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Greenkeeper International

■ From Your Association

Entries are now open for our annual photography competition

■ Members

James Parker reflects on the myriad ways his late dog enhanced his working and personal life

■ Practical Greenkeeping

How to develop a strategy to counter chafer grubs at your course

Ben's Deal

Royal Cinque Ports course manager Ben Williams on the responsibility and privilege of nurturing the Kent links



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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

I had the privilege of playing at one of England's finest golf venues last month. We were blessed with a beautiful day, the course was magnificent and, to cap it all, I played as well as I have for many years. Naturally I complimented the course manager and his team (and would've done so even if I'd played badly!) on how genuinely outstanding the course was.

In conversation I made a throwaway comment suggesting the members must be really happy and received a wry smile in return. Apparently, many who frequent this facility don't share my feeling that it is, basically, paradise on earth. Moreover, they are not backwards in expressing their dissatisfaction. I was a bit taken aback but of course I shouldn't have been. We live in a consumer society where complaining about our lot is a constant pastime. Reluctantly, I think we have to learn to accept that somehow. Still, if golfers aren't happy playing an all-time classic in near-perfect condition what chance the rest of us?

It is imperative, therefore, that we ensure we have the right systems in place to support our members and

“ If golfers aren't happy playing a classic course in near-perfect condition, what chance the rest of us? ”

that employers understand their duty of care to staff who care deeply about the jobs they do and can be severely affected by mean-spirited comments.

I'm pleased that we have recently been able to contribute to the latest update of the industry-wide Governance Guide for Golf Clubs. This lays out in excellent detail just what should be in place to ensure clubs are run properly. In my opinion, poor governance impacts on club staff more than any other factor, and it is staff that provide the environment, on course and off, for golfers to enjoy. It is critical we get this aspect of our sport right urgently.



Jim Croxton
BIGGA Chief Executive

Here to support you when you need us

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Greenkeepers Legal Assistance
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Lifestyle Counselling 0333 000 2082

Human Resources 0845 646 1332
bigga@hrservicescotland.co.uk

BIGGA Greenkeepers
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26



Contents

June 2023

56



18



64



44



10



First Cut

- 07 • Join the support team for the Evian Championship
- 08 • A greenkeeper's best friend
- 09 • What's On this month
- 10 • Soil pest insecticide gets the go ahead
- 12 • Roddy Williams – reduce, reuse and recycle

From Your Association

- 18 • Enter the BIGGA Annual Photographic Competition
- 20 • BIGGA Guardian Iain Macleod
- 22 • Welcome to our new members

Member Interest

- 26 • The Greenkeeper Files: Ben Williams

- 32 • James Parker celebrates the life of his dog, Lola
- 38 • How to communicate more effectively

Careers

- 44 • My New Job: Michael Gibbons
- 46 • Latest job vacancies

Practical Greenkeeping

- 50 • Syngenta – Sustainability matters
- 52 • The R&A's fundamentals of sustainable turf management
- 56 • Dr Marie Athorn – encouraging avian wildlife to flourish
- 62 • Origin Amenity Solutions – The magic of mushrooms
- 64 • John Deere – Precision turf technology
- 66 • The R&A's Head of Agronomy Europe Paul Woodham

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First Cut



All you need to know from around our industry in a digestible form

- Soil pest insecticide given green light for additional use
- A greenkeeper's best friend: meet Della the Boxer

Would you like to help to prepare a course for a major championship?

BIGGA members are invited to become part of the championship support team for July's Evian Championship.

This is a great opportunity to gain experience preparing a course for a major championship.

Those invited to join for the duration of the event will receive return air fares, accommodation, subsistence and uniform.

Volunteers will work alongside the club's greenstaff and other volunteers from across Europe, with greenkeepers

required to be on site from 16 to 30 July. The Evian Course is situated in Evian les Bains in France, next to Lake Geneva.

If you are interested in this rare opportunity, email Peter Wisbey at pwisbey@btinternet.com

The BIGGA Calendar

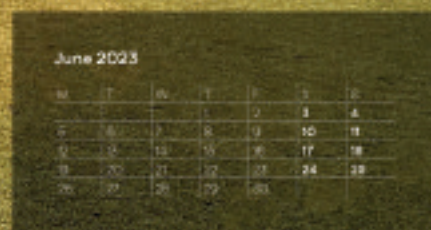
Above: Picture taken
by David Ball, Thetford

• Enter this year's BIGGA Annual
Photography Competition now –
turn to page 18 for more details

Download the desktop calendar:



Scan Me to
find out more



New horticultural course on offer

A new foundation degree in
Sustainable Horticulture
Management is being launched by
Plumpton College, near Brighton, in
September.

Across the horticulture sector
technology is progressing rapidly and
will change the skills required over the
next decade. Adapting to climate
change, improving biodiversity and
the use of resources will require new
approaches and strategies for the
management of horticultural sites.

Validated by the University of
Greenwich, the course is designed to



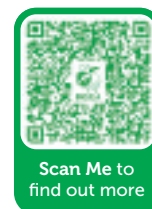
meet the needs of the industry and its
future workforce.

The course will deliver knowledge and
skills in the foundation of horticultural
sciences, key business and financial
management, contemporary
techniques and the integration of green
technologies and sustainable strategies.
In addition to students completing

A-levels or a Level 3 equivalent
qualification who are looking for an
immersive degree, the course is also
ideal for anyone already working in the
sector who is looking to upskill as well
as new entrants who have experience in
middle management in other industries.

There is an
opportunity to visit the
college and learn more
at an open event on
June 17.

For more information
or to apply, scan the
QR code.

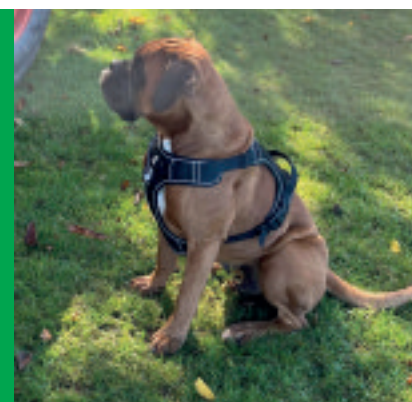


Scan Me to
find out more

A greenkeeper's best friend – Moor Allerton

Name: Della
Age: 3 years
Breed: Boxer

Favourite snack: Chicken feet
Favourite spot on the course: The
long rough
Naughtiest moment: Sneaking into
the halfway house to help herself to
a sausage sandwich
My dog is happiest when: Chasing
her ball around the open fairways
Owner: Adam Matthews, course
manager at Moor Allerton, Yorkshire



What's on this month

Dates for your diary



8th June

BIGGA Scotland - Legacy Golf Championship
– Auchterarder



Auchterarder

15th June

BIGGA South Wales Summer Golf Day
– Maesteg GC

15th June

BIGGA South East Region Golf Day
– Ipswich GC

20 June

BIGGA North East Section Summer Golf Day
– Hexham GC

28 June

BIGGA South West Section Summer Golf Day
– Long Ashton GC

29 June

BIGGA Sussex Section 'Taking your quality of cut to the next level' Workshop with Tom Stidder
– Golf at Goodwood

Coming soon: Workforce and facilities research

BIGGA will shortly release the data from our latest research into workforces and facilities.

Keep an eye out on the BIGGA website and also in next month's issue of the magazine for more details.

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Soil pest insecticide given full approval

An insecticide that deals with leatherjackets and chafer grubs can now be used when turf managers decide it is most needed.

A full approval for Acelepryn, the Syngenta insecticide, is now in place in time for the key chafer white grub application timing in late spring and to target leatherjackets in the autumn.

The label covers control of chafer grubs and leatherjackets in golf greens, tees, fairways and roughs, subject to specific restrictions on the percentage of the area being treated.

While Acelepryn had previously been available for several seasons under the restricted constraints of an Emergency Authorisation, the full approval will allow optimum timing of application to best coincide with peak pest activity in specific situations.

Reporting of crane fly activity on the Pest Tracker website over recent seasons has identified peak flights of adults can occur right through to mid-October.

"For leatherjackets, changing climatic weather patterns that influence adult crane fly emergence, and subsequent egg laying, has frequently been occurring later in the season," said Sean Loakes, Syngenta's technical manager.

"The full approval for Acelepryn will enable more flexibility in the precise application timing for more effective results against early-stage larvae activity.

"Monitoring of adult activity will be especially useful when Acelepryn is being used in an integrated programme with NemaTrident nematodes, where soil temperature and moisture later in the season is important for the predatory nematodes."

The UK label approval for Acelepryn allows for one application per year on permitted surfaces at a rate of 0.6 litres per hectare subject to specific label.

Extensive trials have shown the treatment is recognised to give good control of leatherjackets and chafer at the first and second instar stages.

"The approval for Acelepryn will enable turf managers to develop more effective integrated turf management (ITM) programmes to tackle the severe effects of leatherjackets and chafer grubs," said Syngenta Turf Business Manager, Sarah Hughes.

The best results with Acelepryn have consistently been achieved from application timing to have product

in the soil to target early feeding larvae. Application at water volumes of 500 to 600 l/ha and using the white Syngenta 08 XC Soil Nozzle will ensure better penetration through to the surface. **GI**

Access expert advice from Syngenta

- Follow the seven-step plan to optimise results, along with full compliance with the label recommendations
- Online turf pest ID guide to aid the identification of adult stages of key soil pests and target application timing
- On the Horizon podcast for insight into new developments and practical implications of leatherjacket ITM, control programmes in Greencast Advisory turf blog to offer in-season advice and topical tips for timing and application

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Reduce, reuse and recycle



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

Whether it is single-use plastics, tees that damage mowers or what your course furniture is made from, your club can make a difference

June is always a special month for the Sustainable Golf community as World Environment Day shines a spotlight on efforts to protect and restore the world around us.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of this global event, led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which celebrates environmental action and the power of governments, businesses and individuals to create a more sustainable world.

Over those same 50 years, golf's popularity, reach and impacts have grown tremendously.

Each year, World Environment Day leads with a theme and the past three years have seen focus on living in harmony sustainably with nature, ecosystem restoration and biodiversity. This year the focus is on #BeatPlasticPollution.

Plastics can provide important benefits, from life-saving medical devices to safe and long-life food storage. However, unnecessary and avoidable plastics, particularly single-use packaging and disposable items, are polluting our planet at alarming rates with unmanaged plastic waste finding its way into lakes, rivers, coastal environments and finally



out to sea, triggering a ripple of problems.

Golf's 38,000 courses are often located in these strategically important locations in cities and along coastlines, providing a range of ecosystem services and conservation of species and now is the time to redouble commitments to making a positive difference.

“At a practical level, clubs and all those who work and play therein have a role to play to beat plastic pollution.”

At a practical level, clubs and all those who work and play therein have a role to play to beat plastic pollution.

