



OPTIMISM FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

David Golding, GTC Education Director, gives us optimism as we move into 2009...

As we move into a new year and with the festive season well and truly over, the glass can be well and truly half empty at best, if we let it!

It would be so easy for all of us to feel a little worried as we all feel the impact of the recession.

Yes, as I mentioned in last month's article we are all now having to take stock of our personal lives as well as the business we work in.

I guess most of us are counting the days until the end of the month - payday - which always seems to take longer than all other months. Businesses, especially traditional golf clubs, will be waiting to see how many of the members renew their subscriptions for the New Year and I am sure hoping they can at least retain the majority.

Difficult times for all of us, but can I bring your attention back to one key element I believe in and that is to consider addressing all of today's issues by better communication!

I have fallen victim of this recently and should have known better at my age and addressed matters head on rather than thinking I'll sort it later or it will sort itself out.

I know I have written many an article on the importance of communication and it is 20 years ago since, during my early days at BIGGA, we introduced the infamous Management Courses at Aldwark Manor with Communication Skills always the number one subject requested by the delegates.

As the years have passed our sector has invested heavily in the specialist training courses to improve staff communication skills and it has,

I believe, certainly improved many of us, but we must not slip back!

So what has changed from those halcyon days at the Manor?

The internet is now such a major player in our day to day lives, the mobile phone is a must have tool and this you think should have made effective communication better.

Emails come in thick and fast, website forums are popular for many, texting is vogue but call me old fashioned I still believe in the values of "it's good to talk".

Come on, admit it, we've all been there...some of us having to put our glasses on to either read a text or spend ages writing a text, even worse trying to master predictive text!

Why not pick up the phone, ring the person that you feel might be a "problem" whether it is the Bank Manager, mortgage company or the Chairman of Green, Green Convenor, owner or better still if they are within distance face them head on?

Stress is a killer and too many friends in this sector alone have fallen victim to the pressures of life.

The GTC will continue to ensure communication skills are included in all levels of qualifications and training courses must continue to help us all.

There can be little doubt we have travelled a long way in the last 20 years in greenkeeper education but we must not be complacent.

I honestly believe that a problem shared is a problem solved and there is nothing worse than feeling alone in trying to deal with a problem whether it be of your own making or not.

I am optimistic for the future of our sector despite the current economic situation but we must all keep talking, keep supporting each other and let us not forget, the companies who fared best through and after the last recession, were those that invested in their staff development.

It will take a team effort and while strong leadership is a quality and skill that people admire, all the best leaders have tremendous communication skills and the team ethic has proved the vital ingredient to their success.

A topical example within our sector is the "S" Factor (sustainable golf course maintenance) and we will be addressing this early in 2009 when we will be hosting, with The R&A, a number of workshops for turf staff working within our Approved Centres will come together with those brave "Gingerbread" guys who are working within the sustainable best practices on the ground, to discuss the whole aspect of how best we can share the knowledge and experience to employers and today's and tomorrow's Course Managers.

The GTC Approved Centres and training providers are there to help employers and learners with individual training needs and courses, as are BIGGA and we at the GTC always offer an open invitation for you to contact us if you feel we are missing something in terms of qualifications, training manuals etc - so please talk to us!

Email the GTC at: david@the-gtc.co.uk

Telephone: 01347 838640

Text: 07831 222659

NOTE: Replies to text messages can take a little while!

GTC is supported by:





Industry Update

HIGH PRAISE FROM THE 'HOME OF GOLF'

St Andrews Links has recently renewed its Toro agreement, with Links Superintendent, Gordon Moir, saying that the Toro equipment the 'Home of Golf' exclusively uses to maintain its greens and tees has "proved extremely reliable and allowed the Links Trust to present the golf courses to the standard golfers expect."

Comprising seven courses, the world-famous St Andrews Links in Fife sustains more than 200,000 rounds of golf a year and so it is crucial that the courses are immaculately maintained.

"Many golfers view their trip to St Andrews as a pilgrimage and have very high expectations. It is vital, therefore, that we present the courses in the best condition we can every day of the year – not just for The Open or the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship."



St Andrews Links Superintendent Gordon Moir, left, and Lely's Jeff Anguige, with, standing, Links General Manager Alan McGregor.

