Kinsale Golf Club

Advisory Visit

Report 1

Date 27th August 2025

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Inspection visit date	8th August 2025
iTurf Management representative	Ian McClements
Course representatives present	Hilary Madden – Chairman Management Committee Pádraig Crowley – Head Greenkeeper Spencer Wigginton – Greenkeeper James Kiely - Greenkeeper
Weather conditions	Overcast, 12-19ºC, south westerly wind 6-7 mph

This visit was completed with the objective of reviewing the effectiveness of the maintenance regimes across the main playing surfaces. An objective assessment of pace was also made on three greens.

This report confirms the salient points discussed during the visit with outline recommendations and strategic objectives for the turf areas going forward.

2.0 CURRENT COURSE CONDITION

2.1 COMMENTARY

Greens	· The putting surfaces supported a decent grass cover dominated by bentgrasses with minimal annual meadow grass. This latter species was to be found in greater abundance in lower lying peripheral areas where water tends to be trapped and ponding occurs during moderate to heavy rainfall events, e.g. 17th. · Keep up the good work supporting the existing bentgrass popuations and developing them further. · Spring development should focus on increasing cutting frequency, light dustings of top dressings and a little nutrient rather than reducing the height of cut prematurely, which will not favour the bent. · Greens were firm underfoot and receptive to a well struck shot, occasional ball marks were visible which highlighted the need to remind members of the importance of repairing pitch marks as they arise. · The surfaces were free of disease. · Ball roll was good even though the bentgrass was deemed to be a little leafy and prone to flicking up e.g. 8th. A more refined sward would be the objective, which would also help with pace and improve ball roll characteristics still further. · Pace was assessed on the 14th, 15th and 18th greens following a cut (at 3.5 mm) and roll. The values obtained are within the levels of pace deemed appropriate for routine membership play. · Areas of weakness were associated with drought stress e.g. front of the 11th or 14th whilst the recently re-laid sod on the right-hand side of the 7th green would benefit from being brought in to the collar height of cut to allow levels to be perfected before being mown at greens height. · Below the surface, rooting development was generally satisfactory to good. There is a tight layer at around 120-130 mm depth corresponding with the transition between the original rootzone and the top dressing above. At this interface there were occasional traces of black layer and

	subsequently the aeration programme would benefit from being adjusted to break through this layer to improve the aeration status of the upper 150 mm of the profiles. The original rootzone below is open and friable.
Surrounds & Approaches	· The aspiration to have collars and aprons of a similar quality and texture to the putting surfaces remains. Over the past 12-month period, progress has been made in this respect yet with more work to do. · Where remodelling work has been undertaken, e.g. 9th, 18th and more recently at the 7th, there is good progress with a full grass cover now established. · A number of surrounds & approaches had lost grass cover or surface uniformity due to drier weather conditions e.g. 5th, 11th. The hydrophobicity of the profiles should be managed with wetting agents and localised applications of water. These areas should be targeted when the drier sections of the putting surfaces are being hand watered. In dry conditions, it would not be unrealistic to have at least one staff member dedicated to hand watering on a daily basis. · Mowing at a bench setting of 8-10 mm would also help to tighten up the sward cover and improve density when mowing on two to three occasions each week. It would be preferable to use a small light weight triplex mower rather than the larger fairway mower to alleviate mechanical wear pressures as much as possible.
Tees	· Tee tops supported a reasonable grass cover, with the Par 3 holes showing greater damage due to the intensity of play, e.g. 15th. · A late summer renovation would be valuable in terms of encouraging recovery after summer play and represents an opportunity to level up any minor surface imperfections. The tee tops would be scarified to remove organic debris or matted material at the sward base, followed by a sand dressing, aeration and seeding. The seed mixture should comprise 60% perennial ryegrass and 40% fescue. The fescue component can be split in to equal proportions of slender creeping red and chewings fescues. · The 7th tee was somewhat weak, having been sodded. It was reportedly laid just before being subject to the dry spring weather and then opened for play. The need for additional seed and a period of rest was highlighted. · The native grassland rough in the carry to the 8th hole works well and this concept could be introduced at others to give added definition and to help free up time for more important maintenance operations. The extent of the carry does need to be considered, and the grassland managed a little more aggressively to encourage thinning. A thinner sward would encourage greater biodiversity but also allow golfers to locate a knocked down tee shot.
Fairways	· An external contractor had installed both a primary and secondary drainage scheme to the 2nd, 5th and 16th fairways whilst the 7th has been earmarked for a scheme. · The grass along the tops of the lateral drainage has yet to fully establish and additional seed should be worked in to the drainage lines. · Grass colour and vigour was a little weaker than desired and the nutritional programme was reviewed. The aim is to develop a little more body to the sward to allow the ball to sit up and in doing so help to reduce the leafy lateral texture.

