

A GREATER UNDERSTANDING



This month David Golding, GTC's Education Director, explains how he is hoping that a joint series of GTC and The R&A workshops, to be held this summer, will help all turf staff employed at GTC Approved Centres understand what the sustainable golf course programme, including the benchmarking service, is all about - David also encourages employers to use the much publicised Apprenticeship scheme.

Much has been discussed regarding just what is behind The R&A's strong support and promotion to golf clubs and greenkeepers of maintaining and managing golf courses in a sustainable manner.

The R&A's benchmarking service is now available which is designed to help courses record, monitor and report on their progress towards becoming more sustainable and as a means of gathering information, not currently available, to give the game more accurate details in order to offer more reliable data to organisations and authorities rather than the more "we know golf is more environmentally friendly than we were" type of meaningless statements.

I know from my attendance at the UK's Amenity Forum where much time and effort has been spent from a huge range of pesticide users on defending the use of plant protection products that the EU Thematic Strategy has really exposed many weaknesses in data, and we think the UK has a good record.

Clearly golf has to have much more reliable data to feed into the various countries regulatory process if we are to continue to have these "tools" to use in the future.

I do not intend to enter into whether there should be pesticides to use or not but the whole debate needs to be aired in a professional manner with leading golf bodies at the forefront of policy making.

The GTC with BIGGA, the British Home Unions, the PGA European Tour and The R&A are all committed to ensuring greenkeeper education and training programmes are current and will ensure the whole sustainability debate is discussed and how best this is explained to all levels of greenkeeping students.

So how do we best address the S Factor?

What we have agreed with The R&A is a workshop format where all staff employed throughout the GTC Approved Centre network, who are involved in delivering turf education, will be

invited to meet with Course Managers and Club representatives who are known to be involved in a sustainable programme of maintaining their golf course.

There will be representatives from the GTC and the R&A at all of the workshops.

It will be an opportunity to bring the theory behind the sustainable golf course programme together with the practicalities of introducing and implementing a programme in reality.

We intend to invite Course Managers, who, together with their club officials, will explain their experiences to the delegates from Centres throughout Britain.

We are hoping for a really hands-on approach to the workshops and our aim is to develop a set of agreed learning materials for students on the range of courses offered by our Approved Centres.

Attendance at the workshops is by invitation only but the outcomes will be made available shortly after the final event.

The GTC would like to thank the following clubs for agreeing to use their facilities and the Course Managers and club officials for their support in the days programme: Wilmslow GC, Burnham & Berrow GC, Glencorse GC, Temple GC, Gog Magog GC, King's Hill GC and Cleveland GC.

The proven way to train your workforce

Nobody can have failed to have seen or heard the Governments recent advertising campaign promoting apprenticeships.

Regular readers will know that as a former apprentice (many years ago!) I have recommended to the GTC for many years that to have a sector

specific apprenticeship is one of the best ways to ensure we can still attract youngsters into greenkeeping.

By us attending meetings to develop and now review the apprenticeship framework, it is important our golf clubs and Course Managers continue to maximise this route to staff recruitment and development.

Millions of pounds have been made available by the Government and during these difficult times for small and medium size businesses in particular, it is easy to forget training.

I encourage all employers and managers to consider this option to access training through a GTC Approved Centre (see our website for Centres) with funding support to maintain staff development.

The main content of the Apprenticeship in Sports Turf – Greenkeeping is the Vocational Qualification both at Level 2 Apprenticeship and Level 3 the Advanced Apprenticeship.

As our sector has an apprenticeship to offer may I remind all employers willing to offer work experience to school students, 14 years and older, that should they be interested in a career as a greenkeeper please make them aware of the Apprenticeship - we can send them a free career pack.

Visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk and www.the-gtc.co.uk for further details. Employers can post apprenticeship vacancies on the www.apprenticeships.org.uk website as well as apprentices seeking employment. Follow the link to The Apprenticeship Service.

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