WIMBLEDON WELCOMES SCOTTS

A Scotts Seminar, held at The All England Club, Wimbledon, proved to be a very successful event for the 150 invited guests

Speakers included Eddie Seaward MBE, Head Groundsman at the All England Lawn Tennis Club, who gave an entertaining talk on the Wimbledon Year. He was followed by Leon Terlingen, the Global Professional R&D Director for Scotts Europe, who discussed the advances in fertiliser technology.

He stated that the four point combination for a success was Right Product; Right Rate; Right Time and Right Place, while performance usually was in direct relation to price.

After a short break Simon Barnaby, Technical Manager Syngenta UK & Eire, explained the merits of Plant Growth Regulators in Turf Management featuring the qualities of Primo Maxx.

Simon was followed by Andy Newell, Head of Turfgrass Biology with the STRI and the official agronomist to the All England Club who talked of Testing Grasses for Sport.

After lunch the guests were treated to a tour around the Club where they were able to see the progress on the Centre Court roof and the new Number 2 court which will be ready for the Championships later this year.

HAND ARM VIBRATION SEMINAR

Echo UK are sponsoring a free seminar on the subject of Hand Arm Vibration at Harrogate Week 2009. The Seminar, which is planned for Tuesday, January 20 at 10.15 am in the Queen's suite, will be delivered by Fivesquared (a division of Earlsmere ID Systems), the UK's leading independent vibration assessor. Statistics show that more than one million people are still subjected to levels of vibration that are above the exposure limit level.

Employees are regularly being issued with and are using tools and equipment that offer excessive levels of vibration on a daily basis and vibration information presented by some manufacturers can't be used for risk assessment as it has not been tested under load or indeed in working conditions. Fivesquared carry out major testing projects for Echo on all tools and equipment in actual working conditions, providing data that can be used as part of the risk assessment process. For further information regarding the Vibration seminar at Harrogate Week, or to register attendance, contact Fivesquared on: 01226 750111.

BLEC IS NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

BLEC Landscaping Equipment Company Ltd has gone into administration. Gary and Sue Mumby started BLEC in 1986 and have, over the last 22 years, built the company into a worldwide enterprise, supplying machines across the globe. At its peak, the company employed 50 people and the premises at Deeping St. James, nr Peterborough, were expanded to accommodate a new office and manufacturing facilities. However, since early 2008, the company has suffered a series of blows, including a severe downturn in orders from Europe and particularly the United States, coupled with the appalling weather effecting UK sales of their large range of landscaping equipment.

The 35 members of staff have been laid off and the premises are now closed.

Gary and Sue would like to thank all of their distributors, customers and suppliers who have shown their continued support for BLEC products over the years and hope that the future brings a more positive outcome for everyone struggling in today's difficult climate.

CRICKET BOOM FOR SHREWSBURY SCHOOL

The first New Holland Boomer series tractor has been purchased by Anthony Hough, Director of Grass for Shrewsbury School. A longstanding New Holland customer, "I always buy New Holland because I get great peace of mind! Buying from a large company which offers such fantastic manufacturer back up is my priority. I have always bought New Holland, and the addition of the Boomer now means that I have a fleet of four tractors all under four years old," said Anthony.

Anthony's existing fleet includes tractors from New Holland's TC range and a TN60DA, which have after market cabs fitted and he comments that they are comparatively small.

"The Boomer has a factory fitted cab which means it is so much more comfortable, there is more space and as a result it is normally the first tractor out of the shed every morning! My staff love it!" he said.



Director of Grass for Shrewsbury School, Anthony Hough, with the new boomer

BUSINESSES NEEDED TO MAKE NEW DIPLOMA A SUCCESS

Now is the time for businesses to sign-up and help shape the country's future workforce. England's next generation of employees and professionals will have the opportunity to choose the new Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies, which enables students to learn about industry from employers.

Aimed at 14-19 year olds, the Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies is an industry-led Diploma that becomes available in schools and colleges from 2009.

The content gives learners an opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge required to progress into further learning or employment within the sector. The Diploma can be studied alongside GCSEs and A Levels and is available at three levels.

Some 51 partnerships of schools, colleges and employers across England have already been given the green light by the government to start teaching the new Diploma in 2009, with a complete roll-out across England in 2013.

