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# Greenkeeper International

## A job well done

Robert Patterson reflects on his two decades as course manager at Royal Aberdeen

### ■ Practical Greenkeeping

Learn how to improve communications at your club

### ■ From Your Association

Meet the BIGGA delegation on their way to the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show

### ■ First Cut

See the winner of the BIGGA Photography Competition 2023



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The magazine for BIGGA members Greenkeeper International exists for you, our members. Since 1987 BIGGA has helped thousands in golf greenkeeping to progress their careers, find inspiration and get involved in our varied and vibrant community. This magazine aims to reflect the passions and preoccupations of our members and we'd like you to be involved. Please drop us a line, send us a picture or post on our social media pages.

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ISSN: 0961-6977

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# Welcome

After what seems like non-stop rain for months, it was slightly at odds to witness presentations at generally upbeat conferences on the topic of water shortages. But as discussed at both the excellent series of BIGGA Regional Conferences and the Golf Club Managers' Association Conference, the industry needs to address this critical issue urgently. It has been fascinating and encouraging to talk to so many clubs who are already taking serious steps towards more resilient and reliable sources of irrigation water and, importantly, to endeavouring to harvest the water that already falls or emerges.

While 2023 has been incredibly wet, with many courses closed for extended periods, this is not a pointer towards needing less irrigation water in future. Rather it is indicative of the more extreme weather we now receive, meaning what were 'once every 20-year' drought periods are now far more common. It was really heartening to see this topic taken so seriously across conference season. The wider golf industry is working hard to offer a strong and robust water plan for the future.

Despite the importance of such topics, the conferences have been

I wish all of our members and families a very merry Christmas and a successful new year

thoroughly enjoyable with a positive vibe among delegates and speakers alike. There is great optimism across the sport and a definite shift among golf facilities towards investing in their staff and golf course to futureproof their businesses. The GCMA conference, attended by more than 200 UK general managers, reflected this shift, making it a positive and reassuring experience for us.

We now look forward to the festive season and what looks like being a vintage BTME with exhibition stands and Continue to Learn registrations at pretty much record levels. I can't wait.

May I conclude by wishing all members and families a very merry Christmas and a successful new year. I hope to see very many of you in 2024.



Jim Croxton  
BIGGA Chief Executive

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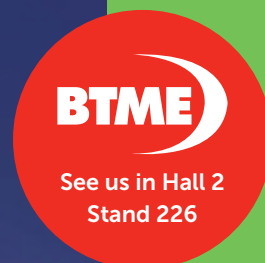
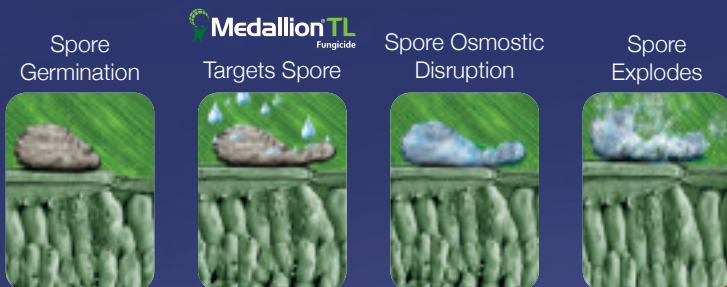
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TM





# First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- Finalists announced for 2024 Golf Environment Awards
- BIGGA photography competition winners revealed



© Jonny Watt

## Golf clubs unite to learn more about biodiversity at Nature Links seminar

Golf clubs spanning a 100-mile-long nature corridor demonstrated their commitment to biodiversity at the Nature Links seminar at Lewes GC.

The Southwood Foundation brought together clubs in and around the Weald to Waves nature corridor, in Sussex, to discuss environmental protection, nature restoration and the benefits for golf of taking action on biodiversity and sustainability.

The charity, which was set up to accelerate action on climate change and biodiversity by acting as a catalyst for greater collaboration, has teamed up with clubs along the Ouse, Adur and Arun rivers to explore how nature is being restored on their courses.

Greenkeepers and club managers from across the area were in

attendance, with conservation organisations active in this area including the South Downs National Park, RSPB and Buglife there to help with support and advice. England Golf also provided a presentation on the business benefits of biodiversity.

Lewes GC leaves 30% of its course for nature, including turning the rough into extensive wildflower meadows – a crucial habitat for biodiversity.

As a result of the club's commitment, the course now proudly boasts rare leaf-cutter bees, peregrines, red kites, kestrels, a growing number of starlings and even glow worms.

All the organisations present at the seminar demonstrated a strong desire to work together to continue the progress already being made.

"It was a real pleasure to bring so many dedicated greenkeepers and club managers together for the first time to discuss what they are doing in and around the Weald to Waves nature corridor," said Caroline Croft, operations manager at the Southwood Foundation. "We hope the seminar helped connect those committed people and reconnect the fragmented landscape for wildlife."

Mandy Quick, general manager at Lewes GC, added: "There was a real buzz in the room - we are not alone in thinking nature needs our help.

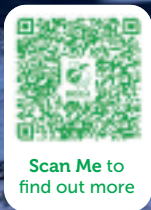
"Doing right by nature on golf courses is good for the planet and good for the resilience of our sport in the face of climate change. We love a win-win." **GI**



## The BIGGA Calendar

December: Alistair Morrison,  
Durness Golf Club

Download the desktop calendar  
by scanning the QR code:



Scan Me to  
find out more



# Finalists for Golf Environment Awards revealed

### The 2024 Golf Environment Awards finalists have been announced.

Launched in 1995 by the STRI Group, the awards aim to recognise, reward and promote outstanding individuals and golf courses for the time and effort they put in to protecting and preserving their unique surroundings.

Richard Stuttard, STRI Group director, said: "We're so impressed that after 28 years we continue to receive an incredible number of submissions from golf clubs across the UK and internationally.

"The standard of entries is high every year, and it is amazing to see the work that golf clubs do for the environment and nature."

Clubs from around the UK and Ireland are represented across six categories, including the Conservation Champion award, Ecological Project of the Year and UK Environmental Golf Course of the Year, with Colmworth, Gog Magog, Royal Mid-Surrey and St Annes Old Links all shortlisted.

Representatives from The R&A, BIGGA, Jacobsen, Syngenta, Aquatrols and Tillers Turf will make the final decision and the winners will be announced at a ceremony in Harrogate during next year's BTME.

All winners will receive a £750 grant to help fund further ecological and environmental projects at their clubs, a visit from an agronomic consultant,

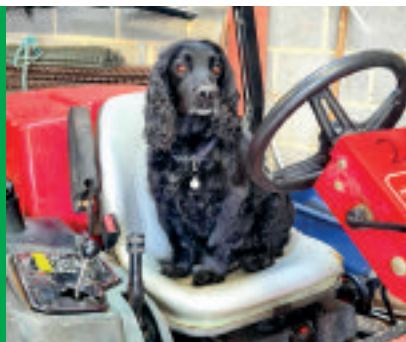
entry to the Foundation Award in Amenity Horticulture Course and promotional materials to display across digital platforms.

The Conservation Champion will also earn BIGGA membership status. Visit [golfenvironmentawards.com/finalists-of-golf-environment-awards-2024-are-revealed/](http://golfenvironmentawards.com/finalists-of-golf-environment-awards-2024-are-revealed/) for more details.



## A greenkeeper's best friend – Murphy

Owner: Del Pople  
Club: Clevedon



**Dog's name:** Murphy  
**Breed:** Sprocker  
**Age:** Eight years old  
**Favourite treat:** Anything the lads will give him at break time  
**Favourite place:** Riding any vehicle  
**Naughtiest moment:** Pinching the then chairman's ball off the fairway  
**He is happiest:** Chasing golf balls

# What's on this month



## Dates for your diary

### 6 December

BIGGA Scotland Awards Lunch – Stirling GC

### 7 December

BIGGA Sussex Section Turkey Trot – Worthing GC

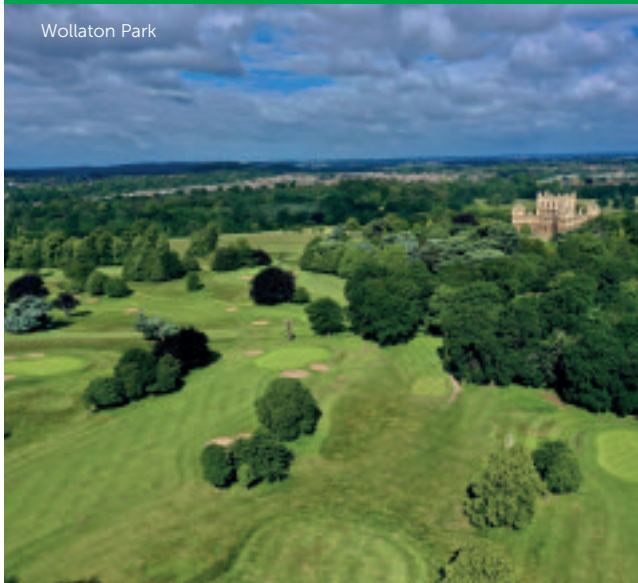
BIGGA South West Section Turkey Trot – Minchinhampton GC

BIGGA Sheffield Section X-Mas Golf Day – Lindrick GC

### 8 December

East Midlands Turkey Trot – Wollaton GC

Wollaton Park



### 14 December

BIGGA Devon & Cornwall Section Turkey Trot – East Devon GC

### 15 December

BIGGA South Wales Turkey Trot – Pyle and Kenfig GC

BIGGA East of England Turkey Trot – Lincoln GC

# Notice of AGM

4:00PM - 5:30PM, 17 January 2024

The BIGGA Annual General Meeting will take place in 2024 the week prior to BTME and will be held as an online event.

The meeting will be held virtually using an online meeting system and further details will be distributed to members in due course.

Previously the AGM was held in person during BTME, but the move is intended to encourage more members to participate and have the opportunity to participate in the behind-the-scenes work of the association and its officers.

All members of BIGGA are invited to attend the AGM, with full members entitled to vote on matters arising. **GI**



Our programme of local and regional events is supported by regional patrons, whose generosity helps create opportunities for BIGGA members.

## GOLD



## SILVER



## PREMIUM



## CONNECT PLUS



## CONNECT



Head to the BIGGA website for more information about local activities near you





## Ball takes BIGGA photo competition top prize with stunning Thetford drone snap

A stunning shot of Thetford GC blanketed in a glistening early morning frost has claimed first place in the BIGGA Annual Photography Competition 2023 sponsored by Syngenta.

David Ball's photo (featured above) was chosen as overall winner alongside winners in three categories from a shortlist of 36 finalists.

The first assistant landed himself a DJI Mini 2 SE Drone and a framed print of his victorious photo, while category winners received a £150 Love2Shop gift card.

"We greenkeepers are privileged to experience these times of the day that most people don't get to see during their working hours," said David, who took his drone-captured image as the

January sun was breaking through the clouds above the 5th hole.

"I was just lucky and in the right place at the right time on this beautiful morning. It is such an honour to win.

"I'd like to congratulate all the category winners and the calendar entries for their great images."

Alistair Morrison, head greenkeeper at Durness, scooped the prize in the landscape category for his shot overlooking the clubhouse on Balnakeil Bay in north-west Scotland, while Robin Hood greenkeeper Elliot Walters captured a bee in dazzling detail to be named winner in the wildlife category.

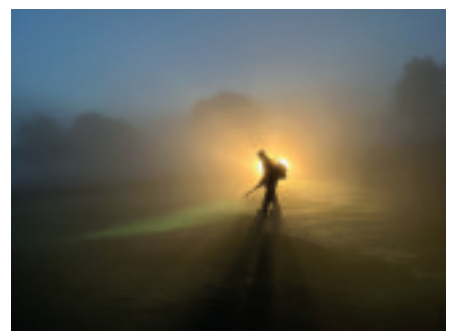
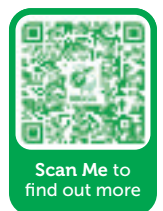
Former photography student Peter Meek's shot of a Bath GC colleague clearing leaves on a dark November

morning following a storm got the nod in the greenkeeping category.

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton said: "David Ball's entry stood out to us as it showcases the beautiful golf course at Thetford at a time that golfers will rarely see it – deep in the depths of winter – yet there are greenkeepers present, putting in the hard work that makes golf possible when warmer weather returns.

"Congratulations to all the winners and thank you once again to our valued sponsors at Syngenta."

The top 12 photos will appear in the BIGGA and Syngenta 2024 desktop calendar. **GI**



Above left to right:

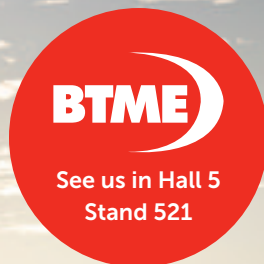
Alistair Morrison, Durness GC - Landscape winner; Elliot Walters, Robin Hood GC - Wildlife winner; Peter Meek, Bath GC - Greenkeeping winner.

