

County Louth Golf Club

Winter Programme of Works 2020/2021

The following document is a guide that allows the greens staff to carry out as much work as possible during the Autumn/Winter period. Factors that may affect the progress of this programme include weather, staffing levels, staff training days, holidays and time constraints. This is a working document and can be flexible.

As everyone is aware, 2020 has been an unprecedented year with Covid-19. As a result, when drafting this year's programme of works I have tried to keep expenditure as low possible in all areas. In certain cases, there are tasks we will not undertake at all because of cost. In terms of costings, imported materials and expenditure, the programme reflects the club's current financial status. Hopefully we will see a return to 'normality' in 2021.

The winter programme is broken down into the following categories:

- 1. Bunker Revetment**
- 2. Lowering of Bunker walk-ins**
- 3. Re-levelling of Tee boxes**
- 4. Rough Management**
- 5. Aeration Programmes**
- 6. Turfing Projects**
- 7. Pathway Projects**
- 8. Machinery Maintenance**
- 9. Ecology Projects**
- 10. Drainage Work**
- 11. Irrigation Upgrades**

1. Bunker Revetment:

When we revet any bunker on the links we actively monitor both the depth of the walk-in and the sand levels. When the bunker has been completed and the sand is reshaped, we will then ensure that the sand is presented in such a way that it is dished enough in order to encourage the ball to roll back to the centre of the bunker. This remains our aim even during the regular playing season. Our bunker revetment programme has been very intensive over the last three winters. As a result, during this coming winter bunker building will be scaled back. This will be the case moving forward also. Bunkers will now be re-built as and when needed on a rolling yearly programme. We will aim to rebuild the following bunkers over this winter period:

- *RHS/LHS = right and left-hand side*
- *Angle of revetment on fairway bunker faces is 55 degrees*
- *Angle of revetment of greenside bunkers is 65 degrees*

Bunkers to be Revetted

2nd Hole

- 1st RHS fairway bunker

9th Hole

- LHS greenside bunker
- RHS greenside bunker

11th Hole

- 2nd RHS fairway bunker (reduce in size and re-model to original shape and size)

15th Hole

- 1st RHS greenside bunker
- 2nd RHS greenside bunker

Original 17th Hole

- RHS greenside bunker
- LHS greenside bunker

18th Hole

- 2nd centre fairway bunker
- 3rd centre fairway bunker

Top Driving Range Practice Area Bunker

- One bunker

New Chipping Facility

- Both practice bunkers

Total = 13

2. Lowering of bunker Walk-ins

This process is extremely important as it improves the playability of the bunkers and is also practical in allowing golfers to enter and exit each bunker easily. In general, when a bunker is rebuilt, we will always take into consideration the condition of the walk-in. If it is necessary at the time, we will lower the walk-in. This can be a time-consuming job as a large amount of turf needs to be stripped from the working area in order to get the correct fall into the bunker to complement the original surrounding undulations. The following walk-ins will be reduced in height this winter:

9th Hole

- RHS greenside bunker
- LHS greenside bunker

15th Hole

- RHS greenside bunkers X 2

17th Hole

- RHS greenside bunker
- LHS greenside bunker

18th Hole

- 2nd Centre bunker on fairway

Total Walk-ins Lowered = 7

3. Re-levelling/Construction of Tee boxes

The teeing surfaces on some tee boxes are uneven and are in need of attention. Tee boxes to be re-levelled/constructed/re-turfed this year include the following:

- Ladies 2nd tee box – Enlarge in size to improve wear and tear
- 5th Ladies Tee Box - Enlarge in size to improve wear and tear
- 7th Winter Tee Box - Enlarge in size to improve wear and tear
- Construct new 14th Winter Tee Box at the bottom of the walkway up to the main tee complex. All traffic to be pushed to the RHS of the walkout for the winter period to rest tightly mown grass walkway
- Construct new Winter Tee Box on the original 17th Hole to improve wear and tear on main tee complex
- There may also be an opportunity to construct a small forward tee on the 8th hole. I would envisage this tee box been built to the LHS of the large mound in front of the

fairway. It will be situated to the LHS of the stone path. The final position of the tee can be discussed with the green's convenor at a later date