For information on how you can get involved with your local consortia, please visit:

www.diplomaelbs.co.uk
or contact Lantra Connect
on tel: 0845 707 8007 or
email: connect@lantra.co.uk

18TH CENTURY AVENUE PART OF ON-GOING RESTORATION

Around 130 ancient trees, forming part of a famous 18th century landscape have been treated to one-metre deep aeration treatment as part of ongoing restoration.

Gibside, near Newcastle upon Tyne, formerly owned by the Bowes-Lyons family but now under the protection of the National Trust, boasts 'The Long Walk', an avenue half a mile long lined with Oak, Sycamore and Lime. "As the gardens were designed between 1722 and 1760 the trees are at least 150 years old," said Gibside's Landscape Gardener Keith Blundell.

The gardens, originally designed by Stephen Switzer are open 12 months of the year. Due to the popularity of the attraction, visitor numbers have increased from approximately 30,000 to 115,000 people annually in the past eight years, and this has put more pressure on the long walk, which is one of the main attractions of the property. "Some of the trees were suffering from stress with crown die-back and nutritional problems," Keith continued.

Specialist aeration contractors, Terrain Aeration worked at Gibside for



three days injecting compressed air, via a probe, one metre below the surface to create underground fracturing and break up the compacted soil.

"They worked between the drip lines of the trees and needed to use the JCB hammer to insert the probe most of the time because the ground was so hard," Keith explained. "Conditions in the walled garden, some of which is used as a car park but most of which is dedicated to community and volunteer allotments were much softer."

Membership



TRACEY MADDISON, HEAD OF MEMBERSHIP SERVICES, TAKES A LOOK AT THE YEAR AHEAD

What does 2009 have in store for you?

If you're anything like me, at this time of year, you may find yourself doing a lot of thinking about what lies in store for you in the New Year. You may be thinking about making New Year resolutions, in my case go to the gym more, or just go to the gym would do! Practice more and reduce my golf handicap, explore the opportunities that membership of my professional body offers me, identify useful courses that would help me carry out my job more efficiently...I could go on - but I won't! Making a move towards the things I want is something else. I buy the books, write the lists, talk to people about it - and always find a reason not to begin the task itself! Does this sound familiar? Well not next year, I am determined 2009 will be different; I am going to turn my thoughts into goals and my goals into action. I'll keep you posted!



Make it Happen in 2009 starting with Harrogate Week

Why not join me in making 2009 a year for making it happen. Come to Harrogate Week, starting with Continue to Learn on Sunday, 18 January 2009 and sign up for one of the many workshops or attend one of the 30 FREE seminars available to you - places are limited so make sure you arrive early at your chosen seminar. For full information see the Learning

and Development article in this month's Greenkeeper International. The Membership Team will be on hand at the BIGGA Stand during Harrogate Week to chat with you about any membership issues, we can also check and change your personal details or we can take payment for membership renewals that are due, we can also take new applications from your friends and colleagues who may wish to join BIGGA.

New Year Resolutions

Why not explore the opportunities membership of BIGGA gives you. Visit the members area of the website to remind yourself of the benefits and make it your New Years resolution to attend and support your Section and Region events, all the dates of Section events are available from contacting your Section Secretary or visit 'Your Pages' in the members area of the BIGGA website.

When you get a quiet moment sit down and identify useful courses that will help you carry out your job more efficiently, keep an eye on the BIGGA website and notices from your Section Committee on courses available throughout next year. Many courses are available at a subsidised rate. Come on let's make things happen in 2009.

I will leave you with this thought, I saw it on a poster in a pub in London and it made me smile...

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity.

An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

(Anon)

Which one are you?

If you have any sayings you like to quote why not let me know at traceymaddison@bigga.co.uk

This month BIGGA welcomes the following new members...

