

# Links Management

The preservation of traditional links conditions is of paramount importance to the Links Manager and his team which aims to:

- provide a highly rated Championship Links
- keep greens and approaches as firm as possible
- select and encourage the correct native grasses
- preserve and encourage wild flora and fauna within the rough grassland
- use cultural methods in preference to chemicals and pesticides
- implement an ongoing aeration programme to combat disease and compaction
- conserve heather and marram grass habitat
- ensure that only a minimum amount of nutrition is applied to greens and fairways.

The site at Royal County Down covers 320 acres but only 17% is intensively managed and the rest remains in near-natural state. Within the managed areas the Club has pursued several specific policies which have had significant positive effects:

- we have adopted a 'no fungicide' policy, which prohibits the use of chemicals to control fungal disease. This involves limiting the amount of free moisture (which can encourage turf diseases) by implementing an efficient aeration regime, selecting the correct native grasses and by only using the minimum nutrition required for healthy turf growth
- an efficient state-of-the-art irrigation system has been installed on fairways, greens, tees and pathways but is only used as a management tool and in times of drought to keep the grass alive
- no-spray buffer zones are maintained around the boundaries of water features and wetland areas to prevent leaching of fertilisers and herbicides into the water
- a rough grassland management programme has been set up to eliminate areas of lush weeds and non-links grasses and encourage colonisation by fescue grasses, marram and wildflowers
- the root zone of some greens has recently been replaced to relieve compaction but great care was taken not to alter the contours of the original surfaces and to minimise disturbance to surrounding dunes.

Links Policy establishes continuity between successive Green Committees, Club Captains and Links Managers so that the Club's strict links maintenance programme and objectives can be preserved. This document is reviewed annually to incorporate new research and knowledge.