Tony Baxby, Head Greenkeeper at Harrogate Golf Club, Jay Dobson, Agronomist from PSD Agronomy Ltd, and David Snowden, from Floratine, were a lot more variable than it should be,” said Jay. “The greens weren’t stable chemically and the grass condition didn’t perform. There was a lot of thatch, they weren’t as good as they could have been.”

“Golf Club, Jay Dobson, Agronomist from PSD Agronomy Ltd, has built on a clay sub base. We used CalpHex, a multi chelated calcium, and Pervade, a soil penetrant, to flush out the excess elements.

The work means notorious ‘traps’, such as the Road Hole Bunker, Shell and Cartgate, are being returned to a state of play following a major rebuilding programme. In total, 94 of the 112 bunkers have been revetted to counter the effects of erosion and to prepare the course for the 134th Open Championship.

“When the bunkers come back into play, we can concentrate more on turf and course presentation. In the lead up to the Open Championship, we will want the course to be drier and faster, and additional growth will mean the greens will get smoother,” commented Euan Grant, Head Greenkeeper of the Old Course.

The Old Course’s bunkers often play a starring role in the Open Championship. David Duval, for instance, fell foul of the Road Hole Bunker in 2000 dropping valuable strokes and any chance of the Claret Jug as he pursued Tiger Woods. The sad sight of Tommy Nakajima attempting to escape from the same trap during the 1978 Open will also live in many people’s memories. While Nicklaus famously took four shots to escape Hell Bunker in 1995.

With the stage set for more drama in July, the Trust’s greenkeepers are ensuring the bunkers are suitably prepared through sand shaping and the application of additional top dressing to ensure the new turf knits-in properly.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL VOICE

A new initiative to help the European golf sector in the field of environment and sustainable development is to be launched by the Committed to Green Foundation.

The Foundation’s new flagship project will be to create and facilitate the European Forum for Sustainable Golf. This initiative will enable a community of stakeholders to participate in discussion and information exchange on environmental and sustainable development issues facing golf across Europe. It is hoped that this mechanism will enhance the dissemination of environmental best practice information to golf facilities, and also enable collective promotion of local, regional and national environmental initiatives. The Forum will be formally launched by the European Commission in Brussels at the end of June 2005.

Jonathan Smith, the Foundation’s newly appointed Chief Executive said: “I am delighted to have this opportunity to take forward the work of the Committed to Green Foundation. It is clear that golf faces many environmental challenges, golf has to adopt, and be seen to adopt, best environmental practices. If it can do so in a cohesive and credible way there is tremendous potential for golf to achieve recognition for its stewardship of the environment.”

AGRONOMISTS UNITE

For the first time in the fine turf industry’s history, agronomists from around the world came together for a three day conference in April, to discuss a range of issues relating to golf course management and construction. 62 participants took part in an intensive programme, held at the Craiglands Hotel, in Ilkley, which included visits to the trials ground at STRI and Alwoodley Golf Club.

The conference, organised by STRI, following discussions between Dr Gordon McKillop, STRI’s Chief Executive, and Jim Snow, National Director for the USGA, was initially arranged as a joint meeting between STRI and USGA staff. As planning progressed, other interested parties from New Zealand, Canada, Italy, Sweden, Scotland, including Steve Isaac and Nick Pan - representing the R&A, were invited. A total of 22 sessions were covered over the three days.