SCOTTISH

Rory Borthwick, North
John Gammack, North
Connel McKenna, Central
Gordon Paterson, East
Grant Peters, Central
Gordon Simpson, West

NORTHERN

Robert Acheson, Sheffield
James Burkinshaw, Sheffield
Sam Gattens, North East
James McGrath, North West
Daniel Peters, North West
Ian Pogson, North West

MIDLAND

Clive Brampton, East Midland
Edward Campbell, Berks/Bucks & Oxon
John Corbett, Midland
Paul Curtis, Berks/Bucks & Oxon
Antony Francis, Berks/Bucks & Oxon
Alan Gee, Midland
Ashley Goy, Berks/Bucks & Oxon
Robert Jones, Berks/Bucks & Oxon
Noel Mackenzie, Berks/Bucks & Oxon
Malcolm O'Brien, Midland
Steven Pitts, Midland
Mark Skelton, Berks/Bucks & Oxon
Luke Taylor, Berks/Bucks & Oxon
Andrew Wale, Midland
Alexander Walton, Midland

SOUTH EAST

Dave Beck, London
Andy Corder, Kent
Martin Dearlove, London
Danny Floyd, Surrey
Joshua Hallil, East Anglia
Martin James, Kent
Alan Joyce, Kent
Nicholas Leach, Kent
Peter Thompson, London
Adam Wicks, Surrey

SOUTH WEST & WALES

James Cooper, South Coast
Nigel Howe, South West
James Palmer, Devon&Cornwall
James Stewart, South Coast
Robert Wills, South Coast

N IRELAND

Martin Fitzpatrick, Northern Ireland
Christopher Larmour, Northern Ireland

CONTACT US

By telephone - 01347 833800 (option 1 for Membership.)



Tracey Maddison
Email: traceymaddison@bigga.co.uk



Justine De Taure
Email: justine@bigga.co.uk



Brad Anderson
Email: brad@bigga.co.uk

Other useful telephone numbers (for greenkeeper members only)

Personal Accident Helpline 02075 603013
Greenkeepers Legal Assistance 0800 177 7891

Learning & Development

Key Sponsorship:

UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF GREENKEEPERS

The funding provided by Gold and Silver Key Sponsors is used to produce training and career aids, DVDs, CD Roms, field guides and provide refunds for training fees and subsidised learning and development courses. The funding also helps support seminars, workshops, courses, the lending library, careers advice, posters and manuals.

Many young greenkeepers owe their career progression to the assistance they've had from the Learning and Development Fund. An equal number of established greenkeepers have also been able to access the fund to continue their professional development thanks to the donations of the Gold and Silver Key Sponsors.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING KEY SPONSORS



GOLDEN KEY



Golden Key Individual Members

JH Greasley; WJ Rogers; Andy Campbell MG, CGCS; Iain A Macleod; Tom Smith; Frank Newberry; Christopher Lomas MG, Lee Strutt MG.



SILVER KEY



Silver Key Individual Members

Ade Archer; Steven Tierney; Paul Jenkins; Iain Barr; Richard McGlynn; Steve Dixon; Sam Langrick.

Sami Collins, Head of Learning & Development, provides a departmental update...



Rachael and I hope that you had a great Christmas and New Year, are fighting fit and looking forward to everything that 2009 has to offer.

Continue To Learn at Harrogate Week

Harrogate Week is approaching fast and the Continue to Learn Education Programme is proving to be very popular with many of the workshops sold out. This year we have over 30 Free Seminars presented by many of the exhibiting companies. Places will be limited, to ensure you get into your chosen sessions arrive early!

Tuesday 20 January

- Getting to Grips with Hand Arm Vibration - Countax
- Benchmarking for a More Sustainable Future - The R&A
- Stress Relief at a US Open Course - Vitax
- EU and UK Pesticide Policy Developments - Grant Stark & Jon Ailbutt
- Turf Nutrition - Getting the Balance Right - Headland Amenity
- Turf for a Changing Climate - Lindum
- Travels With Terry - Machinery/Maintenance Equipment Ideas - Terry Buchen MG
- Eco-Concept in Golf Course Maintenance - Actioneco
- Balanced Programmes - From Organics To Water Management, Farmura

Wednesday 21 January

- 20 Years of Top Flight Winter Sports Maintenance - Dave Saltman, Pitchcare.com
- One Metre Deep Aeration - When, Where and Why? - Terrain Aeration
- Finding Askernish - Gordon Irvine MG, Golf Course Consultant
- Integrated Turf Management Principles and Practice - Ruth Mann
- New Chemistries to Combat Water Quality - Tower Sport Europe
- A Starter Guide to Tournament Preparation - Murray Long, Course Manager, Sunningdale Golf Club
- Using Integrated Management to Improve Turf Quality - Scotts
- Primo MAXX - Latest Research and Developments - Syngenta

