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# GAILES LINKS GOLF COURSE

## Advisory Report on the Golf Course On behalf of The R&A Championship Committee

Report Date: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017  
Consultant: Richard Windows



## Gailes Links Golf Course

Date of Visit: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Visit Objective: To review the spring condition of Gailes Links in anticipation of hosting Final Qualifying for The Open.

Present: John Caven – General Manager  
Brian Dickson – Course Manager  
Richard Windows – STRI Ltd

Weather: Cool, dry with sunny spells.

### Headlines

- The very dry spring is presenting the Links in an authentic manner.
- The golf course is performing very well with excellent feedback.
- Grass cover and early season performance to greens is very good and superior to previous years.
- Improving the consistency of irrigation delivery is required to heighten performance.
- Green approaches and fairways were wonderfully linky.
- Some main box tees remain a little thin and require seeding and feeding.
- Rough management has worked excellently and thinner textured swards are evident.
- The Practice Range is now maintained at 6 mm with excellent performance.

### Key Actions

- Review and monitor soil moisture levels to increase accuracy of irrigation delivery.
- Maintain consistent soil moisture levels at 25% in the morning drying down to no lower than 15%.
- Sustain Revolution wetting agent and use Aqueduct to remoisten if the greens become too dry.
- Sustain verticutting to refine sward texture and maintain cut height at 4.25 mm.
- Implement bent and fescue overseeding again in the summer.
- Plan to repeat the same successful aeration programme to the greens again this winter.
- Complete seeding and additional feeding to the main box tees to accelerate recovery.

## Photo Observations and Comments



Figure 1: The general condition and performance of the course is excellent with firm and running conditions, which are reflective of the dry weather received this season.



Figure 2: Green approaches and fairways are wonderfully firm and become more consistent with the greens as you move from the fairway to the greens, which is ideal.



Figure 3: Annual meadow grass has commenced seeding which is earlier than last year. The level of seeding also looks to be less due to botanical improvements and healthier turf from the increase in soil pH.



Figure 4: Uneven irrigation delivery is affecting the consistency of firmness between greens and through each surface. Investing time into altering sprinkler arcs and run times is necessary to increase accuracy.



Figure 5: Areas of greens that were being missed with irrigation were very firm (excess of 140 gravities) and dry (11-12%) compared to wetter areas (firmness 88 gravities) where soil moisture was up to 42%.



Figure 6: The Championship tees were all in good order and well grassed with presentation reflecting the dry weather.

## Photo Observations and Comments (continued)



Figure 7: The fairways were firm, fast and running and were reflective of the dry weather so far this spring.



Figure 8: The grass pathways would benefit from being mown as fairway to improve flow between tees and fairways.



Figure 9: The new practice tee is excellent and now being mown at tee height (6 mm). The feedback on the facility is superb.

## Recommendations

### Greens

- Monitor soil moisture regularly and adjust irrigation delivery to each specific green to start the day at 25% soil moisture drying down to 17-18% each evening.
- As the objective measurements showed during the visit, there is significant disparity between greens with 3G & 4G being ideal (3G: 110 gravities at 22% soil moisture and 4G: 118 gravities at 20% soil moisture). However, other greens were softer and wetter (17G: 93 gravities at 39.9% and 8G: 97 gravities at 34.2%). This means the wetter greens (e.g. 8, 17 & 18) require less irrigation compared to 3 & 4.
- In addition to green specific inputs, it will also be necessary to ensure the delivery of irrigation is optimised across each platform. For instance, 18G supported moisture values of 17% centre right compared to 43% front right. Therefore, scouting with the moisture meter before and after irrigation will show any disparity informing the need to alter irrigation arcs. In addition, use the sprinklers to deliver a maximum of 25% soil moisture water and supplement this with hand watering to any remaining dry areas.
- Sustain monthly Revolution wetting agent applications with the next treatment at the end of this week. If the greens do become too dry and patchy, reset soil moisture with the Aqueduct and irrigation as necessary.
- The 8:0:6 granular feed has been applied and should now be supplemented through the season with the urea/ammonia mix as required combined with the seaweed and Farmura Porthcawl supplements.
- A further application of sand top dressing will be made in July.
- Sustain gentle verticutting to refine sward texture and retain excellent ball roll qualities.
- Maintain green speed around the 9 ft 0 – 9 ft 6 in mark for routine play. On days where speeds are towards the upper end of the range following mowing, omit rolling to avoid the greens becoming overly fast. For Open Qualifying, speeds of 9 ft 6 in – 10 ft 0 in will be ideal.

### Green Collars, Surrounds and Approaches

- Irrigation regimes to these areas is ideal with a good progression of firmness from the green out into the fairway.
- All wetting agent should continue into these areas and if necessary use the Aqueduct if rewetting is required in any local area.

### Tees

- Overseed and feed the main box tees to encourage a full recovery following winter play.
- Constructing separate winter tees remain an important issue to spread the increasing amount of year-round play and to shift summer and winter traffic routes away from each other.

### Fairways

- These surfaces were in superb condition.
- If the weather remains dry, some wetting agent may be necessary to help remoisten parched areas before rain or irrigation.

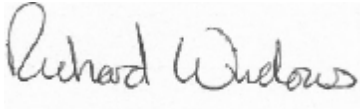
### Pathways

- The grass pathways would look better maintained at fairway height to provide superior flow from tee to fairway.

## Course Development

- There are some very exciting plans for course development including gorse and tree removal, additional tees, bunker alterations and recontouring areas of rough to restore and optimise the links character of the course.
- To make sure the work is done with due cognisance to the environment and links character of the course, the ideal methodology would be to appoint an appropriate Golf Course Architect who would then manage and direct the project team involving Agronomist, Ecologist, Drainage Consultant in the planning stages and then the aforementioned plus a lead contractor and shaper during the construction phase.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Windows". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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