



Castle Royle 2024 Golf Strategy

For the last couple of years as a club we have laid out a transparent plan for the year ahead in regard to the golf course. This year will be no different and this document will review what we have successfully completed and then talk further about what we would like to achieve in 2024 in our constant bid to deliver the best possible golfing experience at Castle Royle.

2023 course review

We had an excellent season at Castle Royle this year and were able to deliver a very high-level product throughout the playing season.

Our greens have played magnificently all year, all down to the hard work and investment put into them over the last two years. We had another successful year of greens maintenance, being able to install in excess of 200 tonne of sand into the surfaces. This is the reason why our putting greens are now playing so well all year round, evidenced through the most recent winter months. We have had our wettest year in 20+ years according to our rain fall data and the greens have stayed firm, rolled well and been at a speed most golf clubs only see in the summer months, let alone winter.

In addition to this, due to the healthy nature of the greens, we have not experienced anywhere near the same level of disease pressure endured in recent years. You may have noticed that there has been very minimal scarring on the greens, which has helped the roll of the ball and will mean the surfaces will be in excellent shape going into the spring.



Our continued tee maintenance has started to prove its worth over the 2023 season as well. Presentation was improved by changing our cutting patterns and the maintenance windows we now complete, which are very similar to what happens on the greens, is showing us improved recovery and keeping far better grass coverage through busy playing periods, in both summer and winter months.



The fairways have been amongst our biggest challenge this year, mostly from Autumn onward. As mentioned, we have had our wettest year for the last 20, average rain fall for the last 10 years has been 660mm, in the last two years it has been only 550mm. In 2023 it has been over 950mm, nearly double what we have had in the past two seasons!

This amount of rain fall along with the warm temperatures has meant the worms have been enjoying life more than ever this year. We have not experienced such a sizable worm issue like this before at Castle Royle and the plans are being put together to try and mitigate this issue from being quiet as prolific going forward.

We started a more in depth maintenance program on the fairways this year, the areas have been aerated and scarified twice. The team have already raked them in preparation for the spring and now we have laid these foundations, a heavier fertiliser program will start in the spring. As with all playing surfaces on a golf course, it takes time to lay good cultural foundations before you can significantly improve them, we needed to prep these areas with aeration, scarifying etc to make sure our feeding program can give the best possible results.

The fairways have not been on the top of the agenda for a number of years but it is definitely going to be an area of focus in the season ahead. We will be continuing our cultural processes but more importantly investing into more products to thicken up and

strengthen the growth on the fairways. The increased cultural practices will help drainage, should we have another wet year ahead, and the fertilising products will help us maintain better coverage throughout the main playing season, and also keep one eye on our sustainable footprint of not using as much irrigation water.

An area and results we are pleased with over the past season is the aprons and collars. These areas have been thinned out, reshaped in places and made far more visually appealing by being hand cut in a similar way to the tee boxes. They have experienced more aggressive maintenance programs this season of scarifying and aerating, this will continue and the surfaces in the season ahead will become tighter giving us the ability to cut them shorter and enhance their premium playability.



We continued to re-introduce long rough areas around the course to shape it from a playability, ecological, but also a visual perspective. The long rough was sprayed ahead of the prior season to reduce the level of weeds, clover and general density of these areas. Due to the higher rainfall in the second part of the summer it did work against us a little trying to reduce the thickness of these areas. The density was better than previous years and the shape and visuals significantly enhanced, but still some more work to be done. Managing the long rough areas does take some time to get on top of, we have chopped and collected all areas this winter and will spray again in the spring. The more we do this, the thinner it will grow back so that we can get the best of both worlds, more playable long rough areas in addition with the great visual of the course it delivers.

Bunker work is currently being completed over the next couple of months before the end of March. The sheer amount of rain fall has made this area of the course almost impossible to

maintain to a high standard through the winter period. With regular daily rain fall, even after a full bunker rake, these areas are beaten down within a few hours. The team have added extra man hours to try and maintain what we can through the heavy rainfall period by hand raking all green side bunkers more often. This has helped with us being able to move sand back into the correct areas of the bunker and fluff up what we can, but it has been a thankless task in the wet conditions. We have added new sand to the bunkers over the past season and will top up where appropriate in the spring, our main issue has been the rain compaction rather than just not having enough sand. The work in the next couple of months will be centred around relieving compaction but also sharpening the edges and faces of the bunkers.