The humble tee, for example, is possibly the smallest piece of equipment in the bag but can have a significant impact. Discarded or lost plastic tees may be picked up by birds and wildlife and find their way into the food chain. Or if left lying around a tee box, run over by a mower, which then dents

the blade, impacting the cut and potentially leaving grass more susceptible to disease. The solutions are simple and out there with sustainable options, such as bamboo tees.

The three Rs of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle can be applied to many parts of the golf business including for course managers and greenkeepers.

Are there opportunities to reduce plastic by buying in bulk? Even encouraging the team to bring a reusable water bottle rather than a single-use plastic bottle is a positive step. Think about the snacks for breaks and lunch and packaging involved there. Or perhaps the course furniture can be made from wood discarded following a woodland management programme rather than plastic.

What options are there

to re-use and put materials to a second use? Some materials can be donated to community groups who can make use of it. Mesh from the Ryder Cup at Gleneagles, for example, was donated to local farmers and used to protect their crops.

And recycling is fundamental to any operation and well worth regularly reviewing with your waste providers. Implementing effective recycling and waste streams from the course, maintenance facility and clubhouse should be par for the course.

Golf has a diverse supply chain of products and materials and new innovations are emerging all the time.

Check out www.sustainable.golf/highlights for inspiring examples from clubs all around the world for more ideas. **GI**

• The GEO Foundation for Sustainable Golf is the international not-for-profit organisation dedicated to advancing sustainability in and through golf for 17 years; collaborating across the sport from major Tours, governing bodies, corporate sponsors, club and course managers, media, players and more. Learn more at sustainable.golf

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We are committed to the continual professional development of our members, working with the leading bodies in golf for the good of the game.

BIGGA's activities are underpinned by the generosity of our industry partners and supporters. BIGGA's various activities, initiatives, learning and development opportunities and member benefits are made possible due to the ongoing commitment shown by these companies, organisations and individual donors. From our supporters all the way up to our premium partners, our thanks go to all of them for their dedication to BIGGA and its members.



Individual Contributors:

Andrew Campbell | Greg Evans | Frank Newberry | Jon Kiger | Richard McGlynn



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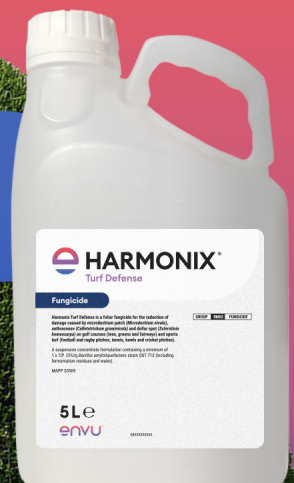
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Always read the label and product information before use.

From your Association



Find out what BIGGA's staff and volunteers are working on

- Enter the BIGGA Photography competition
- Welcome to all our new members

“ It's fascinating to see how the curriculum is put together, given it will play such a vital role in the early careers of greenkeepers for years to come – Iain Macleod, page 20

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 Chairperson Steven Lloyd



Enter our annual photography competition

Win a DJI Mini 2 SE Drone and a framed print of your picture

Members can now enter the 2023 BIGGA Annual Photographic Competition – sponsored by Syngenta.

There are three categories: Wildlife, Landscape and Greenkeeping.

The overall winner receives a DJI Mini 2 SE Drone and a framed print of their picture, with entries accepted from now until the end of August.

A public vote in October will decide the winners, who will be announced in December alongside the BIGGA Desktop Calendar. The calendar is mailed out to head greenkeeper/course manager members with their copy of our December issue.

Last year's winning entry depicted a greenkeeper mowing the 2nd green at Ipswich on a misty morning. It was taken by Ipswich greenkeeper, Joe Simpson.

Not only was it the unanimous choice among the competition judges, it also received the most likes when put to a public vote across BIGGA's social media accounts.

Simpson, now a two-time champion, said: "I'm really surprised as I thought the quality of all the photographs that got shortlisted was fantastic with some really strong contenders. I think it's a fantastic competition and I love entering and try to encourage others to enter as well. Greenkeepers are really lucky because we're up in the early hours and get to see some fantastic sights and this competition is an opportunity to share them."

BIGGA's annual photographic competition is a celebration of the wonderful golfing landscape and the role greenkeepers play in shaping it for golfers and the wider public to enjoy. Twelve images were selected in total for the annual BIGGA calendar, with golf courses represented from a nine-hole venue on the north coast of Scotland through to this year's Open Championship venue.

To enter this year's competition, scan the QR code.





BIGGA
CPD Continuing Professional
Development

Congratulations to the following
members who achieved **CPD**
Approved status this month:

Simon Ashford, Rhyl

Chris Browett, The Richmond

Robert Clark, Old Thorns Hotel & Resort

Paul Doran, Theydon Bois

David Edmondson, Prestwick

Derek Grendowicz, Private Residence

Craig Mackay, Royal Dornoch

Stewart Marshall, Dudley

Jon Methven, St Andrews Links Trust

Alan Quarterman, Llantrisant & Pontyclun

Lee Strutt, Cabot Cape Breton

Jonathan Taylor, Brocket Hall

Jay Tregidgo, Chipstead

Congratulations to the following
members who achieved their
CPD Milestone this month:

Paul Doran, Theydon Bois

Duncan Sieling, The Richmond

Greenkeeper cultivates a new career in education

Geraint Ellis, from Porthmadog, has received The Livery Company Prize for outstanding learners and tutors who have achieved City and Guilds qualifications.

Now a Work-based Learning Practitioner in Horticulture, Environmental Conservation and Trees and Timber at Coleg Cambria Deeside, he was selected by The Worshipful Company of Gardeners to receive the title. Geraint had excelled in a Level 2 Diploma in Horticulture and progressed to Level 3 while deputy head greenkeeper at Porthmadog Golf Club.

He said: "Horticulture is an ever-evolving discipline. I would encourage learners into the industry as the careers on offer are fulfilling and rewarding".

The 2022 winning entry – taken by Joe Simpson, of Ipswich

The categories

Greenkeeping

We're looking for images that showcase the working lives of those responsible for preparing courses, who are up early and always put 100% effort into preparing the course. This category is about sharing hard work and success.

Landscape

Golf courses provide some of the most spectacular landscapes to be found anywhere and this category celebrates the wonderful natural world, where greenkeepers are privileged to spend their working lives.

Wildlife

Peaceful, remote and surrounded by the natural world, it's no surprise that greenkeepers often enjoy close encounters with some spectacular natural wonders.

Why I'm proud to serve as a Guardian



Iain Macleod
BIGGA Guardian

My role is to ensure that the articles of our association are upheld by the board and it brings me into contact with many people that I truly admire

Although I officially retired in December, I think it's important for us in the older generation to give back to the association whenever we can, which is why I'm proud to serve as a Guardian on the National Board.

The Guardians are in place to make sure that the articles of BIGGA are adhered to in any decisions the board makes, thereby ensuring the traditions and core principles of the association are maintained.

In recent months I've also been involved in a project that I think highlights just how much work is going on behind the scenes to support the entire greenkeeping industry, not just BIGGA members.

The Trailblazer apprenticeship programme in England is proving hugely successful, but that format hasn't been adopted in Scotland yet.

A national project is underway to discuss whether the Scottish system requires an upgrade and both BIGGA and the Greenkeepers Training Committee (GTC) are playing a role in that.

At BIGGA and the GTC this important work is led

by Fiona Lyttle, who has an incredible wealth of knowledge and is passionate in her drive to improve education opportunities for greenkeepers. She picked up the mantle from David Golding since his retirement and she is doing a great job.

Fiona works alongside so many members, such as Robert Patterson from Royal Aberdeen and David Edmondson from Prestwick.

As a lifelong member of greenkeeping associations, I think it's wonderful that the spirit of collaboration is

ongoing, especially when it is behind the scenes and done without any expectation of reward or praise.

I was recently invited to participate in a discussion about apprentices with a wide range of other industries and sat alongside representatives from fishing and other rural industries. It was interesting to hear about how they are also working to attract candidates and ensure they get the right qualifications to retain them within the industry.

At its heart, the discussion was about which elements of learning are essential and which should be optional, such as machinery maintenance or health and safety.

It's fascinating to see how the curriculum is put together, given it will play such a vital role in the early careers of greenkeepers for years to come.

I hope everything goes well at your facility this summer and that we have a happy and prosperous golfing season. **GI**

“ As a lifelong member of greenkeeping associations, I think it's wonderful that the spirit of collaboration is ongoing



MEMBER BENEFIT:
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BIGGA

British and International
Golf Greenkeepers Association

ACCIDENT INSURANCE

BIGGA's Accident Insurance provides **full BIGGA members** cover for time off work due to an accident at home, work or even on holiday as well as one-off payments dependent on the type of injury.

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and need help please
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Welcome to our new members

International

Jace Bertsch S
Greg Turner S
Chad Wiertzema S
Foley Company /
True Surface

Northern Ireland

Sean Mulligan GK
Royal County Down

Scotland

Luke Boulton GK
Adam Thomson GK
Lundin

Robert Hogarth S
Fairways GM (Renfrew)

Gordon Wallace APP
Falkirk

Kevin West GK
Longniddry

Matthew West HGK
Abernethy

Northern

William Andrew AGK
Ripon City

James Baxter DCM
Mark Bonomy AGK
Silloth-on-Solway

Marc Brute HGK
Penmaenmawr

Mark Cooper DHGK
Alan Miller GK
Boldon

John Greenwood DHGK
Colne

William Holmes GK
Oakdale

Matthew Kidd APP
Oulton Hall

David Limmack GK
Steven Watson GK
Lobden

Phil Longstaff GK
Moortown

Christopher Lumley GK
Stephen Welch FA
Chester-le-Street

Oliver Mason AGK
Selby

Keith White AGK
Ashton-in-Makerfield

Dominic Wright AGK
Fulford

 Central England
Andrew Booker GK
Wollaton Park

Carl Hales AGK
Rugby


Noreen Kausar P
Natalia Pinto P
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Stuart Radbourne AGK
Hellidon Lakes Hotel &
Country Club

Ryan Shellum APP
Kings Norton

Thomas Taylor AGK
Temple

Owen Withers APP
Carholme

 South East
Liam Banner APP
Royal Cromer

Luke Barney AGK
Gerrards Cross

Bradley Beaumont APP
Timothy Clay APP
Stoke-by-Nayland
Golf & Leisure

Jonathan Boast AGK
Burnham Beeches



Royal Cromer

William Bradfield APP Barnham Broom Hotel	Chelcie Lawrie AGK Aldwickbury Park	Wayne Wintrup AGK St Clements	Daniel Hollier AGK Barton-on-Sea
Danny Collins APP Woldingham (The)	Samuel Martin APP North Foreland	South West & South Wales	Daniel Le Bas AGK Players Club (The)
Ben Dudley GK West Hill	Ryan McQuade GK Wisley (The)	Nick Bullock AGK Chilworth	Miles Theobald GK Thornbury Golf Centre
Daniel Hammond GK Devyn Pohar GK Daniel Shaw GK Walton Heath	Wesley Pusey AGK Clandon Regis	Mat Darby HGK Jon Martin AGK Teign Valley	Edward Williams GK Remedy Oak
	Cuan Walsh APP Poult Wood	Kieran Eite APP Dorset GCC	

