You can play it as a six hole or a nine hole course,” said Aaron, who added that the project was given funding by Sport Northern Ireland.

“There were strict tight deadlines for every stage of the project which, if missed, would have caused the funding to be withdrawn but we met every one.”

The new area will be administered by the Pro Shop, with a booking system ensuring that there are not too many people on it at any one time, and schools will be invited to bring enthusiastic children to the area to receive lessons from the professionals and hopefully ultimately become members.

“It will also be a great warm up for those with a later tee time and we will have matches for the various groups within the club – juniors, ladies, seniors etc. It will help to bring the club closer together while sharpening up our short games, and let me get on with it which is exactly the way to a successful club,” said Howard.

“It seems to me that many, many golf clubs do not make good use of their practice facilities, however comprehensive they might be, and much comes down to the fundamental philosophy of the club to see new blood coming into the game. Donaghadee has been very enterprising in looking at this innovative approach to swell their membership, both adult and junior, and they have been very successful indeed in doing this on both counts,” he explained.

With the new short game facility to manage, which requires hand mowing of the greens, Aaron operates with a team of six including himself with summer help bringing that number to seven.

“I’m over the moon at the way things have worked out and delighted at the way the club has supported me. They gave me the job and let me get on with it which is exactly the way to a successful club. Pay the professionals to get on with the job,” said Aaron.

Perhaps it wasn’t such a gamble after all for Donaghadee Golf Club.
The BIGGA Open Support Team proved its worth at St Andrews this year when poor weather hit. Scott MacCallum reports from St Andrewsaviours

Blown away by St Andrews

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The 150th anniversary Open at St Andrews saw the BIGGA Open Support Team returning to the venue where the very first team started work back in 1984. Much has changed in those 26 years but one thing has remained constant – just how important the team is to the smooth running of an event where you never know what will happen next.

This year, for example, a suspension of play on the second afternoon because of high winds meant matches couldn’t be completed until Saturday morning. The knock on effect meant that those 30 players left out on the course had to play the same course as the players who had already completed their rounds. That, in turn, meant that Gordon McKie and his team couldn’t complete their third round prep until much later than intended which put pressure on everyone involved. The BIGGA team was there to help and a phone call from the R&A’s Grant Moir at 9.15pm on Friday evening asking for 20 Support Team members to shoot fairways ahead of the fairway mowers at 4.30am the next morning was met by a sea of hands volunteering to take on the task. Such desire to get in and help, whatever the hour, is what the BIGGA Open Support Team is all about.

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One of the many highlights was the presentation of a Lifetime Achievement Award to Cecil George (see page 34). National Chairman, Paul Worster, was Master of Ceremonies and introduced Past Chairman, Elliott Small, who outlined Cecil’s career. The actual presentation was made by BIGGA’s first Chairman, Walter Woods, the former Links Superintendent at St Andrews.

Thanks must go to all team members but, in particular, the Pod Leaders, Billy Merritt, Richard Saunders, Douglas McIntosh, John Kernaghan and Jeremy Hughes and all those who drove mini buses. Their work was supplemented by the Cabin staff, of Peter Boyd and Clive Osgood, and 1st Tee team of Richard Wyrman and Paul Jenkins. The responsibility for administration and the Marquee was carried out by Rachael Duffy, who was ably assisted by the Board of Directors Chris Bealey and Gary Cunningham.

The thoughts of everyone on the team went out to one of their number, Anthony Gillis, of Cork Golf Club, who had to cut short his time in St Andrews, almost before it had begun, and return home because of a family illness.

Next year the team will reform and be there to help at Royal St George’s Golf Club. Look out for the application form in the December and January issues of Greenkeeper International.

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Drs drawn from a list of BIGGA members who applied for the team at the turn of the year, greenkeepers came from all points of the UK and Ireland as well as the USA, Sweden, Germany and Slovenia.

A St Andrews Open benefits from the collective greeningkeping might of the St Andrews Links Trust Greeningkeping resources, managed by Gordon Moir, so, outside of emergencies, the BIGGA team members were able to concentrate on supporting their matches.

And what a fine job they did. The Association should be proud of them all. The hard work and effort was matched only by the fun and laughter that was had by all. One of the many highlights was the presentation of a Lifetime Achievement Award to Cecil George (see page 34). National Chairman, Paul Worsley, was Master of Ceremonies and introduced Past Chairman, Elliott Small, who outlined Cecil’s career. The actual presentation was made by BIGGA’s first Chairman, Walter Woods, the former Links Superintendent at St Andrews.