4. Rough Management

Rough management is an essential task that we carry out every year. Last year the club hosted The Carr Mara Tournament from the 30th of September to the 2nd of October. As a result of this we did not begin our rough management programme until October 2019. Our aim was to present the course at tournament level for this event, so we decided on no rough being cut prior to the event. With last year being very wet throughout the winter period we did not manage to complete our rough management programme. In order to counteract this, we have decided to begin our rough management early this year. This decision has also been driven by the extremely strong growing conditions throughout June and July.

Our aim this year was to have completed all flailing and scarifying of the roughs before the end of August. This will then allow for some recovery before we move into the Winter months. This aggressive approach is necessary in order to thin out the roughs and eradicate any rank grasses. We are now moving into the third winter of this specific programme and we are making some good improvements in this area. The long-term aim is to improve the playability of the rough for all golfers but at the same time to enhance the visual impact of the different levels of roughs – semi rough, managed rough and wild (un-managed) rough. Below are the specific tasks we will carry out regarding our rough management this year.

- Initial flailing and collecting to 2 inches height of cut
- Aggressively rake with Terra Rake to stand up the course grasses
- Flail again to 1 inch
- Aerate with slit tinner to improve air/water movement and encourage finer grasses
- Apply graminicide to eradicate all course grasses (you will see a browning off of the lush/rank rye grasses and Yorkshire fog)
- Scarify all roughs to remove dead/course grasses
- Finally finish with a second terra rake in spring to wake the rough up before the season starts

5. Aeration Programmes

Winter aeration is essential to the grass plant in order to encourage root growth when the leaf of the plant is not growing. The following areas to be aerated over the winter months include the following:

- Greens – monthly 8mm solid tine over the winter months (starting in October) followed by a deep verti-drain in January with a 13mm tine to 8 inches depth
- Tees – solid tine with 13mm tine monthly beginning in November
- Surrounds – 13mm solid tine twice over the winter period (November & January)
- Roughs – slit tined in January

- Fairways – verti-drained with 13mm solid tines to a depth of 9 inches at 4 inches spacing (Carried out by external contractors in November or December)
- Closely mown central carry grass walkways – hollow cored with a 13mm hollow tine to reduce compaction. These areas will then be verti drained with a 1-inch solid tine afterwards to increase air circulation.

6. Turfing Projects

Any worn areas on the course that need re-turfing after the extremely busy season will be tended to. For example: pathway edges, high traffic areas/pinch points, bunker edges, walkways etc...

Other larger projects which require some reshaping and re-turfing include the following:

- Rear of 2nd Green Surround Complex: Extend and continue the tightly mown surface further towards the back left to complement the project we carried out two years ago on the back right of the surround
- 5th Pathway: Widen the end of the stone pathway and reduce mound to open up this area to improve the spread of traffic onto the approach
- 10th Tee Box: To reduce the steepness of the walk off from the 10th white tee. This is extremely steep and can be dangerous. This is a straight-forward cut and fill project. We also aim to remove the ferns to the front left of the 10th white tee box/back right of the 9th green surround. We will replace the ferns with a sandy mound and plant marram grass. We will tie this project in with the 10th tee box walk-off. All original turf used.
- Rear of 16th green: To widen and re-turf this natural routeway up to the 17th tee complex. This area is untidy and visually very poor. Irrigation will be installed to ensure the condition of the turf is maintained. Rye grass turf will be imported for this project. The aim of this project is to push golfers to the right of the large mound to the RHS of the green for the winter period. This will allow us to rest the heavily worn area to the front and LHS side of the green for the winter months.