Thursday 22 January

- Introducing Velvet Bents to Your Course - British Seed Houses
- From Coal to 36 Holes - Bellwood Trees
- Environmental Issues in Canadian Golf - Bob Burrows, CGSA
- Managing in a Changing Financial Climate - Enviropro H2O
- Online Learning - Myerscough College
- Increasing Fertiliser Use - Efficiency Through Improved Biological Strategies - Novozymes Biologicals

- You Won't Believe It - Sharp Cylinders Allowed Me to Raise my Height of Cut and Increase my Greenspeed! - Bernhards
- Setting the Sprayer to Hit the Target - Tom Robinson
- The Future of Spraying - R & K Kensett
- Compost Teas Help Cut Costs and Chemical Use - Symbio
- Using Latest Weather Information to Assist Course Management - Met Office
- The Science and Nanotechnological Advantages of MEGALEX® and UPPLAUSE® - The Green Solution Ltd

BIGGA CPD Credits are available for all of the Continue to Learn Seminar Sessions and Workshops.

Careers Advice

Do you need careers advice, help writing or updating your CV, writing a letter of application or negotiating a contract? Why not book a session at the Careers Clinic being held at Harrogate Week. Sessions are available on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday with morning sessions available to pre-book by contacting the Learning and Development Department on 01347 833800 option 3. A careers advice service is also available from a government website www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk or by telephoning 08080 100333. This weblink will be added to the 'Useful Website Links' page in the Members Area of the BIGGA website.

Master Greenkeeper Certificate

Congratulations go to Dan Lightfoot, from Bearwood Lakes Golf Club, who achieved Master Greenkeeper status by passing his Stage Three Examinations in October 2008. Dan will be presented with his Master Greenkeeper Certificate at Harrogate Week during the Opening Session to held on Tuesday 20 January at 10.00am.

A RICH HISTORY AND OPTIMISTIC FUTURE

Scott MacCallum visited Hesketh Golf Club where the recently appointed Course Manager and his team are working hard to return the course to former glories.

Photograph by Alan Birch

FEATURE



Hesketh Golf Club, in Southport, has a rich history. It is regarded as the birth place of the English Golf Union, the initiative coming from a Hesketh Club Captain who went on to become the EGU's first President, while the Bentley brothers, Harry and Arnold, were among the most illustrious pair of brothers ever to play the amateur game.

Arnold won a rare golfing Olympic Gold Medal at the Berlin Olympics in 1936 in front of Adolf Hitler.

A fir tree, presented to Arnold at the time, and known as Hitler's Tree, was planted outside the Hesketh clubhouse where it still sits, despite regular overdoses of a certain naturally produced chemical, applied by members in its early years

While the history of Hesketh is on a par with any club in the country, in recent years, the golf course itself had slipped slightly from the heights it had reached and was in need of a boost.

That arrived in the shape of new Course Manager, Peter McVicar, who took over the reins in July 2007 and who has since made a big impact. Prior to his arrival in the North West Peter had

been Course Manager at the renowned Scottish links of Machrihanish.

"I spotted the advert for Hesketh in Greenkeeper International and looked the club up on the net. I also spoke to some people who had played the course and, having discussed it with my family, decided to apply."

Granted an interview, Peter arrived on the Monday evening for a Tuesday appointment and decided to take a quick look around the course at the earliest opportunity.

"I got stuck in the car park on the Monday evening because the barrier came down and I couldn't get out," recalled Peter with a smile.

It could have been taken as a bad omen but, on the other hand, perhaps he wasn't meant to leave.

"The interview was at 10am but I got here at 5.30am, went out onto the course, chatted with the boys at work and had a proper look at the holes around the clubhouse. They are amazing and I thought that I could definitely make an impression at Hesketh."

Fate was actually working in Peter's favour when he learned that some Hesketh members had

played Machrihanish the previous summer.

"They had had a great time and they asked me why wanted to come from Heaven to Hesketh? I told them that I thought I'd taken Machrihanish as far as I could and that I wanted a challenge. I told them that I felt I could return Hesketh to its former glory."

The job clinched, and having "Talked the Talk", Peter set about "Walking the Walk".

He was greatly impressed with the team he inherited describing them as "awesome", with all the skills required, but perhaps not the opportunity in the past to show just how talented they were.