Key

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

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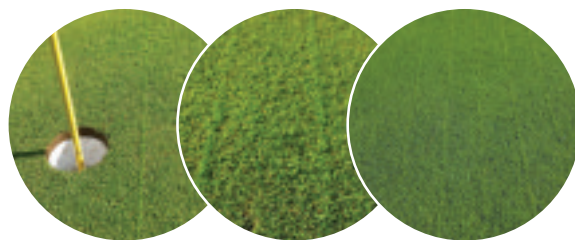
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- The Greenkeeper Files: with Royal Cinque Ports' Ben Williams
- How Lola the dog gave James Parker her loyal companionship
- Members share their secrets on how to communicate better



The expectation from members, guests and visitors for high-quality course conditioning is an everyday demand which myself and the team thrive on and do our best to deliver – Ben Williams



Ben Williams

The Royal Cinque Ports course manager describes his career journey from raking the bunkers as a youngster at his home club in Wales to his current role at the historic Kent links

Little did he know it at the time, but Ben Williams's 340-mile journey from Llandudno to Deal began with a twice-weekly task of raking the bunkers ahead of club competitions at North Wales.

The 31-year-old course manager at Royal Cinque Ports fondly recalls his first steps in greenkeeping, taken in the summer after completing his A-levels. As a keen junior golfer, it made perfect sense to find work on the links where he was already a member.

"I would rake bunkers before ladies' competitions on a Wednesday and men's competitions on a Saturday morning," said Williams. "I thoroughly enjoyed the role and was lucky enough to secure an apprenticeship after four months of starting as a bunker raker."

At the beginning of last year, when his mentor and predecessor James Bledge moved from Cinque Ports to Royal Liverpool, Williams succeeded him as course manager.

What was the interview process like for the course manager's role?

The interview was split into two stages. The first stage was a formal interview with the club secretary, chairman and chairman of greens. The second stage was a presentation to a panel of six. I was asked to present on the current course condition, my plans for the first three months in the role, resources required to continue the process of improvement, methods of communication and my vision for the club over the next five years. The presentation was followed by dinner in the clubhouse, where the panel had the opportunity to ask any further questions.

What do you feel were the qualities that you had to offer that got you the role?

As deputy course manager I was exposed to a number of tasks and skills that prepared me for the jump in positions. I gained experience of

“The expectation from members, guests and visitors for high-quality course conditioning is an everyday demand which myself and the team thrive on and do our best to deliver”

How did you get from those early days at North Wales to where you are today?

After completing my apprenticeship at North Wales, I completed a year-long internship in the USA with the Ohio Program. I interned at Double Eagle Club in Ohio and the Sea Pines Resort in South Carolina. On my return to the UK, I worked for a summer season on the 2010 Course at the Celtic Manor Resort. While I was in Newport I secured a summer position in the Southern Hemisphere at New South Wales Golf Club in Australia.

I returned to the UK for a second time and took up the position of assistant greenkeeper at Maesdu, Llandudno, where I completed the first two years of my FdSc Sportsturf Management online with Myerscough College.

I then headed for Royal Cinque Ports in June 2017 and started out as an assistant greenkeeper. Over the next five years I enjoyed a steady rise up the ranks at the club, becoming first assistant greenkeeper in 2018, deputy course manager in 2020 and was promoted to my current position as course manager in January 2022.

writing department budget reports for the club's board of directors and quarterly course reports in the years before becoming course manager.

What is the remit of your role?

The remit for myself and the rest of the greenkeeping team is to deliver the highest possible standards of course condition and presentation to the membership, guests and visitors on a daily basis. My key responsibilities include agronomic planning, budgetary control of the greenkeeping department, human resource management and health and safety.

What kind of working relationship do you have with the other management leaders at the club?

We're in an advantageous position at RCP that the maintenance facility is located very close to the clubhouse, which lends itself to regular interaction with other departments. All of the club's department managers have a close working relationship with one another and meet every Friday morning to discuss events of the last week and to plan for the following two

weeks. The meeting helps to resolve any issues that may have arisen and aims to prevent them reoccurring. It also helps to co-ordinate any activities at the club that cross between different departments.

What are the specific demands and challenges of working on a world-class links?

The course is an incredibly undulating, free-draining, sandy site, so the biggest challenge we face during the summer is ensuring the surfaces remain adequately irrigated with the volume of abstracted irrigation water we have at our disposal. The free-draining nature of the site does, however, mean that we enjoy favourable ground conditions in the winter for completing project work.

Due to the nature and standing of the club, the expectation from members, guests and visitors for high-quality course conditioning is an everyday demand which myself and the team thrive on and do our best to deliver. The membership is incredibly supportive of the greenkeeping team, as is the club, which is fantastic for everyone involved.

Phase one of the masterplan mainly focussed on in-play areas so that the World Handicap System Course and Slope rating could be re-rated in February. All of the tee sets have now been rated for both male and female golfers and golfers will be encouraged to play from the tees which are most appropriate for their ability. The changes were also designed to future-proof the championship status of the golf course.

Phase two and three of the development plan will be undertaken over the course of the next two winters and will focus on further dune construction and grass path work.

How long did it take the course to come back following last summer's drought?

Last summer was an exceptionally challenging time for greenkeepers up and down the country. RCP received just 37mm of rainfall for the whole of June, July and August, while temperatures peaked at 34°C. The club invested in a new Toro Lynx Irrigation System in 2019 and it certainly paid dividends last summer. All mown surfaces on the course

“The team is very well supported by the club and has access to an extensive fleet of modern greenkeeping equipment. The majority of our mowing equipment is Toro, while our utility vehicles and tractors are a combination of Toro, John Deere and Kubota”

What specific course projects have you got going on at the moment?

We have recently finished phase one of three of the club's course masterplan, which was devised with the help of golf course architects Mackenzie & Ebert. Winter 2022/23 saw the introduction of 15 completely new bunkers positioned strategically in fairway landing zones, six new tees, two sleeper boardwalks and a new dune to the right-hand side of the 16th fairway. Additional bare sand areas and dune slacks have also been created on the 9th and 17th holes in areas of scrub and rank grassland. The clearance work served to create material for the winter construction projects and also created a more appropriate habitat for duneland species.

receive monthly wetting agent applications which helped to maintain surface coverage and helped with the re-wetting of soil profiles when rainfall arrived.

The greenkeeping team have also been using Barenbrug SGT Fine Fescue to overseed fairways in recent years which has contributed to improved drought tolerance on these surfaces.

Inevitably, surface coverage was lost on isolated areas of the course during the drought, so an extensive overseeding programme was implemented last autumn to aid recovery in these areas. The majority of the affected areas have now recovered well and we are heading into the summer months off the back





A (Working) Day In The Life



0530

Arrive at work



0545

Meet with the team to discuss the plan for the day and whether we need to modify the work programme



0600

Daily team meeting with the whole team to brief everyone on their assigned tasks. My job varies from day to day, but I always aim to get out onto the course ahead of play to assess turf conditions and any project work progress



0800

Catch up with outstanding administrative tasks



1000

Lunch



1030

Post-lunch meeting with members of the team who have completed course set-up tasks to assign tasks for the afternoon



1100

Attend any meetings in the knowledge that the course has been setup for a full day's play



1500

Run through the following day's plan and make a final check of the weather forecast



1600

Leave work

of a very favourable spring period for links courses in the south east.

How would you describe your management style and general way of working?

I always like to have a clear plan laid out as to what we want to achieve. We plan work programmes seven days in advance during the playing season, but these plans are subject to change with the weather and other scenarios.

During the winter, and project work, I use Gantt Charts to help manage the completion of tasks. It helps me to plan the logistics of project work while providing a visual guide to the team's progress and whether we need to assign a greater volume of man hours to complete time critical tasks.

The greenkeeping team uses a variety of different technologies to maintain the golf course. We use Pogo and TDR moisture meters to help with accurately mapping soil moisture levels, ensuring irrigation is used efficiently and only targeted at areas of turf that need it.

How have you furthered your knowledge in recent years?

I'm a regular attendee at BTME and have attended the Continue to Learn Conference for the last two years.

How often do you get to play golf and where do you like to play?

I'm currently playing off a handicap of 5, but that has been slipping of late. My favourite place to play golf when I'm not playing at RCP is the Northcliffe Course at North Foreland, a fantastic 18-hole short course just down the road in Broadstairs.

Do you have any mentors in the industry?

My closest mentor is my predecessor at RCP, James Bledge, who moved on to take up the course manager's position at Royal Liverpool.

James has always encouraged me to step outside of my comfort zone



and develop new skills. An example of this was when I was asked to deliver a course winter plan presentation at a membership evening while I was deputy course manager.

It's always nice to be able to pick up the phone and discuss all things RCP with James, not only as a mentor, but as a close friend. When I was promoted he shared with me as much of his knowledge and wisdom that he had accumulated at RCP over his nine years at the club. We went through all the intricacies of the role in depth over a number of weeks, which was invaluable before stepping into the position.

What advice would you give to a greenkeeper starting out today?

Grab every development opportunity with both hands and don't be afraid to ask questions. Take pride in what you do and enjoy your work. **GI**

Our facilities and machinery

"The club has invested significantly in upgrading the greenkeeping team's facilities, with the construction of a new office, break room and male and female changing facilities. The team is very well supported by the club and has access to an extensive fleet of modern greenkeeping equipment. Most of our mowing equipment is Toro, while our utility vehicles and tractors are a combination of Toro, John Deere and Kubota. We also have a new John Deere ProGator with Mounted Dakota 410 Topdresser for spreading our native dune sand; a Campey 4 Star Seeder for dimple seeding and a Toro 648S Procore."

Ben's team at Cinque Ports

Deputy course manager
Lee Campany

First assistant greenkeeper
Haydn Gray

Head mechanic/greenkeeper
Keith Pooley

Assistants
Michael MacDonell, Joe Forster, Paul

Lansdown, Cameron Robinson

Apprentices
Kai Appleby, Daniel Brazier, Pacey-Jay Carswell, Jamie Kennedy

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A reflection on dogs, golf,
greenkeeping
— **and life itself**



James Parker, the course manager at Machrihanish Dunes on Scotland's Kintyre Peninsula, celebrates the life of his Beagle, Lola, who offered loyal companionship and so much more during her master's golfing travels



Earlier this year we said goodbye to our loyal dog after almost 15 years together. Lola, a beautifully natured Beagle, was a wedding gift to my wife, Sarah, a companion for us both and the very first member of our blossoming family.