** All turf used on the above projects (with the exception of the last point) will be taken from our own turf nursery. This nursery is invaluable to us as it removes the need to import any fescue turf from external suppliers. Since we installed irrigation on the nursery two years ago this area has gone from strength to strength and we now have a very strong supply of indigenous fescue turf. For example, last year the cost of importing fescue turf was €8,000 approx. This is a timely saving to the club.*

7. Pathway Projects

There are certain pathways that require attention again this year. The stone pathways need re shaping and bordering correctly. The plan is to also shorten or completely remove certain stone pathways that lead out to fairways. They are unsightly, noisy and do not belong on a natural links course. The stone will be removed, soil will be added and the area will be re-turfed with a fine Rye Grass sod. All Rye grass sod will be imported for these projects from an external supplier.

****I do intend to construct our own rye grass specific turf nursery in time. This will again reduce costs and allow us to be self-sufficient and operate in a sustainable manner.***

The pathways that need work this year include the following:

- 8th tee box – widen the exit from the 8th white tee and to the rear of the ladies 8th tee to improve the spread of foot traffic. Install irrigation.
- Exit from the LHS of the 11th green – Remove stone pathway, extend to 4m width and re-turf. Install irrigation
- 12th Buggy Path to the LHS of the 12th approach – Remove stone pathway, extend to 3.5m width and re-turf. Install irrigation
- Walkway up to 14th white tee box and extension up to 14th blue tee box – remove green artificial matting, extend to 4m width and re-turf. Irrigation already in place.
- Stone pathway from rear of 14th green to 15th tee box – Remove stone pathway, soften mound where the pathway takes a sharp turn left towards the 15th tee to ease wear and tear, extend to 5m width and re-turf. Install irrigation
- 16th pathways between the main 16th tee box complex and the 16th Winter tee – Remove both stone pathways, extend to 5m width and re-turf. Install irrigation. (An open sand area/sand scrape may also be introduced between both grass walkways to improve the aesthetics of this area. Care will also be taken not to affect the right of way ('bathers' path') during these works.
- 16th green buggy path LHS – install stone walkway and re-level surface.
- Grass walkway between blue 17th tee and white 17th tee – lift and remove damaged turf, re-turf with rye grass. Install irrigation.

8. Machinery Maintenance

Our in-house part-time mechanic will carry out all winter machinery maintenance. We endeavour to carry out as much maintenance as possible in-house to keep cost to a minimum. As a result of the age of some of our mowing equipment, there are certain maintenance works that will have to be carried out by an external contractor. This is unavoidable and will carry a cost for the club. With sufficient investment in this area the maintenance bill can be reduced each year as well as contributing to improved condition of all playing surfaces.

The machinery maintenance that will be carried out this winter will be as follows:

- Servicing of all machinery
- Replacement of necessary bearings, parts and cables for next year's season
- Sharpening of all mowing cylinders and bed-knives (the club now owns its own in-house sharpening/grinding units)
- Greasing of all moving parts

9. Ecology Projects

This is an area we are keen to pay more attention to in the long term. It is an extremely important area. We take on this responsibility to ensure we are adhering to all environmental issues and improving the ecological and bio-diversity interest on the course. Projects such as gorse management, rough management, sand dune management and marram planting all play a major role in the ecosystem that is the golf course. Open sand scrapes in areas that are not in play will also attract native birds, insects and bees. Projects that will be carried out this year include:

- Full gorse management programme to be adopted – coppicing all gorse to a height of 8 inches to help with re-generation. (to be repeated every 3 to 5 years)
- Construction of some very gentle rolling mounds at the rear of the 8th green surround to mask the flat expanse beyond the back right of the surround – The construction of some soft mounding and planting of marram will improve the aesthetics of this area. The flat area in question has been negatively commented on by the STRI and the R&A recently. We will use the existing sandy material to create some small mounds that will complement the current topography. The mounds will be planted with marram. Behind these mounds, deep into the rough and away from play we will create an open sand scrape. This area will then be naturalised over time with marram and other indigenous plants. Aesthetically the backdrop of the 8th green will improve.

