



# **GROUND MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT POLICY**

## Document Review History

| Version No | Reviewed by       | Issue Date |
|------------|-------------------|------------|
| Adopted    | General Committee | 05/05/2021 |
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## **1. Purpose:**

- 1.1 The purpose to this procedure is to ensure that there is a formalised process to maintain the rugby pitches and surrounding grass and woodlands (grounds) to a good quality by pre-planned maintenance (PPM) and ad hoc work, both during and out of the playing season (September to April)
- 1.2 The grounds are managed by the Ground Committee to ensure all works are carried out in accordance with Health & Safety requirements, as set out in the risk assessments. Grounds maintenance works are performed as set out in this document, Management Plan for the Poplar Avenue, Typical Pitch Maintenance Schedule and adhering to all the relevant British Standards.

It will be reviewed and updated at least annually; any changes being recorded in the DOCUMENT REVIEW HISTORY on the cover page.

## **2. Definitions:**

In this document:

“Club” means East Retford Rugby Union Football Club Limited.

“Committee” means the General Committee of the Club.

“Ground Chairman” means the person elected to the role of Ground Chairman on the Club’s General Committee.

## **3. Introduction:**

- 3.1 The Club recognises the important part played by the grounds to provide a good quality and safe environment for players and supporters.

## **4. Aims:**

- 4.1 The aim of this procedure is to:
  - Maintain an aesthetically pleasing landscape that is both functional in keeping with a sports facility and local environment
  - Maintain the grounds to facilitate the playing of sport in a safe and pleasing environment
  - Maintain the grounds in such a way as to promote a positive image of the Rugby Club and its facilities to members, visiting teams and their supporters and the general public, as well as promoting the ideals of environmental sustainability.

- Provide and maintain the site free of obstruction, snow, ice and any other hazards or restriction at all appropriate times
- Maintain the grounds in a safe manner to ensure accessibility to players, supporters, visitors and members of the general public
- Assist in the preservation and management of the woodland, adopting sustainable methods of work to promote a healthy natural environment and increase biodiversity across the site
- Ensure compliance with the requirement to commission biennial tree inspections and subsequent tree surgery

## **5. Responsibilities:**

5.1 Whilst all members of the Club have a responsibility for ensuring that the Club always provides a clean and safe environment, the following individuals have specific responsibility in relation to grounds and gardens.

5.2 *Ground Committee Chairman:*

The Ground Committee Chairman is responsible to the General Committee for the successful delivery of operations set out in this procedure, ensuring there is sufficient resources to deliver the required ground maintenance service.

5.3 *The Ground Committee:*

The Ground Committee is responsible for ensuring that the Club has an effective procedure for maintaining the pitches and woodlands through pre-planned maintenance (PPM). The Ground Committee is also responsible for:

- Ensuring adequate and appropriate equipment and consumables are provided to deliver the ground maintenance service, which includes regular maintenance of equipment, personal protective equipment and purchasing of consumables
- Ensuring relevant training in the safe use of equipment and correct horticultural techniques is given to the persons using the maintenance equipment.
- Ensuring risk assessments are reviewed and kept up to date
- Manage any associated grant and charitable funding associated with ground projects.
- Arranging the biennial tree inspection and appointing a suitable arboricultural firm to undertake the tree surgery.

- Liaising with the tree Officer at Bassetlaw District Council when any tree works are planned.
- Investigate any complaints/incidents and ensure that remedial action is taken in line with recommendations.
- Cutting the grass areas to ensure a clean and tidy appearance using both pedestrian and ride on mowers and strimmers.
- Pruning hedges as much as is necessary to achieve a clean and tidy appearance and to prevent them overgrowing footpaths. Also, to remove any damaged, dead or diseased parts of the hedge.
- Emptying litter bins on a weekly basis to ensure the site is kept tidy and litter free.
- Litter picking and clearance of cigarette ends to be carried out on a weekly basis.
- Woodland management according to the Management Plan for the Poplar Avenue and other recommendations.
- Weed control by means of both chemical and physical means for both hard and soft landscaped areas.
- Regularly clip hedges to maintain a uniform and tidy appearance (according to the type of hedge and situation) and a well-developed cover of vegetation over the whole of the hedge surface. Regularly mow or otherwise control any weed or grass growth at the base of the hedge so it does not detract from the overall appearance.