Having decided as a family to devote ourselves to the management of sports turf, Lola travelled with us on our numerous adventures throughout the UK.

Lola was undoubtedly a dog destined for the golf course. From bounding around Gleneagles in the snow as a pup, to walking the links of St Andrews on our pilgrimage to the Auld Grey Toun, Lola was a turf dog.

Having lived near Troon for a while, we found great happiness sitting as a family watching the sun set from the tee box of the Postage Stamp.

The loss of Lola raised some interesting realisations, not least giving me an opportunity to write this article which serves as a fitting memory to a golf course dog. However, more importantly it could provide some interesting lessons about the challenges faced by turf managers up and down the land.

Dogs and golf have a long history together. Since the formation of the game, it is clear that dogs have often shared the links with their human companions. Many early paintings of the game depict players sharing their golfing recreation with their canine friends. One of the most famous of these – a picture depicting Freddie Tait with his terrier Nails – hangs in the clubhouse of The R&A.

More recently, dogs have gained a prominent place in the world of turf management. Likely originating from our agricultural counterparts, the working dog has become an increasingly common sight on sports facilities throughout the world. Rising rapidly in popularity, turf dogs have been featured in articles, videos, blogs and social media with one popular social media account registering more than 11,000 followers.

Despite their popularity, the subject of dogs and their place on golf courses remains a polarising subject. It is not my intent to change any opinions on a dog's place within turf management, but simply to give all an understanding of what canine companionship achieved for me.

On Friday, February 24, Lola spent her last day with me on the golf course. The next morning I returned to work alone for the first time in many years.

Despite being only a 10-minute commute, that journey felt like the longest I had made in a career spanning 17 years.

Although Lola could offer no academic input to my morning routine, her presence alone for many years had been enough to keep me calm, focused and relaxed, choosing to adopt a dog's mentality of playing and living in the moment.

While bereavement is experienced by all of us throughout our lives, the feeling of loneliness, despair and fear can never be truly understood until such an event occurs. Loss can raise questions within us and force us to face some of our greatest personal challenges.

Man's best friend

The reason people migrate towards dogs is that fundamentally dogs are people orientated. Studies throughout the years have shown good evidence to this effect. Often referred to as man's best friend, domesticated dogs have simply learned that, to survive, human interaction is vital.

Staring into the eyes of a dog is reported to have similar effects on the adult mind to that of staring into the eyes of an infant. The bonding stare of a dog increases hormonal Oxytocin levels creating a feeling of affection. Good owners value the qualities of their dog. They appreciate that, in return for this nurture and care, a dog will give them joy, companionship and years of devotion. This symbiotic relationship has been proven to significant effect for centuries. The dog's desire to interact with humans has personally given me the greatest pleasure.

Over the years I have shared in the enjoyment gained by greens staff who had adopted Lola as our Team Dog. Her presence around the facility has allowed staff members to come out of their shells, to form closer relationships with me and to enjoy the company of a dog even if their own personal circumstances prevented them from owning one themselves.

Lola provided many laughs and at numerous venues become an integral part of the team serving as a welcome morale boost on some of the bleakest days. Her get-up-and-go attitude meant that even in the very worst of the British weather, a course walk was never neglected.



Conversation starters

Dogs are social creatures. Owning a turf dog had for many years been a bridge between me and the golfing public. After decades in the industry, it may be fair to say that we all have reached points and occasionally been unwittingly conditioned to believe that all golfers are the same and that most members are out to get us. It becomes easy as humans to judge everybody by our own opinion and, where possible, to hide away from those who we deem to be getting in our way or causing trouble.

Dogs, though, are different.

Lola, like all animals, was completely non-judgemental. To her, a human was a human and everyone that walked on two legs was fair game. To a dog, all humans are both friendly and carrying food.

It was often with trepidation that I would see her bounding off towards the captain's tan chinos or hanging round that stuffy group who were usually best avoided.

Those seemingly stressful moments served a purpose, a purpose I only began to appreciate some years down the line.

The wandering actions of a carefree dog forced me to engage, to be a face and not just a body, to be a mouth and not someone rendered speechless.

Such interactions with members led to us to forming great friendships, gaining allies with people we had prejudged to be enemies.

Even the most hardened of opponents would crack a smile or make a gesture of goodwill with the dog in tow.

Reduced loneliness

Despite industry friends, good supervisors and regular participation with fellow turf professionals, turf management remains a lonely enterprise. Managing a golf course on a day-to-day basis, while rewarding, can undoubtedly result in feelings of isolation and separation, particularly when the going is tough.

Because of their obvious inability to converse verbally with humans, dogs serve as great listeners. For a number of years I often found myself walking the course with the dog discussing disease, heights of cut, nutrition, HR, fertility, fixture lists and budgets – the list was endless. Now, while Lola was no accountant, agronomist or plant pathologist, that downloading of information and the constant upbeat wag of the tail was often enough to ease my concerns or for me to gain clarity in my own thoughts. Those moments always served as a reminder that solace can be found in meeting the simple necessities of life – in family, in friends, in colleagues and leisure.

Calmness and relaxation

The distraction a dog offers is a huge aspect that I will miss about Lola. Every course manager at times can feel overwhelmed when problems arise. Some weeks it just seems as if nothing will go your way. You head out on the course bouncing and return to the office scratching your head. In those moments, socialisation with a canine friend can have some very positive effects. According to research, dogs are great at offering sensory stress relief. Stroking or



Above: Sunrise on the world-famous Postage Stamp at Royal Troon
Below: Lola with James's children

hugging a dog during times of stress has an almost instant impact helping you to calm down and relax. Playing with your dog, perhaps in the office over a break, can increase Serotonin and Dopamine levels, giving feelings of calmness and control.

Those moments of distraction help a course manager to stay in the moment and cease catastrophising over situations beyond our control. They remind us that all challenges, however upsetting, remain temporary.

GI

“ Having lived near Troon for a while, we found great happiness sitting as a family, watching the sun set from the tee box of the Postage Stamp



“ To Lola, a human was a human and everyone that walked on two legs was fair game



Lola had an old tennis ball that instantly changed her mood – I believe we all need an equivalent in our lives

Just as an old tennis ball or stuffed toy can change a dog's mood instantly, finding a mental trigger to persevere and carry on can keep us driving forward even when a temporary situation feels overwhelming.

I do appreciate that dogs are not everyone's cup of tea. Some people have circumstances that restrict them from owning an animal. Some will work at golf clubs that do not embrace dogs. Others will simply not feel compelled to own a pet. That is all fine.

This piece, while therapeutic to write, is not about increasing canine ownership. It is simply a wake-up call that all of us managing turf need to develop coping strategies.

Turf management is not getting easier. Over the past decade, many articles have been written about the increasing pressures of managing sports turf. If we are to be realistic, those pressures are not going away. Increasing restrictions, tightened finance and difficult recruitment aligned with ever-increasing expectations, are problems

that are here to stay. Developing coping mechanisms and nurturing the ones we already have are vital in safeguarding our mental wellbeing. A mind well looked after that can cope with moderate levels of stress is far more productive, creative and intuitive.

Each of us can develop our own coping strategies. Where possible, developing multiple ones is highly advantageous. Over the past five years many fine individuals have left this wonderful profession. Could it be though that some would still be here had they had their own coping mechanisms in place?

In the meantime, I head home every day leaving one member out on the course. Despite having a wonderful companion and a great coping strategy for the last 15 years, I now find myself having to come up with a new one. While we will undoubtedly return a turf dog to the Mach Dunes family at some stage, for now we mourn the loss of Lola. And I have begun addressing some of my challenges, those that she did so well to help me find a way through.



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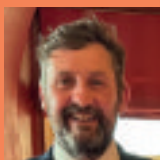


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James Bledge
Links manager
at July's Open
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winner of the
2021 Innovation
and Thought
Leadership Award



**Shaun
Cunningham**
The course
manager at
Prestonfield and
winner of the
2022 Innovation
and Thought
Leadership Award

How to communicate more effectively

We asked two award-winning members to share the secrets of their success in communications – so you can use their practical tips in your own job

You both write a blog for your members. Explain how it has been a success and why

James Bledge (JB): At Royal Cinque Ports we started a basic Wordpress blog – royalcinqueports.wordpress.com. I used it as a diary and members' communication tool which I still look back at now for reference. From day one in the job until leaving nine years later I added regular content, focusing on speaking in layman's terms to golfers who know little about our industry and using quality photographs to ensure the site was professional.

This grew to making videos, sometimes explaining why we carried out certain activities and sometimes drone flyovers with narration over the top. This was linked to a YouTube channel which was also full of great content. Included in this was a three-stage journal from when we decided to spray graminicide on fairways to get rid of ryegrass and convert to fescue. All of the evidence was on the blog and our YouTube channel.

At Royal Liverpool, we had to work out how best to take the blogging to the next level, we stumbled upon a company called Shorehill Golf. This is a lot more interactive

than a basic blog. A high-definition drone map is taken of the course and areas are highlighted where work has taken place. The viewer can hover the mouse over a highlighted area and see what has been happening there – there could be a link to a YouTube video or pictures and an explanation. It seems to have gone down well and there is a good amount of scope to improve this in the future.

• [Learn more at royal-liverpool-golf-club.shorehillgolf.com/](http://royal-liverpool-golf-club.shorehillgolf.com/)

Shaun Cunningham (SC): I write a monthly greens update which is circulated out to all the members. I have done this for a number of years at my current and previous workplaces. It has proved very successful at both clubs as it gives them an understanding of what objectives and visions the greens staff have for the course. I want to make the membership feel part of the journey and include them by giving them as much relevant information as possible. My goal is to keep membership up to date with what is going on but not get too scientific and bore them to tears. I try to keep the blog as simple as possible, adding good quality photographs and humour to keep them entertained.



What are the first steps to being proactive about improving members' perceptions about you and your team?

SC: Continued, good communications to educate membership of what it takes to deliver a golf course to a high standard and what skills, experience and qualifications the team require to achieve this. On course, create continued progression and marginal gains to deliver a more professional environment.

Small things like freshly-painted tee markers, tidy flower beds or perfectly raked bunkers will greatly improve members' perceptions of the greens staff.

JB: I like our team to be able to have all the answers should they be approached by a member on the course. By holding morning meetings and giving staff all the information on what we are doing and why, this can be relayed to the membership. Transparency is key. Obviously, there will be certain cards you need to hold close to your chest but it's their club and it's nice for them to know what's going on. We are educated professionals and it's good for the team to converse with the golfers.

