

## Course Manager's Report - May

The last few months have been extremely challenging and difficult. The lack of rain and low temperatures have been a double-edged sword.

The low temperatures have slowed bent grass growth on greens and the lack of rain has also slowed growth in all other areas.

We do have irrigation, which is operational, but we must be extremely careful how much we apply in early months when normally irrigation is not required as we have a limited resource which needs to last the whole season.

The plus side to the dry cold conditions has been on areas other than greens, these areas have the same amount of leatherjacket population but because it has been so dry and cold these areas have not suffered anywhere near as much as they did this time last year when we had the opposite, and it was very wet.

The greens have not been so lucky. The dry conditions have meant we have continued to water them to help with growth, but this has also given the leatherjackets a better environment to cause the large areas of damage you are seeing.

I have heard players commenting on still seeing hollow tine holes. We hollow tined the greens late last year during lockdown, so this is not recent work. Where you are still seeing these holes is where we are seeing the most leatherjacket activity, they sit in these holes and eat the grass plant causing the holes to open as the grass plants dies around it. You will also be seeing fresh holes that are just created by the leatherjacket coming to the set face and you sometime see them crawling along the surface of the greens.

Golf courses around the country are fighting their own battles with leatherjackets, in the past were able to apply chemicals to deal with the problem, the problem was controlled, but now the industry is facing a very serious issue if a chemical solution is not found.

It fair to say that some course only experiencing minor damage this year, but this is likely to be a that they are experiencing a low hatch of the grub this year and are likely to see increases in years to come. There are also courses experiencing much worse, losing as we did last year, large areas of grass on there playing surfaces.

[https://www.bigga.org.uk/event/managing-the-leatherjacket-challenge.html?fbclid=IwAR3eTxvT7F\\_iu-sdDo9FLIQbhibt22mrdJsXtWLFKxo07cMmyD5VRxlFeU](https://www.bigga.org.uk/event/managing-the-leatherjacket-challenge.html?fbclid=IwAR3eTxvT7F_iu-sdDo9FLIQbhibt22mrdJsXtWLFKxo07cMmyD5VRxlFeU)

There is product out there that can reduce numbers but from what I and many other course mangers have seen these are far from guaranteed. These products range from chemical to biological and even natural product like Garlic and molasses. Some courses have reported success with these products, but it seems as much about the conditions as the choice of product that year.

To try and out compete the grubs we are carrying out an aggressive folium feeding program every 4 weeks. In recent weeks, the greens have started to drop back as grub activity increases again, so we have seen the need to adjust that feeding program to 2 weekly applications. This change should start to show improvements in surfaces over the next few weeks.

Moreover, we will also be continuing with our topdressing program and this week we will be doing the East greens. This will level of surfaces but does unfortunately make the damaged areas more visually predominant until they recover.

I hope this helps to explain the problems we are facing and what my team and I are working extremely hard to fix. To that end I would ask that if you have any concerns or comments with the courses, you direct those to either Steve Graham or myself and avoid airing frustrations at the staff who are doing their very best.

As well as this work and regular cutting and course preparation we have also been able to deal with other projects and repair work around the courses.

We have brought back into play two bunkers on 14 east and one bunker on 18 east, this enrolled completely stripping back to the base. Re-levelling, installing new drainage in all 3 bunkers with new sand. We are awaiting clarification on what action to take on the 11th West and whether it will be remodeled or repaired to existing design.

We have and continue to repair numerous leaks and control issues to the irrigation system.

We have sprayed selective weed killer on key areas of the courses including tees, fairways semi rough areas and larger areas of club house and hotel lawns.

This week we will be turfing the redesigned fairway bunker at 14 east so please be patient if playing the east and allow my team to move to a safe point before you play over them.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Mick Wick my workshop manager for 20 years' service, Rob Gillespie one of my Greenkeepers for 22 years' service and Graham Howell my Irrigation technician for 25 years' service at East Sussex National.

Regards

Scott Litchfield

Course Manager