## **6. Service Standards:**

- 6.1 Work practices vary according to the season (i.e. winter / summer periods) with a schedule of work listing services, frequencies and seasonal requirements for all areas.
- 6.2 The following planned duties are as follows:
  - 6.2.1 Grassed areas shall be uniform in appearance with no patches, edges trimmed, free from mole and/or rabbit infestation and free from fallen leaves, weeds (up to 5%) and litter. Grassed areas will be maintained within the specified frequency, depending on the season, to a uniform length of between 40mm and 60mm.
  - 6.2.2 Trees, Shrubs and Hedges to be trimmed, pruned and/or cut to maintain healthy growth so as to minimise the risk of crime and/or vandalism; the

opportunity for storm wind damage; risk of fire or the obstruction of roadways, pathways, car parks, lighting etc. Also, to ensure they are secure and safe; free from dead or dying branches; free from litter; free from disease and/or insect infestation and replaced as and when necessary to maintain appearance.

## **7. Staff Safety:**

- 7.1 Weed killers and pesticides are harmful to humans and animals therefore great care must be taken in their use and storage.
- 7.2 All hazardous substances are risk assessed with COSHH data sheets available for inspection. The assessment process takes into account the manufacturer's instructions and the following considerations for using and handling weed killers and pesticides:
- Appropriate training of staff.
  - First aid procedure for chemical use.
  - Suitable protective clothing, compliant with manufacturer's instructions.
  - Records of chemicals used.
  - Pesticides must be handled and stored in accordance with COSHH regulations in order to protect the safety of staff, service users and visitors.
- 7.3 Personnel undertaking Ground maintenance are to be provided with appropriate PPE which must be worn when using equipment and chemicals.
- 7.4 *Competent personnel:*  
Only persons who have been appropriately trained shall work in potentially hazardous situations such as working with lawn mowers, hedge trimmers, strimmers, chippers, working in excavations or working at height. Contractors may need a permit to work.
- 7.5 *Specifications and Risk Assessment:*  
The competent person carrying out the work must be familiar and fully understand the specifications and risk assessment for the task or works to be undertaken.
- 7.6 *Hazardous activities:*  
Before commencing any potentially hazardous activities, a risk assessment and specifications shall be used in order to minimise the risks to staff, volunteers and visitors. Appropriate barriers and signage will be used in relevant situations.
- 7.7 *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):*  
Appropriate personal protective equipment shall be available for use. including gloves and boots; high viz jackets, water-proof clothing, goggles, and visors.

7.8 *Use of equipment:*  
The competent person will carry out checks to ensure the equipment is safe to use and in good condition. Lawn mowers and trimmers should not be used on steep inclines or during inclement weather. Equipment should be stored securely when not in use and not left unattended.

7.9 *Inventory of Equipment and Plant:*  
This will be kept up to date and used as part of the renewal programme.

7.11 *Storage of petrol:*  
Petrol should be stored safely and securely and not left unattended when not secured

## **8. Safety of Volunteers**

8.1 The Ground Committee is responsible for producing separate Risk Assessments for all volunteer activities and for implementing Health and Safety during each session.

8.2 Volunteer tasks must be within the capability of each group. The correct use of tools will be demonstrated before each task is carried out by the volunteers, and suitable PPE provided.

8.3.1 Volunteers will have easy access to toilets and hand washing facilities whilst on site.

## **9. Maintenance of Equipment**

9.1 The Club has an obligation to reduce the risk of injury to employees to the lowest reasonably practicable level. There is a risk of injury if any equipment supplied for the purpose of ground maintenance is inadequately maintained and carries a defect.

9.2 All Ground equipment must be maintained in an efficient state, in working order and without defect.

9.4 All mechanical equipment will be maintained annually with any wear and tear issues being reported and dealt with as necessary.