- The introduction of some indigenous open sand scrapes on other areas of the golf course that are not in the immediate line of play - In terms of improving the bio diversity of the links, an open sand scrape is far more valuable to the ecosystem than a large area of heavy rough. Practically it is also easier to find a ball in one of these areas rather than heavy rough or ferns. The open sand areas encourage sand martins, kestrels and other native birds. Areas that may lend themselves to a sand scrape/open sand area in the future include: rear of the 8th surround as mentioned, left of the 9th winter tee box, left of the ladies 10th tee box, in front of the 14th tee complex, between the winter 16th tee box and the main 16th tee complex. We have also been encouraged in the past by the STRI/R&A to introduce these features to the course. There is also a positive operational impact on creating these features. During construction we can stockpile some excellent quality top dressing sand.
- Removal of ferns at the rear of the 9th green and replacing them with indigenous marram.
- Marram planting on new mound RHS of 10th fairway to strengthen mound
- Removal of any non-indigenous trees and shrubs from the course

10. Drainage Works

- 12th Fairway directly in front of the approach – we aim to install some small slit drains across the fairway to allow this area to drain at a quicker rate than normal post any wet periods. It will also improve the consistency of the surface in line with the rest of the fairway

11. Irrigation Upgrades

There will be some small-scale irrigation projects on the course this year that will be managed in house in order to keep costs as tight as possible. These areas include:

- Installation of sprinklers on new grass walkway to the rear and left of the 11th surround
- Installation of sprinklers on new grass walkway at 12th buggy path
- Installation of sprinklers on new grass walkway from 14th green to 15th tee box
- Installation of sprinklers on new grass walkways around the 16th tee box complex
- Installation of sprinklers on new grass walkway at the rear of the 16th green towards the 17th blue tee box
- Introduction of sprinklers to the LHS of the 14th surround
- Extension of sprinklers on the front of the 2nd tee box
- Extension of sprinklers on the 3rd fairway in front of the green

**If in the future we install a new irrigation system, these sprinklers will not be wasted. They can be re-used or placed as a stock item*

12. Recommended work requiring Members' Approval

- 11th Fairway Two Tier Crossing: For Traffic reasons, health and safety, aesthetics and wear and tear, we propose to reduce the severity of the divide between the top tier of the fairway and the lower tier. On completion, the fairway will remain a two-tiered fairway with a significant difference in levels from the top tier to the bottom tier. The project will be constructed in such a way that golfers can walk easily between the two tiers without the risk of slipping on the steep slope. Going forward this area will also be mowed as fairway as the undulations will be softened adequately. There will be no divide of semi rough running across the fairway. This will remove the pinch point to the right of the current tier. Carrying out this work will improve the playability and flow of the hole. All original turf will be used, the project will be completed in house and will carry no cost. **As this may be classed as a significant course change, this project will require membership approval.**
- 16th Fairway Works Winter 2020 – During this coming Winter, at the bottom of the two-tier section in the middle of the 16th fairway, we intend to install some small slit drains to improve water infiltration and drainage of this damp area. We will also jumbo hollow tine this area to a depth of 8 inches and top-dress afterwards with sand. This process may be carried out several times over the winter. We will monitor this area afterwards. If this intensive aeration and drainage works fail to improve the condition of this damp area, we would propose to raise the area by 8 inches to ensure it is completely out of the water table. This would involve removing a large area of turf to create a working area. We would then import some suitable rootzone. The original shapes and undulations would remain the exact same but the surface would be 8 inches higher. The original turf would then be re-laid. This will remove this wet turf out of the water table and as a result the quality of the surface will improve. It is worth noting that the fairway will still remain a two-tiered fairway and the original undulations will remain. All work will be completed in house and will carry no cost. **As this may be classed as a significant course change, it will require membership approval.**

Wayne Murray
Course Manager

September 2020