"We started with the general untidiness of the course then worked on the shaping of the fairways. I don't like fairways that are straight up and down. I like to get a bit of definition in.

He also picked up a tip from architect, David McLay Kidd, who was a near neighbour of his in Machrihanish and which he introduced at the earliest opportunity.

"David suggested that I cross cut at Machrihanish as it lets you see every undulation of the fairway. I've brought that in here and while it adds about an hour and half to cutting time for all 18 holes



I think it's worth it. The golfers appreciate it because it shows that we're putting in the effort and working with dedication and passion," said Peter, whose first request to the club was for new hand mowers.

Since then the greens have all been hand cut and this has since been extended to the tees and approaches.

Peter involves his team – Deputy, Ken Critchley; David Weir; David Williams, Phil Alvey and Alex Mason – in the decision making processes that have resulted in moving the course on.

"We talk a lot at regular team meetings and have a lot of brain storming sessions in which everyone has an equal say."

Having made an immediate impression Peter and the team moved on to some medium and long term goals.

With the aim of introducing some more quality grasses to the course Peter and his team did a few demos of top dressers for the benefit of the committee.

"Previously it used to take a day to top dress 18 greens with a Cushman, shovels and a little drop spreader. We brushed the putting green,

then cut it, then top dressed it, overseeded it and rolled it again, all in the space of 10 minutes and that sold it to the committee. We got the Cyclone spreader, from Tycrop, and we can do all 18 greens in an hour and a half, which means we save a lot of time."

Hesketh will host two days of The Amateur Championship in 2011, while the club also hosted The Junior Open in the week of the Open Championship at Royal Birkdale last year.

"Padraig Harrington came along and was absolutely great with the kids spending a lot of time with them. It was superb publicity for the club."

As part of preparations for the Amateur the club has plans to improve its practice facilities, which will be of long term benefit to the club.

"At the moment we have a field with a green and a bunker but, in three phases over the next three years, we will build a raised tee half Astroturf and half turf with some targets to hit to. Phase Two is better bunkering with another chipping green while Phase Three will involved putting up some fences and fine tuning what we've done."

Peter is very keen to be approachable and

visible to the membership and another of the early initiatives was to have a "Meet the Greenkeeper" session.

"It was basically me sitting in the clubhouse – with my kilt on – answering whatever questions came up."

Around 200 members attended and Peter tackled all issues whether they be agronomic or, more specifically, what he had under his kilt!

"I make a point of coming into the clubhouse on a Saturday afternoon to chat with members and explain what we are trying to do. The best thing we get though is when one of our members calls us over and points out some fescue that they've found. It's obvious then that we are getting through to them.

"We do monthly reports for the members and started out with bullet points but we've moved on to bullet points plus a bit added on for those who wish to know more. It's a great club for passion.

"We've removed the 'Not beyond this point' white lines for trolleys and the members comply while the juniors are great at repairing pitchmarks," said Peter, who also has 24 artisans to assist him.



The Hesketh team with Peter, third from left

A bunker renovation programme has been put in place, which will see around 25 bunkers tackled each winter for the next four years and a rolling programme thereafter.

“Previously bunkers were built into the existing contouring which meant that some face into the rough and others out to sea. We will be building the bunkers and then shaping around them so that they face the hole.”

Peter was instrumental in the setting up of a Course Development Committee when he arrived involving Secretary Manager, Marytn Senior; Professional, Scott Astin; Club Chairman, Alan Tillbrook, and the Chairman of Green, one of the rare female Chairs in the country, Meegan Switzer, who was instrumental in bringing Peter to the Club.

“Meegan leaves the post at the end of this year (2008) but the job descriptions we wrote for the various positions includes an overlap for Chairmen of Green on the Course Development Committee of a year to improve continuity.

They are all good golfers so we are also looking at bringing in a not so good golfer for another opinion,” said Peter, adding that the new Course Policy Document was written with advice gleaned from the BIGGA Website, the EGU and St Andrews Links Trust.

“The first policy document I looked at was St Andrews’. It’s good to start at the top and that’s where I learned of a Course Development Committee.”

The Committee has already had a couple of course walks to assess the course and agree on potential changes.

Among those is to push some tees back, not for the regular members events but for the larger competitions.

“We have bunkers that the good golfers fly over but catch the regular handicapper.