In addition to the bunker winter work we have managed to continue with our tree projects around the course in recent weeks. You will notice that we have raised most of the large tree canopies, cleared the pond edges revealing their beauty again and started shaping our feature fir trees around the course as well. These trees will grow stronger and healthier by being on top of this process and it really does add to the visual neatness around the course.

Our largest project and investment in the course this year was the 13th hole. We are really pleased with the results so far and there is more work to do to finish and polish the project. The pond was re-shaped, lined and ground work completed so it is now in view from the tee box. Due to the hole only coming back into play in October we are yet to have opportunity to shape the hole to its finished point. Through the months ahead we will be introducing some new trees just over the right hand side of the new pond and then be growing some areas of the long rough in to further enhance the dog leg shape of the par 5. The ultimate aim of the project was to replace the pond but also return the hole back to its original dog leg par 5 format, something that has been lost in recent years due to equipment allowing players to hit the ball further etc. This hole is a significant upgrade to what we had and will only have more impact as it matures in the season ahead.



2024 Plans

As you would expect plans will continue in the same fashion regarding the maintenance programs, the budgeted costs have been increased by a significant percentage again this year and we have added more man hours into our green keeping team, taking us to a team of 8 in the winter and 10 in the summer. Now that the foundations over the past couple of years are in place the extra greenkeeping hours will allow us to further refine these areas, but also spend more time on the areas outside of the main playing surfaces. Attention to detail is key for the season ahead.

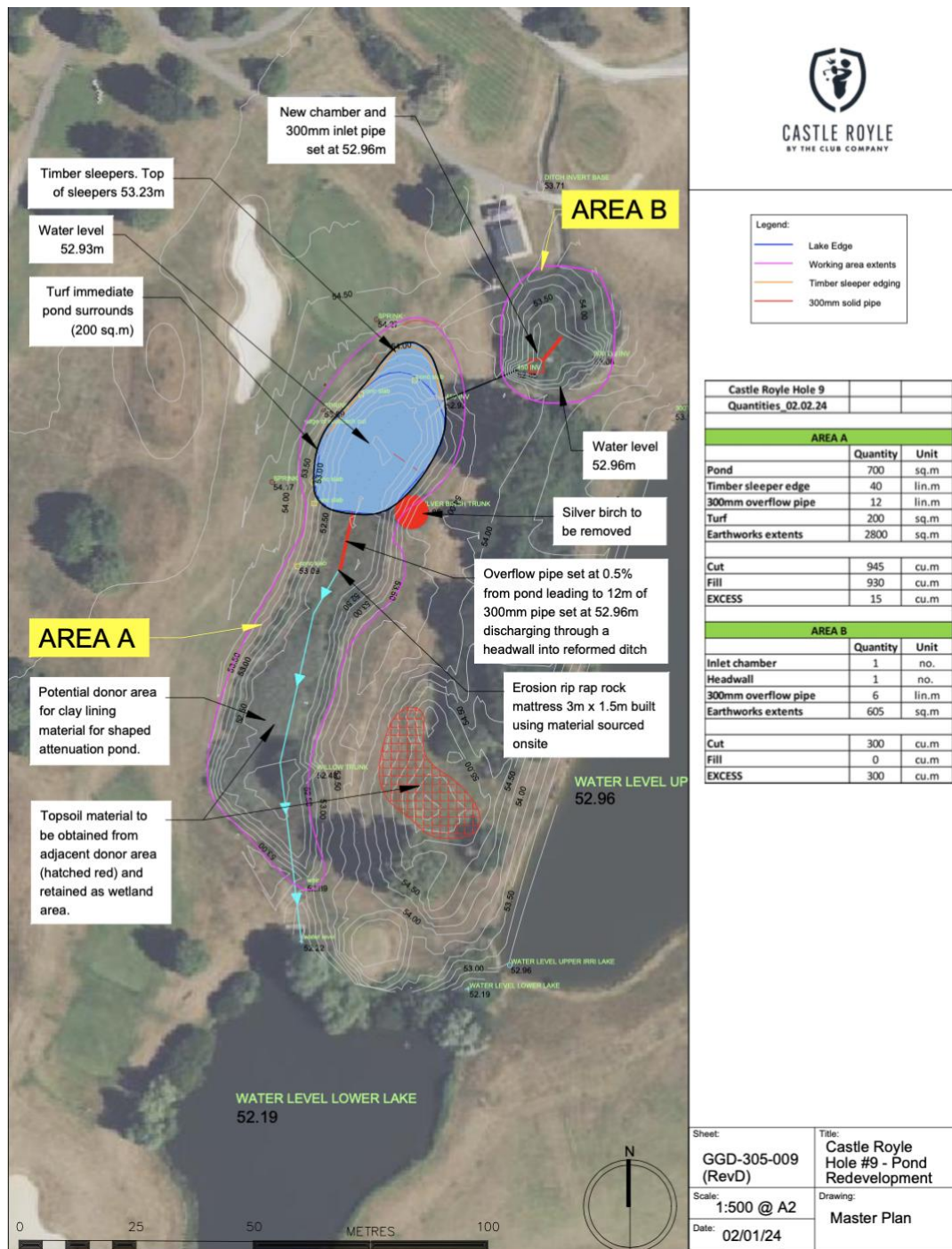
We have another good year ahead of capital investment being put into the golf course facilities, which is a really pleasing continued commitment for us to carry out. This investment will cover a few different sized projects such as our most recent installation of new driving range matting. This matting is different to what we have had previously as we look to offer a more premium winter driving range offering.