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# Get more from what we have



**Roddy Williams** joined GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf in 2021 after more than two decades with the European Tour and Ryder Cup

Our new publication can help you to increase the productivity of your land and make the most of your planned courseworks

**As the golfing season fades and we move through autumn into winter, the focus changes to winter maintenance programmes and potential course renovations.**

Renovations can be difficult to define – they involve both large and small changes, encompassing projects with substantial budgets as well as those driven solely by in-house staff time and effort. What these golf course improvement projects often share is the intention to improve and generate greater whole value and productivity from the land – making it work harder.

At GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf, we recently launched a new publication – Sustainable Golf Renovations Guidelines – with inspiration, support and latest examples of course improvements.

Produced by my colleagues Sam Thomas, Sustainable Golf development director, and Tyler Annan, project manager from the development team, the publication is aimed at courses and clubs at the start of their project journey trying to improve efficiency, reduce operating costs, enhance their environments,

minimise their impact and connect them to their community better.

Any facility considering a renovation project is typically setting out to address a problem or improve upon a situation. Going all the way back to 1764, when the Old Course at St Andrews transitioned from 22 to 18 holes, golf courses have been undergoing incremental improvements. These course adaptations have been carried out to keep pace with the evolving nature of the sport – adjusting to increasing swing speeds or changes to the ball performance and its ability to cover ever greater distances.

Today, alongside a rapidly changing sport, other external forces are exerting influence on facilities worldwide. Growing time constraints, rising operating costs, pressures and regulations on natural resources and an increasingly competitive market are collectively driving a fresh surge of investments and innovations in course improvements. These factors have led to more facilities investing in advancements, technologies and upgrades, while also diversifying their golf offerings.

As part of the strategic planning for these investments, there is a need to bolster the facility's resilience against these new external pressures. Global pandemics, increasingly frequent extreme weather and the strain of living costs are beyond individual control, but these risks can be mitigated by diversifying businesses, securing greater control over sustainable water and energy supplies, minimising reliance on external supply chains where feasible and enriching the local environments.

As Sam notes: "All contemporary course improvement projects should be fostering a stronger drive towards incorporating resilience and innovation into the

golf course, for the future.

"The increasing work we are seeing with course renovations is allowing the industry to shine a spotlight on the good work being done by architects, engineers and construction companies towards building a more stable and sustainable future for courses across the globe."

We are excited to be collaborating with courses all over the world embarking on a renovation project to improve their course and deliver associated benefits that improve efficiency, reduce operating costs, enhance environments, minimise impact and connect them to their community better.

- To find out more, get in touch with the team at [hello@sustainable.golf](mailto:hello@sustainable.golf) **GI**





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# From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- BIGGA reveals 2024 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show delegation
- Board member Stuart Ferguson on the value of teamwork



## Continue to Learn at BTME offers full programme of educational activities

The 2024 Continue to Learn programme at the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition (BTME) is full of career development and educational opportunities.

As the largest sports turf learning opportunity in Europe, Continue to Learn at BTME in Harrogate is where you can learn new practical skills, develop the capabilities to lead a successful team and find answers to all golf course management questions.

With topics selected by BIGGA

members, it is one of the industry's most comprehensive professional development opportunities.

At the Young Greenkeepers Conference, hosted by Chester-le-Street's course manager Jack Hetherington, industry newcomers are invited to network while benefitting from hands-on learning at six stations.

Or hear about the behind-the-scenes work that went into presenting the course at Royal Liverpool for The 151st Open and the AIG Women's

Open at Walton Heath at the free R&A Breakfast Session, where course managers James Bledge (Royal Liverpool) and Michael Mann (Walton Heath) and The R&A's Sustainable Agronomy Team will share their experiences.

Learning activities are discounted for BIGGA members, while a selection are cost free, and will run from 21 to 24 January 2024. **GI**



The BIGGA National Board is comprised of the following members who volunteer their time to support the association: Stuart Ferguson MG, Jack Hetherington, Antony Kirwan, Andrew Laing, Iain Macleod, Lucy Sellick and Richard Whyman  
BIGGA President Andy Smith, BIGGA Vice-President John Keenaghan, BIGGA Chairperson Steven Lloyd



# BIGGA and Bernhard select delegation to America

BIGGA and Premium Partner Bernhard and Company have selected the association members who will attend the Golf Course Superintendent Association of America's (GCSAA) Conference and Trade Show in 2024.

Each year, BIGGA and Bernhard and Company choose a 10-strong delegation to engage in one of the sports turf industry's most prestigious learning opportunities.

The latest cohort will travel to Phoenix, Arizona, for a week-long educational trip that features site visits, seminars, networking events and educational demonstrations.

A spot on the delegation marks out a candidate as among the most dedicated and talented ambassadors for the golf greenkeeping sector, with Trump Turnberry's deputy head greenkeeper Fraser Jardine among them.

"I feel very proud to be selected as part of the team representing the UK greenkeeping industry on a global scale," he said.

"To make the top 10 is certainly one of my biggest achievements and I'm so glad I applied. I can't wait to get over to Phoenix to meet people in the industry from around the world, learn from others and help elevate my career and personal development.

"I'm looking forward to learning about new technology and sharing ideas and techniques with others that I can bring back home with me.

"Thanks to BIGGA and Bernhard and Company for such an incredible, prestigious opportunity."

The successful delegates will also be invited to convene at the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition (BTME) in January, where they will meet former participants of the programme.

The GCSAA Conference and Trade Show runs from 29 January to 1 February. **GI**

## Meet the GCSAA delegates

- Robert Acheson, course manager, Thonock Park
- Harry Cannon, head greenkeeper, Sunningdale
- Stephen Davey, head greenkeeper, Queenwood
- Michael Gibbons, course manager, Disley
- James Hampson, deputy head greenkeeper, Llanymynech
- Stuart Imeson, owner and course manager, Dunstanburgh Castle
- Fraser Jardine, deputy head greenkeeper, Trump Turnberry
- Richard Ponsford, course manager, Clevedon
- Luke Sheldon, head greenkeeper, Beau Desert
- Richard Stephens, course manager, Vicars Cross



# Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year open for entries

The search is on to recognise the UK's most professional sprayer operators in the sports turf amenity and landscape management industries

Entries are now open for the Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year (ASOOTY) awards, with hopefuls invited to put their knowledge to the test.

Sponsored by ICL and Syngenta, the awards assess operators' skills in spray application and the use of products, highlighting best practice in the role of ensuring accurate application on all amenity surfaces while sharing tips and advice aimed at raising standards across the industry.

The awards also now reflect the importance of an integrated pest management approach to issues involving turf and landscape maintenance.

Syngenta Technical Manager Sean Loakes said sprayer operation is a key factor in the success of every application but knowing when not to spray is as important.

He said, "For the best possible results, today's professional sprayer operators must also fully

understand the wider aspects of why an application is being made, and what other integrated options they can also employ for better long-term management of potential problems."

This year's entry process includes an online question form that will test sprayer operators' broader knowledge of issues across the amenity sectors and how to address them.

Lewis Blois, ICL Landscape and Industrial Business Manager, said: "We're looking to find operators that can make those important proactive decisions with every application."

The winner will be announced at the BIGGA Awards at BTME in January 2024, with prizes worth over £500. All applicants will be entered into a draw to win one of five Syngenta sprayer calibration and application kits. **GI**



Scan Me to find out more



# BIGGA

CPD Continuing Professional Development

## Congratulations to the following members who have achieved CPD Approved status

Richard Johnstone MG, Nairn Dunbar Golf Links

Daniel Kendle, Newquay

Andrew Laing, Gaudet Luce Golf & Leisure Complex

Patrick West, Sweetwoods Park

Abigail Laker, Windsor Forest Colleges Group

Joe Curtis, Diamond Club Ottenstein, Austria

Andrew Wilson, Whitecraigs

Jeremy Hughes, Symbio

Keith Burgon, Eyemouth

## Congratulations to the following members who have achieved their CPD Milestone

Keith Burgon, Eyemouth

# Welcome to our new members

## International

**John Ahlert (I)**  
**Aaron Spalding (I)**  
Penderbrook  
.....

**Barry Britton (I)**  
Barry Britton Turfgrass  
.....

**Michael Holliday (I)**  
Pauanui Sports and Recreation Club  
.....

**Muhammad Owais Khan (I)**  
Karachi

## South East

**Jim Bowers (AGK)**  
Kingswood  
.....

**Joshua Burling (AGK)**  
Cottesmore Hotel, Golf & Country Club

**Matthew Chaplin (GK)**  
**William Chapman (GK)**  
Muswell Hill  
.....

**Robyn Craddock (AGK)**  
Denham  
.....

**Callum Hogsden (AGK)**  
Boyce Hill  
.....

**Matthew Jordan (G)**  
Cromer Lawn Tennis & Squash Club  
.....

**Jonathan Mantripp (FA)**  
East Brighton  
.....

**Angus Smythe (GK)**  
Woodbridge  
.....

**Lee Webster (AGK)**  
**Martyn Webster (GK)**  
**Clive Wicks (AGK)**  
Malden

## South West & South Wales

**Dan Bartlett (AGK)**  
Rushmore  
.....

**Morgan Bryant (APP)**  
Bude & North Cornwall  
.....

**Daniel Chivers (AGK)**  
Woodbridge Park  
.....

**Simon Cook (HG)**  
Wellington School  
.....

**Tim Crew (GK)**  
The Mendip  
.....

**Russell De Louche (GK)**  
**Jason Moran (FA)**  
La Moye  
.....

**Maximillian Logavatu (AGK)**  
Army Golf Club

**Rory Medlock (AGK)**  
Churston  
.....

**Antony Williams (AGK)**  
Chipping Sodbury

## Northern

**Louis Allenby (APP)**  
Headingley  
.....

**Stephen Blount (GK)**  
Heyrose  
.....

**Macaulay Ellis-Cheetham (APP)**  
**Joshua Thompson (APP)**  
Moor Allerton  
.....

**Matthew Grainger (APP)**  
Forest of Galtres  
.....

**Jack Gunn (GK)**  
Tyneside



**Niall Alistair (APP)**  
**Thomas Hall (APP)**  
**Jake Watson (APP)**  
 Wetherby

**Mathew Lowe (APP)**  
 Wheatley

**Jake Mead (AGK)**  
 Pike Hills

**Charlie Metcalfe (APP)**  
 Normanton

**James Morris (AGK)**  
**Joseph Streets (AGK)**  
 Chesterfield

**Peter Rainey (GK)**  
 Cockermouth

**Aidan Schofield (APP)**  
 Outlane

**Marshall Smith (A)**  
 ETC Grass Machinery

 **Central England**

**Michael Cunningham (GK)**  
 Moor Park

**Luke Donnelly (AGK)**  
 Sutton Coldfield

**Jeremy Gill (FA)**  
**Nigel Morris (DCM)**  
 Whittington Heath

**Christopher Jolley (GK)**  
 Thorney Park

**Simon Watson (A)**  
 The R&A

**Thomas White (P)**  
 Indigrow

**Key**

<b>A</b>	Affiliate Member	<b>FA</b>	First Assistant	<b>P</b>	Partner
<b>AGK</b>	Assistant Greenkeeper	<b>GK</b>	Greenkeeper	<b>R</b>	Retired Member
<b>APP</b>	Apprentice	<b>G</b>	Groundsperson	<b>RP</b>	Regional Patron
<b>ATP</b>	Approved Training Provider	<b>HGK</b>	Head Greenkeeper	<b>S</b>	Supporter
<b>CA</b>	College Assessor	<b>HG</b>	Head Groundsperson	<b>ST</b>	Student Member
<b>CM</b>	Course Manager	<b>I</b>	International Member	<b>SUP</b>	Superintendent
<b>DCM</b>	Deputy Course Manager	<b>L</b>	Life Member		
<b>DH GK</b>	Deputy Head Greenkeeper	<b>M</b>	Mechanic		

# We are better together



**Stuart Ferguson MG**  
Director, Scotland &  
Northern Ireland

As 2023 comes to an end, it's a great time to appreciate the value of teamwork

December represents the ideal time to reflect on the year we've had with a sense of pride and look ahead to the new one with a feeling of optimism.

A clear highlight of 2023 for me has been the amazing performance of the agronomy team at my club, West Linton GC.

I am immensely proud of each and every member of the team and incredibly excited about the seasons ahead working together with this great bunch.

This group of people are not in possession of a piece of paper declaring them to be greenkeepers, but they do as greenkeepers do, and that's more than good enough for me.

What I've come to appreciate more than anything else this year is that people flourish with the support and encouragement of others.

Golf needs greenkeepers who are dedicated and motivated, and it also needs greenkeepers who feel happy and valued. I aim to ensure that applies to my team, and BIGGA's efforts help to make it happen across the industry.

