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Flexibility key for golf clubs

As 2013 draws to a close and we look forward to a bumper BTME next month there seem to be some genuine signs for optimism in the industry. After a couple of terrible years of weather 2013 was much more like it, courses have been in great condition and remain so going into winter and this has led to a substantial increase in rounds played.

The more switched on golf clubs will have converted those extra rounds into increased revenue which has to be good news for all of us. There are still some serious challenges out there though with golf club memberships appearing to still be in decline.

Golf clubs are being forced to adapt and as with anything in life those that adapt the quickest are finding themselves ahead of the curve. It is in some ways extraordinary that in an innovative sport like golf the core business model of the member golf club has remained seemingly untouched for generations. Our members have been adapting to changes in technology, climate and the economy continually since the sport was born and I genuinely believe that the golf club business can learn from that flexibility.

Over the last few weeks I have been fortunate to attend four of BIGGA's Regional Conferences and am struck time after time with the level of adaptability that greenkeepers show. David MacIndoe's experience growing in Belarus's first golf course and Steve Chappell's preparations for next year's Ryder Cup at Gleneagles were just two of the many examples.

I would like to thank all the presenters who gave their time to take part in the conferences, the learning and networking opportunity they provide is priceless.

I am delighted that Jacobsen have committed to continuing with their excellent Future

Turf Managers Initiative. Having attended the inaugural event this year, I would urge any of you who have ambition to be a course manager to take part. On your behalf I would like to thank Jacobsen for their continued commitment to supporting the Association and its members.

During BTME next month I am looking forward to catching up with the FTMI Class of 2012 and I know I will hear many examples of how the Initiative has made a difference already to the delegates' careers.

There are just a few short weeks to go until thousands of greenkeepers descend on Harrogate for BTME. Bookings for the Continue to Learn programme are substantially up at the time of writing so I say unapologetically "book now to avoid disappointment!" I look forward to seeing you there.

Our cover story for this month is the remarkable tale of the twin brothers who have lovingly cared for the historic links at Harlech, Royal St Davids, for over 30 years. Theirs has been a labour of love that, to continue this column's theme of adaptability, has seen them embrace change in a bid to provide a consistent enjoyable experience on a world class course.

Enjoy the read.



Jim Croxton, BIGGA CEO