



2025 AGM Greens Report

The AGM of 2025 will be my last as Greens Chairman. After 6 years, including an amazing but intense captaincy year, I shall be retiring from the committee of Seaton Carew Golf Club. I've enjoyed the education, learning about managing turf and being involved in problem solving the many challenges that a modern golf club brings. It has at times been difficult to switch off and just enjoy the wonderful game, so selfishly my aim will be prioritise improving my golf rather than the golf course. I'd like to put on record my thanks to the greens committee Hugh, Alex, Lewis and fellow committee members of 2025, and the officers I have served alongside in the past and present. To the committee that follows, good luck and enjoy being custodians of our great club, it's hard work but wonderfully rewarding.

My own tenure of Greens Chairman started in early 2020 and with the support provided by the membership allowed the following necessary investments to be made:

- Appointment of highly qualified new course manager in 2020
- Removal of sea buckthorn in 2021
- Installation of phase 1 of the irrigation system in 2023 and phase 2 in 2024
- Continual investment in modern machinery building towards 2024 and our 150th celebrations

These big investments combined with significant smaller improvements culminated in the course conditioning being the best in modern memory and the Club hosting a very successful 2024 English Amateur Championship. So, expectations were always going to be high for 2025!

Greens

I am honest enough to say 2025 has been the most challenging period serving as Greens Chairman and in the following summary I shall attempt to summarise why. In 2020 the greens were poa annua dominant and disease prone and, whilst progress has been made since, poa is still the dominant grass in SCGC green sward. Please see images of 18th green from May 2020.



The first challenge in 2020 was to establish full grass cover, a playable surface and ensure disease did not re-occur. The plan for the following years has been to gradually improve the surfaces, setting the greens up for a species exchange program by establishing deep root systems and removing thatch from the upper layer with minimal disturbance. This has largely been successful. This brings us to where we were at the beginning of 2025, and frankly the most painful moment, changing the grass types to finer grasses. Deep scarification was carried out in March to remove as much as possible of the poa annua, followed by overseeding with fescue grasses and a heavy top dressing of sand. Normal practice would then be intense watering of the surfaces to speed up recovery. Unfortunately, this favours the faster growing poa, as it can out complete the slower growing fescue and undermine the overseeding. To combat this, water has been applied sparingly on the greens with the subsequent recovery taking longer. The return on this patient approach is fescue establishment and specie exchange taking root and we can see significant evidence of this already. There's no doubt that the question "why" is valid, the greens seemed just fine in 2024, and to the untrained eye they were. Without professional training who can honestly tell the difference between differing grasses such as Bents, Fescue, Poa, Rye, Yorkshire Fog etc and how they affect ball roll. But doing nothing and hoping for the best is not the right choice for SCGC. Regulation and the banning of chemicals that control disease in the golf industry has already begun. Golf course management across the UK is going to have to change and SCGC will not be immune, a return to May 2020 cannot be the direction of the club.

Member Briefing

For those members who attended the briefing on the 4th of September, thank you for your time. Our Course Manager, Tom, explained the process he is following on the species exchange; he confirmed that process is on track and that it's been validated by leading industry consultant William Murphy. Will has advised on species exchange at a number of other championship golf courses with great success, such as Hunstanton, Royal St David's, Carnoustie, Royal St Georges, Royal Portrush to name but a few.

Monthly Course Manager Surgeries

To help with member communication it was decided to hold a monthly surgery with Tom in the clubhouse. The first one was held in October and was well attended. Healthy debate was had on several topics. Initial feedback positive and we hope members get great value from this and my

thanks go to Tom for taking time out of his diary. I am not aware of any other Course Manager in the area that offers this level of access and communication directly with the membership.

Approaches

The greens approaches have expanded and improved immeasurably over the years. We are continuing to work on this with removal of coarse grasses such as rye and regular overseeding. I am confident 2026 will see these approaches being the best in the club's history.

Fairways

2025 was the warmest summer on record and rainfall was 37% of the annual average. The last summer experienced like this at SCGC was in 2018 and led to serious detriment of grass coverage on all fairways and the loss of some entirely. Despite the weather of 2025 the fairways at SCGC have held up superbly and this is in no small part to the irrigation investment made by the membership. Mats and Fairway protection will be in place from the 1st January through to the 31st March, which is basically when the grass goes into hibernation and cannot recover from divot damage. We introduced divot bags this year and it's fantastic to see the membership have embraced this wholeheartedly. The fairways will benefit and be in a very strong position coming into the new 2026 playing season.

Bunkers

The greens committee recognises that the condition of bunkers are the weakest part of the course. This has been brutally exposed with the long dry spell and south westerly winds in 2025, which constantly blew sand out day after day. Unfortunately, SCGC does not have a licence to extract local sand and must import it in at significant cost, around £800 a bunker. We recognise there are multiple types of sand (and coal contamination) in SCGC bunkers. We simply do not have the finances to change the sand in one financial year. A long-term programme is in place to upgrade the bunkers including buying in a denser sand, less affected by wind blow, a good example being the 3rd hole Doctor. A full survey has been carried out on every bunker to ensure they are appropriately positioned for play, repaired where appropriate and making entering and exiting easier for the player.

Winter Course Improvements

With a reduced run and maintain greens budget (circa £15K) and no capital project budget at all in 25/26, the focus has been on small in-house aesthetic improvements:

- Grass paths have been created on Chapel Open & Beach plus renovation of the approach teeing area on Gare, these improvements will have a high impact on the golfers' journey but are low cost.
- Repairing the Ladies tee on Dogleg (16th) and installing irrigation on Bill Hector (18th) blue tee.
- Full remodelling of fairway bunker on Gare and all greenside bunkering on Cosy Corner.
- We are also aiming to deal with the left greenside exit on Lagoon. Some subtle shaping allowing closely mown turf to thrive and thereby solving a perennial problem despite multiple attempts at reurfing the area.

Member Help

We are eternally grateful to the small band of volunteers who helped source plant hire, a new changing facility, paint, rake, divot fill, collect range balls, fix broken machinery, undertake joinery and building work. You know who you are, and I cannot stress how helpful this is to the Club. Any member who has time and or skills please do not hesitate to volunteer.

Finally, I'd like to thank Tom Coulson and our greens team for their hard work throughout 2025 in what has been a challenging year.

Philip Cain
Greens Chairman 2025