The board – ably led by chairperson Steve Lloyd – continue to work hard on behalf of all members to elevate the profession by championing greenkeeping and its people to ensure their skill and commitment are recognised.



“What I've come to appreciate more than anything else this year is that people flourish with the support and encouragement of others

This work can be seen in the workshops and focus groups held across the UK and in the recent regional conferences, bringing together members from golf clubs all over.

A great deal of effort has gone into preparations for BTME 2024, which promises to be a fantastic showcase of our industry and an excellent educational and networking opportunity for everyone who attends.

I would encourage you to make the call to BIGGA

HQ if you're in need of any advice and assistance, or even if you just fancy a chat. The job can be a lonely endeavour at times, but support is always close at hand.

As we head deeper into winter and the nights draw in, there is no sign of things slowing down for us up on Slipperfield Moor. Even as the mowing plan fades, we are just as busy – if not more so!

Golf throughout the year is great value to our members and guests,

though it's a challenge to provide a surface worthy of a championship environment.

We have a task on our hands to make the routing plan and traffic network robust enough, which may not be the most glamorous of projects, but it's extremely important.

As we contemplate that and more in the year to come, I want to finish by taking the time to wish you and your loved ones a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. **GI**

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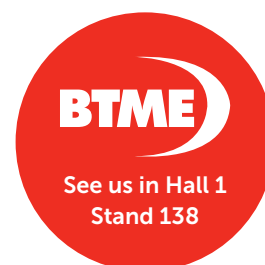
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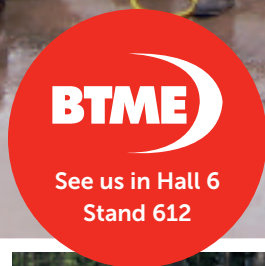


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# Member Interest

Where we meet your fellow turf professionals and share their stories

## ■ Royal Aberdeen's Robert Patterson reflects on his 44 years in the business and passes on his advice for a long and successful greenkeeping career



## Selbie becomes first in UK to achieve new golf course manager qualification



**Paul Selbie, course manager at Hainault GC in Essex, reflects on his achievement of becoming the first in**

**the UK to achieve the Level 5 Golf Course Manager Apprenticeship and encourages others to follow his lead.**

"I wasn't aiming to be the first, but it's a nice thing to have done," he said. "Anthony Stockwell from Hadlow College phoned me to tell me I'd passed. He was as excited as I was!

"It had been almost 20 years since my last educational milestone, and I felt the need to challenge myself further.

"The new Level 5 Apprenticeship came along at the right time and allowed me to pull together all my

learnt knowledge and experience into a nearly two-year course."

Paul was tested on his managerial and greenkeeping skills during the course, which culminated in a two-hour exam, a presentation and a three-hour professional discussion.

He said: "I would definitely recommend it to anyone who is considering it. It's a lot of work, but for anyone who is a head greenkeeper or course manager, most of it should be part of your daily routine. It's a case of collating everything, getting it all in the right place, shining it all up and adding a few bits.

"It's a qualification that will stand you in good stead in this industry and beyond. It's a management qualification so it includes all sorts of

transferrable skills."

Meanwhile, back at Hainault, a 36-hole pay-and-play facility, Paul is busy as usual as the club heads towards the end of another year.

"There's always stuff going on. We've got a few bunker projects and some tee building to do, so that'll keep us busy," he said.

"Another thing on the agenda is tree work. There's quite a lot of woodland on our courses and we've spent the last few years really working on that area, trying to find ways to open it up and get more light on the surfaces.

"It's something we do in a way that's in keeping with the natural surroundings; we aren't just chopping trees down.

"I think that's important." **GI**

Greenkeeper  
Files

# Robert Patterson

"Not a job, but a passion" is how Royal Aberdeen's long-serving course manager reflects on his fine career





**Royal Dornoch's gravitational pull was always going to prove too strong for Robert Patterson to escape – not that he'd have wanted to.**

Robert was born in Dornoch, and the local golf club was the town's greatest boast, even before the historic links attained the prestige it has now. As soon as he was old enough to leave school, Robert found work there as a labourer. It was a matter of months before he had the opportunity to try his hand at greenkeeping – and he knew immediately he had found his calling. By the age of 22, Robert had ascended to the role of head greenkeeper.

He spent 17 years at his hometown club before making the move to Royal Aberdeen, where he will call time on his long and distinguished tenure as course manager in February next year.

After 44 years in the industry, Robert can't bring himself to leave it all behind just yet, with a "side hustle" in advisory and consultancy work on his radar.

Here, he reflects on a life dedicated to his one true passion.

## **“ I got the chance to work on a golf course, which was a dream come true**

### **Growing up with Royal Dornoch on his doorstep**

It's a small place, growing now and getting bigger all the time, but when I grew up there in the 70s, the golf club was the main focus for many local people and visitors – there wasn't an awful lot else to do.

There was a slaughterhouse in Dornoch, and a lot of people locally were employed there, but other than that the employment mainly came at the golf club.

You'd play golf there in the summer or you'd caddie. My father was a very keen golfer and as soon as I was old enough, I had a golf club in my hand.

I grew up just loving playing golf. I did play football, too, but once I got to about 13 or 14, I really took to golf and soon after that I got the chance to work on a golf course, which was a dream come true.

### **First steps on the career ladder**

I left school when I was 15 – you could leave school at that age back then, which shows you how old I am. My father wanted me to take a job at the forestry as he didn't want me sitting at home doing nothing, but then I went to Royal Dornoch in 1980 and did three months as a labourer.

When one of the greenkeepers was off work with an injury, I got involved just to help out. It was the following year that I was offered an apprenticeship and that was the start of my training at Elmwood College in Fife. I became a fully qualified greenkeeper in 1985.

### **When Royal Dornoch wasn't what it is now**

Royal Dornoch is known internationally now in the golfing world, but back then it was a smaller, local golf club. It didn't have the recognition it does now simply because, at that time, the Americans didn't know anything about it. It wasn't until Tom Watson and Ben Crenshaw went there to play it when they were over for The Open in the mid-80s that really started Dornoch on the journey to becoming what it is now.

Before that, it was quite a small place, very seasonal; people would come on holiday, stay on the caravan site and play a round of golf.

## Head greenkeeper at 22

I was offered the head greenkeeper job at Royal Dornoch in 1987 when I was just 22 years old. I'd done quite well in my time at college and the club was preferably looking to employ someone locally, so they offered me the job.

I'll be honest, I wasn't really ready to be the head greenkeeper at that age because I didn't have a huge amount of experience behind me, but there was no way I was turning it down. My thinking was I'd rather try and fail than not try at all.

I won't deny the first four or five years were quite difficult. It was a steep learning curve to go from being one of the greenkeepers on the Friday to coming in on the Monday as the boss.

It was completely different for me having to manage people and plan work, but I have always had a strong work ethic, and I just got on with it.

I sought advice from the likes of Walter Woods, Jack McMillan, John Philp and Jimmy Kidd and learned as I went along. I did 11 years there before I moved to Royal Aberdeen as course manager.



**Above:** The 2011 Walker Cup saw the likes of Jordan Spieth and Patrick Cantlay tackle Royal Aberdeen

### The challenge facing him at Royal Aberdeen

When I came to Aberdeen, it was a world-renowned links with fantastic terrain, but the course was very run down. There had been a lack of investment, a lack of resources and a lack of proper greenkeeping inputs for many years. It was the ideal situation for me to come into because the only way we could go was up.

From the start, the club said they would like more R&A

events. They wanted to get better tournaments at Royal Aberdeen and investing in a new course manager was the start of that process. It was my job to get it by the scruff of the neck and drag it up to where it deserved to be.

The R&A had said the course wasn't long enough for their tournaments, so it needed to be extended, but the condition of it wasn't nearly good enough to host their events.

We then set out plans to revamp the golf course, starting with the greens as they were in terrible condition, and working through basically every surface – approach areas, fairways, tees and rough.

I laid out quite stark plans to the members when I arrived outlining what we needed to do to address the condition of the golf course and get it to the standard it needed to be. It meant a lot of disruption, but there was an acceptance that it had to be done.

The club invested in machinery, staff, better sheds, better facilities, and I had the drive to push it on. That was my passion, and I knew what needed to be done, and the club backed me – if we needed something for the golf courses, we got it. We made quite rapid progress in a short time.

Every year, people could see the courses were getting better and better, so it wasn't difficult to convince the membership and committees of the benefits of doing the next thing and the next thing.

### Preparing the course for big events

I had informed the club when I arrived it would take five to seven years to get the greens into a condition to perform as they should for a links course, and it was in 2005 – seven

## Why BIGGA matters

I had a much greater involvement with BIGGA after I moved to Royal Aberdeen and ultimately served as regional chairman in Scotland. I came to appreciate BIGGA does far more work than many people realise and how important the organisation is to our industry. They champion greenkeepers and educate people on how important our profession is.

The bottom line is these massive events – The Open, the Ryder Cup, the other big championships – without the golf course they don't happen, and that's the responsibility of greenkeepers. We just have to keep banging that drum, make sure that our voices are heard and that course managers/head greenkeepers are at the forefront of all the major decisions taken within a golf club.



Robert and his team at work

## “ It was the ideal situation for me to come into because the only way we could go was up

years after I arrived – that we hosted the British Senior Open, which Tom Watson won.

Over many years the club has hosted all of The R&A events bar The Open. From 2005 to 2014, when we had the Scottish Open, we had 12 events in that time.

This showed the course was improving to a standard whereby the main golf bodies wanted to come with their events, and it wasn't just The R&A, it was the European Tour, the Scottish Golf Union and The PGA – they all wanted to come and have an event with us.

As those things came, we got more recognition globally, being on TV, and more people wanted to come and play the course and add Royal Aberdeen to their bucket list.

### The satisfaction of a job well done

As much as it's important for the club to have hosted those big events, the satisfaction for me is in seeing where we were on day one to where we are now.

Royal Aberdeen is very much a members' club, and right from the start I've had a great relationship with the membership. I've never forgotten that it's their club and course, so first and foremost that's our priority.

The fact that on the back of all the work we have done, we have been awarded all those events is just the icing

on the cake. Obviously to have had the calibre of golfer those events attract walking on our turf is special, but the satisfaction comes from the 25 years of work that has gone into that.

The big events are a justification and validation for all the inputs way back when the place was on its knees. First and foremost, we had to get the golf course into proper links conditions for our members, and everything that came on the back of that was a bonus.

The whole infrastructure of the greenkeeping department at this club is set up so that we can host major events at very short notice. If we got asked to do a Scottish Open next year in July, then we could accommodate it with no worries about the golf course or having to do any major things to it. It's ready all the time and that's the standard we have set for our members, whatever time of year.

### Time for a change

I'm really interested in advisory work and passing on some of the knowledge I've gained over the years.

I want to give back to the industry and share what I've learned with younger greenkeepers. I don't want to walk away when I feel like I have quite a bit to offer, and it's not just about the turf but all areas of managing a golf course.

I think it's important for people to stand up and speak and share that knowledge for the benefit of others.

If I can pass a few days a week doing things like that, I'll be happy; I want to keep the brain active.

I'll be 60 soon, so I also want to slow down a bit and enjoy life for a wee while. **GI**



## Robert's career

**1980**

Leaves school to work as a labourer at Royal Dornoch

**1981**

Begins apprenticeship, trains at Elmwood College

**1985**

Completes City & Guilds greenkeeping and groundsmanship course

**1986**

Becomes first assistant at Royal Dornoch

**1987**

Appointed head greenkeeper at Royal Dornoch

**1994**

Job title changes to course manager

**1998**

Moves to Royal Aberdeen as course manager

**2005**

Prepares course for 2005 Senior Open, won by Tom Watson

**2011**

Royal Aberdeen hosts the Walker Cup

**2014**

The Scottish Open comes to town, with Justin Rose triumphing

**2018**

The Amateur Championship is staged at Royal Aberdeen

“ It was a steep learning curve at Dornoch to go from being one of the greenkeepers on the Friday to coming in on the Monday as the boss



#### Leading by example

I've never really seen it as a job, to be honest; it's a passion for me. I've always been a hard worker and I've impressed that on the people that work for me, and the majority of the staff that I've had along the way have bought into that as well. I have been fortunate through my career to have had very good staff. I couldn't do the job on my own so staff integration and taking them on the journey with you is vital so that we all benefit from the experience.

I'm happy to go out there and sit on a mower or do whatever needs doing and work with my staff. That's the way I have always been as, at the end of the day, the job's the boss, and it needs to be done regardless of position, but I do it because I think it's really important for morale and for them to see me mucking in as well.

I've just come to a point now where I want to have some more time to myself and do something a bit different and help the greenkeepers of the future.