When encountering golfers on the course, should greenkeepers be seen and not heard or is it best to initiate conversation?

SC: I encourage my staff to interact with golfers. Saying good morning to a member or asking a visitor how they are enjoying their day goes a long way in breaking down the them-and-us divide that can be evident. Being pleasant and courteous can only improve and build relationships between members and staff.

JB: I really try to ensure that golf is never disrupted with noisy machinery so all cutting should be completed before golf. If you want to get a bad rep then mowing in the middle of the day is a good way to go about it. On many courses this is unavoidable. We are lucky enough to have enough staff and machinery to stay ahead. In the afternoons, when quiet work is going on, I am more than happy for staff to ask golfers if they are enjoying it. I believe it's a nice touch when a greenkeeper asks a visitor where they are from. I unknowingly had a conversation with Kenny Dalglish on a green without knowing it was him. He told me the red

“ At times, it does feel that we get a hard time from golfers but experience tells me that the majority of members are grateful for all our hard work and understand it is a difficult and very skilled job

mowers were the best. In my defence, he had a woolly hat on, pulled right down. Some of my friends from the red side of town have not spoken to me since...

It sometimes feels like greenkeepers often get a bad rep. Are we just paranoid?

JB: I am not sure we get a bad rep – or maybe I am just one of the lucky ones. The last two clubs I have worked for have been run by enthusiastic and supportive boards and have had very polite and respectful members. I guess there's always a small niggle here and there but that is to be expected in any job. I really believe that proper communication saves a lot of strife, in fact I think we all have fantastic reputations – there are some absolute heroes out there achieving some amazing things with little resource.

SC: At times, it does feel that we get a hard time from golfers but experience tells me that the majority of members are grateful for all our hard work and understand it is a difficult and very skilled job.

Do you conduct course walks?

JB: I carried out many course walks at Royal Cinque Ports and they were very well attended. It is something I would like to do here. I carried out a course walk and facility tour for the board and it was later requested that this was made into a video for members who could not attend to watch. I carry out many course walks for reps and fellow greenkeepers. I really enjoy this as I always have a sense of achievement after talking them through everything the team has improved.

SC: I have tried course walks with limited success. I feel they are a good tool to interact with golfers but I found it was the same people who turned up each time. Numbers are better when hosting a presentation evening for the members in the clubhouse to talk through winter projects or agronomic issues – probably because it's warmer inside and you can sit with a pint.

How should a course manager use social media (if at all)?

SC: Social media is an important tool for the modern-day greenkeeper. It can be used to promote yourself positively as an interactive CV to the greenkeeping industry and the golf clubs, if done correctly. It is a great tool to network with

your peers and accumulate new knowledge and support. It should be used professionally, however, as poor content and grammar, contentious views and online disputes on social media can have a really negative effect on you as an individual and your workplace.

JB: It is not for everyone. I know loads of top course managers that don't bother. It is a double-edged sword because on one side I see how much I learn from Twitter on a daily basis, yet I see some people trolling others in our industry, most often under a disguise. I find that disgraceful. It's off-putting and probably the reason why we have social media non-believers. I get a bit of a buzz from showing off the team's amazing work and seeing the comments come in. I also like to share other greenkeepers' great work and promote our industry as I find it unique and special that we all support each other and share ideas in order to make improvements.

What is your best tip for navigating committee meetings, and specifically dealing with those who may have a limited understanding of what your job involves?

JB: A picture paints a thousand words. Including well-taken pictures in PowerPoint presentations really helps committees and boards understand what you are talking about. It is essential to speak in basic terms in order not to 'lose the room'. Don't ever think that they know what you are talking about as greenkeeping can be quite complex at times and it's easy to get carried away with the language.

You often find that there are accountants and business people on your committee. By speaking their language, you may find a common ground. Using pie charts, graphs and spreadsheets goes down well and there are many turf software developers that can help the turf manager compile these methods of communication.

It is essential to remain calm and not get frustrated when someone on the committee asks what some may perceive to be a stupid question. Always keep a level head and deliver a rounded and well thought out reply. Remember, you are the expert in this field and it's up to you to educate them.

SC: Try to talk in layman's terms and not get too technical when it comes to agronomy. If possible, try to educate them in what your job entails. More importantly, be prepared for any meetings you attend and have all bases



covered when it comes to any questions in regard to course condition, budgets and objectives. If you come across as confident and organised in your responses, the committee members will have confidence in you going forward.

Give us an example of another way that you communicate.

SC: When a request or complaint has been brought up by a member that I feel is a good idea or correct, I normally don't respond verbally or by email and act on the point as soon as the greens staff have time. It highlights to the golfers that we do listen to good points and value their thoughts if communicated in the correct manner.

JB: Podcasting has become particularly popular, especially since the pandemic. This year, we started a podcast intended only for members and only advertised in members' emails.

The purpose is to let them know (much like the blog) what is happening on the links, it is also a good way of instigating some back-and-forth communication when questions can be answered. It may fill a boring drive to work or be good background listening while making dinner. Even if only 50 members are listening, it's worthwhile dedicating 30 minutes per month to create. **GI**

About The BIGGA Excellence in Communications Awards

Sponsored by Campey Turf Care Systems

These awards recognised BIGGA members who have embraced communication as a vital tool available to the modern greenkeeper.

Whether using digital or social media, community outreach or by producing an article for Greenkeeper International, the awards recognised those greenkeepers who embraced communication as a vital tool available to the modern turf professional.

Our thanks go to awards sponsors Campey Turf Care Systems for hosting these awards and for their continued support of BIGGA and its members.



Assistant Greenkeeper

Cruden Bay Golf Club, Aberdeenshire

We're looking for a hard working and self-motivated Assistant Greenkeeper to join our existing team and ensure the club continues to maintain standards and improve the quality of the courses.

Qualifications and Experience: Two years' minimum experience; NVQ Level 2 in Amenity Sportsturf or equivalent; Spraying certificates PA1, PA2 and PA6; Knowledge of H&S procedures; Ability to operate modern equipment; Flexible approach to working hours; Weekend work on rota; Ability to work individually and part of a team; Positive attitude and good communication skills.

Competitive remuneration and benefits package offered.

Send a letter and CV to Les Durno, General Manager:
les@crudenbaygolfclub.co.uk



Groundsperson

Harrow School, Middlesex

Full-time, 40 hours a week (Monday to Friday). Salary: Up to £32,340 pa depending on experience. Candidates should hold a minimum NVQ Level 2 Sports Turf qualification (or equivalent), having working knowledge in at least one of: natural sports pitches, cricket or golf maintenance and the ability to operate a variety of grounds maintenance equipment. In addition to a competitive salary, the benefits include: Free lunch; Automatic enrolment into the school's pension scheme; Use of the school's sports facilities; Subsidised membership of the golf, tennis, angling and social clubs.

For a full job description and application form, visit: harrowschool.org.uk/contact/work-at-harrow. Queries to: recruitment@harrowschool.org.uk. Closing date: 18 June 2023.

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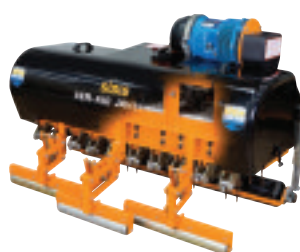
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Careers



Jobs, expert advice and peer-to-peer support

- **My new job: Michael Gibbons**
- **All the latest greenkeeper vacancies**

Featured CPD opportunity: BIGGA South Coast Ecology Course Walk

Corhampton GC | 12-2pm, July 5

Corhampton are winners of The Syngenta Operation Pollinator Award in 2019 and 2023.

Head greenkeeper Iestyn Carpenter will lead a course walk talking about the rare habitats that have been established to encourage pollinators such as the rare 'Small Blue'

butterfly. Iestyn hopes to be accompanied by a representative from the Butterfly Conservation Society. The walk is free to attend and all are welcome. To book your place please visit the BIGGA website or scan this QR code.





Michael Gibbons

Michael Gibbons began his greenkeeping career as an apprentice at The Oxfordshire at the age of 16. This coincided with a young Rory McIlroy playing in his very first professional event there as part of the European Tour's Q-School process.

His next role was at a private school in Oxford working on their cricket grounds before returning to the world of golf at Caversham Heath, in Reading.

Gibbons then left the industry for personal reasons and spent four years at Manchester University studying for a degree in ancient history.

Wondering what career path to follow next, a role became available at Didsbury which was within walking distance of his home. He took the job on what was initially a short-term basis but found himself drawn back into greenkeeping. From there he moved to Sale and then Dunham Forest before taking on his current role.

Tell us about your new role and what it involves

As course manager, I am responsible for the day to day running of the golf course. This primarily involves making sure the staff are well provided for and trained, consulting with the golf club's board as to the club's strategic plan while providing a consistent and manicured product for members, their guests and visitors.

What do you hope to achieve in the role?

I've been lucky enough to learn from industry leaders and, for me, the most important aspect of my new job is looking after its people. If I can make Disley a sought-after environment to work in, that will be my biggest achievement.

In terms of agronomy, consistency is what I will be chasing. On top of that the club has an incredible history, being one of the oldest inland courses in England. I would like to enhance this by taking the golf course back to its moorland/heathland heritage.

How different is it to your previous job?

The main difference is that I have sole responsibility for the golf course.

As first assistant you are responsible to a degree but at the end of the day it is the course manager or superintendent that is responsible for everything good and bad. With that responsibility comes an element of pressure but I think all

greenkeepers want to know whether they can do it and subsequently find themselves in the position.

How does it fit into your career path?

My new role could not have happened at a better time for me. I've just started an MSc in Sustainable Sports Turf Management with Myerscough College, so it gives me a terrific opportunity to put what I'm learning to the test. Previously, I had been an FTMI graduate of 2022. I must admit I had pushed for that to advance my career but I didn't expect to be a course manager just two months later. Disley is the ideal place for me right now in my career.

What do you wish you'd known at the start of your career?

The most useful thing I wish I'd known early on was that it's not a race. Only more recently have I understood that success is not always measured by progression. Being challenged and improving has always been an important part of my personality. Sometimes it has been to my detriment but with maturity I've managed to direct my personality traits in a much more positive manner. It is clear when you sit down and think each role was a crucial step, which you might not think at the time. Each role has helped me grow and reach where I am now.

What has been your best career break?

When I faced the most difficult moment in my career. In 2020 I was due to start a position at a top course in my area but due to the pandemic the opportunity fell through. This led me to a series of decisions and experiences that shaped the kind of manager I wish to be. I didn't believe it would lead me to where it has but, looking back, I do believe I learned valuable lessons such as taking your time when making key decisions which led me to my most recent move.

