

Course Manager's Update – July 2026

As we head into the height of summer, I wanted to share an update on course conditions, the work the team has been carrying out, and what can be expected on the course over the coming weeks.

A Summer to Remember

When I first joined Sand Martins in July 2018, we experienced one of the toughest summers on record, with almost 60 consecutive days without meaningful rainfall. It put our irrigation system to its test, yet the course recovered remarkably well once the weather broke – a testament to just how resilient healthy turf can be.



July 2018 vs Sept 2018

This summer has felt very similar, although the sustained high temperatures have arguably made conditions even more challenging. While the sunshine has provided fantastic golfing weather, it has also placed significant pressure on the course.

Our irrigation system has once again been vital in maintaining playing surfaces, we are working harder than ever to use this valuable resource responsibly.

As highlighted in our member email earlier this month, sustainability remains a key priority. We've focused irrigation on the areas that need it most, with the team spending many hours hand watering greens.

This targeted approach uses considerably less water than sprinkler irrigation while ensuring the turf receives moisture exactly where it's needed.



Looking ahead, we've begun working with irrigation and water specialists to investigate the long-term feasibility of installing a borehole and/or reservoir, helping secure a more sustainable water supply for the future.

Protecting the Playing Surfaces

To help the greens cope with the ongoing heat and dry conditions, we've slightly increased the height of cut to 2.8mm. During our renovation week (3rd – 7th August), this will increase again to 3mm to encourage recovery following maintenance work.

Fairways have also been raised to 17mm during the heatwave to reduce plant stress. You may also have noticed a slight change to the mowing pattern, with a 50/50 cut now being used. This reduces the number of turns our machinery makes around fairway edges, helping minimise wear in these high-traffic areas.

What's different this Year....

The biggest challenge this summer, particularly when compared with the summer of 2025 & 2018, has been not only the intensity of the heat but also, it's prolonged duration.

To put this into perspective, during July and the final two weeks of June, daily evapotranspiration (ET) rates averaged between approximately 5mm & 7mm. In simple terms, this means the golf course has been losing that amount of moisture every day through a combination of evaporation and the natural water use of the grass.

Each night, our irrigation system can apply up to 2mm of water across the course's playing surface.

Despite this overnight irrigation, we have been managing a daily moisture deficit of approximately 4mm for the past six weeks. This sustained shortfall places considerable pressure on the turf, with no rainfall in sight.

Through careful monitoring, we continue to manage these challenging conditions.

Daily hand watering of the greens allows us to maintain the moisture levels required to keep these key playing surfaces healthy and performing well. However, it is simply not practical to provide the same level of individual attention to the fairways, approaches and other surrounding areas, which is why members may notice these areas showing greater signs of heat and drought stress.

While some areas of the course may appear drier than usual, some of this is a direct result of responsible water management during an extended period of exceptional weather.

The current conditions have also highlighted a few underlying issues that only become apparent during prolonged periods of extreme heat.

Certain tees have presented the greatest challenge, factors such as strong winds, pressure issues, concentrated traffic at walk-on and walk-off points, spacing, mist irrigation, and competition from tree root systems beneath drip lines have all contributed to increased turf stress.

We are fully aware of the areas requiring longer-term improvements, which may involve addressing one or more of these contributing factors. Once weather conditions become more favourable, we will undertake the necessary repair work to restore these areas.

Maintaining Healthy Greens

Keeping the greens healthy throughout prolonged dry periods requires constant attention.

Our fortnightly foliar feeding programme continues, providing approximately five units of nitrogen per application, alongside a carefully selected range of nutrients and plant health products.

We've also adapted our moisture management programme. Rather than applying surfactants monthly, we're now using smaller applications more frequently. This has helped maintain more consistent moisture levels throughout the heatwave.

August Renovation Week

Our 2nd renovation week takes place from 3rd to the 7th August.

As always, we'll make final decisions on the exact maintenance programme based on weather conditions and the health of the greens. Depending on conditions, this may include hollow coring and/or solid tining.

Following successful renovations completed in March, and with our regular topdressing programme already in place, there's no need to push the greens unnecessarily if temperatures remain exceptionally high.

The renovations will also include:

- Fertiliser and soil amendment applications
- Sand topdressing
- Wetting agent
- Overseeding with Creeping Bent grass (high drought tolerance)

Temporary greens will be in use and will be mown or rolled daily to provide the best possible playing experience while essential maintenance takes place.

Around the Course

The team (along with the course helpers) has continued working across the course on a wide range of projects (excluding all 'routine' tasks), these include;

- Trimming all fairway sprinkler heads to maximise irrigation efficiency.
- Ongoing tee divoting/repairs.
- Levelling sprinklers
- Topping up drain lines on 5 & 18
- Mowing long rough areas, begun work on the back 9



In readiness for when conditions are favourable;

- Preparing high-traffic fairway areas for repair once rainfall returns.
- Aerating, overseeding and applying organic dressings to drought-affected areas to improve moisture retention and encourage recovery.

The ongoing challenge of sand movement within bunkers continues, dry conditions and persistent winds have caused sand to migrate more than usual, so we'll be topping up bunkers over the coming weeks to maintain consistent playing conditions.

During renovation week we'll also have a Mobile Elevated Work Platform (MEWP) on site to carry out essential maintenance around the clubhouse clock and remove ivy from the surrounding gutters.

Our Team

I'm pleased to say the greenkeeping team continues to develop professionally, with three team members currently studying towards industry qualifications and a fourth due to begin shortly.

We remain committed to supporting future development of the team.

Looking Ahead

Although we're still enjoying summer golf, planning for autumn has already begun.

We're currently preparing our autumn turf health programme for the greens, tees and approaches, alongside our disease prevention strategy. Successful disease management begins well before autumn arrives, making summer planning essential.

When weather conditions allow, we'll also apply a slow-release granular fertiliser to tees and approaches to help maintain strong, healthy growth into the winter months.

One significant improvement project will focus on the collars surrounding the greens.

Years of regular topdressing have gradually built up a band of sand around many collars. This has created slightly raised areas that can restrict surface water from leaving the greens while also producing a very sandy, nutrient-poor profile that dries out quickly during prolonged hot weather.

Our plan is to hollow core these areas before carefully lowering any raised sections through rolling.

Areas that don't require lowering will receive a specialist soil amendment to improve soil structure, reduce compaction and enhance moisture and nutrient retention. This may take multiple processes to achieve the desired result.

Thank You

Thank you for your continued support and understanding while we manage the challenges that another exceptionally dry summer has brought.

The greenkeeping team remains committed to presenting the course to the highest possible standard while protecting its long-term health for all members.

We hope you've been enjoying your golf, and let's hope the sunshine continues, with perhaps just a little rain overnight!

Stuart Job
Course Manager