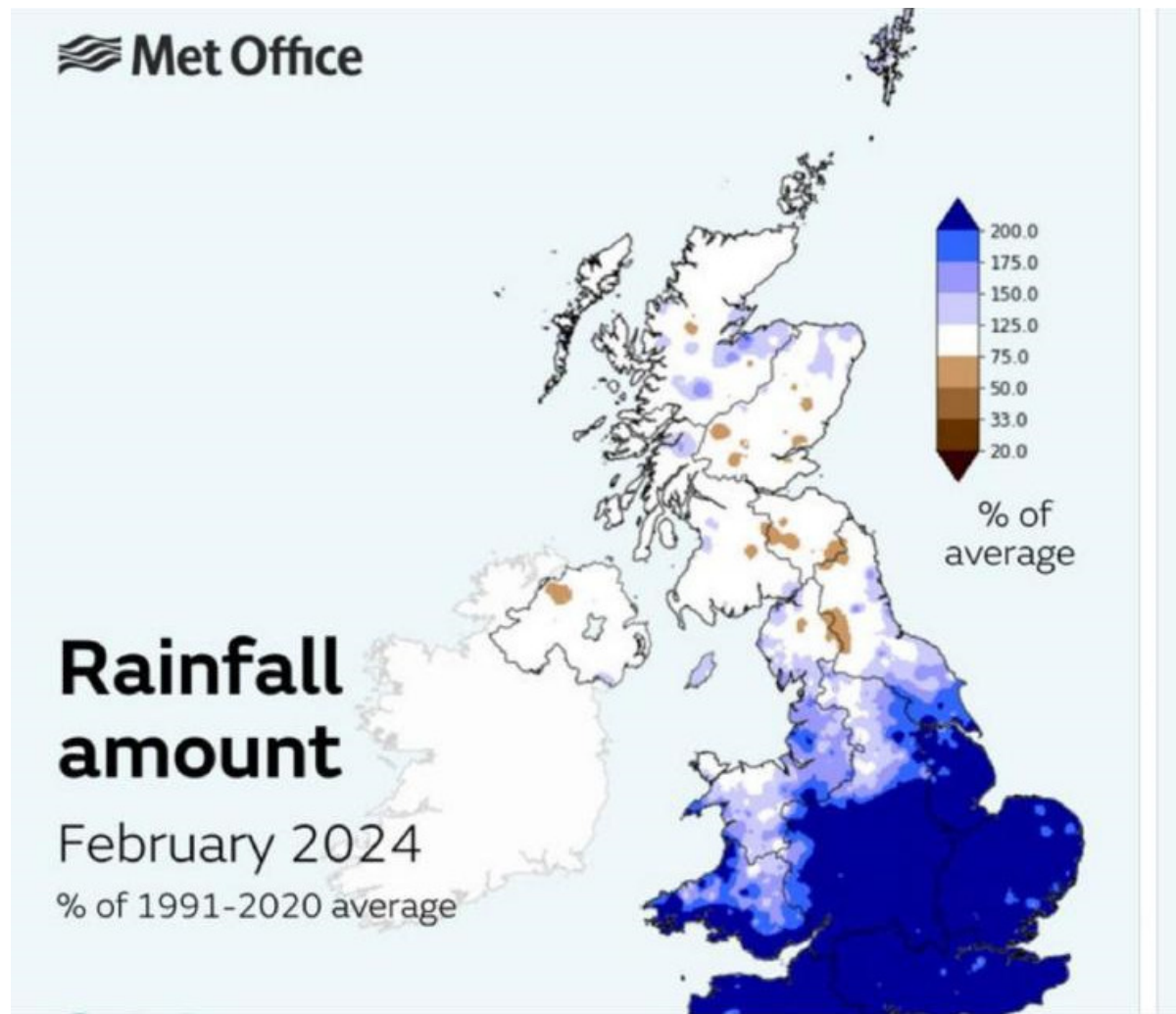


### Frustration eases!

Finally, I get to write a greens report off the back of some decent weather. Great to feel some sun on our backs, play some golf and for the greenkeeping team to move forward with our work and begin to give areas their first cut. There is no hiding from the awful winter we have suffered, below a UK map from the MET office showing the midlands had over 200% of the average rainfall in February and have just announced it was the warmest February on record, also the 9<sup>th</sup> warmest recorded month in a row. These two things coupled together would normally mean serious disease pressures but we have just about managed to nurse the greens through the winter with minimal scaring.



