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Willesley Park Golf Club

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## Specific areas recovery plan

### Worn areas around the greens side bunkers and banks.

The banks around our greens and surrounds were never designed to be cut with the machinery we use today.

They have built up with sand blown and knocked out of the bunkers over many years because of this these areas burn off every year when we have dry weather. The areas have deteriorated slowly over time but have become more prominent this year due to the weather conditions and constant cutting. This wear and tear have broken down an already weak area. The machine we use on the banks is an aggressive machine, it is designed this way to be able to climb banks without slipping or sliding, but the grip from the tyres can damage turf around tight turns and following the shape of the bunkers.

To recover these areas, firstly we need to look at the machine we use and the cutting regime, re-turf or preferably reshape the banks that need to be cut, as we have done around the 8<sup>th</sup> green, reshaping the banks so that our machines can easily cut the banks, with more sweeping, gentle curves.

I currently have two alternative machines on demo, but I am finding similar problems with grip and damage. If you can remember back to when I took over as Head Green keeper, we had the same problem on tee banks, the machinery tyres had worn areas on steep banks from a busy cutting regime. So, I changed the way we cut the tee banks and we no longer have the problem. I am ultimately going to have to make similar changes until the banks have been remodelled. On the downside it takes up more man hours, but it will provide a better result.

### The Fairways

Some of the fairways this year have suffered from a combination of factors, the weather from drought stress to pest attack from leather jackets. The fairways do burn off every summer during dry periods but this year it has been highlighted by the weather. We have had 4 months with long dry spells then a month worth of rain in a day or two-day period. This causes the water to run off any high or already dry areas, so they do not benefit from the rainfall at all, but the low spots get plenty of water, they green up, therefore, you end up with some very hydrophobic areas being highlighted by some very lush areas making them stand out more than usual.

To recover the fairways, we need break up the dry-high areas to allow water to be absorbed, this can be helped by using a penetrant wetting agent through the winter months. As is usual this work will be carried out with a Verti-drain to punch holes and break the compaction but this year I will also be using a large slit tine machine I have borrowed from the Belfry. This is a much quicker way of getting air and water into the ground, it is also less aggressive than Verti-draining which can damage the surface. So, the two combined will help the compaction issue whilst the wetting agent will help get the water where we need it. The lack of grass in these areas would be combated with over seeding using a disc seeder, this is something I suggested and arranged in early September, but it was unfortunately not agreed and therefore not carried out. It is something that needed to be added to the maintenance program to aid recovery and ultimately, in a long-term approach, cure the issue.

## The Tees

Like the fairways the tees tend to dry up and burn off through a long summer season. This is down to the lack of appropriate irrigation.

The recovery of these areas is the same every year with tining, overseeding and top dressing, but we can only do this at the end of the season with favourable wet weather. If the tees had the irrigation system extended to them it would help me maintain them through the season. Now with no water I must wait for rain before I can feed them effectively, also divoting is mostly unsuccessful during long dry periods as I struggle to get germination. I cannot aerate them as that would also add to them drying out. We do hand water, but this is no substitute for an irrigation system watering over night rather than the heat of the day. Our 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> tees are watered by the system when I water the greens, if you compare their condition to the rest of the tees you will see an obvious difference.

Tees like the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> (White tee) also have other factors affecting them. The 6<sup>th</sup> white tee area is far too small for the amount of traffic that goes over it, therefore all the divots and wear are concentrated and do not get the recovery time needed. The 7<sup>th</sup> is overshadowed by a neighbour's tree line which starves it of sunlight and the roots will be taking away any available moisture.

A solution for the 6<sup>th</sup> would obviously move the white disk forward making use of the huge tee.

For the 7<sup>th</sup> as I have already suggested speaking to the neighbours to gain permission to reduce the tree line and raise the canopy. Also, we could build a white tee further back towards the 6<sup>th</sup> green moving it away from the trees in question.

## The Greens

The greens currently have a drainage issue, this became apparent last year during the wet winter.

We are unsure if it's the horseshoe of irrigation pipe which runs around the green, leaking and feeding the greens with water or if the drainage under the greens has become silted up and not working as it should. But when it rains some greens become incredibly soft (4-5-6-7-9 and 18) which leads me to believe it is a drainage problem.

The drainage system in the greens is nearly 40 years old and unfortunately there are no plans existing to help me locate any existing pipework.

The solution would be to do some drainage work. I sent Mark several different types of drainage options to consider at the start of September, some are more expensive than others, I recommended we start with a Sand Master machine, this is the least intrusive option, it removes a 15mm wide and 200mm deep trench and fills it with sand, approximately 4-5 tons per green. Personally, I think this would be the best solution as it would have little disruption to the surfaces, taking into consideration the centenary year next year.

In my opinion this is an urgent problem which will only worsen as the winter progresses.