## **10. Training**

10.1 All members, volunteers and contractors undertaking work on the Grounds must be adequately trained and properly certified as appropriate.

**EAST RETFORD RUFC  
ORDSALL ROAD  
RETFORD**

**Management Plan for the  
poplar avenue  
2019 to 2049**

**Prepared at the request of  
East Retford RUFC**

**19 April 2019**

**By  
Ian Kennedy**

**Treescapes Consultancy Ltd.**

## Summary

This management plan has been prepared for the avenue of Lombardy poplars along the drive at East Retford Rugby Club.

The plan has been requested by the Rugby Club to ensure long term security of the avenue.

The avenue was planted around 50 or so years ago and is a prominent feature of the local landscape. The trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

Over the last decade a number of trees have either failed or been felled, mostly as a result of decay at their bases. Poplars are often planted because they grow quickly but sadly, they are also short lived. Their wood is not durable, and they become unstable at a relatively young age.

This management plan covers the entire avenue.

Originally there were 93 poplar trees recorded in TPO B65 of 1985. 33 trees have been lost over the last decade or so. A further three in the woodland area have significant decay at their bases.

New planting is important now to secure the avenue in the long term.

I recommend replanting with trees that have a columnar habit but I would recommend using longer lived species than poplar. I also recommend using a variety of species to help combat against species specific pests and diseases.

I have recommended *Quercus robur* 'FASTIGIATA' the Cypress oak, *Fagus sylvatica* 'DAWYCK' the columnar beech and *Liquidamber styraciflua* 'SLENDER SILHOUETTE' the columnar sweet gum.

I do not recommend felling any more mature poplars in the next ten years unless they become structurally unsound. I would recommend inspecting the mature trees every two years to check for decay or other instability. Felling more trees than is necessary in the next ten years would put the avenue feature at risk. The priority in the immediate future is to secure new trees in the gaps where trees have been removed or failed.

Plan 1 shows the planting positions for each species.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Instruction

I have been instructed by East Retford Rugby Club to prepare a management plan for the avenue of Lombardy poplars along the driveway between the existing club house and the proposed new clubhouse in the woodland area. The management plan is intended to secure the long-term future of the avenue following loss of almost 50% of the trees over the last decade due to decay.

## 1.2 Background information

The avenue is approximately 50 to 60 years old and was planted entirely with Lombardy poplar. The avenue is a prominent and long-standing feature of the local landscape and is protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

33 of the 93 trees have either failed or been felled because they had severe decay at their bases. A further three at the western end of the avenue have significant decay at their base and will need to be felled. Poplar is often planted because it is a fast-growing tree, quickly providing maturity in a landscape. Unfortunately, it is also a short-lived species that decays readily.

# 2 MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

## 2.1 Species available for selection

There is a wide range of tree species that are suited to avenue creation. However, this avenue is close to rugby pitches which limits selection to narrow crowned trees that will not encroach into the pitches.

Furthermore, wide crowned trees would not be in keeping with the form of the existing trees in the avenue.

Tree species with a columnar habit that would fit between the existing trees and that could be accommodated next to the rugby club include:

### Broadleaves

*Betula pendula* 'OBELISK' Silver birch

*Fagus sylvatica* 'DAWYCK' columnar beech

*Liquidamber styraciflua* 'SLENDER SILHOUETTE' columnar sweet gum

*Morus alba* 'PYRAMIDALIS' columnar mulberry

*Prunus serrulata* 'AMANOGAWA' columnar Japanese cherry

*Quercus palustris* 'GREEN PILLAR' columnar pin oak

*Quercus robur* 'FASTIGIATA' Cypress oak

### Conifers

*Colocedrus decurrens* Incense cedar

*Picea omorika* Serbian spruce

*Pinus sylvestris* 'FASTIGIATA' Columnar Scots pine

*Taxus baccata* 'FASTIGIATA' Irish yew

## **2.2 Species selection**

I would recommend using more than one species to guard against outbreaks of species specific pests and diseases that could have the capacity to kill a single species avenue.

