



Woodland policy 2022/23 (updated from 2021 / 22)

Originally heath land in character with oak and birch woodland, non-native and invasive species of turkey oak, Scot's pine and rhododendron have been planted to define the layout of the course.

Following the external Nicholson report commissioned in 2003 on woodland management at Longcliffe GC, 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. However, other areas of woodland have gone largely unmanaged in recent years.

The lack of effective woodland management in these areas 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. This has also 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 as all the work is planned over several years.

The Board have decided that the course should reflect the ecology and landscape 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 (such reports are stored on the Members Hub). In order to return / ensure Longcliffe GC 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 certain 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 with work being carried out by green staff 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 holes (certain tees, greens or fairways): 1st, 2nd, 6th, 7th, 11th, 12th, 16th, 17th, 18th.
2. Protect original course layout / strategy of the 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 regarding possible grant funding.
3. Maintain areas already cleared of undergrowth by annual flailing.
4. Wilderness areas (such as behind the 3rd green, left of 4th fairway). These to be left, but edges made safe by removing unsafe, dead and dying specimens.

Proposed Woodland Management work 2022/23

- 6th hole Remove 1st layer of rhododendron bushes on left hand side before the bunker and next to the 6th green. Scarify to encourage heather regeneration. Strip areas to promote heather,
- Heather: 2nd carry, extend 7th carry current heather bed, patch on 18th carry.
- 11th green: Remove a further 20% of turkey oaks to left of the approach to the 11th green beyond ditch to allow light and air flow to the green (work in progress).
- Maintain tree line on left side of 10th fairway and bunker. In year 3 remove a further 15% of trees adjacent to 11th green.
- 16th green: Remove trees to the rear and right of 17th tee to allow light and air flow to the green and surrounds (awaiting approval from Loughborough university).

General

In addition to the above specific woodland management work, there are a number of general area of woodland management:

- 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.

Referenced documents (Located on Members Hub)

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