

Significant progress has been made regarding course condition and presentation since the last STRI visit several years ago. Sensible maintenance practices, based on firm agronomic principles, have delivered improved standards of playing quality and turf conditioning to all the playing surfaces. The main issues discussed during the visit should be considered fine tuning of what is already a sound and solid maintenance programme.

The main issues with the greens involved the need to increase routine top dressing operations in combination with deep scarification to reduce organic matter accumulations and optimise the consistency of firmness between wet and dry weather.

Ongoing pipe drainage work to the soil based greens is also required to enhance the general drainage performance of these surfaces.

Since our last visit several years ago, the new sand based greens have established and become increasingly consistent. The turfed greens to 13 and 14 now support an even blend of grass, which is a stark comparison to the patchy blend that was previously present. Unfortunately, the soil based greens do soften significantly in response to wet weather. The very wet August to November last year took their toll on several surfaces, which duly resulted in poor turf and playing performance. A programme of pipe drainage installation has therefore been implemented to rectify this problem.

The aeration and top dressing programme is generally good but should be intensified to deliver improved levels of firmness and surface drainage. By doing this, we will retain better levels of firmness following rainfall events and extend the length of the playing season into the autumn and earlier in the spring. The purchase and subsequent use of the Graden deep scarification unit will be very effective at reducing organic matter accumulations in the upper soil profile and helping to improve surface firmness.

All the greens were holding onto excess moisture during the visit. These high levels of soil moisture reflect the wet weather received over the past couple of days, they also indicate the greens are holding onto excess moisture in response to rainfall

We therefore need to intensify aeration and sand top dressing inputs to reduce the organic matter levels in the upper soil profile. A couple of deep scarification operations per year in addition to one hollow coring and minimum sand top dressing input of 120 tonnes but more ideally 150 tonnes per year is required.

The main issues discussed during the visit to improve the playing performance involved the need to dilute organic matter accumulations by increased top dressing combined with deep scarification and hollow coring to the sand based greens. On the basis of the organic matter results, all the greens should be hollow cored for two years rather than just the sand based greens. This more intensive work is necessary to improve the firmness and year round playing quality of the greens. It will also increase consistency between wet and dry weather patterns.

The detail on the attached page is lifted directly from the Agronomy report. (Dated 14th September)

The full report is available on the web site.

While the course has, in general, been well presented and in good condition during the main playing season, we have the perennial problem, many of our greens retaining excess moisture.

This is due to the high level of organic matter in the upper soil profile. Our target must be to reduce this level of organic matter and rectify the underlying drainage problems to our soil based greens.

How will we tackle this?

A single sand banding program or a hollow coring distributes approximately 25 tons to the greens.

Our intention is to conduct 2 sand banding operations, one early April and one in early September, and then a hollow coring/heavy top dressing mid October. This distributes in the region of 75 tons of sand to the greens.

The remaining 45-50 tons of sand will be distributed during a regular top dressing program combined with further deep scarification/Verti draining throughout the main playing season.

Following an analyses of the impact of the drainage work on the 3rd, 4th and 15th greens further drainage work will be conducted, either on or adjacent to some of our other soil based greens

We are asking for our member's tolerance and understanding, if we really want to develop a playing surface that can be used for more than 6 months in the year, we need to accept some disruption to play during the next 2 or 3 seasons.

***A 2 week window, clear of competitions, is being created to allow this operation to be completed.**