#### Robert's top tips for a long and successful career

- Listen to advice and take in knowledge from people around you
- Ask questions, be inquisitive and show a desire to learn
- Work hard! Nothing is going to get handed to you
- Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today
- Trust your gut instincts when it comes to decision-making
- Be humble



*Continue  
to learn*

# YOUR FUTURE STARTS HERE

Take the next step in your career journey this January. Join your fellow greenkeepers and turf professionals to share knowledge and develop your abilities in a welcoming and inclusive setting.



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# Careers

Jobs, expert advice and peer-to-peer support

- My New Job: BIGGA members discuss their latest roles
- All the latest greenkeeper role vacancies



## Former prison officer finds freedom in new greenkeeping career move

Danny Stock feels like a man reborn after swapping the prison service for a career in greenkeeping.

He spent eight years first as a prison officer and then custody manager at Bristol Magistrates' Court, dealing with every type of criminal imaginable.

Though Danny enjoyed his job for the most part, golf had been his passion from a young age and in March this year the former assistant pro landed a job at Clevedon GC.

"I was stuck looking at four walls and I knew I needed something different," he said. "I'd just started on blood pressure medication because it's quite a stressful environment. I liked the job, but I didn't want to be doing it for another 20 years.

"I thought, 'I'd love to get back into

golf', and then I saw a job advert at Clevedon and went for it."

The switch has had a transformative impact on the 45-year-old father-of-two, with one former prison service colleague telling Danny it had taken years off him.

"I went for a drink with a friend in the prison system, and he was amazed – he said I looked 10 years younger! I feel fitter and I've lost weight because I'm keeping physically active every day.

"This job has challenges too, but it's not the same level of stress.

"I enjoy the work and seeing an end product to it, but it's not just about learning new skills and looking after a golf course – there's a lot more to the job than getting on a mower and

cutting the grass.

"I like seeing the members and talking to them and being that friendly face, almost like a front-of-house role out on the course."

He described the seven-person greenkeeping team at Clevedon as being "like a family", hailing their "spirit and teamwork".

Danny, who is making good progress with his NVQ and hopes to be a fully qualified greenkeeper early in 2024, has a message for anyone thinking about making a similar career move.

"I would encourage anyone who fancies it to give it a go. It's been a breath of fresh air for me. I can't grumble about it at all – even my partner says I'm a different person now." **GI**



# Allen Whellans

Allen Whellans started out as an apprentice greenkeeper in 2004 and is now in a senior sales role with Redexim UK. After fast-tracking his way through an SVQ at Oatridge Agricultural College, completing a level 2 and 3 Amenity and Horticulture (Sports Turf) course in three years as opposed to four, he spent eight years in greenkeeping. He served as assistant head greenkeeper at Duns Golf Club, where he went on to complete additional industry training and obtain all relevant qualifications, before moving on to a career in sales.

#### Tell us about your new role

I am the area sales manager for the north at Redexim UK, managing and supporting our business partners throughout the north of England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. My job is to assist our partners in selling our machines, from training, demo support, installation, pricing, and marketing.

#### What do you hope to achieve in the role?

Short-term we are all working hard to deliver what we

recently announced at our inaugural and very successful dealer conference. Redexim UK have some big goals and some very exciting plans for the coming years to help us achieve these along with our partners. Redexim is clearly growing and focused on the future so who knows what will happen. There is one certainty: I will always hope to remain within the industry.

#### How does it fit into your career path?

Being so new into my role at Redexim, my focus is on delivering what we have set out and being successful in doing so. There will be chance for development within Redexim as it continues to grow and push forward.

#### What skills have you found vital to your job?

You wear so many hats day-to-day, but one consistent has to be time-planning and management. I hate being late, there is no need really. Our partners and end-users are very busy and their time is precious, so I always like to be on time or usually early.



Redexim has become a benchmark in sports turf equipment

## Redexim UK's new area sales manager for the north was once a greenkeeper and has over a decade of experience in groundcare sales

### Allen on applying for a new job

#### Describe the recruitment process for your role

The recruitment process was pretty standard. The role was advertised, I applied, and then had a video call with Paul Langford, the director of commercial operations, and the departing Ian Lauder. A week later Paul and I met in Edinburgh for a coffee and a chat.

#### What were your new employers looking for?

Obviously, I can't speak for Redexim and Paul, but I do feel that they were looking for someone with the required skill set and personality to fit in with their small team. It was clear from our conversations that the company were looking forward with a clear vision of how they would achieve that.

#### What do you think set you apart from the other candidates?

Again, a question Paul would have the best answer for, but it is clear to see that I have a real passion for the industry. Having worked in the industry since leaving school, it is all I have really known. Throughout my employment I have been a greenkeeper, worked for a groundcare dealer, worked for a manufacturer, and run a dealership. I think this gives me a unique experience of all parts of the trade.

#### What advice would you give to anyone applying for a similar role?

Often when applying for a new role we focus on being what we think the employer wants us to be. The best thing I can say is to be yourself and be honest. If you haven't done something or don't know about something, be honest and own that. Employers are looking for more than the immediate skill set you offer; they are often looking at your personality and the traits that you have as an individual

#### What is the best thing about your new job?

The people I work with at Redexim, the people within the dealerships and the people within the industry. We all have the same goal, passion and interest in producing sports pitches, natural or synthetic, to the highest quality. Our customers' commitment to their craft is inspiring throughout the industry.

#### What has been your best career break?

My recent employment with Redexim. I am very fortunate to get a role within an industry that I love, working with a manufacturer like Redexim who have such a clear vision on growth and expansion throughout the globe.

#### What would you like to be doing in 10 years' time?

Well in 10 years I will have two teenage daughters at home so perhaps a global-based role! I'm joking of course. All I know is that in 10 years I hope to still be in the industry, possibly running my own sales team for a manufacturer.



Redexim machinery  
in action

# Greenkeeper Training

The Greenkeepers Training Committee maintains a list of GTC Approved Training Providers (ATPs). These colleges and training centres offer Government-approved greenkeeping courses and qualifications that have been developed by the GTC and other relevant organisations.

To achieve ATP status, a training provider must fulfil a strict criteria, which is available to view on the GTC website.

If you are in doubt about which training provider, course or qualification is correct for you, please contact the GTC to discuss your options.



## Askham Bryan College



Askham Bryan, York, YO23 3FR  
Contact: Apprenticeship Department  
t: 01904 772277 e: apprenticeships@askham-bryan.ac.uk  
w: www.askham-bryan.ac.uk

Askham Bryan College is a specialist land-based college and university centre offering a large range of courses from foundation to degree level and beyond, which will set you up for a career doing what you feel passionate about. In addition to Level 2 Golf Greenkeeper, Level 3 Advanced Sports Turf Technician, Level 3 Advanced Golf Greenkeeper and Level 5 Golf Course Manager Apprenticeship Standards, we can offer specialist short-course training and bespoke CPD events based on your business need. Askham Bryan college is a great place to study and is graded as 'good' for teaching and 'outstanding' by Ofsted for its care provision and accommodation. The college prides itself on making all students feel welcome and providing a great learning experience.



## Hadlow College



Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent, TN11 0AL  
Contact: Anthony Stockwell  
t: 01732 850551 e: AnthonyStockwell@northkent.ac.uk  
w: www.hadlow.ac.uk

Hadlow College is delighted to be offering the new level 5 Golf Course Manager Apprenticeship standard. This eagerly-anticipated qualification will expand your management knowledge, expertise and maximise your career potential. If you would like to find out more about this new and exciting qualification, Hadlow would love to hear from you. Hadlow college also successfully runs the new apprenticeship standards for Level 2 and Level 3. For a full list of courses please visit www.hadlow.ac.uk.

For further information and advice please contact AnthonyStockwell@northkent.ac.uk, WayneSyres@northkent.ac.uk or stuartfranks@northkent.ac.uk



## Myerscough College and University Centre



St Michaels Road, Bilsborrow, Preston, Lancashire, PR3 0RY  
Contact: Course Enquiries Team  
t: 0800 652 5592 e: enquiries@myerscough.ac.uk  
w: www.myerscough.ac.uk

Myerscough College and University Centre is the pioneering centre for sports turf and golf course management education in Europe. Courses are available at all levels, from introductory practical skills training to the postgraduate Masters Degree in Sustainable Golf Course Management.

There are options for full time or part time online study. The foundation degree, honours degree and MA programmes are available online and have students enrolled from across the globe. Apprenticeships delivery is across England and includes Golf Greenkeeper Level 2, Advanced Sportsturf Technician Level 3 and Golf Course Manager Level 5 with flexible start dates across the year. We also offer a wide range of industry short courses.

## Plumpton College



Ditchling Road, Plumpton, East Sussex, BN7 3AE  
Contact: Plumpton Business Services  
t: 01273 892127 e: business@plumpton.ac.uk  
w: www.plumpton.ac.uk

Plumpton College is a leading land-based further and higher education provider of apprenticeships and specialist training and assessments, supporting golf clubs and greenkeeping professionals across the South of England. The college delivers Golf Greenkeeping Level 2 and Advanced Sports Turf Technician Level 3 alongside a suite of LANTRA and NPTC-approved industry courses and assessments, delivered either at the main college near Brighton or onsite with the employer. Training is delivered by expert tutors with extensive experience of working in a commercial industry setting with excellent results for learners. Plumpton prides itself on its partnership with employers to develop the most appropriate learning programme to meet their business needs.



## Sparsholt College



Westley Lane, Sparsholt, SO21 2NF  
Contact: Danielle Fancourt  
t: 01962 797322 e: Danielle.Fancourt@sparsholt.ac.uk  
w: www.sparsholt.ac.uk

Our stunning 450-acre campus boasts all the facilities students need. The college cares about the environment and is well on its journey towards carbon neutrality.

We have a team of industry experts to deliver and assess the Level 2 Golf Greenkeeping and Level 3 Advanced Sports Turf Technician Standards as well as the Level 2 Horticulture, Landscape Operative and Level 3 Landscape & Horticulture Supervisor standards.

Our assessing and teaching team has experience that enables them to support with the End Point Assessment. In addition to this the college offers short courses in horticulture, landscaping and arboriculture, such as pesticide application, safe use of brush cutters and strimmers, first aid and more.



As a member of the Greenkeepers Training Committee, BIGGA strives to enhance professional education through various means, including local and national workshops and conferences. We also work closely with training providers that enable greenkeepers to achieve the qualifications required to progress their careers. Across these pages are detailed a selection of educational organisations who offer training opportunities for golf greenkeepers. Get in touch if you'd like find out more.

## Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA)



Hall Place, Burchetts Green, SL6 6QR

Contact: Rob Phillips

t: 01628 824444 e: Robert.Phillips@windsor-forest.ac.uk

w: [www.bca.ac](http://www.bca.ac)

BCA offers a range of apprenticeships and work-based diplomas in golf greenkeeping, sports turf management, landscaping, arboriculture and horticulture. Taught by industry experienced assessors, delivery is either class based or online. BCA also offers short courses including PA1, PA2 and PA6 chainsaw courses, brush cutters, tractor driving, first aid and more. Based on the edge of Maidenhead in a stunning 400-acre campus, BCA has been delivering land-based and vocational education training since its establishment in 1949.



Get in touch by emailing [landbasedtraining@bca.ac.uk](mailto:landbasedtraining@bca.ac.uk) or visit [www.bca.ac.uk](http://www.bca.ac.uk)

## Capel Manor College



Bullsmoor Lane, Waltham Cross, Enfield, EN1 4RQ

Contact: Derek Mason

t: 07774 113894 e: [derek.mason@capel.ac.uk](mailto:derek.mason@capel.ac.uk)

w: [www.capel.ac.uk](http://www.capel.ac.uk)

Capel Manor College is delighted to announce that it is offering all three of the greenkeeping apprenticeships including Level 2, Advanced Level 3 and the recently-approved Level 5 Course Manager Apprenticeship. Heading up the delivery of the courses, Capel has successfully recruited the services of a very experienced and qualified former golf course manager in Derek Mason. If you're thinking about a career in greenkeeping or wishing to train further and obtain higher qualifications, then Capel is here to help you achieve your aims. For further details of any of the courses on offer, including related short courses such as the use of chainsaws, pesticide application and first aid, please see the website, [www.capel.ac.uk](http://www.capel.ac.uk). For further information or advice please contact [derek.mason@capel.ac.uk](mailto:derek.mason@capel.ac.uk) or [employerservices@capel.ac.uk](mailto:employerservices@capel.ac.uk)



## Oldham College



Rochdale Road, Oldham, OL9 6AA

Contact: Phil Lomas

t: 07912 485436 e: [Phil.Lomas@oldham.ac.uk](mailto:Phil.Lomas@oldham.ac.uk)

w: [www.oldham.ac.uk](http://www.oldham.ac.uk)

Oldham College is the first choice college for work-based greenkeeping apprenticeships in Greater Manchester and the surrounding areas developing strong links with employers across the region. The college offers the Golf Greenkeeping Apprenticeship Level 2 Standard and the new Advanced Golf Greenkeeper Level 3 Apprenticeship Standard. Short course provision, such as a pesticide application course is included in the portfolio to meet the needs of your business. Teaching and assessment professionals have vast experience in the greenkeeping sector keeping up-to-date with current practices and technologies to ensure high quality provision is delivered. The team also has first-hand experience of the End Point Assessment process so can guarantee your apprentice will have the best possible experience.



