

**Some points of interest to come out of the BTME seminar programme**

**DR JAMES BEARD**

Pesticides is a very controversial area. Many people associate golf courses and toxic waste dumps in the same breath. The perception is there although it is incorrect.

Trends concerning pesticides include greater difficulty in registration of pesticides, continued increases in cost and much of that cost is the cost of doing the research to get the information to register the products. I also anticipate increasing employee awareness regarding safe pesticide usage, tighter government controls on pesticide use, and less broad spectrum applications. I see a move away from fence-to-fence applications on a calendar basis to going out, scouting the area, assessing whether there really is a need to apply that particular pesticide at that time or that year.

**DOUGLAS SHEARER**

Protective clothing relies totally on the PPE. If you do not choose the right PPE, then you've problems. Some 95% of that used by local authorities and on golf courses in the past 25 years has been the wrong protective clothing. People thought they were protected – and weren't. The problem is that if people think they are protected they will put themselves in danger.

**COLIN HEGARTY**

How do greenkeeping budgets fit in with the overall business of the golf course? Generally, the clubhouse accounts for 50% of all the money spent, and the golf course accounts for about a third of the expenditure, with labour accounting for about half of that third. It is not a bad rule of thumb to look at your budget and work out what proportion of total club expenditure you are getting. If it's nowhere near a third (or your labour bill is a lot more or less than half your budget) then there's a problem.

**JAMES MOORE**

The first thing you probably do after you've finished a job is wash the equipment down. You've got to stop doing that if you want to be more environmentally friendly.

Look what you're doing. You go out there and you generate lots of clippings, which are between 3 and 5% nitrogen, 1 and 2% phosphorous and a lot of other things as well. Where do those clippings go? They're washed off and go down a drain.

So what can you do? Simple suggestions include building up the intake on the wash rack and putting a screen over it to reduce the number of clippings going down. We let the machines dry off in the sun and then blow them clean. The benefits are:

1. We don't send clippings down the drain;
2. If you're using your irrigation system as a source of water, the water is coming out at 100-120psi and as soon as you start washing the reels, guess where all the grease went out of the bearings and seals? It washed right out. We shouldn't be surprised that the cables rust and the bearings go bad when we wash the equipment every single day.

# What the

**With reconstruction work at established clubs becoming a growing market for architects, there is a fair chance you will soon be faced with appointing and working with one. Cameron Sinclair gave delegates at this year's BTME seminars this advice...**

**A** good working relationship between a golf course architect (gca) and greenkeeper is, in my opinion, crucial to the success of any construction project. When I consider the best projects I have worked on, a common feature has been that I have had a first-class working relationship with the greenkeeper. There are basically two circumstances in which we have to work together:

- When a greenkeeper is appointed to maintain a new course;
- When a golf course architect is appointed to advise an established golf course.

They are very different situations – in the first instance the gca is often responsible for the selection of the greenkeeper, at the existing club the boot can be on the other foot – you, as the greenkeeper, can select the gca! I am going to concentrate on this situation.

Firstly, how do you appoint a gca? Golf course architects all come from different backgrounds and have different strengths and weaknesses depending on their ability and experience – you need to choose one that meets your needs and requirements.

I believe it is important that the greenkeeper gets involved in the appointment process. You should use the greenkeeper network to find out about the most suitable architects.

Having decided on your gca, it is very worthwhile writing down in the form of a brief what you expect from him. Don't tell him how to do the design, but give him a performance specification of what you expect from the end result. This will help the gca to focus on your needs and stop him experimenting on your course with the latest craze in golf course architecture.

Once the design has been agreed and detailed plans have been drawn up, the first big area in which the gca and greenkeeper need to work together is in deciding on the construction methodology that will be used during the implementation of the scheme. Obviously the size of the scheme will have a big influence on the decision on how the project will be implemented but if the scope of work is not too big one of the first questions I am usually asked by the committee is whether I think the greenkeeper can do the work.

As I see it there are essentially three options:

1. The club takes responsibility for the work using its own resources, ie. the greenstaff;
2. The gca draws up tender documentation and contractors are asked to quote on a fixed price basis.

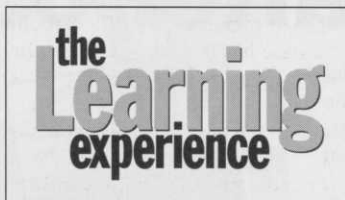
When I discuss these options with the greenkeeper I find there can be a variety of responses. Generally if the project is not too large, eg building one or two new tees, or a few new bunkers or a new green, I find that greenkeepers are quite keen to take it on, particularly if the work can be fitted into their winter programme. Very often advice from the gca comes in the form of a series of recommendations which can be implemented over a few years so the work can be done as part of a winter programme. Training in construction techniques amongst greenkeepers is improving and I find quite a lot of enthusiasm amongst greenkeepers to become involved in construction – indeed some of you take a great pride in not wanting outside contractors on your course. Others alternatively take the view that they have not got time and do not want the responsibility. The scope of work is

clearly a major factor in terms of the time you would have available to devote to it.

Before discussing it with the club, I like to discuss all the options with the greenkeeper first and present a joint approach with the

greenkeeper on how the construction methodology should be handled.

