

Longcliffe Golf Club Woodland Management Plan

Longcliffe golf course is situated on the north facing slopes at the edge of the Charnwood Forest. Originally heath land in character with oak and birch woodland, non native and invasive species of turkey oak, scots pine and rhododendron have been planted to define the layout of the course. These areas of woodland have gone largely unmanaged in recent years, although following the Nicholson report commissioned in 2003, some areas have been cleared of undergrowth to allow light and air flow to greens, tees and other closely mown surfaces and encourage the regeneration of native heath land heather and fine grassland.

The lack of effective woodland management has allowed woodland to self generate and encroach upon the playing areas of the course. This has prevented light and air flow to closely mown areas, allowed broad leaved grasses to dominate, discouraged the finer grasses and heather and contributed to the deterioration and health of playing surfaces and in particular the greens.

In 2016 a programme designed to improve the presentation and health of the course was started. This included targeted renovation of greens, tees and fairways to reduce thatch levels, improve drainage, encourage fine grasses and reduce the thicker rough grassland areas. This is ongoing.

A view is developing that the course should reflect and celebrate the ecology and landscape of the of the Charnwood Forest and advice has been sought from representatives of the National Forest, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and BIGGA Ecology and Sustainability officers to this end. See appendix.

In order to return Longcliffe to a heath land style course, which reflects the surrounding landscape, managing the woodland, trees and undergrowth is essential. This should consider the removal of trees and undergrowth, particularly non native species of turkey oak and rhododendron to allow light and air flow to closely mown areas (greens, tees and fairways) and encourage the regeneration of native plants and heather; clearing areas to reveal mature specimen trees; planting longer lived native trees to maintain tree lines and golfing strategy.

An initial 5 year plan will focus on these priorities. Work will be carried out by greenstaff as part of their winter work programme, supported by the Volunteers Ecology Group and external tree contractors.

Priorities

1. Increase airflow and light to greens, surrounds and tees by reducing canopy shade, self setters, undergrowth (shrubs, rhododendrons, etc.). Target Greens: 2nd 6th 7th 10th 11th 16th. Tees: 2nd 7th 17th.
2. Protect golfing strategy of holes by maintaining tree lines and copses (presently defined by ageing birch) by planting varieties of existing longer lived species. This can be achieved by replanting from existing tree stock. Advice will be sought from National Forest re grant funding.
3. Maintain areas already cleared of undergrowth by annual flailing.
4. Wilderness areas (such as left of 4th fairway). These to be left, but edges made safe by removing unsafe, dead and dying specimens.

Proposed Woodland Management work 2020/21.

2nd Green

Clear undergrowth, self set trees and selected established turkey oaks to the area left of the approach to the second green and between the third tee. This will reveal the oldest mature English Oak on the left of the third hole beyond the ditch and the nearby established beech tree and allow light and air to 2nd green. The area will be scarified to encourage heather regeneration.

6th hole

Remove 1st layer of rhododendron bushes and 3 turkey oaks on left hand side encroaching on bunkers and green. Scarify to encourage heather regeneration.

10th green

Remove English oak and nearby turkey oaks on right hand side of green (right hand side of 9th adjacent to the first wall) beyond hawthorn hedge to allow light to green.

11th green

Remove 35% of turkey oaks to left of the approach to the 11th green beyond ditch to allow light and air flow to the green. Maintain tree line on left side of 10th fairway and bunker. Clear undergrowth and construct natural composting area. In years 2 and 3 remove a further 35% of trees adjacent to 11th green.

General

Continue the removal of unsafe, dead and dying trees in accordance with advice from Woodland Management and Ecology reports.

Plant long lived trees to maintain/improve golfing lines on certain holes (10th, 14th, 16th for example).

Follow particular advice contained in Ecology report to manage gorse and individual specimen trees as agreed with Ecology Working Group.

Appendix

1. Woodland Management Plan 2003 Nicholson Report
2. Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust Ecology Report 2019
3. Longcliffe Ecology Report 2020 James Hutchinson BIGGA