



On the Soapbox

A vehicle for people within the industry to express their viewpoint

Jonathan Smith, of The Golf Environment Group, offers some suggestions for New Year's Resolutions...

So the finer particles have just settled on another festive season.

Like me you've probably had to loosen your belt by at least a couple of millimetres ("Eh! What? Did someone say two millimetres? Bloody idiots").

The good Scottish flock among the greenkeeping congregation will no doubt have exposed themselves to far too much pleasure for their Calvinistic convictions, and will currently be found in sheds whipping themselves with switching rods.

Resolutions designed to herald a new era, announced with bravado in the wee small hours, will either have lost their initial pizzazz, or may already have been broken.

"I will read all the Disturbance Theory papers! I will establish a log of staff training

ity, enthusiasm and passion for the superb and actually very worthy and rewarding career I have chosen.

3. In doing this I will attend education events and provide constructive feedback to my Association.

4. I will strive to work even more closely with our Club Manager or Secretary. I will be a team player. As this businesses leading decision makers, we will sit down together and plan out what we would both like to see achieved. We will devise tactics that make sure the cynical, ill-informed fools (I mean customers) that populate our bar and play our course, don't dictate our businesses pace of play.

5. I will explore environmental issues and sustainability more closely, and embrace them as a way to improve my performance, my product, my profile and my golf facilities profits.

6. I will no longer view them as a hassle, as something to be negotiated around, kept at arms length or avoided. Instead I will approach the subject with positivity in the belief that I might actually be able to drive efficiencies and present a better golf experience while lightening the overall footprint of our operations;

7. I will start by evaluating just how much amenity grass I maintain. I will reflect objectively on our grassing plan and seek opportunities, even if they be small and multiple, to relax management, save time and money, increase habitat, improve course character, texture and atmosphere and improve water quality - all through one simple and carefully applied policy decision that we will not over maintain areas that don't need it.

8. I will involve people around me. I will not allow environmental management to be my sole responsibility. I will engage with colleagues in the clubhouse and the club professional to see if between us we can find ways to reduce waste and energy use, and to better communicate on course management and environmental issues with a unified voice;

9. I will use that team to help put together a simple but effective environmental plan - that summarises the environmental qualities of our site, sets out our policies for addressing priority issues and then summarises the projects and specific practical actions we will take to improve our performance.

10. I will let people know what I do and why I do it. I will be confident in my knowl-

edge and ability to manage our golf course estate. I will honestly reflect on weaknesses, seeking advice and support to address them. I will not allow misinformed people to continue to assume golf courses are sterile, artificial, synthetic landscapes with huge resource inputs. I will turn this on its head by walking the walk, and then talking the talk. Creating a course that provides a high quality golfing experience, is ecologically rich, resource efficient and a stunning golf landscape.

11. The tool I will use to streamline my environmental action, and to present our commitment and performance with credibility, is the most productive available.. GEO Certification (register free on line at www.golfenvironment.org/certification).

Now if you've just read that, then it means you've just said it - at least to yourself. So take the next logical and highly valuable step, and make it happen during 2010.

Make this year the year of low carbon; high ecosystem golf.

With best wishes for success from the Golf Environment Organisation, (whose own resolutions by the way are to support golf in improving its performance, provide practical solutions and appraise and recognise credible achievements.)

'tis the Season...

needs! I will secure a budget for a new wash-pad! I will not use a preventative! I will attain an 80/20 sward composition on the 3rd, 8th and 17th greens!"

(NOTE, if you're publicly stating these kinds of resolutions in front of friends and family then you clearly should have taken a longer vacation).

But, if you happen to be struggling for resolutions as you look forward to another year among your extended family of greenkeeping colleagues, here's a few feel good ideas you might like to consider.

Say out loud... (ideally in front of your full Board of Directors or Committee)

"This year ...

1. I will help golf lose its image problem. Golf has one, for various reasons, and unfortunately that means I have one too. Unbelievable as it may sound, people living around golf courses think of my team and I as eco-vandals that are marauding around our exclusive patch, drawing up dastardly schemes to deliberately harm wildlife and to contaminate soil, water, air and anything else we can pass a boom over.

2. I will make a stand for the greenkeeping professional - not by bemoaning others, but by demonstrating my own knowledge, abil-



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The views expressed within On The Soapbox are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International