	· Worm casting activity is having an adverse impact on grass density to a degree and the use of the rotary mower in wetter periods is helping to mitigate the smearing of casts. · It was reported that Dispatch wetting agent is being used yet some hydrophobic and drier sections remain as a remnant from the dry spring.
Trees	· The need to thin plantations on an ongoing programme was again highlighted. Most holes need some form of work to open up areas to light and air movement as well as helping to encourage the growth and dominance of a couple of specimen feature trees. · Consider developing the grassland to the right of the 3rd hole as a grassland dominant rough which is more in keeping with the open habitat of this part of the course. · Ash die back is adversely impacting upon the imported specimens and does need to be treated appropriately. There is currently no cure for ash dieback disease. Management strategies focus on slowing the spread, minimizing the impact, and preserving any trees with genetic tolerance. Once spotted, consider the following: - o Retain the tree with no work – provided the risk level is acceptable. o Deadwood removal – prune dead wood and branches showing marked symptoms of dieback to reduce the risk from falling branches. o Pollarding/topping: if the tree is posing an unacceptable risk to people or property, reduce its height by removing all the upper branches and allowing it to regrow. o Coppicing – cut the tree to the base and allow it to regrow. o Felling – fell the tree and prevent regrowth. The larger the trees, the more likely the wood will be of habitat value.
Through the Green	· Grassland management should be reviewed to help accelerate the thinning of native grasslands and to increase their ecological value. · More areas of native grassland could be developed as discussed, for example carries in front of tees and in areas that are seldom in play.
Bunkers	· The new bunkers constructed as part of the architectural masterplan are well integrated with the landscape and are a significant improvement on the previous iterations. · The bunkering to the 9th and 18th fairways works extremely well with good visibility off the tee, when it was previously lacking. The seeding of the fairway bunker banks has established extremely well in the timeframe, and it is envisaged that with sustained growth and ongoing maintenance these areas could be brought in to play in around four to six weeks time. · The Club has engaged a Golf Course Architect to review the bunker positions and style, certainly welcomed as the current ensemble does little to enhance the golf course. · We have numerous examples of bunkers and trees in close proximity which form a "double hazard" for approach shots, and a decision is required as to which should remain, e.g. 1st, 14th. When considering bunker placement focus on how they might be of strategic merit, this is important as bunker maintenance is a significant drain on resources. · The mechanical bunker rake is causing damage to the main entrance/exit points and repairs are required.