As I reported in my last report, we have had over a years' worth of rain this winter during the time when we have the least drying conditions. As the days get longer the course is beginning to dry well and we now have the majority of holes back in play. Holes 15, 16 and 18 being the wettest, we are hoping will soon all holes will be back in play.

Looking for positives, the unusually warm winter means the soil temperatures have not reduced as they normally would. Grass plants typically go dormant when soil temperatures drop below 8 degrees. Often the springtime comes and the air temperature becomes a pleasant mid-teens, the golf season begins, the Masters played on TV and Augusta standards expected, yet the grass plant itself remains dormant due to cold soils. The pressure on greenkeepers to recover winter disease

scarring forces them to apply increasing amounts of nitrogen fertilisers with no affect as the plant in its dormant phase does not respond. Soil temperatures take longer to warm than air temperatures so often the grass plant does not get going until well into the playing season. This year we are expecting a quicker start to the grass growth as the soil is warmer than normal. Added to this the level of grass cover we have after the wet summer of 2023 and we are confident the course will begin to take shape very soon and allow us to push standards yet higher this season..... (Disclaimer!) so long as the heavy rains stay away!!

### **New year work.**

The improved conditions are not only benefitting you the golfer and the grass plant but also the Greenkeeping team. Work on getting the course ready for the start of the summer tournament season is moving forward at pace now we can access most parts of the course with machinery.

### **Bunkers**

The renovated bunkers are now being topped up with fresh sand.

#### *Greenside Bunker 5*





### *Greenside bunker 9*



As I write the Bunkers on holes 5 to 10 have been completed. If the conditions remain good, we hope to have most completed by the end of next week. The bunkers will remain GUR until complete to allow us to focus all resources on completing this arduous task first.

### **Mowing**

We are now able to give most areas their first cut. Greens, Tees, Aprons, Fairways and semi-rough are being cut this week. The warm winter temperatures mean the grass has not really stopped growing, but the wet has stopped us accessing the course until now to mow. It will take a few weeks to get clean cuts, return to summer heights of cut and define the playing areas as we would expect.

Below an image of Green 5 after a couple of cuts this week. As you can see the disease scarring has been kept to a minimum and grass cover is good. A great start for the coming season. Height of cut is currently at 6mm and will gradually be lowered to our summer height of 3.5mm into the spring. We will begin our top-dressing program soon as the greens firm up, this will aid smoothing of the surfaces, so soon putting quality will improve.



### **Coming Weeks....**

Complete the bunkers

Continue to improve course presentation to spring/summer standards

The paths will be cleaned up and re-levelled in advance of new surface material being sourced.

The old bunkers on 2, 5, 6, 13 and 17 will be levelled and seeded as grass bunkers.

The greenside bunker on 16 rebuilt

A new drain will be added to the approach of green 18 once conditions allow for us to complete this work.

The Conifer tree stumps will be removed by green 5.

It is going to be a busy time. A lot of catch-up work, tasks we would normally have hoped to have completed over the winter months during normal conditions. We ask for your patience and understanding to any disruption while we try to complete this work before the main season start. All of this work is also going to require some luck with improving weather conditions.

Also, here below I once again ask that you the golfer respect the safety of our team as much of this work needs to be carried out in the line of play.

### **Course Safety**

Course safety for golfers and employees is always paramount. Our Greenkeeping Team have to work around the course while play is in progress, a unique situation to our sport. Our team often require the use of heavy machinery and equipment to complete their work and are trained in the safe use of this equipment. Much of this machinery has loud motors and the greenkeeper must always concentrate on the safe use while completing their task. Although conscientious and aware of golfers we also require awareness from the golfer. If your ball comes to rest near any greenkeeper or the greenkeeper is working in your line of play, please always be sure to alert the greenkeeper of your presence or intention to play prior to continuing. Where possible please lift your ball and move away from the area of work allowing the team to continue their work unhindered. It is our intention to

complete this work without restricting play but we reserve the right to close those holes under renovation should it be necessary to guarantee the safety of both Golfers and Staff.

On behalf of the Team, we thank all members for their patience and understanding over this most difficult of winters. We are now looking forward positively to presenting a course to be proud of.

Ryun Holden

Course Manager