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

I see myself still greenkeeping certainly. Disley is the ideal place for me to cut my teeth as a manager – there is plenty to work on and improve here at the club. I have not long started but already I have plans that will more than likely span five to 10 years. I'm excited to be in the position I'm in and I'm looking forward to getting stuck into the course enhancements while continuing to engage with the wider industry. **GI**

The new course manager at Disley, on the Cheshire side of the border with Derbyshire, tells Phil Helmn MG why he is excited to be working at one of the area's oldest inland courses



“With responsibility comes an element of pressure but I think all greenkeepers want to know whether they can do it and subsequently find themselves in the position of course manager”

Michael on applying for a job

Briefly describe the recruitment process for the job for which you have just successfully applied.

The process was incredibly straightforward. It involved a cover letter and CV. I was then invited for an interview. Half took place in the board room and the other half on the golf course. After this, I was called by the club manager and offered the job.

What do you think your new employers were looking for?

The club have gone through quite a few changes recently. The club manager joined before Christmas and the club has a whole fresh marketing strategy. The board was looking for someone who matched this new energy and ambition while also being able to develop the course at an elevated level.

What do you think set you apart from other candidates?

I believe that the extra work I have been doing while in my position at Dunham is what set me apart.

For example, beginning my MSc studies, graduating from the FTMI programme and running a successful social media page. The competition for management level jobs is high so I think doing whatever you can outside of work to excel is key in setting yourself apart.

What advice would you offer fellow members applying for a new job?

As stated previously, I think that doing what you can to set yourself apart is the first thing anyone can do, even before applying. If you have a role in mind, it's never too early to start preparing for it. There's no such thing as being over prepared.



Groundsperson

The All England Lawn Tennis Club, Roehampton

We're looking for a Groundsperson to join our team at The All England Lawn Tennis Club working at our site in Roehampton. In this role, you'll be assisting in the care and daily maintenance of grass courts to include: applying nutrition (granular and liquid); mowing; marking out; and operating pedestrian and tractor mounted machinery.

If you have strong turf knowledge and qualifications to include level 2, or equivalent, in sports turf and PA1 and PA6A, we'd love to hear from you.

Apply now by visiting: <https://jobs.wimbledon.com/>



Golf Greenkeeper Lecturer/Assessor

Capel Manor College, Enfield, Middlesex

Salary: £25,368-£28,080pa (unqualified Lecturers) / £29,262-£39,090pa (qualified Lecturers). Full-time. Benefits: Generous.

We are currently seeking an experienced Golf Greenkeeper to join our college as a Lecturer/Assessor. The role involves developing and delivering apprenticeships in Golf Greenkeeping, passing on industry knowledge and skills to the next generation of ground staff. You should have years of experience in the industry, extensive contacts and the willingness to develop new apprenticeship opportunities with employers. Familiarity with the skill set required for grounds staff working in other sports is also important. College-sponsored teacher training is available for the right candidate.

Please apply via www.capel.ac.uk/vacancies/



Greenkeeper

Foxhills Club & Resort, Chertsey, Surrey

Foxhills Club & Resort are recruiting a qualified Greenkeeper to join their award-winning team.

Host of the PGA Cup in 2017 and 2022, Foxhills is a 45-hole member-focused resort which prides itself on high-quality service to members and guests.

Applicants should have experience within a busy golf environment.

Competitive salary and staff benefits included.

Please email your CV and cover letter to Sean Graham: sgraham@foxhills.co.uk



Head Greenkeeper

Markgraflerland Golf Club, Kandern, Germany

We are looking for a new full-time Head Greenkeeper from spring 2024. 50,000€ to 70,000€ per annum; 40 hour week; 30 days holiday.

Commitment to working weekends and holidays when needed during the main season from March to early November.

Your essential qualities: Possess management and leadership skills and have a high ability to communicate at all levels in German, with some English skills necessary. Ideally you possess NVQ Level 3 greenkeeping and sports turf management. Fully conversant in monitoring and maintaining health, safety and welfare in the workplace. Possess a full driving licence. IT skills and social media awareness also needed.

Apply to: President Hans Roth, by email to mccag@gc-mk.com



Assistant Greenkeeper

Muswell Hill Golf Club, London

This is a great opportunity for a qualified greenkeeper to join our team and advance their career. The successful candidate will contribute to the development of the golf course, practice facilities and communal areas.

Applicants should possess or be working towards the following:

NVQ Level 2; PA1, PA2 & PA6 spraying certificates (preferred); Chainsaw maintenance & crosscutting (preferred). And be able to demonstrate:

Minimum of two years golf course experience; Knowledge in the use and maintenance of all greenkeeping equipment; Strong attention to detail; Full UK driving licence. In return we are offering £26,500-£30,000 depending on experience and qualifications.

Send CV and cover letter to: manager@muswellhillgolfclub.co.uk



Senior Assistant Greenkeeper

Nevill Golf Club, Kent

This role is suitable for a qualified and experienced Assistant Greenkeeper who is fully competent and can work without supervision. There are no supervisory responsibilities. The ideal applicant will have: 3+ years' experience; a positive attitude; strong work ethic; flexible, self-motivated and positive work attitude; resourceful and organised; be professional in appearance and actions; ability to prioritise appropriately. Qualifications:

NVQ Level 2 or equivalent and above; PA1, PA2 and PA6a chemical application licenses and chainsaw qualifications desirable. OTE £28.5k-£32k.

To apply or for more information email a covering letter and CV to Jack Sims, course-manager@nevillegolfclub.co.uk with "Senior Assistant Greenkeeper application" in the subject heading.



Course Manager

Rushmere Golf Club, Ipswich

We are seeking a Course Manager to lead and work with our hard-working and committed team. Responsibilities include: Lead and develop the team in delivering the course and surrounds to a high standard; regularly report to the management committee; work effectively to a budget and manage/forecast expenditure; ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and H&S policies. Experience and skills required: Minimum of five years

greenkeeping experience; NVQ Level 3 or equivalent; effective leadership and communication skills; PA1, PA2, PA6 spraying certificates are essential, CS30 and CS31 chainsaw qualifications would be desirable; experience of working with irrigation systems. Pay negotiable depending on experience.

Send CV and letter to David King: generalmanager@rushmeregolfclub.co.uk



Assistant Greenkeeper

Warrington Golf Club, Cheshire

You should have previous golf course maintenance experience with a keen eye for detail. Due to our aspiration of striving for the highest possible standards, combined with various project activities, the duties are varied and sometimes labour intensive. The candidate will require: A minimum of NVQ level 2 or equivalent; NPTC Pesticide Pa1, Pa2 and Pa6; knowledge of setting up Toro equipment; flexible approach to work, working hours and weekend duties. Position is full time; 40-hour week; 20 days annual leave plus bank holidays; training and qualifications as required; regulatory pension scheme; competitive salary will be offered inline with qualifications and experience.

Send cover letter and CV to Ben Goodchild: coursemanager@warringtongolfclub.co.uk



Greenkeeper

Golfclub Nippenburg, Germany

We are searching for a new Greenkeeper

Trend meets tradition! Only 14 km away from the city centre of the state capital Stuttgart and thus located in the midst of the Swabian economic power of Boss, Bosch, Mercedes or Porsche, Golfanlage Nippenburg is one of the most exciting golf projects of today. A multiple venue of the German Open, the course is one of the most attractive addresses on the German golf atlas. Become a part of the team and help us shape the future of Golfanlage Nippenburg.

Your tasks

- Care and maintenance of the golf course and outdoor areas
 - Mowing with various machines
- Overseeding grass, laying of sods, fertilisation, watering, scarifying, aeration and topdressing
- Assistance with construction and repair work

Your qualities

- Training in greenkeeping, horticulture or agriculture
- Ability to work independently and carry out manual work
 - Knowledge in handling machines
- Commitment, motivation, reliability and ability to work in a team
 - Willingness to work weekends and holidays

Your advantages:

- Working in a sporting environment and in the great outdoors
 - A young, friendly and motivated team
 - Daily lunch including drinks
- Pay above the collective bargaining agreement
- Good working conditions and friendly atmosphere

We would be delighted to meet you.

Please apply to Elke Weishaupt: bewerbung@golfnippenburg.de



Sales

Avoncrop Amenity Products, South West England

For over 30-plus years, Avoncrop Amenity Products have been one of the UK's leading suppliers of products and bulk-materials to the professional sports turf, amenity horticulture and contract landscaping industries. We offer our customers a comprehensive product portfolio of turf management products including: fertilisers, grass seed, sands and aggregates, plant protection products, marking materials and sports equipment.

Our product range is underpinned with partnerships with industry-leading local, national and international suppliers renowned for their sustainability initiatives and innovations. You will have an exclusive opportunity to expand your role in the company with in-house and manufacturer training, and your career with Avoncrop Amenity Products will give you opportunities for additional performance-related earnings.

Responsibilities:

- Build customer relationships to provide excellent service utilising your sales and communication skills
- Proactively and competently communicate all our product features and benefits, and provide timely follow-ups on current promotions and new products
 - Essential key-skills required are a professional attitude and willingness to learn

Desirable key-skills required include, but are not limited to:

- Specialist interest and the role of our products in various sports turf disciplines such as golf, football, racecourses, local authorities and independent schools
- Exceptional interpersonal, influential and teamwork skills
- Confident and competent at technical presentations

To apply, please email a cover letter and CV to:

donna.nhamburo@avoncrop-amenity.com

Closing Date June 30th, 2023



2 x Technical Area Sales Managers

Scotland and East Midlands

ICL are looking to recruit two Technical Area Sales Managers.

Due to the continued success and growth of ICL Turf & Landscape in the UK and Ireland, we are looking to recruit two high-calibre Technical Area Sales Managers to cover the following areas:

Scotland and East Midlands and surrounding counties, (specific counties to be confirmed)

About you

The ideal candidates will relish the opportunity to deliver first-class sales and technical support to turf managers and distributors of our range of fertilisers, plant protection products, wetting agents and grass seeds. You will be a highly motivated and social character with excellent interpersonal skills, engaging confidently and professionally with people in a range of environments.

With a background in technical product sales within the turf and landscape sectors or a proven track record as a successful and dynamic turf manager, the ideal candidates will demonstrate a knowledge of turf management practices and hold an industry-recognised qualification in a relevant discipline.

Full product training will be provided on an ongoing basis.

There will be a requirement for flexible working and spending time away from home on occasion.

About us

You will know our brands, but you might not realise the strength of the business behind them.

ICL Group employs more than 12,000 people globally. We are world-leaders in the production and distribution of professional horticulture, turf and landscape, and speciality agricultural products.

If you're the person we're looking for, we offer a substantial benefits package including:

Competitive salary plus bonus

Company car

26 days annual leave

Contributory pension scheme

Subsidised private medical and dental insurance

Excellent development and career opportunities that come with being part of a global business

Application

To apply, please email a résumé and application letter to:

Jean.vanVuuren@icl-group.com

The closing date for applications is Friday June 23rd.