2.2 PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 1: Leafy creeping bentgrass that would benefit from refinement

Figure 2: Green profile with tightness at around 100 mm depth

Figure 3: Drought stress and loss of grass cover on approach to the 11th green

Figure 4: Wear damage across 11th tee

Figure 5: Weak perimeter and localised drought stress

Figure 6: Drainage evacuation from the 17th green was evaluated

Figure 7: Natural carry from the 16th tees

Figure 8: Accumulation of sand on a number of old bunker complexes

Figure 9: New bunkering on the left hand side of the 18th fairway

Figure 10: New bunkering on the right of the 9th hole is now much more visible off the tee

Figure 11: Trees on the left approach to the 1st green are a significant encroachment with the plantation being overcrowded

Figure 12: Shaping to many bunkers is poor and poorly integrated with surrounding ground

3.0 MAINTENANCE OBJECTIVES

- To increase sand dressings over the growing season to achieve the desired dilution of organic matter.
- Create a more upright growth habit, with less leafy lateral growth.
- To develop immediate surface levels and integrate recently resodded areas.
- Improve the quality of immediate collars and wider aprons for putting and chipping.
- Adjust the contouring on the 17th and 1st greens to allow surface water to escape and reduce ponding.
- Continue to implement the Architect's bunker remodelling programme with the 1st and 17th green complexes considered to be a priority.
- Adjust the nutrient inputs to fairways to help improve colour and vigour.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 GREENS

4.1.1 PACE

The pace of a selection of greens was objectively assessed using a stimpmeter during the visit following the morning cut at 3.5 mm and a single roll. The results are shown in Table 1 below.

Hole	Green Speed
14	9 ft 6 in
15	8 ft 6 in
18	9 ft 5 in

Table 1 Green speed assessment

The average green speed across the three greens was 9ft 2". Satisfactory green speeds for regular membership play is between 8ft 6" to 9ft 6".

It can be seen that satisfactory levels of pace for routine membership play can be achieved with relative ease.

The current policy of rolling three times a week (Wednesday and twice over the weekend) is expected to be delivering good levels of pace for the majority of the membership and is not considered to be detrimental. However, do exercise care so that rolling does not occur when the surfaces are soft or wet underfoot as soils are more easily sealed and compacted under such conditions. Also be proactive with shallow surface aeration treatments to keep the upper profiles open and receptive to moisture and gaseous exchange to compensate for the rolling treatments.

4.1.2 TOP DRESSING

As highlighted in our last report, aim to increase the quantities of sand applied through top dressing to achieve the desired dilution of organic matter and to help promote a more upright sward growth habit.

It is expected that around 80 to 100 tonnes of sand will be applied over a 12-month period (January to December 2025). Visually, the profiles contain more organic matter than would be desirable through the top 0-20 mm depth. As discussed previously, intact cores taken from a selection of greens and sent to ETL for analysis would help determine accurately the organic matter content of the greens and if the existing top-dressing programme meets requirements.

4.1.3 SWARD TEXTURE

With a little work, sward texture could be better refined and the surfaces less puffy to improve ball roll and smoothness. Use verticutting to tease out organic debris at the sward base and follow behind with top dressing to help dilute organic matter. If we top dress lightly but frequently enough (100% surface impact), the need for verticutting is greatly diminished, the acquisition of the new top dresser should very much assist with the implementation of this programme. Too much verticutting will be detrimental to our excellent botanical composition so care is required. As a guide, we should be considering a light dusting of top dressing after every 14 cuts.

Brushing prior to mowing will help lift lateral growth in to the path of the cutting units, this is less aggressive than verticutting or grooming and again impacts upon 100% of the surface. An alterative to brushing is grooming which is a mechanical operation and potentially more damaging, particularly on peripheral clean up passes. We neither have grooming reels or brush attachments for the current greens mower and either is a worthwhile investment, review how they interact with the cutting reels and how easy they are to adjust or switch on/off.

4.1.4 AERATION

The current aeration programme is primarily focused on shallow solid tine aeration, working primarily within the top 75-100 mm of the profiles.

There is a distinctive tightness in the profiles to depth and evidence of anaerobic black layer at the interface between the original rootzone and the top dressings applied above at between 100 to 140 mm depth. The soil reliever (Verti Drain) with an 8 mm solid tine would be more effective at puncturing this layer and loosening the profile through the upper 150 mm depth. This would also create fissures and channels that would help encourage deeper rooting and even water movement to depth.

