

An ATV is unique – it will go where other vehicles fail to tread. Mountainsides, moorland and sand dunes. It takes it in its stride. Roland Taylor investigates...

Access all areas



A mobile servicing unit for greens, tees and bunkers saves time. Cost effectiveness and productivity are two of the most important sectors of modern management. A major contributor to achieving these is the use of time – something that for most of us in today's fast moving environment quickly runs out. Bearing this in mind, it is always worth investigating the possibilities that can save time and increase productivity by releasing staff or equipment for other jobs. One piece of machinery that could fall into this category is the All Terrain Vehicle (ATV), a prime mover that one suspects many greenkeepers dismiss, yet on closer examination they would discover a workhorse that could be of considerable benefit around a course.

Access all areas



However, getting the okay to buy one past a greens committee might prove no easy task as some members may well have preconceived ideas. These are largely a result of the image created by the consumer media of a cross between a scramble bike and a racing buggy. In the commercial world this is far from the truth, as users quickly discover. An ATV is unique - it will go where other vehicles fail to tread. Mountainsides, moorland and sand dunes it takes in its stride. While there are few golf courses in these types of location, the majority of readers are not faced with this situation and could be forgiven for asking the question, "What benefit would one of these vehicles be to me?" The answer is that they are

light on their wheels and so are ideal on turf, especially where the problems of compaction are a constant headache. In addition these compact workhorses have much more to offer and it is these qualities we now investigate.

Since the ATVs introduction just over two decades ago, manufacturers have developed its role from being a simple go-anywhere passenger vehicle to a power source for towing a range of attachments or transporting staff and equipment between sites. It is these features that will be of most benefit in saving time and costs on a golf course.

Travelling between greens can absorb a lot of unproductive time in a year. The reasons may be the

actual layout of the course or the fact that to drive a tractor and trailer over certain parts adds to the problem of compaction. The low ground pressure tyres on an ATV are inflated at between 2 and 5psi. This means the vehicle can cover areas of water-logged ground without sinking or over delicate turf without damage. This is especially important during winter or a wet spring such as we have experienced this year. From this it can be seen that there is the opportunity to take a direct route, thus reducing travelling time.

Another area where savings are likely to be made is fuel. This is due to the engine sizes used on ATVs compared to those of a conventional tractor. It should also be

remembered that it would also release these larger pieces of equipment for other work.

The following scenario illustrates how an ATV would fit into a golf course application.

Known as the greens, tees and bunkers servicing unit, the ATV, is either fitted with a cargo bed or a more specialist model is used that will take two people plus tools chemicals and fertiliser. It carries all the necessary equipment required to carry out maintenance operations on these three playing areas. Within a few minutes the unit can be on site and the work carried out.

Having this type of mobile unit means that should a problem develop out on the course, it can

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be dealt with quickly. This is especially true in a situation where a mower has broken down. Portable welders, compressors, batteries and tools can be transported to the site within minutes. The same applies to pumps, irrigation equipment and generators. From this it can be seen how versatile this type of vehicle can be when used to its full capacity.

ATVs fall into two categories - the single person unit or the type that has the facility to carry more than one person plus equipment. There is a wide choice of models with or without cargo beds and engines come in all sizes including diesel-powered units. To get the necessary traction, not all models have a differential, so this tends to

make turning circles fairly large if the possibility of damaging turf is to be avoided. It is worth checking out if the particular model you are interested in has a differential; especially if it is likely to be used in confined areas.

Two applications where the ATV has proved to be highly successful are spraying and fertiliser distribution. Because of their design the units can often go on turf when other machinery would mark or damage it.

Since their introduction, a whole range of attachments including sweepers, and trailers have been developed specifically for them, so there are a wide range of jobs they can be adapted to carry out.

As stated before, getting an ATV

through committee might be difficult. For this reason it is important to gather as much information as possible. Talk to your local suppliers; ask them to give details of other courses where the vehicles are being used. Contact these and find out their views. Gather as many facts and figures as possible on running costs, time saved and any other details that help to make a good case.

ATV's have not always enjoyed good press coverage - as a result people have become very sceptical; so you need to have answers to overcome their objections.

The fact that an ATV is designed to travel over relatively hostile terrain means that over confidence sets in and the vehicle may be

pushed beyond its limits. The resulting accident becomes headline news. In this situation the question needs to be asked, "Was the unit being driven safely and within its limitations?" All machinery used on any golf course is dangerous if used incorrectly.

Looking at the overall introduction and development of machinery usage on golf courses over the years, the ATV after just two decades is still very much in its infancy. There is a good case for its introduction into a fleet as a highly mobile greens, tees and bunkers servicing unit.

Saving of time is something we are always looking for in today's hectic work environment - an ATV is a step in the right direction.