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Daniel Spencer, Letchworth Golf Club

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Practical Greenkeeping



Refine your current skillset and expand upon your knowledge

- Dr Marie Athorn on encouraging avian wildlife to flourish
- The R&A's fundamentals of sustainable turf management

“Golf courses make up about 126,000 hectares of the UK's green space and we don't want them to close. We want them to remain as golf courses – albeit optimised for nature – because otherwise they are often turned into built environments” – RSPB's Dr Marie Athorn

Sustainability matters

The drive for Sustainability can inspire innovation and put the focus on making best use of every input



Many measures that enhance sustainability credentials also deliver effective ITM solutions
©Jake Austin



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www.syngentaturf.co.uk

Sustainability is one of those buzzwords that can strike fear of creating reams of bureaucracy, with no deliverable benefits. And while some sustainability initiatives may carry an associated cost, many measures in turf management have an economic benefit for the club, along with agronomic advances for greenkeepers.

Furthermore, most sustainable practices are fully compatible with Integrated Turf Management strategies – and in many instances are already being implemented by greenkeepers on a day-by-day basis.

A focus on new technologies, including innovative chemistry and exciting biocontrols, along with digital tools to aid decision making, will

help greenkeepers to achieve more efficacy from less input.

Studies by the STRI and others have repeatedly shown that preventative application at periods of high disease

Greenkeepers need to find measures to better manage resources

risk – but just before symptoms are visible – can maintain better disease control and improved surface quality from fewer applications over the course of the season, compared to routine prophylactic application or

treatment after the pathogen has broken out.

Disease modelling of turf pathogens under UK conditions has identified when and where infection is most likely to break out. Coupled with detailed weather data, that has enabled attacks to be reliably forecast in time for greenkeepers to make proactive preventative treatments.

Available free on the Syngenta Turf website, many greenkeepers and agronomists now use the tool as an integral part of their decision-making process. The future will see the development of more accessible and easier to interpret information, providing better guidance for specific turf management activities.

While exciting new fungicide

chemistry is in the registration process for UK greenkeepers, approvals are likely to be subject to greater limitations on the number of applications or the areas to be treated. That makes it even more important to use them as part of an ITM strategy from the outset, along with protecting the efficacy of the product portfolio that is already available.

Better targeting of treatments, rotating the chemistry used and optimising application techniques, are all crucial elements of the stewardship of products that can help ensure the sustainability of their long-term use.

ITM tools such as Hicure biostimulant and Ryder pigment are well researched and understood to reduce stress in specific situations. Other products have multiple benefits when it comes to overall turf management and sustainable use.

The primary role of Primo Maxx II growth regulator, to manage turf growth and reduce costs, is proving crucial in current economic conditions and challenges of available labour. But beyond that, reducing clipping yield in peak growth by up to 30% also cuts fuel use, machinery maintenance bills and depreciation by equivalent amounts – along with corresponding reduction in carbon emissions.

Reducing clipping also means less to compost or return to the soil – which consequently reduces associated carbon cycle emissions. A comprehensive study by Cranfield University in the UK concluded that, overall, golf courses could cut carbon emissions by an average of more than 40% with the use of Primo Maxx II programme. Allied to that, the report calculated an average 16 to 20% reduction in mowing costs on managed turf with the programme (Table 1).

Other research studies have also shown the increased root mass of Primo Maxx II treated plants are better able to scavenge and more efficiently utilise fertiliser inputs, as well as available soil moisture.

Trials by Bioforsk in the Nordics identified that stronger plants going into winter with the Primo Maxx II programme showed a 70% reduction in disease incidence, compared to untreated. That has further reinforced the interactions of an ITM strategy that can enhance sustainability.

With water use efficiency a key

	Reduction in CO2 emissions	Reduction in cost
Tees	39%	21%
Push-up Greens	48%	16%
Fairways	44%	19%
Semi-rough	58%	11%

Table 1. Reduction in CO2 emissions and costs of managing turf grass with Primo Maxx II applications.
Source Cranfield University Centre for Sports Surface Technology

topic of golf course sustainability, the development of pioneering combination wetting agent technology in Qualibra proved it was possible to both maintain surface quality and speed by moving excess water down, while also retaining more soil moisture in the essential root zone.

Incorporating both Primo Maxx II for additional rooting and Qualibra to hold the moisture has proven a great integrated solution for stronger turf. Qualibra is the mainstay for sustainable water use efficiency and optimising performance at Royal Liverpool Golf Club for The Open this year.

Furthermore, to reinforce the sustainability of the whole package and minimise any waste, all Qualibra 500-litre IBCs are now fully recyclable through a Syngenta collection scheme, at no cost to the club. All Syngenta products globally are now manufactured using energy from

renewable resources.

Along with the sustainable management of the playing surface, greenkeepers also have a vital role in the wider environs of the golf course estate.

Actively managing out of play areas for maximum biodiversity gain is the underlying principle behind Syngenta's award-winning Operation Pollinator initiative.

With more than 600 clubs across the UK contributing to the overall industry initiative, Operation Pollinator is living testament that golf courses can provide a net gain in ecological value, alongside intensively managed turf.

Syngenta is also highly active in maintaining the social sustainability of the greenkeeping community, through initiatives such as education in safe use of products, application techniques and innovative packaging and handling that will minimise the risk to operators.

Furthermore, supporting BIGGA, the Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund and the Continue to Learn programme are all measures that help and empower the long-term development and success of greenkeepers.

The drive for sustainability can inspire innovation and put focus on making best use of every input, which is positively beneficial for everyone involved in the industry. **GI**

Read this for:

- Creating sustainable surfaces
- Make better use of resources
- Integrated control strategies



Adopting a PGR strategy to reduce mowing has immense benefits for overall sustainability



Author: Sarah Hughes, Syngenta Turf Business Manager UK & Ireland



Head of
Agronomy
Europe, Paul
Woodham



Head of
Agronomy,
Alistair Beggs

The R&A's seven fundamentals of sustainable turf management

The R&A's Head of Agronomy, Alistair Beggs, and Head of Agronomy Europe, Paul Woodham, outline how to work towards a sustainable golf course

What does it mean to be a sustainable golf course? To answer this question, we must consider a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors. We must also consider the passage of time, as the notion of sustainability has altered over the years with changing player expectations and attitudes and as challenges around climate change adaptation and resource management have accelerated.

What have not changed are the core values of golf and how the game is inextricably linked to the environment around it. Many say that much of the charm of golf is in the variety of different environments it is played in. We at The R&A are passionate about managing courses in sympathy with these surrounding environments and about promoting a harmonious

balance between sustainable environmental stewardship of the course and creating and maintaining good playing standards.

Most greenkeeping professionals, at least in northern latitudes, have come to accept that the golf course management of the future looks less like the extravagant excesses we see nowadays on television and more like the practices of the past.

Legislation of various kinds, particularly pertaining to water use and pesticide availability, is likely to bite in the years ahead. Indeed, in some European countries it is already biting – and biting painfully.

The need to use resources wisely has never been more important. The challenge now before us is to educate the decision makers within clubs at committee level of the

important and urgent need to realign current practices in the face of the changing nature of greenkeeping.

In many contexts the word “sustainability” is used as little more than a soundbite and is often vaguely understood. For the golf industry, however, The R&A has clearly defined the term.

In respect of golf-course management, it is defined as: “Optimising the playing quality of the golf course in harmony with the conservation of its natural environment under economically sound and socially responsible management.”

This definition does not apply to the few, as some sceptics may believe. It applies to all clubs – big and small, rich and poor, public and private, links, parkland, heathland and moor.





1 Carefully managed irrigation practices

Excessive watering is the fastest way to *Poa annua* and the miseries associated with it. Given the climate of the UK and the nuances of our greens, it is folly to rely solely on automatic systems to meet our irrigation requirements. By definition, this leads to overwatering and uneven watering which, in turn, leads to stress and disturbance.

Be clever. Use aeration, soil surfactant products, moisture meters and hand-watering policies to make best use of the water you have.

2 Frugal use of selected fertilisers

Stick largely to nitrogen and some potassium. Apply only sufficient nutrient to allow the turf to recover from basic wear and tear. Do not feed for colour! Although some would have you believe otherwise, green is not necessarily great.

3 Appropriate mowing heights

The finer grasses tend to favour mowing heights at or above four millimetres. That is not to say that bents and fescues will not survive at levels below this, and there may be the case to improve sward refinement and performance with adjusted

“Greenkeeping is more of an art than a science” – Jim Arthur

mowing. But avoid prolonging these adjustments, especially if there is high wear or stress. The greater the stress on the turf, the greater the capacity for thinning and damage which, in turn, plays into the hands of *Poa annua*.

4 Controlled disturbance

All grasses fall into three main ecological classifications: competitors, stress tolerators and opportunists. This is the basis of studies into comparative grassland ecology at Sheffield University since the 1970s, and it underpins traditional theories of greenkeeping. The trick for greenkeepers is to use the methods available to them to attract the grasses they want most in a given situation.

5 Regular and varied aeration

There is plenty of evidence to support the need for aeration in all its forms as it helps to retain a suitable free-draining growing environment for

our favoured grass types. Nevertheless, care must be taken over the choice and timing of treatments. In the wrong hands aeration is unnecessary disruption and disturbance. Less disruptive technologies can be helpful if they achieve the desired results.