So, in summary, vary the depth of operation and aim to keep the profiles open, particularly through the autumn to spring period.

4.1.5 GROWTH REGULATOR

As discussed, ensure that a Growth Degree Day model is used to more accurately predict the timing of growth regulator applications. As we enter the autumn period, the interval between applications will simply extend based on the GDD model, so in theory applications could be extended to a full twelve-month period.

The growth regulator, Attraxor can be used to manage annual meadow grass, BASF claim up to 38% reduction in annual meadow grass seed head production with a single application, whilst the product has a similar mode of action in controlling cell elongation to the well know growth regulator Primo. Applications of Primo are most effective if applied at intervals of 200 GDD (using a 0ºC base temperature). Syngenta and Headland both provide access to a Growth Degree Day calculator which can assist with the timings, although this will take weather data from the nearest weather station and is not completely accurate for your site but probably close enough.

4.1.6 IRRIGATION

In the prevailing dry weather, there were a few areas of dry patch visible which warranted hand watering. Indeed, it is preferable to use hand held hoses to irrigate the hot spots rather than the irrigation system, which would then overwater the sections that don't require any! Whilst it is evident that hand watering had been done, some areas had suffered as a consequence of the dry weather and more attention in this regard is required.

A good moisture meter is a worthwhile investment to help inform the irrigation requirements. This can be utilised to accurately determine the precise moisture content of the upper profiles, when they start to show drought stress symptoms and when to apply water proactively.

4.1.7 THE 7TH GREEN

The left-hand side of the green had been reshaped to allow surface water to shed away from the putting surface and out into the collar/surround. The existing greens turf had been stripped and re-laid but had been subject to scalping injury due to discrepancies in levels, plugging of the damaged sections was now required. This section should be incorporated in to the collar for the remainder of the season and reconstituted as putting surface next season when levels are accurate enough to tolerate close mowing. At the collar height of cut, rooting can be encouraged before the section is hollow cored, top dressed and rolled. This process can be repeated on at least one, if not two, further occasions to assist with levelling, rooting and integration.

4.1.8 THE 17TH GREEN

This is reported to be one of the poorest surfaces, with ponding occurring where water lodges at the interface between the putting surface and collar. The drainage assessment of the profile on the day only served to highlight the need to create two or three run off areas to allow surface water to shed away and reduce the quantities of water moving through the profile.

There are few areas that allow water to escape due to its intrinsic design. A levels survey and contour plan would help to accurately identify where water is most likely to lodge and how much the contouring needs to be adjusted to allow water to shed off the green. This can inform the extent of works required and would be the first step in any proposed remodelling works at this particular green site.

4.2 GREEN SURROUNDS & APPROACHES

- In the prevailing dry conditions, a number of areas had weakened as a consequence of dry patch, notably in the approach to the 11th. Shallow rooted grass species (annual meadow grass) are the first to succumb and we should aim to replace these with more durable grasses. Overseed weakened sections when the rains return with a blend of fine leaved ryegrass, slender creeping red and chewings fescues. This can be achieved by removing some of the unwanted organic debris with a scarifier then by creating a seedbed with a blunted 10 mm diameter tine working to a depth of around 10 mm. Work seed in to the tine holes and follow with a light dusting of top dressing.
- The use of wetting agents and localised hand watering is also key BEFORE the surfaces dry. At this stage use a granular wetting agent to help with moisture retention but plan to apply more granular wetting agent next spring. These areas should be included in routine applications of wetting agent over the summer months to help maintain their receptiveness to moisture and would be of benefit when rains return following drier spells of weather.
- The restructuring of a number of green surrounds has been completed to a high standard with imported turf used to successfully establish a grass cover quickly e.g. 7th. Aim to maintain good vigour to aid establishment and rooting whilst make provision for top dressing to develop surface levels that will facilitate a reduction in the mowing heights. If there is any evidence of scalping, then raise the mower and continue to top dress to achieve the desired smoothness.
- The aim is to reduce the height of cut on collars, surrounds and approaches to around 8/10 mm to develop a tighter sward cover for putting and chipping.
- Any new bunker complexes must be carefully blended with the existing collars and contours whilst facilitating close mowing, it would be preferable to switch to light weight triplex mowing which is light

weight and more manoeuvrable than the heavier fairway machinery that heightens the risk of damaging vulnerable surfaces.

