

This month David Golding, GTC's Education Director, specifically looks at the workplace option for greenkeeper training.

It is with a positive note I hope to encourage more golf club employers to "invest" in their staff's education and training.

The GTC, having worked within the Government's national framework for qualifications and apprenticeships for many years, has received information that more funding is to be made available to ensure greenkeeper education and training is affordable for all levels.

Whether it is the apprenticeship scheme or the more academic Foundation Degree qualification the GTC will continue to not only ensure the content of the awards are relevant to our specialist sector but to ensure adequate funding is made available to our approved centres who offer the various courses.

The GTC received a bonus in 2002 when the European Social Fund (ESF) awarded a substantial level of funding to match the time put in by greenkeepers, in a senior position within the golf club, to train as work-based trainers and assessors.

As the two-year contract is coming to a close, with Plan-it Training the GTC is very hopeful that we will be able to confirm news that again our sector has been recognised as a model and further funding be made available to keep our successful programme on going.

I have previously reported that each year we see an increase in registrations for the work-based training qualifications and training schemes. This, I believe, is a trend that suits our sector and the increase in trainees is down to three main factors.

As the GTC trains more Course Managers, H/G's and Deputies as work-based trainers and assessors this ensures the understanding of vocational training and how it should operate benefits not only their trainee colleagues but the employer sees a sudden improvement both in their staffs skills and job satisfaction.

I truly hope that all this improvement is acknowledged through the Course Manager's reports to the employer and staff receive due recognition for their achievements.

Employers (often through their enlightened Course Manager) are investing in staff training which is very cost effective, work-based and prudent when maintaining their course and health and safety policy documents.

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (1998) often known as the PUWER regulations are clear when stating the importance of competence of workers. I know many readers will be thinking "here we go again", quoting legislation as a requirement for training.

However, many older readers will remember the awful work conditions that were "provided" for greenkeepers both to maintain and store equipment in but worst still to have their lunch and snack breaks in.

Most golf club employers, again often through their competent Course Managers, have improved conditions for their staff before the "enforcers" have visited the site and while I know there are still some facilities which should be designated as "sites of septic scenery" thankfully they are now



David Golding.

in the minority.

One further factor that has taken most of the GTC's time is changing the way formal greenkeeper vocational education and training is delivered.

Traditionally our sector has used the "local" horticultural/agricultural college via the day or block release system but, for a variety of reasons, this service has faltered and this is no reflection on the excellent service given by the "named" turf lecturers. It would be unfair to name individuals but often you would name a college and more importantly you would name the "front man" for turf.

We cannot look back at the way the system was because if we as a sector want subsidised formal education and training we must work within the Government's structure, therefore what are today's options available to golf clubs?

One message has to be clear to employers, ensure your senior greenkeeping staff are up to speed with their own personal development which in turn will undoubtedly have a benefit to the rest of the staff and the course.

The GTC have recently produced a standard set of learning materials which are being used by our network of centres and this information can now be purchased for use "on the job".

Based on the best principles and practices for British golf courses the materials cover the knowledge within National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications at Levels 2 & 3.

A small number of the GTC's approved centres actually offer full on the job support to trainees but where there is an enlightened, qualified trainer/assessor on site this option works very well.

When the employer or often a Head Greenkeeper feels the trainee should attend college then the vocational training schemes can become difficult to maintain.

The on/off the job compromise can work with the trainee attending the centre for the knowledge and the skills training being carried out by the Course Manager.

It is still the responsibility of the chosen centre that the evidence both knowledge and practical is to the national standards.

The quality of the assessment is paramount and this has been where the GTC has invested heavily in recent years promoting the use of work-based assessors at every opportunity.

The GTC will continue to ensure the best principles are adhered to through its approved provider network and, with all the changes in college staff and resource levels, it may be no surprise that the committee are reviewing the network and I will update you on the progress being made in this area next month.

For up to date information on vocational training, apprenticeship schemes, trainer and assessor training contact the GTC on 01347 838640 or email david@the-gtc.co.uk Website www.the-gtc.co.uk

May I also take this opportunity on behalf of the GTC to wish you a very Merry Christmas and I hope to see you on the GTC stand at BTME & Clubhouse 2005.