Replacement with more Lombardy poplar would be unadvisable given their relatively short life expectancy and the problems associated with decay. I would not recommend using conifers. Part of the appeal of an avenue is the uniformity that it provides. An avenue with an intimate mix of broadleaves and conifers would not provide uniformity.

## **2.3 Species recommendations**

I would recommend including three new species in the planting plan and I recommend the following is planted now to replace trees already removed or being felled at the same time as the clubhouse development:

20 x *Fagus sylvatica* 'DAWYCK' columnar beech

19 x *Liquidamber styraciflua* 'SLENDER SILHOUETTE' columnar sweet gum

17 x *Quercus robur* 'FASTIGIATA' Cypress oak

Ultimately there will be 31 trees of each species.

Some of the species such as silver birch, mulberry and cherry are smaller growing trees and shorter lived species. It would be more suitable to have species that reach a similar height to provide uniformity. These trees are from three different genus and provide some diversity against diseases.

## **2.4 Future felling and replanting**

Provided the remaining mature poplars remain stable and healthy I would not recommend any more removal for at least ten years until the newly planted oak, beech and sweet gum become established.

I would recommend inspecting the mature trees every two years. If any of the mature trees become affected by decay or otherwise become structurally

unsound then these should be removed and replaced with the species identified on Plan 1.

After a period of ten years I would recommend reviewing the plan to assess the condition of the mature poplars at that stage. I would recommend retaining all remaining poplar trees for as long as they are structurally sound to give the new trees as long as possible to begin to reach a reasonable size.

## **2.5 Timing of planting and size of trees**

Planting of bare root trees takes place between November and the end of February. Container grown trees, containerised trees and root balled trees can be planted at any time of year but are more expensive.

## **2.6 Size of planting stock**

I would recommend planting the smallest trees available from the nursery. The smaller a tree is at planting the less shock it will experience and therefore the quicker it will recover and start growing. Small trees usually catch up with larger trees within five years.

## **2.7 Aftercare**

I recommend maintaining a weed free area of 1m in diameter around the stems of the trees for a period of five years.

The trees should be double staked using short stakes approximately 45cm high. Stakes should only be used for the minimum period until the trees are stable on their root plates. This is usually up to two years, but longer if necessary.

I would recommend rabbit guards are used against browsing.

The trees should be watered for up to five years following planting when extended periods of dry weather are experienced.