“There are three pros in the shop and they are happy to hit as many balls off as many tees, or would-be tees, as I want, to see where they are landing. From one new tee 12 balls were hit and eight of them went in bunkers,” he revealed.

“It has been agreed that any major changes we must consult a designer. With smaller tweaks we will do them in-house or with the assistance of Stuart Ormondroyd, of the STRI.

While Peter has taken to working in the North West with aplomb his family have adapted just as

well to the change from the isolated Machrihanish area, where the nearest population centre was Glasgow.

“I was asked about this at the interview and I said that the nearest MacDonald’s was 130 miles away but that there here were three within a mile so we’d be alright,” said Peter, who has ensured that his two children are brought up as Aberdeen fans, although, as a special dispensation, they are allowed an English team as well.

With such a fair minded guy in charge Hesketh Golf Club can expect to have as glittering a future as it has a past.



Peter with Club Chairman Alan Tillbrook and Pro Scott Astin, part of the course development committee

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ZERO-TURN MOWERS: ARE THEY ALL THE SAME?



Kubota zero-turn mowers are all diesel powered, the pictured ZD28 topping the four-model line-up. Powered by a 28hp engine it can be specified with a choice of 1.52m side- or rear-discharge deck.

By James de Havilland

In the USA, the way in which grass is mown differs from the approach in the UK and Europe. These differences, however, go beyond accounting for climate, grass types, cut and collect systems and a host of other practical constraints.

In the US, they prefer to ride on a mower than walk behind it. Consider the heat of a typical US summer and this approach makes a great deal of sense. It is also a key to the popularity of the zero-turn. These mowers can be used in restricted areas that in Europe would typically be mown by pedestrian kit.

When zero-turn mowers first made their way from the US to Europe, however, these mowers received a fairly mixed reception from professional operators. With a degree of generalisation, some of the early imports were not built for intensive commercial applications, while those that were included were designs with too shallow a deck to cope with long, wet grass. Almost universal use of petrol engines did not help either.

Despite the fact that the zero-turn market has now matured in the UK, there remain some entrenched views that a zero-turn is not as suitable as a similar capacity out-front rotary for heavy use. The reality is that there are some pretty serious,

heavy duty zero-turn models on the market. Think Ariens, Ferris, Iseki, Kubota, Scag, Great Dane and Grasshopper for starters. In fact there is what now seems to be an ever-growing range of commercial quality zero-turn models offered in the UK.

In the golf sector, it is natural to perhaps think first of the models offered by the 'big three', John Deere, Ransomes-Jacobsen and Toro. And with good reason. These manufacturers know the UK market, and the key models offered by the companies in the UK are well suited to golf course users.

So is it fair to say all zero-turn mowers are the same? Well no. For starters, there are models, that include the Gizmow, that have a steering wheel as opposed to steering levers. Ferris units have a front suspension system. Grasshopper models have a four-wheel chassis, with rear castor wheels enabling the mower skid to operate a range of attachments and not just a deck.

A particularly interesting departure from the 'norm' is the Convertible Mower. This model can be operated both as a ride-on or pedestrian zero-turn. The idea is that in applications where an operator may have reservations about sitting on the machine, such as a steep bank, he can switch to pedestrian mode. On the level, he can then switch back to ride-on mode. This is an interesting idea,

and one that just shows how the term zero-turn should not be used to group all mowers of this type under the same headings.

So how much will a zero-turn cost to run?

Costing a mower of any description will always be complicated by the amount of work done, purchase price of the machine and how long it is kept in service. With a zero-turn, it perhaps helps to also look at how the unit could be used to reduce another cost, such as using a brushcutter.

If the zero-turn shows potential to save costs, these need to be considered. As to costs of running a zero turn, you can do some basics by taking the purchase price and writing it down over a period of five years. Assume the money to buy the machine has to be financed at a rate of say 6% per annum. Then factor in service, insurance and maintenance, this typically weighing in at 5% or so of the purchase price.

Next you need to work out typical annual usage and labour plus fuel costs. If this seems a bit tiresome, an all-in guide cost per hour will range from £16.50 to £22.00. This is based upon labour at £10 and fuel at £1.40 per hour and a 500 hour annual workload. If the latter seems high, consider how these mowers can be used in place of a brushcutter. Most users find a zero-turn is worked harder than initially anticipated.