A Long Time Coming!

For the first time in its 10 year history, a Scottish club has won the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition. Brighouse Bay GC near Kirkcudbright in Galloway, have scooped this year’s prize with one of the most holistic and deserving entries ever. Lee Penrose reports...

The course forms one of the principal attractions within the larger Brighouse Bay Holiday Park and is managed by a team of only four greenstaff under the guidance of Head Greenkeeper, Richard Davis. Owned and managed by Tom and Evelyn Gillespie, the overriding policy for the whole site states; “We at Brighouse Bay Holiday Park are endeavouring to become the most environmentally sustainable tourist resort in the United Kingdom.” Having already achieved the ‘David Bellamy Gold Award’ for sustainable tourism 10 years in a row, they can’t be far off!

The club have previously been the recipients of two BIGGA Scottish Regional Winners Awards. These prizes have largely been awarded for the progressive environmental management throughout the clubhouse and associated complex, in addition to the excellent outreach and communication with the surrounding communities. Recently completed and ongoing projects in these areas include; construction of a reedbed for wastewater treatment, use of solar panels on clubhouse/leisure club, onsite production of compost from green waste, use of grey/recycled water for course irrigation, energy transfer technology in clubhouse/leisure club, creation of environmental signs and booklets for visitors and a comprehensive recycling programme involving almost all arising waste streams.

2006 saw a tremendous improvement in the nature conservation side of the Club’s application with a significant number of habitat enhancement projects on the course. The 18 hole course nestles beautifully into its dramatic cliff-top setting and appears to be timeless in character despite being only seven years old. The development of appropriately sited and managed deep rough grassland contributes to its air of naturalness while providing home to breeding skylark, adder and a host of other wildlife. Gorse has become a dominant feature of the

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Overall Winners
Brighouse Bay Golf Club, Dumfries and Galloway

Runners up in Winners Region
Reay Golf Club, Caithness
St Annes Old Links Golf Club, Lancashire
Notts (Holmwood) Golf Club, Nottinghamshire
Royal St. Davids Golf Club, Gwynedd
Rookwood Golf Course, West Sussex
Guildford Golf Club, Surrey
The Grove Golf Centre, Herefordshire

Northern Region Winner
Beaconsfield Golf Club, Buckinghamshire
Bude & North Cornwall Golf Club, Cornwall
Budock Vean Hotel Golf & Country Club, Cornwall
Caly Golf Club, Merseyside
Dunnerholme Golf Club, Cumbria
Farnham Golf Club, Surrey
Manchester Golf Club, Gtr Manchester
Marriott Worsley Park, Gtr Manchester
Montrose Golf Links, Angus
Newbury & Crookham Golf Club, Berkshire
Newport Golf Club, Gwent
Ratho Park Golf Club, Mid Lothian
Royal Porthcawl Golf Club, Mid Glamorgan
South Essex Golf Centre, Essex
Stocksfield Golf Club, Northumberland

Midlands Region Winner
The Honorable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, Muirfield, East Lothian
The Pines Golf Club, Dumfries and Galloway
Wilmslow Golf Club, Cheshire

South West and Wales Region Winner

South East Region Winner

Best Newcomer

Best New Initiative

Highly Commended 2006
central section of the course in recent years as it has developed into a mature to degenerate plant and marched aggressively through the high quality acid-grasslands. A strong gorse management programme has now been put into place in order to retain good quality specimens in the correct places while restoring grassland where appropriate.

Complete species lists of all flora and fauna (including a comprehensive mollusc list) have been professionally compiled so as to provide a basis for ongoing management and a record of the value of the course for local wildlife. The club have also engaged the services of the Scottish Golf Environment group to undertake an 'Appraisal of the Landscape and Cultural Heritage' of the course which recognises and provides management advice on all aspects of archaeological interest. One of the most important features highlighted within is the extensive network of dry stone walls (known locally as dykes) which provide outstanding habitat for specialist birds, reptiles and several types of lichen.

The most northerly golf course on mainland Britain is the proud title held by the Runners Up in the Winners region, Reay GC. Managed by a 'team' of one greenstaff (plus an extra man in the summer!), the traditional link course sits adjacent the sea 12 miles to the west of Thurso in Caithness. Do not be fooled, however, into thinking that such a modest club only contribute to the environment by accident. Proactive grassland, stream and dune management, composting and scrub removal are all excellent on course projects that are emphasised to the local community and tourists by nature walks and wildlife leaflets available. Perhaps Reay's best asset however is the minimal input approach to the whole site. Traditional greenkeeping and maintaining the status quo mean that this course is one of the most truly 'sustainable' in the UK.

