

Making the most of a bad situation

While the attention is quite rightly focussed on the nightmarish time the farming community is enduring right now, as well as the knock on effects the Foot and Mouth outbreak is having on tourism, many golf courses are also suffering a second kick in the teeth in the space of a few months.

Rainfall which broke longstanding records and closed some golf clubs for weeks and, in some cases, months at a time has fortunately abated only to be replaced by a phenomenon which is closing golf clubs for an altogether different reason.

Many calls were received at BIGGA HOUSE from members seeking advice on dealing with the outbreak and they were referred to their local MAFF office. Obviously different degrees of risk existed depending on the location and nature of the golf course and while some would no doubt have been recommended to close - including BIGGA Chairman, Clive Osgood's own club, Walton Heath, which closed for a week - others were not within a hundred miles of an outbreak and could continue very much as normal.

No doubt some clubs have received the doubly whammy of closure for flooding and closure for Foot and Mouth and for them the implications, while not as immediate as those for the poor farmers, are depressing.

No golf equals no golfers and no golfers, equals no revenue. While this is particularly devastating for pay and play and proprietary-owned facilities it also has implications for members' clubs, as no-one has reason to be at the club and clubhouse and pro shop need custom to keep them ticking over.

And if you think about it, if you are closed for a week that's 2% of the available money-making time in the year, a fortnight is 4%. If a club is budgeting for break even or a small profit that can be swallowed up immediately and golf club purchasing decisions may have to be reconsidered.

You don't have to be Einstein's long lost nephew to work out that the new fairway machine you've been promised this season might not materialise.

It is at times like these when you have to earn your stripes and look for ways of making the best of an unfortunate situation.

It would be hard not to agree with the treasurer when he says sacrifices have to be made, but couldn't other options be examined? Leasing, for example, or moving money from one budget to another. While drainage work must continue perhaps the three new tees you'd decided to build next autumn could wait for another year and the money saved used instead to finance a new hand mower. Whatever you consider most important.

It's all about priorities. How best can your reduced budgets be used to maximise your effectiveness over the tough short and middle term?

It's a question you should be asking because when the frustrated golfers return to the courses determined to make up for lost time they are going to be looking for tip top conditions.

An ability to make the most of a bad situation will be a valuable weapon in your armoury.

Scott MacCallum
Editor

Kubota restructures sales operations

Kubota (UK) Ltd has brought together its three sales operations into one division working beneath a single banner - Kubota Sales. Covering the three formerly separate sales divisions of Tractors, Industrial and Construction Machinery, and Engines, the move is designed to improve customer support.

Responsibility for the new combined sales operation lies with Kubota UK's Deputy Managing Director, Rene Orban, who becomes Sales Director in charge of all Kubota product sales.

Operating from Kubota UK's headquarters at Thame, Oxfordshire, the combined sales operation will have an annual turnover in excess of £50 million. Among the products contributing to this figure are compact tractors, tracked mini excavators and small diesel engines.



Above: Rene Orban, Deputy Managing Director of Kubota UK outside the Kubota UK headquarters at Thame, Oxfordshire

Sales, parts and service support for the Kubota product ranges brought together within the single sales division will continue to

be handled by a specialist distribution network of almost 90 Kubota-appointed and trained dealers throughout the UK.

HSE software launch

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in collaboration with Royal & Sun Alliance has published Essentials of health and safety Routemap, an easy-to-use computer software package designed to help small businesses improve their health and safety awareness.

Director-General of the HSE Timothy Walker said. "The Essentials Routemap will assist firms to avoid accidents and ill health at work by helping them identify and control the risks their workers face."

"Having a health and safety

management system which is relevant to the risks or hazards involved helps ensure compliance with health and safety law, and more importantly helps reduce accidents and ill-health. Health and safety failures cost Britain up to £18 billion each year. The cost of work-related accidents and ill-health to employers is £140 to £300 for each worker employed," he said.

The Essentials Routemap is available at HSE Books, HMSO and at high street book stores and retailers at £95 + VAT.

New work-based NVQ Level 2 from Cannington College

Cannington College, Somerset, are currently developing a Work Based programme of study that will allow greenkeepers to gain an NVQ Level 2 qualification in Greenkeeping & Sportsurf Maintenance.

The work-based programme allows greenkeepers to be assessed in the workplace with minimal college attendance being required. The qualification is based upon the Greenkeeping Training Committee's 'Black Book'.

This new qualification offered by Cannington reflects the college's attitude of providing quality assured education & training for both people and businesses.

Interest shown in interest-free scheme

Over £2 million worth of new golf course equipment has been financed by John Deere Credit this winter, following an interest free credit scheme launched for the first time last year.

The scheme has proved very successful, with 107 deals signed with 30 dealers across the country. The most popular machines

chosen by golf courses have been John Deere's new greens and fairway mowers, and 4000 Series compact tractors, with list prices ranging from around £10,000 to £30,000.

"John Deere Credit's interest free scheme has obviously helped a number of our golf club customers with their equipment

purchases this winter," said Graham Williams, John Deere's Commercial and Consumer Equipment Division Manager.

These sales have contributed to a 40% increase in our golf and turf business over the last quarter, compared with last year, and we will certainly be planning to repeat the scheme next winter."

Huxley Golf expands business

Huxley Golf, who specialise in the supply and installation of all-weather surfaces for golf, and whose customers include many of the world's top golfers and golf courses, are expanding their business in response to increasing demand from customers.

The Hampshire-based firm, owned by Paul and Barry Huxley, has developed a comprehensive range of all-weather surfaces which includes putting greens, golf greens and target greens, golf course tees, practice tees, path-

ways, lawn and standing areas, cartways and driving range landing zones.

Huxley Golf's customer list includes Ian Woosnam and Darren Clarke, who are among several golfers who practise at home on Huxley Golf all-weather greens.

"Our business with golf courses has grown fast, but we could cope. Courses typically try one Huxley Golf all-weather tee and then come back for more. Several clubs now have 18 tees, while

pathways are now becoming popular. Last year we introduced our new all-weather putting greens and we only just coped with the demand. Because of this, we appointed five new Huxley Golf Specialist Area Distributors and Installers, in addition to our Scottish operation.

These new Distributors are now doing well and we are looking to appoint several more in key parts of the United Kingdom and also overseas," said Paul Huxley.