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ABOVE LEFT: Cecil Receives his award from Walter Woods
ABOVE CENTRE: Tools of the trade
ABOVE: Back packs kindly donated by Ransomes Jacobsen
LEFT: John Pemberton with Mark Pyrah of Sherriff, who kindly sponsored the TVs NEAR LEFT: Walter and Jack, doyens of the industry
BIGGA Titbits (by BIGGA Open Support Team Members)

• An early start does have its benefits. In the second match out Loren Roberts’ caddie spotted a lady watching the golf from the window of a room on the third floor of the Old Course Hotel covered only by her bra.
  Bob Malbousch MG, of Hinsdale Golf Club, Illinois, USA.

• Jean Van de Velde is still serving his apprenticeship as an on-course reporter. In trying to get a better view of Tiger Wood’s putt on the 15th he wandered onto the line of the group teeing off on the 16th. He was met with shouts of “Jean! Jean!” from the crowd, and the golfers, including Tiger, but as he was wearing headphones it took him a while to realize that he was an obstruction. He turned red and moved out of the way cheers from the crowd and the other players.
  Matt Wormald, of Luffenham Heath Golf Club.

• In an eventful day for Tiger he formed part of an illustrious queue for a portaloo on the 7th. Justin Rose went first, Tiger was next in line with Camilo Villegas bringing up the rear.
  Matt Wormald, of Luffenham Heath Golf Club.

• DA Points pulled a bag of beef jerky from his bag during the delay. Once he’d finished he then pulled a roll of dental floss from his bag and announced to the gallery, “The big problem once you’ve eaten beef jerky is that you gotta floss!”
  John Mair, of Dumfriesshire Golf Centre.

• Just as Steve Stricker sent his putt on the way to the hole on the 8th green a hare raced across the green missing the rolling ball by inches.
  Billy McMillan, of Tyrell’s Wood Golf Club.

• Ignacio Garrido’s caddie had a bad day on Saturday. Caught short he disappeared into the bushes to do what he needed to do and as he raced to catch up he tripped, fell over and all the clubs fell out of the bag.
  Jeremy Hughes, of Vale of Llangollen GC.

• BIGGA Support Team member John Mitchell, of Pembridge GC, had an unusual working day on Saturday. With 10 matches still to be completed early in the morning John was part of a small BIGGA team which arrived at the golf course at 5.30am to finish the matches. John was allocated the match closest to home and joined his group on the 18th tee. With no bunkers on the 18th Henrik Ibsen asked him why he was there and John told him that it was to make sure the team of referee, scorer, scoreboard carrier and BIGGA Support Team member was intact. John completed the walk up the 18th returned his rake and, not having been allocated a match on Saturday, had completed his day’s work by 6.40am.
  The Open - Complete Bunker Stats (1995 to 2010)

• Two players completed the four rounds without going into any bunkers at all – Rickie Fowler and Edoardo Molinari.

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• Careers advice and guidance
• Regional and national events

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• BIGGA Support Team member John Mitchell, of Pengeforth GC, had an unusual working day on Saturday. With 10 matches still to be completed early in the morning John was part of a small BIGGA team which arrived at the golf course at 5.30am to finish the matches. John was allocated the match closest to home and joined his group on the 18th tee. With no bunkers on the 18th Henrik Stenson asked him why he was there and John told him that it was to make sure the team of referee, scorer, scoreboard carrier and BIGGA Support Team member was intact. John completed the walk up the 18th returned his rake and, not having been allocated a match on Saturday, had completed his day’s work by 6.40am.

**The Open - Complete Bunker Stats (1995 to 2010)**

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**The Open - Complete Bunker Stats (1995 to 2010)**

- Two players completed the four rounds without going into any bunkers at all – Rickie Fowler and Edoardo Molinari.
Golf courses, far from being the habitat destroying, carbon churning beasts they are sometimes perceived, are often the exact opposite. New eco-friendly technologies that not only boost a club’s environmental credentials, but also help reduce running costs, are widespread.

Sustainability is becoming a key factor and alternative energy sources may now be viable to clubs that could potentially act as a business selling energy to the national grid, as well as providing electricity or heating for their own use.