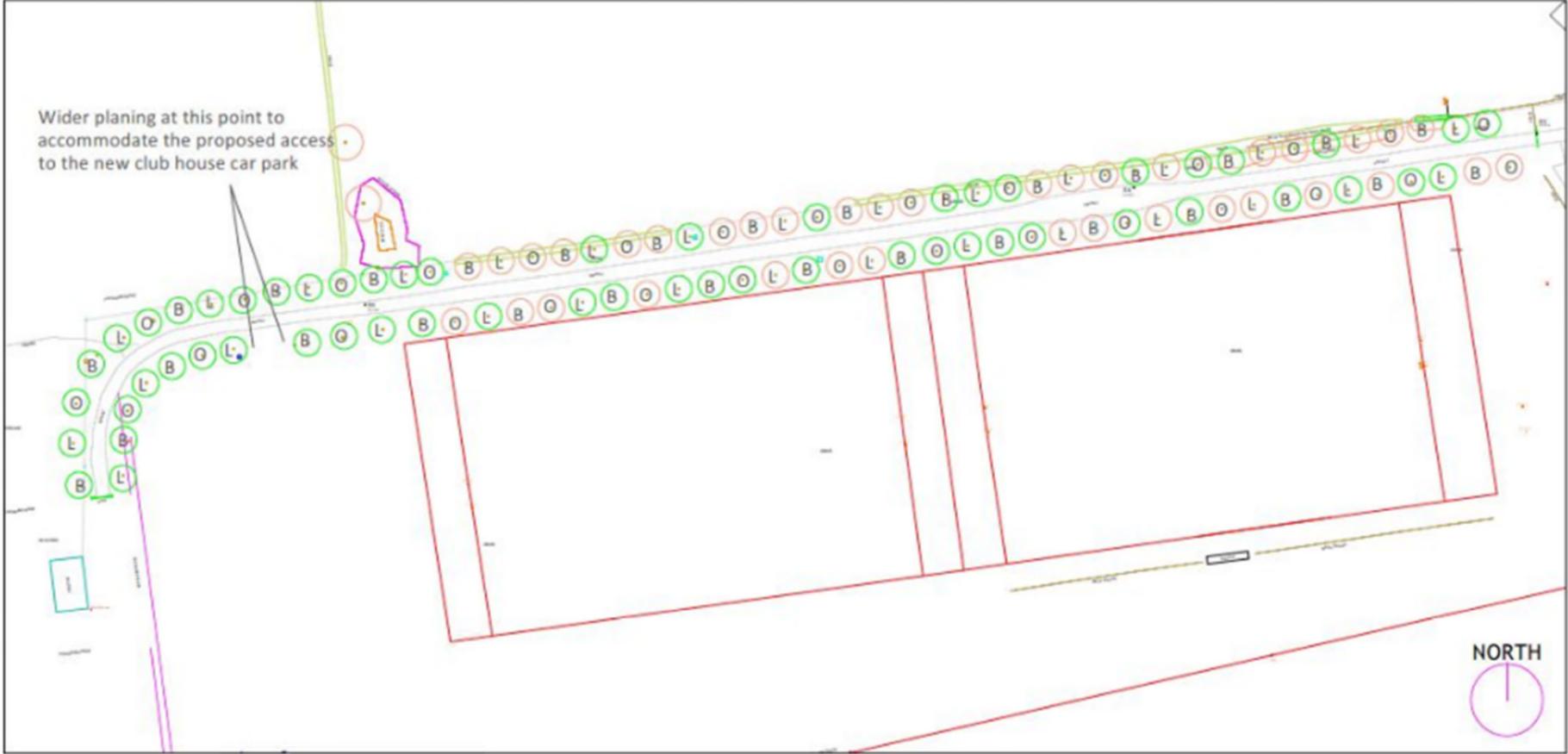
## **2.8 Management beyond 10 years**

At this stage it is difficult to know how much more poplar tree replacement should take place from 2029. This will depend on how much tree removal becomes necessary for safety reasons in the next ten years. Further replacement work should be assessed at that time.

This plan should be reviewed every ten years until a point when all of the poplar trees have been replaced and that replacement planting has established.

**Ian Kennedy BSc. (Hons), M.Arbor.A. MICFor.**

# East Retford RUFC management of the avenue



Plan 1 Tree positions

- ⊙ New oak
- ⊙ New beech
- ⊙ New *Liquidamber* (sweet gum)
- ⊙ Existing poplar tree to be retained as long as possible and then replaced with oak, beech or *Liquidamber* as shown

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| <u>Tree totals</u>    |
| 31 Oak                |
| 31 Beech              |
| 31 <i>Liquidamber</i> |

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## **Appendix 2 - Typical Pitch Maintenance Schedule:**

The pitches at East Retford Rugby Club comprise of levelled grassland and have never been laid as specific sports pitches. Consequently, they are slightly uneven and are ridden with weeds. The local County Council Depot cut and mark out the pitches and they are available for use by the local schools should they need them at any time.

It is not intended that we as a Club abide strictly to the recommendations which follow however, we should strive for as much best practice as possible by applying weedkiller and maintaining grass growth by remedial seeding fertilizer application and regular cutting.

### **September**

The start of the season. Keep on top of the mowing (aiming to maintain the grass height at between 50mm and a maximum of 75mm during the season) as there will still hopefully be a good amount of growth. If at all possible, chain harrow the pitch after each weekend. This will stand the grass up, replace a few of the divots from the games and is a great way to put a good pattern on the pitch.