We do have another big project planned for the year ahead which will hopefully finish the restoration of the golf course layout and structure. In 2024 the 9th hole will be slightly re-designed and the pond restored to return this feature hole in all its glory. The provisional plans were to start this work at the end of March, I have had notice however in the past 24 hours that the contractors are available from next week! So, I am pleased to report we will start 6 weeks earlier than initially planned. While this is short notice, I have taken the

opportunity to move this work forward as it does mean we will affect far less competition golf, with the hole being back in play prior to the main playing season starting in April.

Below is a technical drawing of the design we will be working towards.



In addition to the pond and hole re-design we are looking to rejuvenate the old tee box which sits to the right of the current tee boxes. The tee box has already been prepped and uncovered from the tree canopy around the 8th pond and is now beautifully surrounded by the water. This work will be less disruptive than the 13th hole last year as will only take

approx. 6 weeks. We will also be able to put the hole back in play immediately, all be it with some GUR for the new turf and seeded areas to take root.

This is another really exciting project for the year ahead and will be one of the last big structural projects we needed to complete and restore the golf course to its original premium design. In the short term while the work is being carried out, we will play the course as 17 holes, there will be clear roping for the pathway down the side of the 9th hole and it will not affect qualifying competitions through this period.

30th Anniversary

2024 is the 30th year of the clubs inception and with this we will have certain things in place to celebrate the milestone. At the beginning of the playing season we will be installing a temporary new logo, highlighting our 30th anniversary. So, from April you will notice all our pins & flags on the greens have 30th Anniversary logo's, along with changing smaller items such as tees, pencils & pitch repairers as well as any logo items we sell within the retail area.

Further to this we will be hosting a number of special events across the year which most notably will include our 30th Anniversary Ball on Saturday 22nd June along with holding a premier Pro Am the day prior on Friday 21st June.

An exciting year of celebrations ahead to look forward to!

In summary, 2024 will continue with the journey described when I arrived at the club just over two years ago. We have invested heavily into the golf course and it will continue in the same fashion in the year ahead. While there have been some short term quality issues experienced on the fairways for a 4 week period in Nov/Dec this winter, if you take our playing surfaces as a whole over the last 12 months, they have been fantastic and significantly improved on previous years.

As promised, each year will improve, our 30th year will not only deliver another collection of significant investments, but yet again jump up in playing surface conditions and quality, delivering the golfing expectations we come to expect at Castle Royle.



