



## **GOLF COURSE REVIEW**

Prepared by

**Gerry Byrne**  
**Director**

**Sports Turf Practitioners (Ire) Ltd**

**Meeting date – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

**MEETING SUMMARY**

This month's meeting focused on the autumn renovation programme which was successfully delivered by Paul and his team. We also agreed a stretch winter works plan which included clearing out drainage channels and freeing up inlet drains to facilitate improved water flow.

Also, regarding drainage, a topographical survey was commissioned for the golf course which will form a base map for a drainage master plan developed by expert Richard Hayden

Finally, as winter is upon us, machinery service will be carried out in-house by Paul which will save the club many euro's in outsource service.

One important recommendation is the need for a licence for the use of the 360 Degrees Digger for Health and Safety compliance.

The afternoon concluded with a meeting with Pauline, giving general feedback on observations made during our extensive walk of the course.

#### Meeting Contributors

Pauline Mooney – General Manager

Paul Ryan – Head Greenkeeper

Gerry Byrne – Director, STP (Ire) Ltd

#### Executive Summary- Key Findings

1. **Golf course** playing corridor was wet due to recent rainfall, although not as wet as last year and recent drying conditions gave the team an opportunity to keep grass areas under control.
2. **Greens** are in very good condition, surfaces understandably soft due to recent aeration works but condition are healthy. KPI Performance testing not carried out as result would be unfair given recent works and weather conditions.
3. **Approaches and green surrounds** are good, no waterlogging reported.
4. **Tees** struggled with end of season wear but overseeded and fertilised to bring autumn recovery which can be clearly seen. An excellent programme with resulting seed strike and improved growth.
5. **Fairways** are wet but under control. Recent end of season liquid fertilisation applied has boosted growth and colour, we need a couple of days drying to give them a good cut to bring back under control.
6. **Rough** under control, leaf fall becoming an issue with blowing planned.
7. **Bunkers** will be raked weekly, despite largely closed for the winter period. Reasonings are to keep weeds from developing and compacting over winter.
8. **Landscape** excellent, team have begun to trim back hedging and shrubs which is most impressive. As per protocol, the Hydrangea plants will be cut back in late January to ensure strong summer flowering.
9. **Maintenance yard and Shed** very clean and tidy, all machines presented to a very high standard. Paul has prudently purchased end of season fertiliser at a reduced price which is a savings for the club.
10. **Health and Safety** concerns with no licence tickets for the on-site digger. Recommend a day training / exam to secure ticket for any staff that may use the machine. Our recommended company is called NVPDT and certified instructor / examiner is called Nigel Keane at 086 8161452

11. **Ash dieback** concerns with the club's large population and given the risk of fallen branches which is noted, felling is recommended. For every ash tree which is cut down, a regeneration of three new trees is to be planted.

## Golf Course

### Greens

Greens are in very good health following an extensive autumn renovation programme of aeration and overseeding. The works was carried out to exacting standards with 13mm aeration tines at 75mm depth and 2.5cm spacing. When the sand dissipated into the canopy, Paul followed in with an overseeding programme using premium seed blend Cristal Blue Links®. Whilst the surfaces were bumpy during the recovery period, they are now healthy and largely disease free.

Paul did report minor disease activity in recent days with is identified as Microdocium and quickly addressed through spraying an amenity grade fungicide. I credit Paul for his swift response in addressing the issue.



**Autumn aeration and sanding – carried out in a professional manner**



**Excellent recovery to facilitate overseeding – note the young seedlings emerging through the canopy**

As the greens have fully recovered, attention turns to our winter programme which consists of a combination of turfgrass hardener for harsh winter protection, soil hardeners to ensure the rootzone remains firm and yet free draining and a soil penetrant designed to flush rain water through the rootzone.

Nutrition will be a judgement call over the winter period with colour dictating what is required.



Excellent rooting for October – strong winter density

#### **Autumn / Early Winter Recommendations;**

- Hold height of cut to 4mm – cut twice weekly and Iron if possible [ground conditions dictate].
- Sand top-dress monthly at ¼ tonne per green.
- Turfgrass hardener programme of Mantle® mixed with Iron Sulphate / Silica.
- Soil hardener Rocastem® to begin from November.
- Water penetrant Pro – Wet Gravity® to begin this month and monthly thereafter.
- Nutrition to be applied through liquid forms and judgment call by Paul, based on colour and density.
- Preventative fungicide to protect from the disease Microdochium which can affect surfaces during the Q.4 months. Daily inspection required and suggest Paul educates the team on disease identification to ease the pressure on him.
- Apply leatherjacket control with optimum spraying window towards the end of October. The product Aceleprin® is the only insecticide used for eradication.

#### **Green surrounds and Approaches**

Are presenting very well with strong colour and density.