Whichever way you decide to go, it is vital that the gca makes sufficient visits during the construction stage. Under a fixed price contract the gca will be responsible for supervising the work and his fees will be based on the value of the contract. His visits are therefore built into the fee. Under other options it is important that a certain number of visits from the gca are built into the budget. Gca's get very irritated if, having advised a club and produced design plans, they find that the club do not want to pay for supervisory visits during construction. All plans are open to interpretation on site and it is annoying to find that your ideas have been implemented but the shapes are all wrong. The art of golf course architecture not only involves technical ability and an understanding of golf course strategy but also aesthetics. A good gca has got flair, imagination and an eye for the land – he should be at his most productive in this department during construction – if you do not use your gca at this time then it is not worth employing him at all. Most gca's love getting out of the office spending time on the site during the shaping process – so use them.



# experts say...

I often see examples of work at existing clubs where what has been done is technically sound but basically lacks flair. This scenario can occur when a gca has prepared a masterplan of improvements at an existing club. Very often the recommendations are to do with bunkering – suggesting new bunkers and removing obsolete bunkers. The greenstaff set about implementing the proposals under the guidance of the greens chairman and the result is a triumph of the practical over the aesthetic. Greenkeepers need to recognise their own limitations and recommend to the greens committee that the gca is asked to look over what is being done.

There is a crucial point in the shaping process when the gca should be there to approve the works. That is basically the point before any drainage is installed or topsoil replaced. For example, it is fairly straightforward to reshape a green base but once you start drainage and build up you are locked into the shapes on the sub-base and it becomes expensive to make changes. So try and arrange visits from the gca at the point of sub-soil formation and make sure that the machinery is available on site to make any changes during the visit. Even if a contractor is on site they generally won't charge extras for making changes to the sub-soil base but if they have to undo completed work they usually do.

I would therefore hope that the greenkeeper would keep me informed of progress and advise me when would be the most productive time to visit. In this respect do not be afraid to shout at the gca if you feel his presence is required – gca's often have more than one project on at one time and they will tend to prioritise their time according to who screams at them the loudest!

A final point on the timing of visits. It is obviously essential to get the basic shapes right but you also need to involve the gca for the finishing touches. Very small changes in level or in the profile of the bunker can make all the difference to the imagery and aesthetics of the picture. A gca should have the eye for the job so try and make sure he is around before the turf is laid or the seed sown.

In conclusion, in order to establish a good working relationship with the gca you should:

1. Get involved in the appointment process and find out about your gca through talking to fellow greenkeepers.
2. Discuss the construction methodology with the gca and do not be afraid to take on the responsibility.
3. Present a joint proposal with the gca to the committee. Make sure you get enough visits from the construction and be aware of the critical point formation when it is easy to make changes.
4. Use the gca for the finishing touches.



Taking it all in: delegates at the seminar programme in Harrogate

## **TOMMY LINDELOF**

*Chief executive of the Swedish Greenkeepers Association and publisher of Greenbladet*

The dentist to his patient: "Unfortunately, I have to pull out a tooth."

The patient: "Will it hurt?"

The dentist: "Normally not, but sometimes I hurt my wrist..."

This somewhat absurd dialogue could, figuratively speaking, be a dialogue between the greenkeeper and the chairman of green. Although, they should think in the same way, they do not. The greenkeeper makes a statement based on a professional view of the problem. The elected representative often reacts in one or two of the following ways:

1. Does it cost money?
2. How shall I explain this to the captain or the board of management?
3. Does this affect my chances of re-election?

In Sweden, last year, we saw quite a few examples where elected representatives of the golf clubs turned a businesslike problem into a personal problem. For example, if the irrigation system is inadequate during a drought, the golf club blames the greenkeeper for not irrigating enough. Or, in the spring, if it is too cold for the grass to grow, the greenkeeper is blamed for not fertilising. Or if the greenkeeper is told to lower the height of cut to improve the speed of the ball and the greenkeeper says that it cannot be done because it will kill the grass, the greenkeeper is blamed for having difficulty in co-operating.

In my view, there is nothing wrong in these examples with either the greenkeeper nor the elected representative. What is wrong is the golf club and its form of organisation. The golf club as a non-profitable organisation is not able to handle activities that should be dealt with in a professional way. Nor are they upto handling decisions that have long-term effects.

We have had golf clubs in Sweden for 90 years and in Britain for nearly 250 years. As far as I understand the structure of the golf club has not changed much during these years, although the activities within the golf club have undergone many changes. Furthermore, the demands from members on quality and excellent conditions on the course have been much accentuated during recent years. In addition, laws and regulations imposed from outside the sport interfere with the maintenance of the golf course and how to handle employed people.

In my view, a golf club should be run as a limited company. The members would still handle the game of golf (competitions, handicaps etc) and the social life (parties, playing cards etc) but all the activities that must be handled in a professional way should be handled by a limited company whose shares are owned 100% by the golf club. The secretary would become the managing director and you would have professionals in charge of the following 'departments': golf course, finance and administration, and buildings.

To avoid a situation where corruption by friends could arise, there should be different members on the board of the golf club and the board of the limited company.

I do not think one could directly reduce the costs of the golf club by this organisation, but I think the better management that would result would reduce costs. My prime aim with this setup is to create a better framework for a professional management and with a company, I think, the members would better understand and appreciate the professional work that must be done. Furthermore, the management of a company is better described in laws and regulations than the golf club and that in itself gives the company a firmer ground to stand on.