From deer to grass snakes, a whole host of wildlife species seek golf courses as a haven to inhabit and as a place to rear their young. Jim Cook visited four golf clubs to find out more…

**Thorpeness Golf Club, on the east coast of Suffolk, sits within a 300 acre site. Sprawling areas of rough, deep rough between holes, heathland, wetland, copse trees, regenerating gorse and heather create a number of habitats for a multitude of wildlife species and rare plant types.**

A man-made mere with several islands tends to attract birds you would expect to see, and some you certainly would not. Course Manager, Ian Willett, explained. “What course can you go to at five o’clock in the morning, drive out onto the course in early spring, just as the sun is rising and hear the boom of the bittern? We get that from the north warren which is at the back of the fifth. You’ve got the northern diver out there and we’ve even had a white egret pair nest and rear two young. They got blown off course during the spring ended up here and lived it up. We were running around with cameras thinking it was white herons, but when we got a decent shot in and got the book out we realised they were white egrets nesting on the mere.”

Ian is backed up at the club by a team that has the same attitude toward the environment as he does. “The team and I know that everything we do on the course has an environmental impact - large or small. We are lucky because a member, called Dr Ray Harding, has been keeping records for 30 years and his journals about the golf course have been published. He has carried out studies and he keeps us on track, so we discuss everything we do with him.”

Dr Ray Harding spoke of changing attitudes towards golf clubs. “The Wildlife Trust and other organisations always tended to look at golf courses as a problem, but now they see it the other way round; that they are a reservoir or a last resort for wildlife, who can then re-colonise. That’s working quite well so at least we have achieved that.”

Ian spoke of how a disastrous situation was turned into a positive at the club. “Last year we’ve had arsonists in and set fire to various parts of the golf course. So we went in this year and cleared the site. Literally we scrubbed it down to the seed bed took all the timber out and piled it to one side which will give us an adder hibernacula, and we are trying to encourage a few grass heaps around the course. The snake population isn’t that great. Adders we are fine on and we have hundreds. Grass snakes, we’ve got them but they are not that active, so we decided to leave the odd grass heap to try and encourage the females to lay their eggs there.”

Although all wildlife was welcome on the course, some had become a bit too cosy. “Last year we had about six to eight stoats going on the course, lowering the rabbit population, but this year I think I have seen just one stoat. The rabbit population has gone absolutely through the roof – they are thousands of them. We use a pelleted chicken manure mix though, because the rabbits don’t like the smell of it.”

Ian said that one year of carelessness could effectively undo 30 years of hard work. “You need staff coming in after you who think the same way as you and carry on the work.”

It was not only on the course where environmentalism was considered. “We use air jets for the showers, where it takes a certain amount of air into the head so you are cutting down the amount of water you use, but still getting a good shower. We use low energy bulbs and have a recycling area, which is also used by locals. We also use a water recycling system at the sheds.”
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“The team and I know that everything we do on the course has an environmental impact - large or small” Ian Willett
Meldrum House Country Hotel and Golf Club, in Scotland, completed a new greenkeeping centre in January which contains a number of eco-friendly technologies.

The £750,000 development stores all the maintenance machinery and contains a wood pellet or log burner to provide heat and hot water for the complex. Insulating materials in the walls help reduce heat loss.

Rainwater collected is used to wash machines, and then filtered to be used again.

Kenny Harper, Golf Course and Estate Grounds Manager, said the club was working towards self-sufficiency.

“At the moment we’re using pellets for the burners, but we hope to use wood only from the estate by this time next year. We think it is extremely important to adopt a responsible approach to energy and water usage and as a result, eco-planning has become an important part of our business.”

“... as far as fertiliser and pesticides. This spring, carp were introduced to the ponds and instead of using chemicals, it was hoped would be a more natural way of clearing pond weed. Kenny was looking forward to seeing the results.

“It is early days at the moment and the fish are only four to six inches so it will be a little while before we see any results, but if you don’t try how are you going to know if it’s going to work?” Kenny Harper

The many lakes and ponds at the club have buffer zones around them to prevent run off from fertiliser and pesticides. This spring, carp were introduced to the ponds and instead of using chemicals, it was hoped would be a more natural way of clearing pond weed. Kenny was looking forward to seeing the results.

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