



Greenkeepers Training Committee

In a new series, the GTC has invited representatives from its Quality Assured Centres and Training Providers to discuss their particular specialism within the sports turf sector

This month Jake Waites from Bridgwater College explains his education vision and discusses the question “What makes a great Head Greenkeeper?”

During BTME 2013 the GTC invited its Quality Assured Centre sports turf representatives to meet with Quality Assured Training Providers. This was designed to encourage sharing of human and physical resources between Centres and Providers.

The event proved very successful and David Golding, GTC's Education Director, is continually hearing excellent examples of its QA Training Providers being invited to QA Centres both to share specialist subject knowledge and in some situations equipment and machinery.

David explained: “Many companies and their knowledgeable staff would love to support and contribute more but until the introduction of the GTC Quality Assured Scheme in 2010 it was impossible for companies to support the many colleges and private companies offering sports turf courses and qualifications.

“However, now with a limited number of QA Centres - two in Scotland, two in Wales and six in England - it is now far easier to develop a strong Centre – Training Provider partnership.

“QA Centres offer the formal government accredited qualifications however they are also best placed to compliment these courses with specialist short-courses, workshops and seminars.”

David invited Jake Waites, Sports Turf Trainer/Assessor at GTC's Quality Assured Centre, Bridgwater College, Cannington Centre to explain his Centre's vision on how best to provide both formal and informal education and training courses, workshops and seminars to best suit employers and sports turf students needs with input from QA Training Providers and guest presenters. Here are Jake's views.

What makes a great Head Greenkeeper?

I would propose that the lines are becoming increasingly blurred. You live and die on the quality of your greens' used to be the maxim but with the development of the game and the increasing complexities involved in successfully managing a golf course, is it still enough just to deliver consistently high quality surfaces? It would be nice to be able to say 'yes' to this but is that still really the answer?

I am not suggesting for a minute that the hard earned knowledge and ability that goes into presenting your golf course is in any way redundant but how often have you found yourself thinking 'I used to be a greenkeeper, now I'm an Administrator/Communications expert/Finance and Human Resources manager as well!' With this being the case, how can you ensure that you still have the skills to meet the challenge?

For those entering our industry as apprentices, for assistants with a level of previous experience who are looking to build on it and for those who have aspirations to be the next generation of Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers, the training paths remain familiar and well travelled.

As one of the GTC's quality assured training centres, here at Bridgwater College's Cannington Centre our primary focus is to ensure that all these groups receive the training they require. We still feel that the Work Based L2 and L3 Diplomas (formerly known as NVQ's) offer the best solution both for the student and the employer, offering as they do a combination of real on-job experience and underpinning knowledge delivered in the classroom or workplace.

However, for those who have achieved a more senior level and for



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those ready to make a step up, the available routes are sometimes less obvious.

There are excellent options for further and higher levels of study and these programmes have helped drive the standards within our industry to higher and higher levels, but in the increasingly pressurised working environments which managers and supervisors find themselves in, the time commitment involved can prove to be a significant obstacle.

So, how can we address this training shortfall without having to use up too much of this precious commodity?

An excellent means of continuing your professional and personal development is to carry out a SWOT analysis of current abilities and then target events and short courses that meet the shortfalls



you have identified. This may be by approaching your local college, through BIGGA's excellent Continue to Learn programme at BTME, through regional seminars and workshops or GTC events.

The workshop model in particular provides an excellent opportunity to learn new skills, discuss techniques and share best practice with your peers in an interactive environment.

Earlier this year we ran the first in a series of workshops entitled "Smarter Greenkeeping". Guest speakers at the first session were Laurence Pithie from Turf Master One training and Paul Worster, Course Manager at Minchinhampton Golf Club and former BIGGA Chairman.

The first workshop covered all aspects of bunker renovation and maintenance, using various case

studies as examples and their personal experience which spans over 70 years in the business.

The second workshop focused on how greenkeepers can be more influential in the workplace and how presentations for capital expenditure can be made more effectively.

We have worked closely with Laurence in developing future topics for the series.

Our upcoming events are:

12 December 2013

Greens Performance

13 February 2014

Planning & Budgeting

13 March 2014

Managing with less

In addition to Laurence's input, we will also look to incorporate both other GTC Quality Assured Train-

ing Providers and some of the local talent! Here in the south west of the country we are blessed in having some of the most experienced and knowledgeable minds in the industry (we are after all in Jim Arthur's parish). It is a tribute to the industry in which we work in that these busy people are so willing to give their time to share their experience and best practice.

For course enquiries contact Helen Goodland: Goodlandh@bridgwater.ac.uk or Tel: 07753 311160

To register on workshops contact Jane Wagner, Commercial Manager, Cannington Centre for Land Based Studies, Bridgwater College, Cannington, Bridgwater, Somerset TA5 2LS.

**WAGNERJ@bridgwater.ac.uk
Tel 01278 655065
Mobile 07917 475641**

Contact Details

David Golding
GTC Education Director
and European Greenkeeping
Education Unit Standards
Director

01347 838640
david@the-gtc.co.uk

GTC
Aldwark Manor
Near York
YO61 1UF

www.the-gtc.co.uk
www.eg.eu.eu
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