

'Ben on the Course'

Dear Member,

It seems like a very long time since we last communicated. I hope you and your families have kept well and are enjoying getting back out on the golf course as we move out of a non-existent Spring into some warmer months (fingers crossed!).

Since Lockdown 2 and into Lockdown 3 we experienced the worst autumn / winter weather we have experienced. I thought that the autumn and winter of 2019 to 2020 was bad but 2020 into 2021 was far, far worse.

The main problem was rainfall with over 150mm (6") falling throughout those five months. 150mm (6") never really captures the real impact of the amount, but 1" of rain on one acre of land is 113 tons of water – Ingrebourne Links is 400 acres in size, so the maths is straightforward: $113 \times 400 = 45,200$ x 6 = 271,200 tons of water, or just over 100 Olympic size swimming pools worth!



Even without the pandemic virtually all golf courses will have been closed during the later months of 2020 and into 2021. You will see we have installed some drainage around the 1st tees on the North hole, but that piece of work took near 4 weeks to complete as desperate conditions hampered our every step. We need more drainage and will continue the program as and when.

Out of Lockdown 3 and we then experienced over 37 days without any rainfall whatsoever and everywhere is bone dry with a persistent NE wind blowing for 24 of the 30 days of April! That's British weather for you!

We were all pleased to see this recent rain and warmth so growth can start up albeit 4 to 6 weeks behind last year – such is the climatical changes we seem to be experiencing year in year out.

Despite the above the course is looking neat and tidy and playing conditions are very firm and fast like a true coastland links. We have sprayed a wetting agent on the entire course so that rain and irrigation water will penetrate the ground and get into the soil – this together with a 'slow release' nitrogen fertiliser we should start to see grass growth and a slow 'greening up' of the course over the coming few days.

Greens are running true and are in decent shape considering they too are not enjoying the cold winds and need some warm sunshine on them – but they are still putting well and I'm confident will be very good in the coming weeks.

As you may know we will be hollow coring all greens in mid-August this year so that recovery is much quicker going into the early autumn.

In previous years we have done this important work much later in the year, but recovery is twice, even three times quicker when done in August.

Many clubs now opt for an August date for renovations, and we feel this will be a permanent fixture going forward.



Now that the full greenkeeping team are back together we are starting to tackle some of the fairway areas that need re-profiling and returfing. You will see that we have completed some of these areas on the 5th, 13th, 15th, and 17th holes adding new drains where possible. Our program is to address as many of these areas as possible over the coming season.



Once the new turf has knitted in, they will blend in much better and shed the surface water away so that the areas are less likely to flood. Ours is a very different course construction because reclaimed soils were used, and areas of settlement are inevitable causing these areas appear.



You will also see that we have re-turfed areas of the 18th green and a circular section of the apron.

The green area laid wet during the winter and growth was sparse, so we decided to re-turf the area to speed the process up.

Once the new turf on these areas has established, we can lower the cutting height and bring them back into play. Thankfully we have very large greens so there is plenty of pin positions whilst the repair process takes place.

We must remember that the East course is less than one year old so it is inevitable that there will be teething problems, like any youngster!

As this nine starts to mature it will be a become a great test of golf and compliment the older North course – but patience, time and nature is required.

The teeing grounds are looking good, and the white tees have had a good rest. Our intention is to return the white markers to the back tees soon, and Dominic will be contacting everyone with the details in the coming days.

Can I ask that you keep golf trollies and golf buggies away from the aprons of the greens and away from the teeing ground areas. Some golfers seem to ignore the white lines on the approaches to the green and then wonder why our approaches suffer.

Finally, can I ask a personal favour that you replace your divots and repair your pitch marks on the greens, especially as they begin to soften up. These two main issues seem to be a problem on so many courses where members either forget to replace divots and repair pitch marks or just don't bother. Please do your bit and replace and repair – that would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you all in advance..... have a great golf season

Ben and the greenkeeping team