



Northop Golf Club

Feb 2025

The use of Personal winter mats is making a huge difference, and we will see the benefits of this once we start cutting the fairways again. These restrictions are likely to remain in place until the end of March inline with the start of handicap qualifying competitions.

Thank you for following and policing these rules.

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Northop Golf Club Greens



Jonathan's Course update:

Winter brings its fair share of challenges for both greenkeepers and golfers alike. The first few weeks of 2025 have brought a blanket of snow and ice, numerous named storms and plenty of mild but wet days. Our work program must be flexed around the weather to ensure that we continue to make course improvements whilst minimising any damage that any work during these conditions will invariably make. We are making progress on many fronts, and I want to share our plans for the next few months as we get ready for Spring and the start of the 2025 golfing season.

Greens

Our greens are in good condition for the time of year despite some poor winter weather. Disease levels have been minimal however we have seen some fusarium scarring in recent weeks, these have already been treated and will quickly grow out once the greens start growing steadily. Due to the prolonged wet conditions, moss has crept in on some parts of the greens. Please be assured that we are doing everything we can to keep this in check by applying iron products, penetrant wetting agents and aeration. We are confident that any moss will be eradicated in the spring when scarification and Verti cutting commences.

At the end of February/early March (weather depending) we will be carrying out our planned greens maintenance by solid aerating and applying sand top dressing (same process carried out in spring and autumn last year). This will be followed with scarifying and overseeding of the greens in early April as this will be less disruptive to play. We aim to have the maintenance work carried out in advance of the main tournament playing season. Any aeration work carried out throughout the golfing season will be very low disturbance pencil tinning.

Our autumn's greens maintenance is scheduled for w/c 29th September at the end of the 2025 competition season.



Just a few polite reminders:

Our greenkeepers have priority when working around the course. Over the last few months, we have had a few near misses when golfers have decided that this is not the case.

We will only close a hole as a last resort, this is to ensure that the work is completed as quickly as possible and in a safe and efficient manner.

If you are using the range, please can you collect your golf balls after you have practiced. There are a lot of semi embedded balls now which will be lost once the ranges starts growing again.

Tees & Approaches

The tee boxes will be realigned in early spring to encourage golfers to set up in the intended direction of play and for aesthetic purposes. Maintenance work will involve solid aeration and Verti cutting with some topdressing and seeding during spring to improve overall turf quality.

Current 1st tee

The mounds are currently being reshaped and a level of hardcore added as a primary drainage layer. Further primary drainage will be added, before a thick layer of root zone will be used to level the tee area before it is finally turfed. Our aim is to have this tee in play by the middle of April. This will greatly improve playability and safety for neighbouring houses.

We plan to relocate the halfway house to the back of this tee so it will face up this hole.

5th Tee expansion

The white competition tee on hole 5 will be expanded this winter to encompass the permanent yellow tee during the 2025 season. The current yellow tee (behind winter mat) is too small and of a poor quality due to the neighbouring trees preventing adequate grass growth. We will also be creating a new red tee box in a better location for our lady golfers.

All summer tees on the 5th will now be accessed via the path to the right of the 4th Green and the hole will play as a dog leg (right) from all tees.

Fairways & Step-Cut

The fairways and step-cut will be fertilised in the Spring, and we will continue with bi-monthly spray applications of fertiliser and plant growth regulator along with herbicide applications to eradicate weeds. The fairways will be realigned/re-shaped with some potentially being made narrower and some being extended in the known common landing areas to improve overall playability and ease of maintenance.

Some weaker fairways will benefit from topdressing and overseeding where required.

Rough

The rough will be maintained at 55mm (same as last year) and some areas of the ecology rough will be reviewed e.g. expansion of some areas and reduction in other areas so that it remains fair for the golfer.

The Bunkers Beards that were trialled in 2024 will be removed for the season ahead and after listening to feedback from our members the current 10th white tee banks will be mown again this year.



Our 1st year of our Bunker improvement program has seen 33% of our bunkers either infilled or renovated.

Pond on the 18th.

After a lot of investigation work the team discovered that most of this water was flowing from the range on to the course so we dug a ditch across the range to ensure water flows away from this area. This will be tidied up in the Spring, with a culvert pipe installed for a grass bridge for golfer & machine access.

We also found a blocked gully pot which is now working well.

Bunkers

When we started our Bunker improvement program in the Spring of 2024 we had 51 bunkers on the course. These are of a resort nature, being too big, slow to drain and time consuming to maintain.

Throughout 2024 we have infilled 9 bunkers, green side bunkers have been turfed, and fair bunkers have been seeded. Some of these will need additional work in the Spring but generally the new run off areas are growing in well (such as the back of the 2nd).

From Jan 2025 we have focused on renovating existing green side bunkers, focusing on ones which are frequently used by golfers and that are easily accessible to keep machine damage to a minimum. Drains have been found in all bunkers so far; these have been up to 3 feet below the bunker surface, so this partially explains why these bunkers currently drain so slowly. So far 4 bunkers have had drains exposed, rodded, cleaned, lifted (or replaced) and then refreshed with clean bunker sand. We are hoping that this work will mean that these bunkers will drain much quicker in future and will therefore be able to be returned into play faster than in the past.

An alternative approach has been adopted with the 4th greenside bunker where we have added additional drainage running off the course, a natural turf liner has been laid, once this has rooted, this will be killed off and the bunker will be filled with quality bunker sand in early March 25.



When ground conditions are favourable, our next bunker plans will focus on renovating the greenside bunkers on the current 5th (using a similar a similar approach to that used on the 4th) and 15th hole.

The smaller bunker on the right side of the 4th green will be filled in leaving a runoff/swale area and to also spread-out the wear and tear from future foot traffic to the new enlarged 5th tee.

Following on from the success of adding new sand to all bunkers in August last year, we will be topping all greenside bunkers again with fresh sand in March/April and all bunkers will be re-edged.



Our drainage work on the 14th and 15th holes have certainly helped these areas drain far more effectively.

Work on these holes may need extending or soak away capacity increasing in the year ahead.

This work has proved a drainage approach that we are already using across the course (eg 10th).

Storm Darragh hit in early Dec 24 with significant tree damage on the 11th and water damage to the ditches on the 16th. Luckily, it didn't directly impact our playing surfaces.

We are steadily addressing this with the help of professional tree surgeons.



Other Completed tasks this winter have been:

- Drain installation 10th green surround
- Topping pathways w/road plannings
- Ditch clearance holes 3 and 16
- Preparing and turfing/seeding infilled bunkers hole 8,10,14&15
- Repair 16th bridge/crossing to protect from further erosion
- New Bridge across the 11th ditch

Other ongoing winter tasks (weather dependant)

- Levelling and repairing leaking greenside sprinkler heads.
- Tree pruning.
- Weeding and topping paths with road plannings.
- Extend/create and clear current ditches.
- Drainage installation on 8th by infilled bunker
- Drainage installation at the bottom of the 10th fairway
- Additional remediation works by the Oak on the left of 18th
- Anything else Mother Nature throws at us!!

Finally, I'd like to recognise our hard-working greens team, including Matt, Steve and Andy and our regular volunteers Mike, Ricky and Alan. We work very closely together as a team with a combined goal of delivering continuous improvements in our course. Thank You for your support it really is a huge help.