

STROLLERS MAKE MARATHON EFFORT

A group of staff from The Scotts Company and a former employee completed the New York Marathon, and in the process raised more than £10,000 for the children's charity, Whizz-Kidz.

The Scotts Strollers' day started with a 2.30am wake up to catch a 4am coach to the start line on Staten Island. After more than five hours trying to keep warm in the chilly holding area, they joined the 40,000-strong crowd of runners gathered in the mid-morning sun for the start. Carried along by the encouragement of spectators lining the route, Andrew Wilson was first across the finish line, completing the tough, undulating course in four hours 16 minutes.

Shaun Cavanagh finished in four hours 47 with David Truby and Sam Cassidy both recording a time of four hours 51. Frances Lark from Customer Services completed her first marathon supported by Regional Director Steve Squires in a time of six hours 57 minutes.

After such a tremendous effort, the team made good use of their time in the Big Apple with visits to Wall Street, the Empire State Building and Ground Zero and a helicopter ride around the Statue of Liberty.

David and Shaun happened to bump into race winner Paula Radcliffe at the top of the Empire State Building. When they asked her if she'd found the race as tough as they had, she said it depended how tough that was!



NEW AWARDS LAUNCHED

New industry-wide annual awards that recognise the important contribution by grounds care staff to the sustainability of British sport and best-practice grounds care across a multitude of disciplines and technologies have been launched by the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG).

The IOG Industry Awards will acknowledge the high standards achieved by a wide range of volunteer and professional grounds care skills and facilities – from grass roots to professional stadia level. The 2009 results will be announced Oscar-style at the Emirates Stadium, London, on 15 October 2009 as part of the IOG's National Conference.

Commenting on the launch, Sports Minister, Gerry Sutcliffe MP, said: "I recognise the valuable contribution which grounds staff around the country, whether volunteers or professionals, make in keeping sports facilities well maintained. Their hard work and technical knowledge helps make sport accessible to everyone and should be publicly acknowledged."

PESTICIDES – THE FACTS

Jon Allbutt, Chairman of the Amenity Forum, puts his slant on the recent EU Pesticide Usage directive.

I am not surprised at the amount of debate on whether greenkeepers will have any pesticides at all to use in the future.

That, after all, was the point of the Amenity Forum's campaign over the last two years or more – to raise awareness and get our sector involved in the debate!

The EU Parliament has now voted on two Directives – The Authorisation Directive that decides what pesticides will be permitted within the EU – and the Sustainable Use Directive that sets the "rules" to protect the environment including the public or in EU speak – bystanders.

The main points are:

- Member States will include in their legislation that users will adopt integrated approaches to pest management – this is already common practice in golf but not other amenity areas!
- Member States will establish National Action Plans – the UK already has one in operation.
- Application equipment will need to be tested except, perhaps, knapsack sprayers – we already have the NSTS scheme that can be adjusted.
- Distributors, users and advisors will have to be trained and hold a recognised qualification – we have a world class certification scheme
- There is still great concern over definitions in the Authorisation Directive that will decide on what active ingredients will be permitted within the EU – we must wait a while for clarification here. It seems clear that we are going to lose some valuable products, but it will be months before we know exactly what.
- Member States must introduce legislation to protect water – we already have the very successful LERAPS Scheme
- Member States must introduce legislation to protect vulnerable people and sensitive environmental areas. The Directive allows for prohibition or restriction. This includes all amenity areas where we are using pesticides where the public have access, there are lakes, ponds and other environmentally sensitive areas. Each Member State must consult the general public and users as part of the legislative process so your voice is vitally important. Contact BIGGA HOUSE and they will put you in touch with your representative and he will bring your views to the Forum.

So it is not all bad news is it?

The next and hopefully final stage in the process is for the Council of Ministers to approve the detail for implementation; this will provide more clarification for each Member State and also set a timetable for implementation. The timetable is usually within two years of the issuing of the final documentation – this is likely to mean that we will have our new UK Regulations around the end of 2011.

I will be monitoring developments carefully and expect to have the detailed documentation in March/April.

In the meantime if it vital for our industry sector to continue to make our views known to our professional bodies who in their turn must make their views known all the way up to Ministers!

