

Using what comes naturally!

ELIE Golf Club head greenkeeper Brian Lawrie is cashing in on a couple of natural assets that lie right alongside his fairways – sand and seaweed from the shores of the Firth of Forth.

Brian and his assistant David Bowers have combined these with grass clippings from the course to make a giant compost heap and they feed the rotted-down result back on to the grass.

The work of collecting the sand and seaweed and then turning the compost used to be a backbreaker – all done with hand shovels. But, three years ago, Elie invested in a McConnel Ditch

King, a three-point linkage-mounted digger/loader that fits on to the back of the club's Massey Ferguson 135 tractor.

The arrival of 'the machine age' heralded a vastly more efficient operation, with the Ditch King's grab scooping up large amounts of seaweed and its digging bucket collecting the sand in a fraction of the time needed for the hand operation. Splay feet on the Ditch King enable it to work safely on the beach.

It then just remained to transport the material from the beach the 500 yards to the compost heap.

Armed with the digging bucket, the backhoe also turns the compost. The increased amounts it turns over compared to a hand-digging operation mean the heap rots down more quickly. This also means the golf course benefits from frequent small dressings of compost, rather than the occasional heavy dressings that were the norm before the Ditch King arrived.

The Ditch King and bucket have also become essential items for excavating and shaping Elie's bunkers. Again, prior to the machine's arrival, this job had to be done by hand.



Top left: the Ditch King also comes in handy for bunker work. You may notice in the background a ship's periscope! This was rescued from a Newcastle upon Tyne scrapyard and enables the starter to see that the 1st green is clear. **Top right:** down by the seashore, the Ditch King grabs another load of seaweed. **Above left:** assistant David Bowers digs into the heap. **Above right:** David with Elie's head greenkeeper Brian Lawrie.