

# Course Manager's Blog – May 2026

## WEATHER

Before writing this month's blog, I looked back at last year's May edition and, honestly, I could almost have changed the date and reposted it.

January and February were wet once again, with 208mm of rainfall recorded. In contrast, March and April were exceptionally dry, with less than 40mm falling across the two months combined. Alongside the dry spell, April also brought consistently low overnight temperatures more typical of February, resulting in numerous frosty mornings. These conditions are far from ideal for growth and recovery following winter wear and tear.

That said, we used previous years knowledge and experiences, adapting our turf management, particularly on greens, and as a result feel we are in a much stronger position in terms of turf health, playability and consistency – something we were criticized for in previous Springs.

We have been very pleased with green and overall course condition. Heading into the next period of the year in a good position.

## AGRONOMY

Over the past couple of weeks, we have applied a controlled-release fertiliser to all tees, approaches, and green surrounds. This is the same product we have used over the last few seasons, and we have consistently been pleased with the results. Despite the lack of rainfall, we have already noticed improved colour and a healthy flush of growth across these surfaces, helping to thicken and strengthen the sward.

Following renovations, we trialled a different granular fertiliser on greens. With these increasingly dry and cold spring conditions becoming more common, we have noticed inconsistent growth patterns at this time of year. This season, we opted for an organic-based fertiliser and, once soil temperatures consistently reached 8–10°C, we began to see much more even growth across the greens.

We have also been applying a selective herbicide to fairways and rough areas to control weeds that established over the winter months. Applications on finer turf areas such as tees and approaches will commence once temperatures become more consistent.

Our weekly sand topdressing programme on the greens is now underway. Between 4 and 5 tonnes of sand are applied each week, before being brushed in and followed by rolling, leaving a much smoother putting surface. This programme will continue throughout the season and into autumn. Including both renovation periods, we will apply approximately 180 tonnes of sand over the course of the year.



I've had a few questions regarding whether the greens perform better or worse on days when sand is applied. Last week, I decided to measure the difference. Following mowing, the greens were running at approximately 10.4ft on the stimp meter — a good speed for a single cut. After dressing, brushing, and rolling, the greens increased to 11.6ft, an improvement of just over one foot. The process is not only culturally beneficial for the turf but also enhances the member playing experience.

Our fortnightly foliar applications of nutrition and growth regulator on the greens have also begun, alongside monthly moisture management applications.

Overall, the greens are performing well and remain strong heading into our busiest tournament months. We will continue monitoring green speed, smoothness, and moisture levels on a weekly basis.

The fairways have recently received their second application of growth regulator, iron, magnesium, urea, and wetting agent. Tees and approaches are scheduled for their monthly application in the next week or so.

## **HEIGHTS OF CUT**

One advantage of the cold and dry conditions is that we have been able to reach our summer heights of cut relatively quickly. Greens are currently maintained at 2.5mm, tees and approaches at 9mm, and fairways at 15mm. This is because growth has been 'pegged back' by the cool nights and dry conditions.

For the summer season, we have reverted the tee and fairway mowing lines back to the diamond pattern, while the approaches have been changed from the traditional diamond design to more of an "up and down" style.

This change of direction of mow makes the approaches really stand out, providing clear definition as to where the green complex begins.



## **TASKS**

Recently, we have topped up pathways around the course and repaired potholes caused during the winter months.

We have also begun terra-raking operations, completing one pass on the fairways so far, with semi-rough and rough areas next on the schedule. This process removes dead material and helps stand the plant upright, improving surface presentation and consistency.



Bunker sand rotation remains an ongoing task. This involves regularly redistributing sand back into the appropriate areas of the bunkers. Some of the more heavily used bunkers require significant on-going attention, although this can be greatly helped by proper raking after play. You can watch our short video demonstrating the correct bunker raking technique here:

<https://youtu.be/giSwPB9mtfI?si=duInjiP4QVeqbU-6>

We will also be topping up sand levels in several bunkers across the course over the coming weeks, with work already underway on holes 11 and 12.

## **STAFF**

We have recently appointed a new trainee greenkeeper, Hayden. Hayden had been volunteering at North Hants and came across our trainee greenkeeper advertisement.

He has settled into the team very well, picking up new tasks quickly and showing great enthusiasm. Already, he has been trained in hole changing, tee setup, bunker raking, rolling greens, and mowing greens.

Hayden is due to begin his college course later this year.

## **COMING UP**

As we move further into our tournament season, we will continue fine-tuning all playing surfaces. Mowing frequencies will increase, and spraying programmes will intensify accordingly.

The greens are pushed hard during this period, so as soon as conditions allow, we will carry out a light aeration using 10mm solid tines to relieve any additional compaction caused by increased rolling. Ironically, this process will then be followed by more rolling.

Although our irrigation system performs exceptionally well, periods of drought still require additional support through hand watering. This remains an incredibly important process, allowing us to target only the specific areas requiring additional moisture and therefore conserving significant amounts of water.

Using moisture probes, we can accurately monitor water content across greens and collars, identifying areas that dry out more quickly than others — typically high spots and areas subjected to greater wear.

Mid way through June, course architect David Jones will be visiting the club to work with us (myself & Matt Short) to discuss and plan future course improvements – this will in turn be communicated and updated within our five-year vision for the course.

We hope to share this with you by the end of this year – please keep an eye out for its release.

## **HELPERS**

Our helpers have been fantastic recently, repainting all the red and white hazard posts around the course and trimming the fairway pop-ups. Not only does this improve presentation, but it also makes ongoing maintenance easier.

These small details really help elevate the overall appearance of the course. In addition, the helpers have continued with tee divoting and branch clearance work.

They are currently tidying the tree line to the left of the 1st green, and it is already looking excellent. I genuinely can't thank the helpers enough for all of their hard work and continued support.



Good luck to everyone competing in the upcoming club championships. Let's hope for a warm, dry couple of months and some excellent golfing weather ahead.

Stuart Job  
Course Manager