4.3 TEES

- Tee tops were showing the effects of play, with divot scars somewhat slower to heal and recover in the prevailing dry conditions.
- An end of season renovation programme would be valuable in helping to restore a full grass cover before growth ceases, this would comprise a scarification to remove any matted growth at the sward base followed by aeration, seeding and top dressing.
- Smaller tees should be earmarked for a period of rest and recuperation so that surfaces can be presented at their best for next spring.
- Moveable mats could be used on bigger tee tops to help protect the grass surfaces from damage but be cognisant of the need to move these at least once, if not twice, each week to minimise the risk to the tee from footfall directed towards the mat or lack of light underneath.
- The R&A analysis of Amateur Driving Data 1996 to 2018 report provides insights in to the driving distances of amateur men and women golfers. The total average driving distance for men is 215 yds, ranging from 187 yds for category 4 golfers to 240 yds for category 1 golfers. In women's golf, the total average driving distance is 161 yds, ranging from 150 yds in category 4 golfers to just under 200 yds for category 1 golfers. This allows us to consider the amount of carry to include in front of tees, suggesting that no more than 100/120 yds of carry should be provided in the front of forward tees and no more than 140/150 yds of carry from the back tees. The carry should be such that a knocked down shot can be found and retrieved. The carry at the 8th hole is approximately 150 yds from the back tee and could be shortened slightly, whilst management should aim to produce a thinner wispier stand of grassland.
- The new 7th tee was established with imported sod and subject to dry weather shortly after laying, consequently the surface was somewhat weak and requires an intensive renovation and seeding programme to aid recovery. Consideration must also be given to the removal of the trees immediately to the left of the tee and on the southern side to help open up the surface to allow sun on to the tee for grass growth.

4.4 FAIRWAYS

- Sward colour and vigour were weak and some adjustment to the nutritional programme was suggested.
- We understand that the fairways receive a number of granular inputs, mainly a 6-month product supplemented with a granular autumn/winter feed. The summer feeds comprise a low nitrogen fertiliser, iron and growth regulator. Increase the nitrogen applied over the summer in the liquid feeds to include a spray solution of urea (10 Kg/ha), ammonia (12.5 kg/ha) and iron. The application of growth regulator should also be timed in accordance with a GDD model and the inclusion of urea/ammonia adjusted according to requirements. This will help to supplement the application of granular in the spring (Headland Multigreen 28:0:0) but also help improve turf quality and discourage casting.
- In the spring to assist growth and recovery from winter play, apply CAN (Calcium ammonium nitrate), 27% N at a rate of 100-125 Kg/ha.
- Recently installed drainage to the 2nd, 5th and 16th fairways have yet to fully close and should be dressed out with divot mix with the return to showery weather conditions. It is hoped that the scheme proposed for the 7th fairway will be completed within the next 12-months.

4.5 ROUGHS

- The appropriate management of the naturalised grasslands such as those that currently exist in the carry off the 8th tee is encouraged to develop a thin wispy open sward that will be botanically richer and enhance the biological diversity of the site.
- This openness is achieved through a process of close mowing with the removal of clippings and scarification to thin the sward. If the ground is particularly rich, then plan to implement this programme initially in the late summer/early autumn and follow up with a repeat treatment in the spring. It may even necessitate a further mowing and collection mid-season. It may take a number of seasons of treatment to achieve the desired effect, reducing the frequency of treatments to x1 per season as we progress.
- Natural grassland carries could be introduced at numerous holes whilst the pocket of ground between the 3rd and 4th holes lends itself to the development of more open grassland as a respite from the tree lined fairways of the 1st and 2nd.