#### **Tees**

Tees displayed heavy wear and tear during the month of September which is understandable given the high traffic levels during the summer months. We agreed to apply a high nitrogen fertiliser when play eased and quickly follow with an over seeding programme. This has worked exceptionally well with improved sward density and seed development.



**Excellent grass coverage returned to all tees – note the seed lines coming through**

### **Fairways**

Fairways have become waterlogged in recent days due to recent heavy rain. Despite this, it is pleasing to report the grass to be under control and largely healthy. The coming days are due to be dry and Paul plans to mow and bring back under control.

Nutrition wise they are in good health following a recent liquid fertilisation which will likely be the last application for the season.



**Good end of season colour to fairways – use drying ground to mow when possible**

### **Rough**

The rough is presenting very well, under full control despite the wet soil. Leaf fall is becoming a minor issue and where possible, utilise the blower to get rid of the debris.

### **Bunkers**

As always, in very good condition and despite not in use, raked weekly. The reasoning for this is to ensure contamination with weed invasion is kept to a minimum and compaction issues do not become an issue in springtime.

### **Yard and Machinery Shed**

The yard and machinery shed remains very tidy with all machines washed and fully serviced. At this time of year, our focus turns to annual service and repairs of machinery which is largely carried out in-house under the direction of Paul. This saves the resort many Euros in out-source mechanics with their requirement being only for major breakdowns, grinding and blade sharpening.

It is refreshing to see a Superintendent insisting on carrying out the work for the estate, it highlights a strong sense of management to ensure no waste with simple servicing of machines to out-source companies.



**Machinery / fertiliser neatly stored – inhouse servicing with only grinding required locally**

### **Landscape**

Paul and his team have begun the winter clean up programmes of tidying the on-course shrub beds plus the cutting of the large boundary Grisilinia hedge at the 6<sup>th</sup>.



**Grisilinia hedge cutting and finished shrub bed trimming**



**Team busy cutting and cleaning the shrub bed at the left of the 1<sup>st</sup>**

### **Winter works**

**Ditch cleaning**

Over the years the ditch bases have become contaminated with leaf debris and branches. If possible, it is recommended to clean all ditch lines to assist with water flow.

Additionally, we noted that a small number of drains were blocked and will need to be manually freed of soil as it may be blocking the exit of drainage water.



**Clear ditch bases and re-expose outlet drains**

**Ash Die Back Disease**

The estate tree population have a number of ash trees which are dying and will soon become dangerous. The growth habit of the diseased tree are it sheads its branches following the leaf die back. This is dangerous for both golf course operatives and golfers who may play in the vicinity of affected trees.



**Ash dieback disease**

Regrettably, it is recommended they be cut down over the coming winter. To ensure we do not impact on the estates environmental standards, planting three semi-mature nursery trees for every one removed is a common golf course policy.



**Tree planted to replace ones removed**

Recommend to plant common Oak, Beech, Pine or Sycamores replacements as they are growing very well countrywide.

#### **Ditch / Pond at the 9<sup>th</sup>**

The pond at the 9<sup>th</sup> has become overgrown with reeds and saplings from the nearby ditch. This can impede on storm water flow into the sea which was noted last year when the bridge was almost washed away. I support Paul's recommendation to clear out the pond and ditch line. It is a fantastic finishing hole but obscured by the unsightly area.



**Unsightly pond and ditch affecting the visual beauty of the 9<sup>th</sup> hole**

#### **Putting Green as part of Clubhouse Masterplan**

As part of the clubhouse development, a masterplan is developed to enhance the journey from the clubhouse to the 1<sup>st</sup> tee. This is most impressive as it brings the seaview into the golfers experience. As part of the plan, a new putting green is to be built behind the accounts office and supported.

We reviewed the specification which is to exacting standards and reasonably priced. One small recommendation would be to change the plan from turfing the surface to seeding. This will not only save 6k off the construction price but give Paul a chance to build a green with creeping bentgrass similar to what was sown at Adare Manor.

#### **Drainage Report**

It is pleasing to see drainage expert Richard Hayden commissioned to carry out a full drainage report for the club to include soil tests and a drainage plan.

The 1<sup>st</sup> phase was a topographical survey which was carried out last week and will act as a template for drainage design. We eagerly await his report.

Whilst it may be a stretch to expect management to act on the report it will give a flavour of what is required from a costing standpoint.

#### SUMMARY

The season has largely ended and we can reflect on a very successful year from both an agronomic and presentation standpoint.

Paul has taken the position as Superintendent to heart and his passion and drive to give the members premium playing conditions are clearly seen by all. He has improved the course in every aspect, not only turf grass but landscape improvements and machinery maintenance.



**Well done on a truly fantastic year Paul!**

My next visit is scheduled for early December to summary review winter works to date and early plans for spring 2025.

**Gerry Byrne**  
**Director**  
**Sports Turf Practitioners**  
**October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

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