



## *'Ben on the Course' Mid-April '26 update*



The Masters once again showed what can be achieved when attention to detail and course conditioning are taken to the very highest level. Whilst we don't have 150 greenstaff on hand, the same greenkeeping principles apply here at Ingrebourne Links as we finally move into the playing season.

After a notably wet January and February, we experienced prolonged periods of saturated ground, which led to some wet areas across the course and a small number of closures, which is something we always try hard to avoid.

These conditions also meant limited machinery access for us. With that in mind, we made the decision to postpone our planned spring greens renovations.

The main concern was the risk of causing unnecessary damage through surface disruption, along with the practical difficulty of removing the cores and applying topdressing materials in such wet conditions.

This was not a decision taken lightly. To support it, we carried out soil sampling across the greens, assessing organic matter levels, soil structure, infiltration rates and nutrient status.

The results confirmed that the profiles remain stable, with good rootzone performance and no underlying issues. This gave us confidence that delaying the work would not affect the surface quality in the short term.

As a result, members have been able to enjoy consistent putting surfaces at the start of the season, rather than playing on greens recovering from major renovation works.

Our plan is to carry out full greens renovations in October, which will better prepare the surfaces for the autumn and winter period.

The spreadsheet below shows the rainfall amount in millimetres for the past three years with the first three months of 2026.

<b>Amount of Rainfall per month/year in millimetres</b>					<b>Average Rainfall per month (2023-2025)</b>
<b>Month</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	
Jan	62	57	80	<b>101</b>	75
Feb	1	90	60	<b>109</b>	65
March	86	78	8	14	47
April	67	49	31	0	49
May	28	65	16	0	36
June	25	11	25	0	20
July	69	51	57	0	59
Aug	41	5	25	0	24
Sept	31	90	48	0	56
Oct	103	50	54	0	69
Nov	113	65	56	0	78
Dec	73	67	36	0	59
<b>Total Rainfall for year (mm)</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>637</b>

The fluctuations in virtually every month of the three year period would be impossible to predict. Overall, 2025 has been our driest year, especially leading up to the Christmas period. But the start of 2026 tells a story of heavy rainfall total in January and February, then a bone dry March and now into April.

As we moved into March and early April, a combination of rising soil temperatures and steady drying winds helped to reduce surface moisture levels across the course. This has allowed us to gradually return to more regular mowing and begin refining presentation.

The greens are currently healthy, with a good, dense sward. As night-time temperatures increase, we will see further improvement as the finer grasses begin to grow more actively.



Across the course, heights of cut have now been lowered in line with seasonal growth. You should begin to see greater definition between tees, fairways, semi-rough, approaches, collars and greens. Each of these areas is maintained using different machinery, cutting heights and patterns to produce a consistent and well-presented finish – as shown in the image above.

At this early stage of the season, we are managing this carefully to ensure we do not place unnecessary stress on the turf as it transitions into the main growing period.

We have also carried out targeted aeration on the greens using 8mm pencil tines.



This allows us to relieve surface tension and encourage root development with very little disruption to play. This has been followed by a light sand topdressing to smooth out minor imperfections from winter wear.

**This type of maintenance will continue through the season, helping us to maintain firm, true surfaces in keeping with the links-style character of the course.**

A wetting agent programme has also been introduced. In simple terms, this helps water soak evenly into the greens rather than sitting on the surface or running off. It reduces the risk of dry patches developing and helps us maintain a more consistent putting surface as shown by the image below taken this past week.



In contrast to the winter months, April has so far brought very little rainfall. As a result, the irrigation system has been brought back into operation slightly earlier than usual.

The system is working well, with only minor adjustments required following the winter period, and we will continue to monitor and adjust water applications as needed.

Importantly, the heavy winter rainfall has left our reservoir in a healthy position, which puts us in a strong place as we head into the summer months.



The image above shows the system 'firing up' for the playing season.

All tees have now been fully renovated. This included aeration using 16mm solid tines to relieve compaction, followed by overseeding with a perennial ryegrass mixture chosen for its durability and recovery. A sand topdressing was then applied and brushed in to ensure good contact and integration.

The results so far are very encouraging, with strong early growth and improved surface density as shown in the image below.



We have now started to address the areas that were most affected by the wet conditions. In some locations, we are planning improvements to the drainage and making small adjustments to fairway levels to reduce the likelihood of the same issues occurring in future.



Bunker improvements are ongoing. This includes completing the large bunker on the 9th hole, work to the approach bunker on the 11th, along with re-edging and sand adjustments across other bunkers. The aim is to improve consistency, presentation and playability throughout.

Additional work has also been carried out on the Par 3 Mini Links and around the clubhouse, including upgrades to teeing mats. The Mini Links continues to be a valuable area for members to practise and sharpen up their short game.

Looking ahead, we are proud to be hosting the **East Anglian Open** once again in July and a **Clutch Tour** event in August. These events provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the course, and preparation work will continue to ensure standards are maintained.



Last year's **PGA Club Professionals Championship** brought very positive feedback from both players and the wider industry, which reflects well on everyone involved in the club.

I would like to thank all members for their continued support through what has been a challenging winter. Course closures are never taken lightly, but at times they are necessary to protect the course for the longer term.

**We really appreciated the co-operation of members over the past months, particularly with the use of winter wheels on golf trolleys and by carrying your clubs, with the results being that levels of wear have been kept to a minimum.**

My personal thanks go to the greenkeeping team for their hard work and commitment in all conditions, and to our exceptional marshals for their continued assistance on and around the course – they really make a big difference.

We would ask all members to continue repairing pitch marks and replacing divots. The vast majority of roundage is played by club members so please help me and my team offer you the very best conditions to play.

*The Season is now on so thank you again and enjoy your golf.*

*Ben and the Greenkeeping team !*