## Pershore College



Avonbank, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 3JP

Contact: John Colclough

t: 0330 135 6940 e: [employerenquiries@wcg.ac.uk](mailto:employerenquiries@wcg.ac.uk)

w: [www.wcg.ac.uk/apprenticeships](http://www.wcg.ac.uk/apprenticeships)

A national centre for horticulture situated on a 60-hectare site near Evesham. Pershore College (part of WCG) offers the very best in land-based learning. Land-based apprenticeship standards available at Pershore College include:

Arborist (Level 2); Crop Technician (Container Based Level 3); Golf Greenkeeping (Level 2); Horticulture Supervisor (Level 3); Horticulture Operative (Level 2); Landscape Operative (Level 2); Land-based Service Engineering (Level 2 Engineer, Level 3 Technician); Sports Turf Operative (Level 2)

Pershore College also offers short courses in landscaping and horticulture as well as pesticides training: PA1, PA6 and more.



## SRUC Elmwood



Carslogie Road, Cupar, Fife, KY15 5YT

Contact: Anja Boehme

t: 01334 658800 e: [anja.boehme@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:anja.boehme@sruc.ac.uk)

w: [www.sruc.ac.uk](http://www.sruc.ac.uk)

SRUC Elmwood is based in Fife just 10 miles from St Andrews. The college offers a range of work-based block release and online options in Sportsturf studies and golf course management.

For those seeking an entry level qualification we offer Modern Apprenticeships at VQ Level 2. For those looking to develop their managerial careers the college offers SVQ Level 3 in Sportsturf as well as an online Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Golf Course Management.

The SRUC curriculum has a global perspective which is accessible, and market focussed. We aim to be responsive to the diverse range of challenges across the golf sector and arising in the emerging natural economy.



## Suffolk New College



Rope Walk, Ipswich IP4 1LT

Contact: Apprenticeships

t: 01473 382600 e: [apprenticeships@suffolk.ac.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@suffolk.ac.uk)

w: [www.suffolk.ac.uk](http://www.suffolk.ac.uk)

Our Suffolk Rural campus, at Otley in the heart of the countryside, benefits from an extensive number of regional golf clubs where we can offer a high quality educational and professional experience for trainee Golf Greenkeepers, amongst an offer of 40+ apprenticeship standards. Our most recent addition is Advanced Sports Turf Technician and our industry experts also deliver Countryside worker, Sports Turf Operative, Golf Greenkeeping and Horticulture or Construction Landscape Operative routes. Delivery modes support classroom or workplace-based learning and we also offer a range of integrated commercial short courses including pesticides encompassing PA1, PA2 & PA6 accreditation, chainsaw, and first aid qualifications.



# Latest job vacancies

## Deputy Course Manager

Farleigh Golf Club, Surrey



We have an exciting opportunity to join our excellent team as Deputy Course Manager at Farleigh Golf Club, Warmingham, Surrey.

Reporting directly to the Course Manager you will be responsible for helping lead the team, deputising in their absence, ensuring all tasks are completed to a high standard and motivating the team to ensure superb standards are maintained and health and safety practices carried out.

Farleigh Golf Club is part of the Foxhills collection, a fantastic benefit to both our staff and members, a thriving venue that continues to invest in the courses, pushing the standards forwards year over year. Our 27-hole layout makes up three 18-hole championship courses.

Please email your CV to: [michael@farleighfox.co.uk](mailto:michael@farleighfox.co.uk)

## Golf Course Mechanic

Ganton Golf Club, North Yorkshire



A rare and exciting opportunity has arisen at our long-standing championship venue. Located in North Yorkshire, Ganton Golf Club is one of the finest 18-hole Championship golf courses in the world.

The ideal candidate will be a passionate team member, Highly motivated with hands-on mechanical experience. You will have good communication skills, a flexible approach to work and an ability to prioritise workload.

The club offers to the right candidate an excellent salary package, including accommodation (3-bedroom house on site), 5% pension contribution, paid overtime, 30 days holiday, golf privileges, education and training opportunities along with BIGGA membership.

Please email a CV with covering letter to Simon Olver, Golf Course Manager at [coursemanager@gantongolfclub.com](mailto:coursemanager@gantongolfclub.com)

## Senior Greenkeeper

RAC Golf Club, Surrey



We are recruiting for a Senior Greenkeeper based at our Epsom clubhouse. With an exciting development strategy in place, this is a great opportunity for someone to take our courses to the next level with an inspired, environmentally sustainable plan that ranges from course architecture to woodland management.

Candidates should have agronomic qualification NVQ 3 or HNC or equivalent, be computer literate - including Microsoft office, have pesticide spraying licence PA1, PA2 PA6, a full driving licence, be an experienced greenkeeper and a team player.

Benefits include a salary of £30,941.48, annual staff bonus, free meals on duty, paid birthday day off, generous pension, free parking and many more....



To find out more please scan here:

## Assistant Greenkeeper

Sunningdale Golf Club, Berkshire



Sunningdale Golf Club are recruiting for an Assistant Greenkeeper. The successful candidate will be working as part of a world class team benefiting from ongoing training and support. On a day-to-day basis you will contribute to the maintenance and development of the golf course, its practice facilities and the surrounding estate and be part of our Tournament teams.

Sunningdale Golf Club is widely regarded as having two of the best and most beautiful courses in the British Isles, both ranked in the world top 100. The Club has a proud history of hosting tournament golf, having recently held the Seniors Open 2021, with several major events scheduled including the Curtis Cup in 2024.

Email: [jobs@sunningdalegolfclub.co.uk](mailto:jobs@sunningdalegolfclub.co.uk)  
or visit [www.sunningdalegolfclub.co.uk/careers](http://www.sunningdalegolfclub.co.uk/careers)

## Seasonal Assistant Greenkeeper

Tyrifjord Golf Club, Norway



An exciting position has arisen for an enthusiastic, motivated Seasonal Assistant Greenkeeper to join our team at Tyrifjord Golf Club in Norway.

The role of Seasonal Assistant Greenkeeper offers an exceptional opportunity for personal development as you will be working under the guidance of our experienced Head Greenkeeper, Ian Ross (Syngenta/NGA Greenkeeper of the Year 2017).

Benefits include further training, staff clothing, use of the golf course, discounted on-site accommodation with kitchen/bathroom and Wi-Fi, pension contributions and healthcare insurance and a competitive salary of Kr200 per hour.

Please apply via email to [ian@tyrifjord-golfklubb.no](mailto:ian@tyrifjord-golfklubb.no) attaching your CV and covering letter by Friday 1st December 2023.



## Recruitment

[www.bigga.org.uk/careers](http://www.bigga.org.uk/careers)

From trainee vacancies to senior management roles, new greenkeeping job opportunities are added daily to BIGGA's online recruitment pages.

BIGGA's website receives 1.6 million page views per year and 55% of those are to our careers pages. Visit [www.bigga.org.uk](http://www.bigga.org.uk) to see our latest opportunities and find out more about advertising your position.

For more information call 01347 833 800  
or email [info@bigga.co.uk](mailto:info@bigga.co.uk)



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# Practical Greenkeeping

Refine your skillset and expand your knowledge

- How an ex-firearms officer is using his police skills in the golf industry
- The R&A on managing drainage and irrigation for extreme weather



## Five practical tips for positivity

- Start your day with a positive thought or an affirmation
- Surround yourself with supportive and like-minded individuals
- Recognise your own negative thoughts and turn them into positive solutions
- Embrace change and view it as an opportunity for improvement
- Celebrate your successes, no matter how small.

## The power of positivity: how an optimistic attitude can lead to success



As 2023 ends and the greenkeeping community reflect on their accomplishments and challenges, now

is the perfect time to explore the undeniable influence of positivity in the profession, says Vicky Elliott-Potter, founder and director of EPIC.

In the demanding world of greenkeeping, where nature often throws unexpected curveballs, a positive mindset can make all the difference.

Positive thinking empowers you to face challenges with resilience and adaptability, enabling you to find solutions where others might see only obstacles. It fosters a can-do attitude that enhances work and homelife,

plus your overall wellbeing.

It's easy to get caught up in negative thoughts, but, remember, you have the power to choose your perspective – your mood is in your control. Focus on the aspects of your job and life that bring joy, satisfaction and a sense of purpose. Practice gratitude and watch how your mood transforms. You choose your mood and your emotional responses.

Every challenge offers a lesson, so when facing adversity, take a step back, analyse the situation and seek the silver lining. Embrace mistakes as opportunities for growth. By learning from setbacks, you can make them into stepping stones toward success, turning negatives into positives.

And positivity is contagious. Your

optimistic attitude will inspire those around you, creating a harmonious and productive work environment. Your colleagues will be more motivated, your relationships at home will be happier. After all, we all love to be around positive people.

In conclusion, as you reflect on the past year and prepare for the challenges and opportunities of 2024, remember the transformative power of positivity. This will lead to personal growth, enhanced relationships and professional success.

Buddha famously said: "What you think, you become." I for one am a believer.

Here's to a positive and successful year to you all in greenkeeping. See you at BTME in Harrogate. **GI**

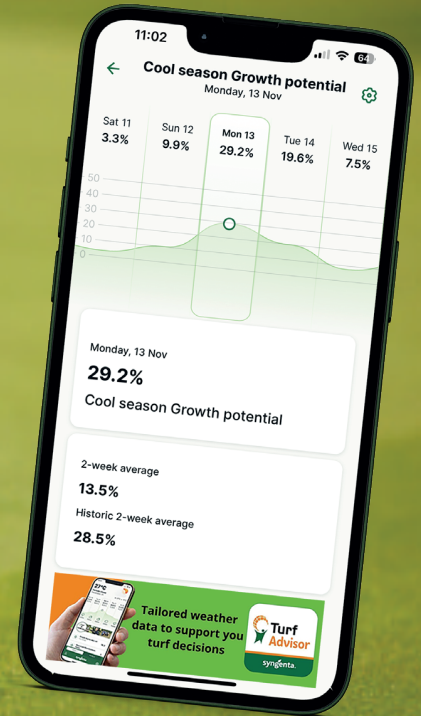


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# Growth Potential

Tracking the growth rate of your turf gives the opportunity to assess how plants are performing at any given time and has implications for almost all management actions.

Considering the importance of growth potential for turf management, it's no surprise that people have sought to improve the quality of this important metric, with the development of Growth Potential models, that link temperature to patterns of turf growth. Which also brings the opportunity to look at predicting future growth.

In typical UK temperature conditions, which are highly favourable for growing cool season grass species, the Growth Potential, or GP, curve tends to kick off in early spring and peaks around July.

However, for every site, every year the temperature will be a limiting factor for growth at different times. The Growth Potential model has the ability to highlight in advance when these difficult periods will occur.

Where can Growth Potential be incorporated into turf management decisions? Maintenance timing and actions; Timing of PGR programme; Fungicide selection; Biostimulant timing; Nutrition strategy; and Communication with club managers and players

The new Syngenta Turf Advisor app provides the current daily GP figure, along with a graphic of recent days and a rolling forecast for the week. Furthermore, it includes an average GP for the two-week period and how that compares with the long-term

historic average for the same period. However, it must be recognised that the pattern of GP may not be represented by real-time grass clipping yield measurements.

In the UK we can see stresses impact our turf resulting in the typical slow-down of growth with a dip through the summer, for example. That is normally related to high evapotranspiration rates, drought stress and extreme light levels, but only rarely as temperature stress tracked by the GP model. Comparing GP figures to the actual growth helps understand the impact of the other stresses involved and assess the resilience of turf plants to all stresses, along with the ability for them to recover – and how that can influence proactive timing of turf management activities.

### Read this for:

- Understanding Growth Potential
- Benchmarking results
- Using data in practice

### GP model numbers

Initially developed in the US, the Turf Advisor GP model premise is that growth of cool season grasses begins to get going at a 24-hour average temperature of around 5°C, builds rapidly at temperatures from 10°C to 17°C, and peaks at a temperature of 20°C. When average temperature exceeds that peak, the growth begins to slow down again - to a point of little activity above a daily average of 32°C.

### Benchmarking results

The simplicity of GP is both a strength and a limitation; it is not designed to show you the rate of growth, but to highlight the "potential". Connected with other data, that becomes useful. Since GP, as a decision support model, is only governed by air temperature, other climatic data points must be observed as the combination is what influences actual growth, factors such as rainfall, evapotranspiration and light should all be looked at when considering maintenance schedules.