### **October**

The mowing will still need to be done. Make sure that the grass is being cut properly by ensuring that the blades are correctly set to cut and that it is not too wet on the leaf to mow. It is always good to chain harrow when there is morning dew on the grass. This knocks off the wet and leaves you with brilliant pattern. Look to apply your autumn and winter feed towards the end of the month, something like 4-12-12 (nitrogen phosphate-potash), low in nitrogen, high in phosphate and high in potash to strengthen cell walls and roots of the grass. Use the weather forecast as a guide. Do not fertilize if frost is forecast. Have a couple of hand forks available to hand fork away any surface water on match days. The referee will be grateful for his-her touch-judges runs being hand forked on the morning of a wet match day.

### **November**

The weather may now be breaking to give a lot more rain. Now is the time to give the pitches a good spiking albeit with a slitter or aerator. Do it on a dry day if possible and leave the pattern in for the weekend's games. The last cut of the year may well be this month. If the weather was to stay mild, you may get a little growth, but one or two frosts at night tend to stop most growth.

### **December**

Typically, one of the hardest months for a Groundsman. Try to keep machinery off the pitches as much as possible. If you can, chain harrow the pitches in two directions - the earlier in the week the better. That way, you have replaced divots, put a pattern on and now have no need to go onto the pitch apart from marking it out. If there is a cold snap, try to roll the pitch with the mower. It will help to save matches if the surface is flat. A well-grassed pitch will cope better than a bare one. Make a decision in the club as to your policy: do you want to be playing on frost-bound pitches? If you need to play a game and the forecast is for frost, use a mower roller after you have chain harrowed the pitch. Use the stockpile of sand to top dress any areas that may be rutted after scrums, rucks or mauls. Two men and a wheelbarrow can

move and spread a fair amount of sand. If you work as a team, you can be chain harrowing and spreading sand at the same time. If however you decide that it is too hard to play on, keep off the pitch and let the referee see that it is rutted and unplayable.

## **January**

Very often the coldest month. Go onto the grass only when necessary. Keep players off in either very wet or very cold conditions. Use the harrow and mower roller only when you have to. Hand fork any standing water away before it freezes. If the weather allows, get another spiking done.

## **February**

Wet and cold again. Do try to keep fixtures played by chain harrowing and rolling with the mower. Make sure that you do spike with the slitter or aerator again this month. Having rolled the pitch with the mower for only a few weeks now, the surface will have become compacted, so it needs the aerator. This is imperative at this time of the year. As the end of the month nears, the weather may warm up a little. If funds allow, look to order another feed. (4-12-12)

## **March**

Put on a feed if the weather allows. 7-0-21 is recommended, medium nitrogen, no phosphate, and high potash to strengthen roots and encourage top growth whilst maintaining feed to the roots. The grass will begin to grow, so it may be time to give it a cut later on in the month. Start to plan and organise what remedial works you think you are going to be doing at the end of April. Feed, top-dress and also speak to your contractor as to his availability the day after your last game.

## **April**

If at all possible, try and get your cutters down to around 4mm. This will allow you to work the seed into the soil much easier when you begin the remedial work at the end of the month. Get the last match date in your mind and sort everything out to happen as soon as possible after the final whistle of the last game of the season. Have your contractor in the very next day as the sand that you have already ordered is being delivered that morning. Ensure that things like the seed and feed are on site before you stop playing. You need to catch any spring showers that are around for the next month in order to achieve the best results.

## **April/May - remedial works**

Using a tractor with grassland tyres, top-dress with specified sportsturf sand at a minimum rate of 60 tonne per pitch. Make sure that it is spread evenly and that any low or bad areas get a bit more sand. Deep tine each pitch to a depth of 8-10 inches on 3-inch centres with suitable heave on the machine. Brush and chain harrow as much of the sand into all the holes and low spots. Once the sand dressing has been dragged and brushed to a level you are satisfied with, then you can begin to seed. A disc seeder would be best as it cuts, lifts and drops the seed into the ground and rolls it flat again in one pass. This will ensure that the seed is in the ground at the right depth and covered, ready to grow. Then apply a good feed of 10-15-10. This is a well-balanced feed- high nitrogen, enough phosphate to last until November and enough potash to keep the roots growing. Spread evenly across the pitch and then roll with

the mower to make sure that the seed is in contact with the soil. Then irrigate as soon as possible or wait for rainfall. Growth will be visible in about 10-12 days.