In the North of England, St Annes Old Links were successful in only their second application to the competition in securing the regional title. An excellent individual project in the creation of a large practice tee utilising waste spoil from other onsite work was the highlight of this year's entry. As with all other winners in 2006, a holistic recycling policy is well in place with other important projects such as relict heathland restoration and scrub control on the golf course. Down into the Midlands, Notts (Hollinwell) Golf Club secured the regional title for the third year running. The club are widely recognised for their extensive heathland creation and specific habitat management on the golf course and have been highlighted in previous years of the competition for the construction of reedbeds for wastewater treatment.

Royal St Davids GC, in Harlech, have won the South West and Wales Region in their first year of entry, and staved off some very stiff competition this year in historically the weakest region. Working closely with The Countryside Council for Wales and STRI in maintaining the Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) which covers some 95% of the course, the club are undertaking extensive grassland management trials in order to develop the most appropriate techniques in maintaining a good quality sward for both wildlife and golf.

The South East Region has previously hailed more overall winners that any other in the history of the competition. 2006 again saw some extremely strong entries from a range of golf clubs. After much deliberation by the judges, the public pay and play Rookwood Golf Course in West Sussex were finally chosen as regional winners. Owned by Horsham District Council, the course is managed sympathetically for wildlife with buffer zones developed around all water bodies for breeding waterfowl. In 2006 when concerns about golf courses using excessive water for irrigation made national news, Rookwood took it upon themselves to put a few ill-educated pessimists straight and produce a series of signs and leaflets about the strict water use policy on the course. The promotional materials that contain the tag line 'Using water wisely' are professionally produced. What is more, they have been displayed in high profile areas, on the roadside at the entrance to the course, on the
Rookwood Golf Course, West Sussex

forms a large part of the greenstaff's annual workload and involves assisting in maintenance of a nearby nature reserve in return for heather seed/turves. An outstanding project emphasised to the judges is the Club working closely with Surrey Wildlife Trust in placing 30 dormouse boxes alongside the 8th hole. Over the last year the Mammal Recording Officer has recorded two mating pairs - pretty good for a species named on the IUCN Red List and the subject of a UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

All in all, 2006 has been another excellent year for the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, Brighouse Bay finally came out overall winners, however they were pushed all the way to the last by one of the regional winners. The competition is consistently getting harder to judge as the clubs involved in sound ecological management has risen from a small percentage to a majority. The full list of clubs achieving a prize or highly commended certificate is printed below, which I hope highlights the fact the competition is open to all clubs irrelevant of size or history and that no biased is placed on prestige...only effort and attitude.

As always, I would like to offer the sincere appreciation of all involved with The BIGGA Golf Environment Competition to our generous sponsors at Ransomes Jacobson, Syngenta, CourseCare and Scotts. If it were not for the support of these environmentally progressive companies, the Competition would not be sustained as the most prestigious annual environmental event in golf.
Co-sponsoring the competition for the first time this year are Course Care and the company are proud to be associated with BIGGA and sponsor the Environment Competition.

They see environmental issues as a priority and do as much as they can to protect the environment by recycling, taking their environmental responsibilities seriously. They manage a Waste Transfer Station at their Keighley base and are fully licensed by the Environment Agency (licence No. EAWML/65417). They operate in an environmentally responsible way and, for instance, have installed purpose made plant and equipment to process and recycle much of the collected waste. Currently 95% of the waste collected from golf and turf management customers under their Waste Away scheme is recycled. This includes the many thousands of plastic chemical containers. Instead of taking them to landfill, they are turned into chips, which are re-processed and turned into useful rot proof items for use around the course; fence posts, seating, walkway, sleepers etc. Many other products are recycled and include; waste oil, aerosols, filters, fluorescent tubes, batteries, redundant plastic wheelie bins and window frames, old oil tanks, etc.

With the advent of the new WEEE regulations (waste electrical and electronic equipment), they have expanded their waste management services to include items such as old fridges, computers, TV's and monitors, printers, radios and phones etc. They are encouraging waste reduction through recycling and composting by customers too. Their new composting machines will turn grass clippings, twigs, branches, leaves, green kitchen waste and all that cardboard from the pro-shop into compostable material.

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