Other factors can also limit turf growth, such as nutrition, sward composition, soil type, disease and stresses. These more complicated influences, subject to greater variance on a site-specific basis, need to be considered along with the GP model.

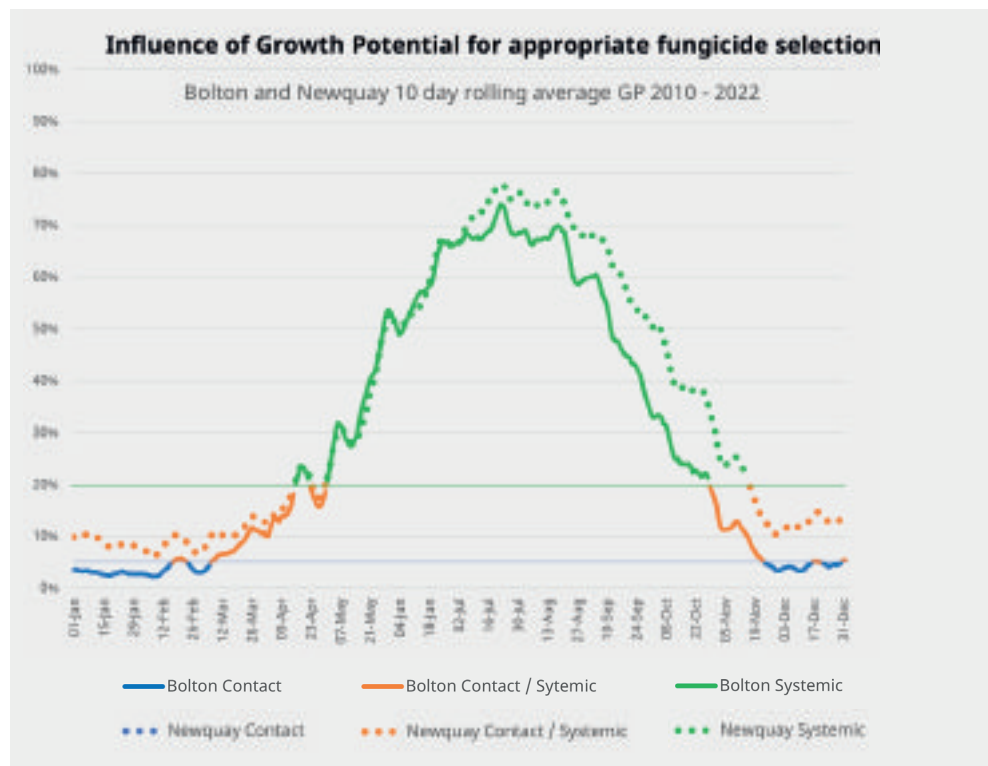
Course managers that regularly monitor grass clipping yield can quickly build up a picture of their own growth potential. As a benchmarking tool, that physical record can then be compared to a standardised GP model to predict what the actual implication of a GP figure will be on that individual course and where other stresses may be impacting our programme.

### Fungicide selection

Growth potential is an extremely useful tool. When there is little or no growth contact activity, which adheres to the leaf surface and prevents infection getting into the plant, can be highly effective and prolonged when the leaf is not being repeatedly cut off. At the other extreme, the more systemic products, such as new Ascernity and Heritage, perform most effectively when there is growth to take up the active ingredient into the plant and move it around the plant.

Between the two, there are combination products, such as Instrata Elite, that cover both aspects.

Extensive trials, along with plant



physiological biokinetic studies, indicate contact products, such as Medalion, are most appropriate when turf is consistently at a GP of 5% or less; the combination products containing both Systemic and contact when GP is running above 5%, and systemic products when it is consistently over 20%.

A review of historic GP figures highlights that in the far south west, for example, contact fungicides may only be suitable for very limited cold periods, with combination products having a far longer window of application in the autumn and spring.

However, in central north England a contact fungicide would be most appropriate from mid-November and through a critical stage of early winter to retain turf cover. It also highlights how courses there could transition into full systemic products more quickly when growth does initiate, as well as for a more protracted period over the summer without the heat extremes hitting turf growth.

### Regional differences

The key point from the analysis is the wide regional differences, and the importance of looking at historical records as a guide to what is likely to happen, along with the in-season trends that will influence decisions.

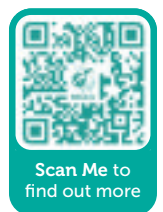
Using disease models of pressure and risk, in combination with two-

week GP trends and comparable data from previous years gives a far better picture of challenges and threats.

### Resilience and recovery

The Growth Potential model also provides a valuable guide to the ability of turf to recover from any damage or stresses, for timing renovation week, for example. When assessing disease risks, turf that is actively growing and with consistently high GP, above 70% for example, would be faster to grow out and recover from disease attacks with lower impact on turf quality. If infection occurred when turf had a growth potential of less than 20%, however, the effects could prove far more serious and longer lasting.

Tracking Growth Potential is another valuable piece of the jigsaw to make more proactive turf management decisions, based on data, to support greenkeepers' own experiences. **GI**



Author: Sean Loakes  
Syngenta Technical Manager UK & Ireland



# Understanding the value of a turf equipment technician



**Turf equipment technicians (TETs) have a crucial role to play at your golf club, says James Wilkinson, workshop and equipment manager at Buckinghamshire GC.**

TETs are responsible for maintaining all turf equipment and have day-to-day oversight of the workshop, including health and safety requirements and the management of all maintenance records.

Their role is at the heart of operations – they are the cogs that keep the wheels turning. The role of the TET enables green staff to do their job, maintaining the course to the highest possible standard, which in turn ensures a fantastic experience for members.

Their role is commercially effective as it minimises any dealer costs, which can be significant. It also reduces the downtime of machinery as it can be serviced or repaired quickly and on-site.

In some cases, TETs can be

undervalued as a function and are seen as “just a mechanic”. There is a lack of understanding of the skill now needed to carry out the role.

Technology is advancing at such a rate, with electronic and hybrid mowers now in use, the breadth of knowledge required to keep up with these advancements is vast.

From a stakeholder’s perspective, my advice would be to trust your TET as your in-house subject matter expert. They know what it takes to deliver what’s needed and if they are entrusted to do this and get the job done, the results will speak for themselves.

For TETs themselves, I would say create and nurture a great partnership with your course or venue manager. You are partners in each other’s success.

We have been seeing a welcome shift in the way TETs are viewed. The role has evolved and is now coming to the forefront of operations, gaining the respect and appreciation it deserves.

In line with this, more TETs and

those in associated roles are responding and making moves to ensure the next generation can enjoy a rewarding career.

The establishment of TETO (Turf Equipment Technicians Organisation) goes some way to giving TETs a voice and a space to network, share ideas and best practice.

With the support of industry organisations such as BIGGA, TETO aims to provide a foundation for young people coming out of education, promoting the sector and the career opportunities available. It’s a career I would thoroughly recommend. **GI**

James and fellow TET Chris Minton will be speaking at Continue to Learn at BTME



# Apprentice CORNER

## Understanding the structure of a grass plant

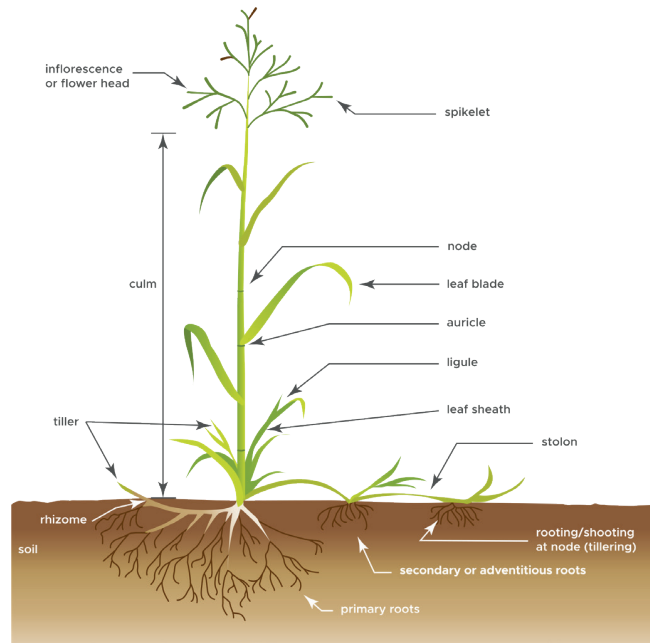
The whole of greenkeeping and golf depends on greenkeepers managing the grass plant, so it is important to have a good knowledge and understanding about it. There are several types or species of grass plant that are used on the golf course and all of them have certain characteristics in common. Grass is a living organism and as such has certain needs including oxygen, water, mineral nutrients and food which enable it to do certain things including growing and reproducing. A grass plant is structured in a way to ensure it can meet these needs and it will adapt to different environments.

### Traditional species found in UK golf greens

- Bents (*Agrostis*)
- Fine Fescues (*Festuca rubra* ssp)

### Grasses considered to be weeds in fine turf

- Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*)
- Annual Meadow Grass (*Poa annua*)



**Table: The parts of the grass plant**

Plant Part	Function	Comments
Roots	To anchor the plant to the ground To take up water To take up nutrients	Roots need oxygen to function properly, so aeration of the soil is really important.
Leaf	To manufacture food	Grasses manufacture food through the process of photosynthesis which requires sunlight, warmth, and chlorophyll (green pigment) to work effectively. This is largely carried out in the leaf blade. The leaf sheath provides structural support, acting a bit like a stem.
Stem or culm	To grow (from buds) To transport water and nutrients up and down the plant To hold up the leaves so that they can capture sunlight To hold up the flower so that it can be pollinated	At regular intervals along the stem there are attachment points for leaves, and where a leaf joins the stem there is always a bud at that junction – this junction is known as a node.
Tiller	To increase the branching of the plant and create more opportunities for the plant to flower and set seed	Tillers in grasses are the equivalent of branches on a tree. They grow from the buds, and as they mature they become identical in structure to the main stem. Some tillers specialise to become stolons or rhizomes.
Stolons and rhizomes	To allow non-sexual reproduction	In some plants, some grasses included, the stem sends out runners called stolons (over-ground) and rhizomes (underground) that allow it to reproduce over short distances.
Inflorescence or flower head	Reproduction	The flower is where pollination takes place, meaning sexual reproduction and the potential for dispersal of seeds over a wide area.

# Tactical communications: Lessons from an ex- police firearms officer



Ex-police officer and now greens director Martin Cox discusses how to use tactical communications to improve problem-solving

Martin Cox was a police tactical firearms officer for more than twenty years and spent almost three decades in the service. He is now greens director at Ingestre Park Golf Club and finds himself on a new learning curve.

Martin discusses how the transferable skills acquired and developed in his previous role can be applied to the golf industry.

#### **What we mean by tactical communications**

Tactical communications are a means of relaying and receiving information and detail to achieve a positive result.

In my role in the police force, I was a team leader and the nature of the work we undertook called for a keen focus on having methods of communication that followed a clear process. This was crucial for the team to be effective and to achieve the desired outcomes.

It's about using coherent systems of thought to improve problem-solving, increase awareness of others, refine operational processes, and deliver clearer messages.

The result is team buy-in and successful outcomes due to heightened levels of communication among all organisational stakeholders.

#### **The pitfalls of communication in the golf industry**

Greenkeepers often use jargon or industry language, which can be hard for directors and committees to understand.

These groups are mainly made up of well-meaning volunteers from a variety of professions, but rarely with any greenkeeping or agronomy backgrounds.

Moreover, they are not likely to possess any deep insight of operational practices, logistical issues, and financial costs attributed to maintaining a golf course.

While I would concede this is rather a sweeping statement, I have noted some common themes from my interactions with greenkeepers and course managers that reflect my observations.

#### **The key to understanding each other better**

My ethos has always been to listen to the professionals, after all they perform the maintenance tasks daily and recognise all the nuances of weather conditions, seasonal tasks linked to agronomy and the current market costs of course consumables.

That is not to say that reviews and the introduction of efficient working practices by people with a skill set outside of the industry cannot bring added value, but it must first be based upon an understanding of the variety of tasks required to maintain a golf course and most importantly how they are performed. Collective thinking is the goal.

#### **Understanding a flexible approach to problem-solving**

The dynamic decision-making model is something that has been used in the police force for around 30 years. It's affectionately termed as 'the wheel' in the firearms world; when you get new information, you spin the wheel.

You start with establishing what you know, so you assess what information is available and which aspects of it are confirmed.

Armed with that knowledge, you then look at the resources and capabilities available to deal with the situation you're facing. Those resources include everything from people to tools and equipment, while the capabilities refer to the skill sets of those people and the applications of those tools and equipment.

After that, you move on to consider the time parameters. How pressing is the need and how urgently does it need to be addressed?



Then you assess the need for any supporting resources and capabilities before identifying the achievable outcome based on all those preceding factors.

This process provides a structure to approach problem-solving that can be applied across a multitude of scenarios.