## **May**

Try to keep the surface moist to allow for best growing conditions. Irrigate if possible, during dry spells. Keep off the pitch for at least a fortnight. Then, just cut it at about 50mm with a rotary mower if possible. Do cut once a week after that in different directions. This will help the seedling to tiller and to form a plant much faster. You can let the clippings fly once again. A slow release nitrogen-based fertilizer like 25-5-12 should be applied to maintain growth through the summer months.

## **June**

Keep on top of the mowing. Let it begin to grow out to 50mm towards the end of the month. If there is a dry spell, try and keep the areas irrigated. This will be difficult to do if it is a long dry spell, but the more grass you can keep now the better it will be late on in the season.

## **July**

Mowing and watering will be the main task. Get a strimmer and do as much mowing of the outside of the pitches as possible, covering general maintenance of the ground's perimeter and goal posts. Make the place as tidy as you can, it will not grow back as quickly and the whole ground will look attractive to any newcomers.

## **August**

Begin to get ready for the season ahead. Check all goal posts and sockets for safety. It may be 12 months since anyone looked at these posts. Mark the pitch lines out using a safe paint. At this time of the year lines are either being cut out, washed out or grown out. Apply a late summer fertilizer like 14-0-9 mid-late August to bring the sward up to a fresh standard for the start of the new season. Keep the mowing going and irrigate if you need to. Restrict the training to identified areas and rotate repetitive practices. Do not let the coaches ruin a season's work by being too keen in the summer! If the training areas start to wear out, give them extra sand and perhaps a watering and a feed. They are intensely used at this time of year but need to be looked after. The longer they train off the pitch the better.

## **Equipment and machinery**

Currently we are unable to purchase or even "hire-in" expensive equipment however the list below is a target for what we should be striving for if we are to maintain our pitches as they should be.

Maintenance equipment and machinery can be purchased or, where appropriate, hired.

Investing in good quality, up-to-date equipment will greatly increase efficiency and make maintenance work less time consuming.

Clubs should set aside a budget for new equipment, annual servicing and replacement of worn out implements.

Machinery can be hired out and clubs may also contract the work out, saving on initial capital costs and the problems associated with maintaining the equipment.

To undertake successful maintenance a club should have the following equipment:

- Mower - various models fulfil different requirements. Cylinder mowers produce a better quality finish
- Chain harrow/roller - to break up clumps and re-level the surface. Heavy rolling is no longer considered suitable due to adverse effects on the root zone
- Tractor
- Hand tools - spade, fork, half-moon brush, drag brush, edging shears, wheelbarrow and measuring equipment
- Stockpile of sand, medium fine, good draining sand - to be used on wet areas to help save fixtures. Suitable sands (medium sands) range from particle size of 0.125mm to 1.0mm (whose principle particle range is between 0.25mm and 0.75mm) for amelioration and top dressing of winter pitch surfaces Expensive equipment may be hired as and when required.
- Aerator - tractor mounted or pedestrian
- Sprayer - for application of liquid fertilizer and pesticides. Health and safety reasons may make it preferable to buy in this work through a contractor, as spraying requires a licence

## **Appendix 3 – Pest Control:**

The biggest concern that we have at East Retford is Moles and Rabbits.

### **Moles:**

A real nuisance especially after a mild winter and the resulting soil heaps have to be cleared away before any meaningful sport can take place.

The only real answer to this problem is to employ a pest control specialist to try and eradicate the problem.

During the months of March/April, the problem should be assessed, and appropriate action taken if required.

### **Rabbits:**

Again, the burrowing rabbits create problems at the edges of the fields and the holes have to be kept being filled in.

Local specialists in controlling rabbits should be employed i.e. ferrets, low caliber rifles etc., always ensuring that the persons employed carry the requisite insurance and permits.

Written authority should always be given by the Club Secretary to all Specialists employed to undertake Pest Control.