4.6 BUNKERS

- The reshaped bunkers on the right of the 9th and 18th fairways are a significant improvement on the previous iterations and shows what can be achieved with good shaping, we encourage you to keep up the momentum with these improvements.
- It is also worth noting that a number of bunkers have lost their shape due to the movement of the mechanical bunker rake. With a number of new bunkers having been constructed, use the mechanical rake for the central floor but revert to hand raking the outer edges to reduce damage when sand/rake is pulled out of the bunker exit.
- Whilst the club has engaged the services of a Golf Course Architect to assist with bunker placement and design, it should be appreciated that bunkers do place a considerable maintenance burden on the club's resources. Thus, any proposed changes do need to be carefully thought through. Given the numerous trees that now dominate the landscape and influence play there are many instances where tree canopies confer a greater strategic impact than previously located bunkers e.g. left-hand side of the 1st green. In such instances it would not be detrimental to fill in and close these hazards, where they add little to the strategy of the hole.

4.7 TREES

- The comments made in last year's report remain and the need to continue with a programme of plantation thinning, tree removal and even restocking in places is highlighted. Given the extent of the work, it is worthwhile to consider the appointment of a trusted contractor to complete the work on a phased basis over the next five to seven years.
- A number of larger specimen trees are overcrowded by surrounding younger trees and careful removal is required to allow as many of these as possible to thrive.
- A few ash trees have succumbed to ash die back and these need to be treated in an appropriate manner. The rate of spread depends on the host species and the origin of the disease. At the first signs of infection, it's crucial to prune the affected areas to prevent rapid progression. Once the fungus penetrates a large portion of the tree's inner tissue, reversal becomes difficult.

    - First, trees showing signs of infection should be prioritised for pruning, and the resulting wood must be quickly removed in small quantities. This reduces the fungal inoculum and minimises the risk of further contamination.
    - Although no chemical treatments exist for this disease, preventative measures can help reduce the likelihood of infection:

- Avoid deep cuts on trees and prune them as late as possible, ideally in early spring, to minimise exposure to the fungus.
- Protect existing wounds on trees to prevent fungal penetration into vascular tissues.
- Keep soil well-fertilised to maintain tree vitality, ensuring they are strong enough to combat the fungus if necessary.

5.0 RESOURCES

- It is encouraging to note that since our last visit, the club has invested in a new top dresser, which it is hoped will be put to god use to intensify the top-dressing programme to greens and tees.
- The club's replacement programme should be sustained to replace items of machinery as they come to the end of their useful working life before they become a burden on the club in terms of repair costs. At least one tractor unit is now in excess of 20 yrs old and due for replacement.
- Further consideration could also be given to purchasing a flail mower/scarifier for rough grassland management e.g. Wiedenmann Super 500/600, Amazone Groundskeeper or similar.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- It is encouraging to note the excellent botanical composition of the putting surfaces, credit to the maintenance regime in place.
- A little work is required to improve the texture of the greens which will help to enhance the ball roll characteristics further.
- Immediate collars and wider aprons need a little work to elevate standards comparable to the putting surfaces for chipping and putting.
- Remodelling work to surrounds has commenced and should be sustained with works proposed as a priority to the 17th and 1st greens which were considered the most pressing.
- Also, excellent progress with the bunker refurbishment programme and again a programme of work that should be sustained to achieve consistency across the course over the medium term.
- Fairways require a little work to enhance their colour, texture and density, which should be relatively easily achieved with a slight increase in nutrient inputs and foliar feeds.
- Tree management works were instigated over the previous 12 months and it's a question of how quickly and what funds are available to sustain or accelerate this work over the next five to ten years. In any case prioritise areas that will have the greatest impact at improving turf health on adjacent playing surfaces. Trees will continue to grow without intervention!

Signed

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