### Dynamic decision-making as a police firearms officer...

An example of this model in practice would be to say that you get 999 call in the control room with a report from someone saying they have had an argument with a friend, and that friend has threatened to harm them. The caller says they know their friend has a machete and he's saying he is coming back with it. The report suggests he is on his way.

At that point, the dynamic decision-making model can be applied – what information have we got and is it confirmed? Let's say another person calls in to confirm they've seen a man in the area ranting and raving, carrying a machete. With the information verified by a witness, you look at the available resources – do we have patrols nearby? Have we got a dog at our disposal? Have we got officers on the ground who can go and secure the person who we think is a potential victim?

Next, you move to the time parameters – in this case, it's happening now. He is on his way, the information suggests he has a knife, and there is a threat to cause harm.

The next phase is establishing what resources and capabilities we need in order to support our actions. We're here to get the person who we believe to be the potential victim away from that location. But then we have to protect anybody else who's in that location, we have to protect the public, and we have to protect ourselves.

We have to ensure that we give the right response, so we can look at the less lethal options such as the police dog – the 'furry Exocet' can solve a lot of problems!

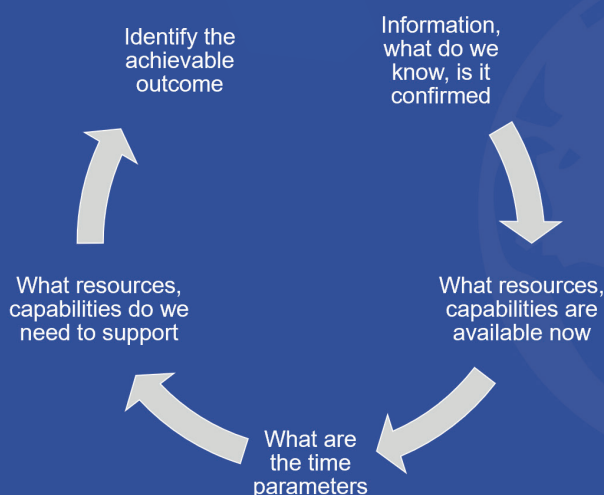
Then you come to identifying the achievable outcome. Taking all the information you have, accounting for the resources you've got, the capabilities you have, the time



### About Martin

Martin was a police officer for twenty-seven and a half years, spending 23 of those years as an operational authorised firearms officer. Within that specialised field of police work, he deployed in a variety of capacities, including armed response, close protection, counter terrorism, firearms command, and was a nationally qualified firearms tactical advisor. Upon retiring nine years ago, he took up golf and joined his local club at Ingestre Park. He then became involved in management committees and subsequently the board of directors. Since April 2021, he has held the position of greens director and has conducted a full review of the greens department. It has proven a steep learning curve, made tougher by being coupled with a major redevelopment of the golf course due to the HS2 train line.

# Dynamic Decision Making





# “It’s about using tactical processes to improve problem-solving, increase awareness of others, refine operational processes, and deliver clearer messages”

parameters involved, and including any support that you may have, what is the achievable outcome? In this example, we want to secure the individual with a machete and make sure it’s safe so we can sort out the rest from there.

If any of the information should change, we spin the wheel again and establish those same factors that will inform our decision-making and help us identify that achievable outcome, whatever it may be.

## ...and as a greenkeeper

To put this into the context of greenkeeping, consider the real-life example that we faced at my golf club of undertaking the grow-in on a course where the development of the HS2 line has necessitated a major redevelopment. There are two things working against you: often the weather, and certainly time.

We had problems with land acquisition that put us behind schedule by five and a half months. Fortunately, contractors managed to get us back on time with that, but we were not going to get almost half a year of grow-in time back.

This created what’s known as a collapsing timeframe, because by a set date the HS2 development was going to mean we lost holes and we had to have our replacement holes ready.

The same process of dynamic decision-making can be applied, just as in the police firearms example. You assess the available information, see what resources and capabilities are at your disposal, establish the time parameters, decide what supporting resources and capabilities are required, and identify the achievable outcome.

You can see that even when the situations are vastly different, the same process of decision-making still applies.

## Realising and developing your own style

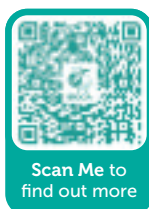
We’re all individuals but the key is to harness your characteristics and hone your style in a way that will help improve your team, and the way you interact with people.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of people: gunslingers and snipers. Gunslingers tend to be impulsive, meaning they can often shoot from the hip and make rash decisions, and they very frequently fail to see the bigger picture or take all the relevant information into account. It’s also a common trait among the gunslinger group to be adversarial in their interactions.

Given those characteristics, gunslingers are not guaranteed to hit their target, which is to say they have a reduced chance of achieving the desired outcome.

Snipers, on the other hand, take a steady and supported aim, establishing the information and assessing potential ramifications of their actions. Because of this more considered approach, they are considerably more likely to hit their target. **GI**

Martin was speaking at Continue to Learn at BTME. BIGGA members can rewatch this session and other highlights from the education programme by heading to the Members’ Area of the BIGGA website.



## The five universal truths of human interaction

- People feel the need to be respected
- People would rather be asked than be told
- People have a desire to know why
- People prefer to have options over threats
- People want to have second chances



## Are you a gunslinger or a sniper?

### Gunslingers

- Can be impulsive and shoot from the hip
- Often adversarial
- Lack vision of the whole picture
- Not guaranteed to hit their target

### Snipers

- Take a steady and supported aim
- Concentrate on specific actions
- Aware of the outcomes of their actions
- More likely to hit their target



# Using UK Growth Potential to support management of Microdochium

Adopting an Integrated Management Plan using UK Growth Potential can reduce the number of required applications to manage disease more effectively

Microdochium Patch, recently reclassified as *Monographella nivalis*, occurs when the pathogen, a susceptible host grass and environmental conditions favourable to the pathogen interact. Disease occurrence and intensity are affected by the duration that the three primary factors are aligned. The aim is to create an environment unfavourable to the pathogen and

to support a healthy plant primed to defend itself (systemic acquired resistance) against the pathogen, in this case, *Microdochium nivale*.

Consider cultural disease controls such as soil fertility, grass species, and mowing height as they can be in favour of, or against, a pathogen.

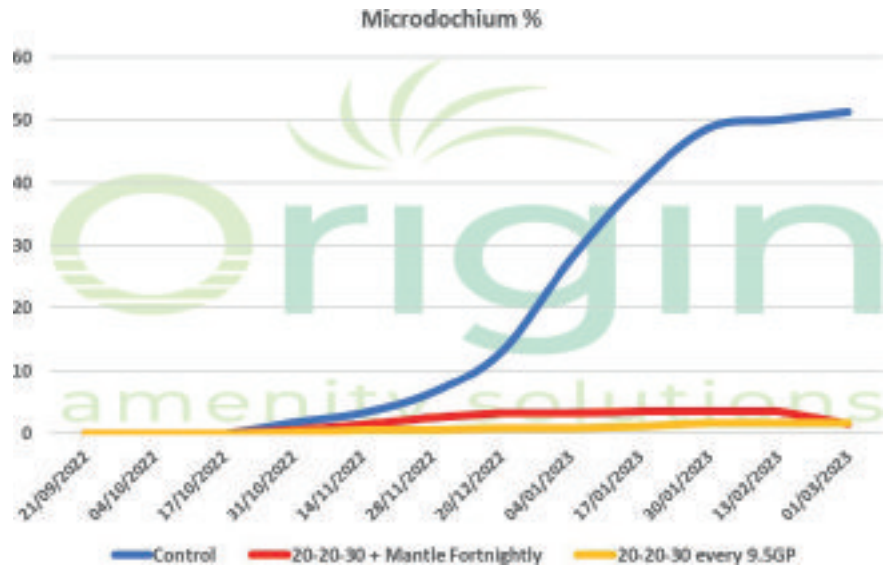
Water management plays a key role in cultural disease control. Adequate drainage, thatch management,

aeration, improved airflow, and shade reduction on surfaces is essential. Removing trees and shrubs over the winter period will improve environmental conditions around the greens complex.

As the end of 2023 approaches, it is time to consider what maintenance is required in 2024. Organic matter testing using the OM246 method



“Our research showed we achieved similar levels of excellent control of *Microdochium* by applying every 9.5 UK GP compared to the ‘calendar’ method, but we only required six applications to achieve this control using GP”



Above: Managing *Microdochium* with application fortnightly vs every 9.5 UKGP

or testing the top 0-25mm and 25-50mm allows you to make an informed decision about what your maintenance regime will be.

Disease needs time to develop; removing dew and guttation fluid will reduce periods of leaf wetness. The use of dew dispersants at times of prolonged leaf wetness (continuous fog or drizzle in mild, humid conditions) will support your physical management practices. Consider a penetrant wetting agent to keep surfaces as dry as possible.

Plant elicitors can be beneficial before and during periods of disease risk. Elicitors stimulate the plant's natural defences (they trigger a defence response) and elicit phytoalexins that gather around the site of infection to resist the pathogen attack. Examples of plant elicitors are phosphite, salicylic acid and harpins. Fertilisers and elicitors with an acidic pH will make the leaf surface less favourable to the pathogen.

Integrated management plans can be utilised to enhance plant health and plant defences as well as altering

the environmental conditions to favour the turfgrass and discourage the pathogen.

Utilising plant nutrition, elicitors, biostimulants and beneficial microbes, dew dispersants, penetrants, and Bio-controls such as Harmonix and PPPs can decrease the plant's susceptibility to *Microdochium*. At our Turf Research and Technology Centre we have been applying the products using a UK Growth Potential (GP) of 9.5 with excellent success.

Growth Potential is a figure taken from the day's average temperature that indicates likely plant growth. By utilising this figure, we can optimise the timings of our Plant Elicitor programme, the 20/20/30 + Mantle mix, to ensure we re-apply when the plant has 'used up' all the previous application, or it has been removed by mowing.

Using this method ensures we only apply when required – it may mean applications are closer together during warm weather, but it will only be applied on plant requirements. During colder weather applications can be

spaced out much further using this method.

We selected a figure of 9.5 UK GP as the time to re-apply the 20/20/30 + Mantle. (This is still under research, and we may refine this recommendation in the future). A direct comparison was made with the old 'calendar' application timing of once every 14 days from September to Christmas, and then monthly afterwards.

Our research showed we achieved similar levels of excellent control of *Microdochium* by applying every 9.5 UK GP compared to the 'calendar' method, but we only required six applications to achieve this control using GP.

Eleven applications were used following the 'calendar' approach, so a substantial product and time saving has been demonstrated. **GI**

Contact Origin Amenity Solutions  
Call: 0800 138 7222  
Email: [sales@originamenity.com](mailto:sales@originamenity.com)



LXe-261

# What the future holds for alternative fuels

Is electric merely a stepping stone to an alternative fuel source of the future, ask Kubota UK

The desire for a reduction in environmental impact is undeniably driving the demand for alternative fuel products in the golf and sports turf industry. As has been seen in the automotive market, battery power is one option for providing propulsion, incorporated in maintenance machinery of all sizes – from hand tools to pedestrian mowers and, more recently, compact tractors as the technology improves to keep pace with industry requirements.

Electrically powered products essentially use a battery source, typically lithium-ion, to provide the “fuel” for the machine. Instead of refuelling a machine with liquid fuels, they are re-charged by a 230-volt power supply and/or, depending on the supply available, ‘superchargers’ which can be used to significantly reduce re-charge time.

Kubota have adopted this approach to power the new ZE Electric Zero-Turn range – launched last month – to join an RT220-2e compact

wheel loader and LXe-261 in Kubota’s electric portfolio.

Developing an effective electric offering demands more than simply offering a low or zero-emission machine – it still must meet the customer’s needs for productivity, durability and efficiency.

Looking at the LXe-261 tractor in particular, one of the major challenges was delivering ample range and operational run-time.

For that reason, the LXe-261 is equipped with a large-capacity battery that can provide rapid, one-hour charging and three to four hours of continuous run-time, so operators will be able to quickly charge the

batteries during their lunch break and continue working in the afternoon.

The electric motor produces an equivalent 25.8hp which drives the 3-range HST transmission, hydraulic pump and steering pump making it suitable for mowing, hauling, and other maintenance tasks.

When considering ‘alternative fuels’ the option is to essentially retain a combustion engine but power it with a different source, including hybrid technology. Kubota’s compact, high-power density, fuel efficient engines are already widely used in the global agricultural and construction industry, forging a reputation for reliability and robustness.

**“Developing an effective electric offering demands more than simply offering a low or zero-emission machine – it still must meet the customer’s needs for productivity, durability and efficiency”**



“These fuels also do not require engine or machine modifications, providing a positive economic, as well as environmental, argument around their use.”



In the drive towards carbon neutrality, Kubota is focussing its future engine development on three pillars:

- Pure Engine Solution: Existing engines with enhanced fuel efficiency
- Hybrid Engine Solution: Micro-hybrid and hybrid technology providing extra power boosts when required
- Fuel Solution: Engines which are compatible with low carbon fuels such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), synthetic fuels and hydrogen

This research is resulting in significant company advancements in many areas, including hydrogen engine technology – an attractive carbon-free alternative fuel solution. The Kubota 3.8L, 85kW four cylinder industrial off-highway hydrogen engine eliminates carbon dioxide emissions by only using hydrogen as a fuel.

Kubota’s hydrogen engine is based on the spark-ignited type

WG3800 engine and, by keeping the size or footprint of the existing engine, Kubota has maintained the compatibility with customer applications. While not set for an imminent introduction into the sports turf arena, the Kubota hydrogen engine is proving to be an attractive choice within the generator sector and is already attracting interest from manufacturers.

In another breakthrough, the company recently revealed that all Kubota diesel engines, including Stage V models, can use paraffin-based fuels that comply with European standard EN 15940. The newly approved fuels include Gas to Liquid (GTL) and Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). The use of HVO has also recently been approved for Kubota diesel engines in the United States.

When using these fuels, operators will need to comply with any local regulations in the areas being used. There is no requirement to flush fuel tanks or change filters, as HVO

and GTL are safe to mix with diesel, nor are there changes to existing maintenance intervals or warranty conditions. These fuels also do not require engine or machine modifications, providing a positive economic, as well as environmental, argument around their use.

Both alternative technology (battery power) and true alternative fuels can provide an effective solution, whether you’re looking for equipment that delivers carbon neutrality, zero emissions, or both. But like engines of all types, the harder you work them, the more fuel (or charge) you will use. We can all expect to see a blend of fuel sources in use in the professional groundcare sector for a good few years to come, and considerations on consumption, maintenance demands and logistics regarding installation will all have an impact on what the right choice may be for you. **GI**



# INFINICUT®:

## Employing the Kaizen approach to mower performance



Whether it is actively pursued, or sought subconsciously, the principle of 'continuous improvement' is ever-present in modern life. Also known as the Kaizen philosophy, it is based on the idea that making small, manageable changes over time can lead to significant improvements in the long run.

This approach can be witnessed in greenkeeping, employed by those managing their golf courses and, too, in the innovations delivered by maintenance machinery manufacturers.

Fifteen years on from the first iteration of the INFINICUT® pedestrian mower, Advanced Turf Technology discuss some of the recent improvements introduced to further enhance user experience.

The Kaizen concept can be found in all areas of greenkeeping – an example could be attempting to transition a sward from one grass species to another.

The desired result might take a while but, over time, the turf quality

is enhanced, and the user experience improves.

From a machinery perspective, there are plenty of examples of products that were designed many years ago that have subsequently undergone several revisions and, when compared to the original product, are markedly improved.

Take a greens triplex: the basic format hasn't changed but, through incremental changes, the product has achieved significant improvements in its design and delivery.

Here at Advanced Turf Technology, innovation is very much at the core of our company's ethos.

The results of embracing this approach can be seen across our INFINICUT® range.

The first INFINICUT® concept was born 15 years ago and, since then, many changes have been made to the product, all with a view to improving performance.

The launch of the 22" golf cutting unit in early 2023 was the culmination of years of research and refinement to

deliver the level of precision needed for golf green management.

Below is a brief insight into recent product upgrades and the rationale behind the changes.

### User Experience

Being battery powered, the INFINICUT® already had a reputation for being quiet, with minimal to no HAVs exposure issues.

Our approach to user experience was therefore to look at how else we could make the job of greens mowing easier and offer the potential for a better result.

The new programmable tilt-and-turn feature automatically slows the mower at end-of-line turning for an easier approach to the next line.

The slow-down speed can be programmed via the InfiniApp™ to whatever percentage of mow speed the user prefers.

The act of slowing down is performed via regenerative braking which further extends battery duty cycle.

“The Kaizen philosophy is based on the idea that making small, manageable changes over time can lead to significant improvements in the long run – it can be applied to greenkeeping”



The INFINIApp™ has simplified mower adjustment and set-up, eliminating discrepancies and improving efficiency.

### Cut Performance

Cut performance is the key element of any mower attribute.

While existing cutting unit geometry was maintained, we wanted to extend bedknife life. Design focus therefore centred on torsional rigidity, also known as torsional stiffness, which describes an element or materials resistance to twisting or torsional deformation when subjected to a torque or twisting force.

Calculations and analysis of torsional rigidity are essential to determining whether a design is suitable for a particular application and to prevent structural issues due to excessive torsional deformation.

For that, we employed Finite Element Analysis (FEA) – a cornerstone of aviation design. Poor torsional strength in cutting unit design results in the unit oscillating and can contribute to excessive bedknife/cylinder wear.

By changing the material composition of our SMARTCut™ reels and the way the unit was constructed,

we were able to reduce bedknife wear.

### Ease of Maintenance

Time to complete tasks seems to be an ever-decreasing commodity in golf course management.

That issue extends to turf technicians and mechanics. By focusing on machine ergonomics, we managed to decrease the time needed to re-grind the unit by over 50%. Motivation here was to reduce the number of elements that need to be removed and/or slackened to perform a re-grind.

Bedknife to cylinder adjustment was also factored in and ease of access was improved to achieve consistent bedknife to cylinder contact.

### Customisation

Every golf course is different and course managers don't necessarily follow the same maintenance doctrine. To reflect that, we simplified the ability to alter mower clip rates, acceleration rates and braking force.

This is all achieved via the InfiniApp™. Settings can also be stored for retrieval and simultaneously sent wirelessly to multiple machines in a fleet, reducing time and all-but eliminating differentiation between mowers.

### Reliability

All of the above improvements are nullified if the mower isn't reliable. Therefore, to improve reliability, we sought a reduction in water ingress points and achieved this via a modification to the electrical architecture which reduced possible ingress points by over 35%.

In summary, cumulative improvements to design don't have to be drastic to achieve a noticeable improvement in the overall offering of a product. By taking this iterative approach to design, manufacturers can ensure valuable product features are retained whilst progressing the overall offering to meet the levels demanded by greenkeepers of today and tomorrow. **GI**

# Precision and control through irrigation

Nestled between the Irish Sea and the Wicklow mountains, the Druids Glen course is one of two championship courses at Druids Glen Hotel & Golf Resort



Designed by Pat Ruddy and Tom Craddock, Druids Glen is a parkland course that opened in 1995. It hosted the Irish Open between 1996 and 1999 and Seve Trophy in 2002. Built to USGA standards and a previous European Golf Course of the Year winner, it has been described as the 'Augusta of Europe'.

Thirty years on, a multi-million-euro investment by resort owners Neville Hotels has renovated and enhanced the course and its clubhouse. Twenty greens have been reshaped, tiered and extended, with new tee boxes, renovated, repositioned and centre-lined bunkers.

Led by course designer Peter McEvoy and EIGCA architect Jeff Lynch of ReGolf, the project team included John Clarkin of Turfgrass, Giles Wardle of Irriplan, Darr Golf Construction, Aquaturf Solutions, Irish TurfCare and Rain Bird. After just 17 months, the restored course re-opened in June.

with double and triple-row coverage on fairways at specific holes with over 1,000 Rain Bird 752 and 900/950 Series rotors installed across the course. Isolation valves allow for irrigation to a specific green or fairway to be shut off, which could not have been done previously.

Significant investment was also made in comprehensive drainage and upgrading and extending 26,000m<sup>2</sup> of pathways. Over 90,000m<sup>2</sup> of topsoil were stripped and replaced, while the greens required 7,000 tonnes of rootzone, 2,000 tonnes of gravel and 5,000m of drainage.

"We were delighted with Aquaturf Solutions. Their professionalism and hard work were world class, and equally with Irish TurfCare, for whom nothing ever seemed to be an issue," said Bradshaw.

"I can be in the office working while CirrusPRO™ is fully operational in the background. What's so great is the real-time interface and the control

## The new system is dependable, giving us everything Rain Bird promised it could"

"Ripping up what the Irish consider to be a gem and have a romantic attachment to creates a certain amount of pressure," said Lynch. "The course was overdue a makeover to bring it up to modern tournament standard for the elite golfer, potentially for the Irish Open in the future, yet still needed to be an enjoyable golfing experience for everyday golfers.

"There's often a mixed reaction in Ireland when you mention irrigation given the rain we have, yet the new system Jonathan Bradshaw and his team are now working with is crucial for growing in and ongoing maintenance."

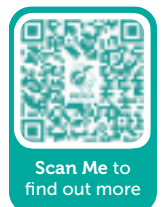
Bradshaw began his greenkeeping career at Druids Glen, returning as Course Manager three years ago. The previous irrigation system installed when the course was first built didn't meet modern-day standards. The Neville family were hands-on and closely involved in the decision to choose a Rain Bird® IC System™ with CirrusPRO™ Central Control software, also informed by what Bradshaw had heard from his peers and Irish courses currently operating Rain Bird systems. Irriplan's Wardle designed a system

it brings – it's very easy to use and alerts us immediately if anything isn't working properly. Whether I'm on my phone, tablet or the PC, there is access to the full central control software giving instant control and reliability. The new system is dependable, giving us everything Rain Bird promised it could.

"Financially, the long-term benefit is in time saved. We're irrigating a much greater area of maintained turf than we did and while we don't pay for water extraction, using less water overall means using less electrical power to pumps, which does save us money. In time, three or four of my greenkeeping team will be trained to use CirrusPRO™, with different levels of access as needed.

"I'm proud of the team here. It's a privilege to be working at Druids Glen, one of Ireland's top courses and a very special golf course," he said. **GI**

Find out more about  
CirrusPRO™



# Can we advise you on drainage and irrigation?



Paul Woodham is The R&A's Head of Agronomy Europe

This year's extreme weather conditions have once again brought water management to the top of the agenda

**Golf courses across the UK again encountered the worst of extreme rainfall and storms with several areas exposed to flooding and damage during October.**

Few now argue against the impact of climate change, and greenkeepers are increasingly familiar with the implications of extreme weather – especially when dealing with water security issues such as drought, flash storms and flooding.

Often, we are facing the pressure of too much water and yet at other times the prospect of a water supply that is depleting faster than the output of the irrigation system.

This year served warning of both scenarios. February was the driest on record in many regions and brought the fear of an early drought, despite a wet winter. Rain returned with some relief, but a subsequent six-week spell of sustained dry conditions led to an official drought in some regions by the end of June. Another change saw some of the wettest summer months recorded, with frequent violent rain events causing numerous concerns and many hours of greenkeeping time to repair paths and bunkers.

Our aim at The R&A is to protect golf and specifically support clubs with research and guidance for sustainable solutions to the impact of climate change, resource restrictions, changing legislation and public misconceptions, along with political and operational challenges.

**“ Our aim at The R&A is to protect golf and specifically support clubs with research and guidance for sustainable solutions**

Our job is to raise standards in sustainable agronomy and influence positive change, such as examples of clubs where innovative horizontal well storage and modular sub-surface tanks create additional storage for harvesting water from drainage or off-course sources. Linking drainage solutions to opportunities for water harvesting and alleviation of off-site risks is an environmental responsibility of the club and a wise investment.

Our work within the Sustainable Agronomy Service is seeing first-hand the threats posed by overwhelmed or inadequate drainage systems. Small-

scale drainage improvement work is often designed to tap into existing drains, or add new outfalls to existing ditches, and has to be done with care to ensure the older drains can cope with the additional flow and that discharge or run-off is controlled to avoid off-site flooding. Drainage schemes

for larger areas, and smaller ones in sensitive areas, will often build water-holding attenuation and ensure there is controlled discharge into the ground away from playing lines, meeting sustainability requirements and protecting the environment.

Golf course drainage designs and irrigation sourcing need to be aligned, even considering opportunities that will take off-site urban or land run-off on to the course

for storage and reduce the need for abstraction. For some, future water sourcing may use treated wastewater working with water companies where there is an opportunity to reduce the reliance on potable or abstracted water. The R&A Sustainable Agronomy partnership with The Environment Partnership (TEP) ensures clubs can access independent and expert support alongside our agronomic vision for sustainability.

We are already seeing more projects at a feasibility stage where The R&A and TEP work closely with golf clubs and stakeholders with interests in the course and surrounding areas. Working together we will see greater opportunities with innovation and protection at the heart of a connected strategy for drainage and irrigation.

Visit our Golf Course 2030 website ([randa.org/golf-course-2030-projects-resources](http://randa.org/golf-course-2030-projects-resources)) for case studies about drainage and water security solutions. **GI**



Our monthly column from The R&A's Sustainable Golf team shares news and insights on agronomy and sustainability themes. For more information on The R&A's Sustainable Agronomy Service please contact [sustainablegolf@randa.org](mailto:sustainablegolf@randa.org)

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