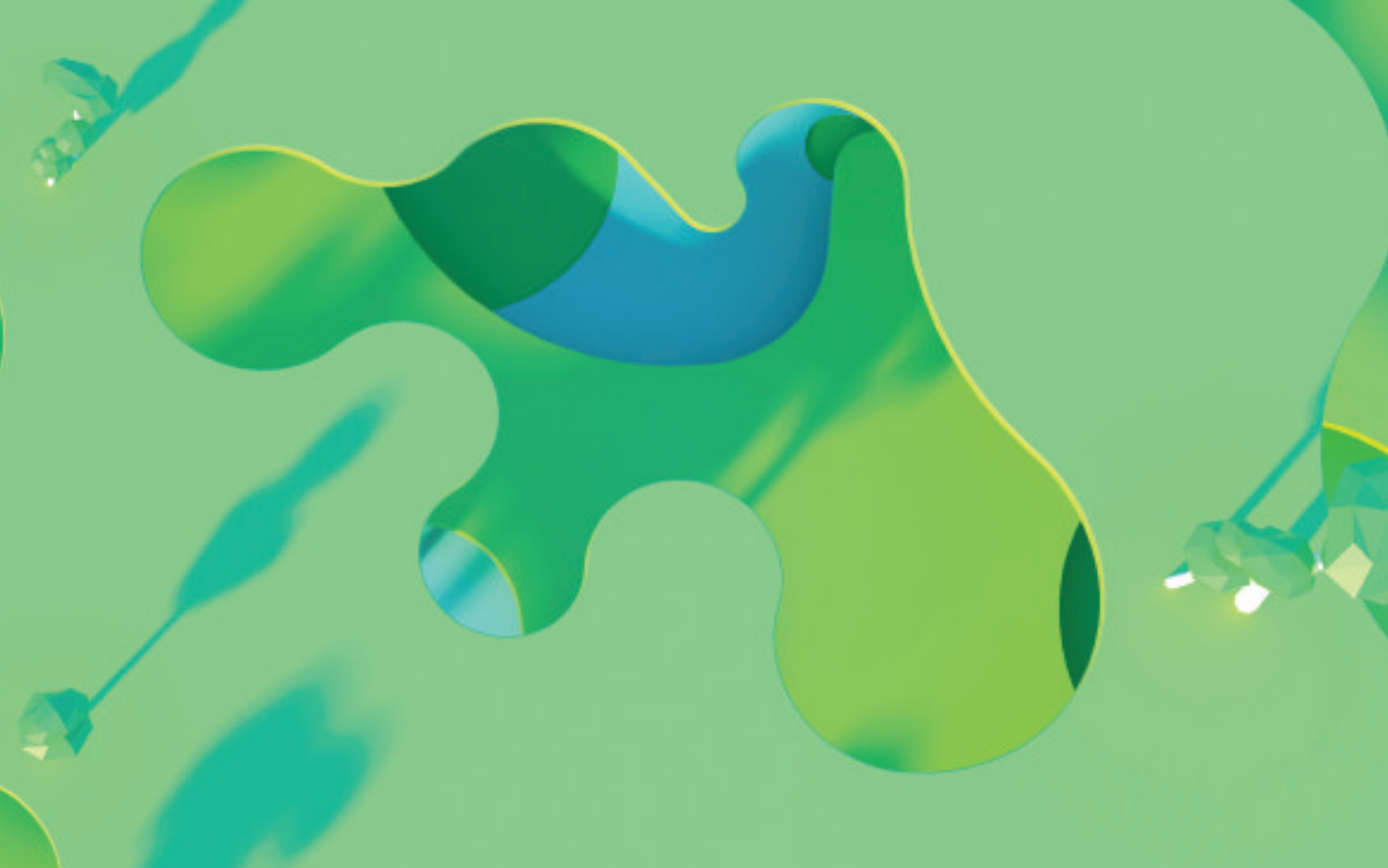
6 Overseeding with suitable grass types

Give your favoured grasses every chance to thrive. Bents and fescues will not produce their own seed to perpetuate themselves in a green – unlike *Poa annua* which does so readily, even with very tight heights of cut. It is therefore crucial to introduce these grasses at the right time using the right techniques so they may gain ground. The right environment, however, must be created first of all.

7 Controlled use of pesticides

Sustainability today is not about eliminating chemical usage completely. Integrated pest and disease management is the way forward, using chemical and cultural techniques to complement each other until a more disease-tolerant grass equilibrium can be reached.

These key fundamentals apply universally. They may bring slightly



different grasses and sward compositions on different sites, but the principles are the same and will deliver a better and more robust product at lower cost.

This is where we stand as greenkeepers in the UK today. Sadly, we must be honest and accept that our record of sustainably managing our courses over the last century has been less than good.

Nature gave us a splendid canvas upon which to begin, but naïve interference to meet misguided notions of perfection has led to

widespread botanical deterioration. We have the skills to change this dynamic, and change we must, because climate change, resource constraints and pesticide restrictions now demand it.

Adhering to basic greenkeeping principles will help restore the balance. It is worth remembering the words of Jim Arthur: "Greenkeeping is more of an art than a science. Copy the conditions of those very low fertility soils and environments where our desired grasses dominate naturally, simply because the more

agricultural species are inhibited or excluded in soil that is too low in plant nutrients to support their higher demands."

We must learn from history, not ignore it. Using these principles and aligning them with new technologies and innovations is what sustainability is all about.

Not everything that was preached in the past is relevant, but much of it still is. If you have started, continue. If you have not yet begun, it is time to start. The consequences of inaction will be severe. **GI**

Key concerns facing our industry

Over the past year, our agronomy team has repeatedly encountered the same key concerns facing our industry and has been working to draw attention to them.

- Impacts of climate change including extreme heat, flooding, drought, crown hydration impacts and heightened levels of turfgrass stress, particularly with a sustained increase in footfall since the pandemic.
- Resource restrictions, particularly on water and sand.
- Legislative change: in June 2022, for example, the EU presented a proposal to reduce the use and risk of pesticides which will apply to golf courses from 2024 onward.
- Public opinion that golf is bad for nature.
- Political and operational challenges around the recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

Help nature on your golf course

Dr Marie Athorn describes the partnership between the RSPB and The R&A as being about “spreading the word about the good work that the golf industry is already doing and helping clubs make their courses better for nature, while still being great places to play golf”.

“The RSPB moto is ‘Nature is in crisis, together we can save it’ and that is what this partnership is all about: we’re not trying to take away from the golf at all,” said Marie.

“And we’re not necessarily trying to replicate what we might do on a reserve, but it’s about working together with the golf industry to provide for nature and we already know that’s happening on quite a large scale.

“Historically, golf perhaps had a bad reputation in terms of its ability to

contribute to nature conservation.

“Through the partnership we are raising awareness of the great contribution that golf courses can make when they are managed with nature in mind and using The R&A’s platform to deliver best practice guidance that shows the art of the possible,” she said.

How did you first become aware of the possibilities in this area?

Throughout my career I have seen the ability of other land uses to contribute to nature conservation, without that being their primary purpose.

Whether that be green spaces around housing developments during my time as an ecological consultant or during my PhD looking at constructed wetlands that treated

wastewater and finding that it was still possible for them to provide valuable habitats for wildlife.

I’ve been a golfer my whole life and part of my enjoyment of the game was seeing the wildlife on my golf course in the Peak District.

Whether it was the undulating flight of a Green Woodpecker as it flew across the fairway or the Waxwings that would call in the winter to feed on the berries of the Rowan trees, it all added to the enjoyment.

Bringing all these experiences together I knew the potential was huge for the golf industry to contribute to nature conservation and the more time I spend in this job the more I see how that potential is being realised at many of our golf clubs across the UK.

Can heather be left to grow
on areas of the course well
away from play?

Golf courses in the UK occupy more than 126,000 hectares of green space, which, if correctly managed, could make a huge impact on nature's recovery. RSPB Business Conservation Advisor to the R&A, Dr Marie Athorn, explains how you can play your part

How do golf courses fit into the wider ecological landscape?

Existing golf courses managed with nature in mind provide vital stepping-stones for wildlife across the wider landscape.

Although most conservation organisations across the UK own and manage nature reserves, all acknowledge that nature will require a wider, connected network to survive and thrive. This means working with other landowners and land managers to create well managed land for nature which is essential to nature's recovery. With over 3,000 golf courses in the UK, contributing to approximately 126,000 ha of greenspace, golf courses are well placed to help provide for wildlife.

The UK landscape has become really

fragmented in nature's eyes and often the urban landscapes are hardest for nature to access. Golf courses can provide those vital stepping-stones across that urban landscape as they are often located in close proximity to large numbers of people and those urban environments. This can be especially beneficial to our migratory bird species that travel such large distances. A BTO GPS tagged cuckoo that was flying from Africa, trying to get to its breeding ground at an RSPB nature reserve north of London, flew around London and stopped off at various golf courses. Having stopping off points on a long journey is vital for their successful migration.

What species might golf courses be able to support?

There are some really simple steps

that golf courses can take to support nature without starting to look at changes in management to in-play areas or other areas of habitat on the golf course.

Putting up bird and bat boxes can really help some species if you think carefully about which species you target. Starlings have declined by 82% in the last few decades, they are however still widespread in the UK, albeit in much smaller numbers – so most clubs will be in the right location to help. Starlings take well to bird boxes that are designed for them and they feed on leatherjackets, especially during the breeding season. They need to feed their chicks with something juicy! Starlings have small thin beaks and so when they feed on leatherjackets in greens or tees they don't leave



“ One study looked at a GPS tagged cuckoo that was flying from Africa. It was trying to get to its breeding ground – an RSPB nature reserve north of London – and to navigate around such a vast urban landscape it used golf courses.”

damage. Putting boxes up around your golf course means that the starlings that use them will hopefully feed on the leatherjackets on your golf course. So by helping starlings have somewhere to nest you may also help your own cause.

Its not just starlings, another rarer species that feeds heavily on leatherjackets is the Chough. Choughs are only present around the coast on the western edge of the UK, having

only returned to Cornwall in the last decade and already frequenting golf courses like Newquay GC. Choughs nest on coastal cliffs and like to feed on short turf so there is little you are not already doing as a golf course that would attract them. So be mindful if you see a small black corvid with red bill and legs, then it will be feeding on leatherjackets and, much like starlings, not damaging the turf so you can let them do their bit for your course.

Several bat species also feed on crane flies. They will feed over habitats that attract insects, so if you can manage areas of woodland, grassland and wetlands naturally this will attract bats to feed on your golf course. Bats will roost in natural cavities in trees so try and retain trees with these type of features or why not make and put up bat boxes across your golf course. Do remember though bats are protected – once the bat box is up and being used it would

Choughs feed on leatherjackets and, much like starlings, don't damage the turf so you can support them and let them do their bit for your course

are linked to priority habitats. Heathland is a priority habitat and is a habitat that works so well with golf. Managing heathland habitats on golf courses for nature need not conflict with golf at all. The diverse structure that benefits nature can also make for an aesthetically pleasing and challenging golf course.

Bare ground is an important part of that, whether that's a standard scrape or exposing the soil in some way.

If that is something that's regarded as unattractive, that can be done in areas that are further from play, but many courses now are doing what are shown as more natural bunkers, larger sand areas as carry areas. Then allowing a transition from bare ground, into acid grassland and then into the stands of heather that look so beautiful on a golf course.

Bear in mind that nature likes a diverse age structure of heather, so if you want to crop the heather and keep it short – in a carry area for example – can you keep the diverse structure by letting it grow longer elsewhere?

Even simple things like heather-topped bunkers, which look fantastic from a golf perspective, also really deliver for nature, and replicate what we might do in a reserve, because you've got that diverse structure and a bunker face is great for species like mining bees and smaller invertebrates.

What about links courses?

If existing links golf courses are managed with nature in mind they often have a huge variety of plants and habitat structures that can support a wide range of invertebrate life, which then supports a diversity species up the food chain – from birds to mammals and other predatory species.

Bare sand environments in dune landscapes are really important for rare invertebrates. Dune slacks are important too, and can appear quite naturally, especially in a really undulating dune landscape. Small amounts of scrub in the dune landscape can also be valuable, especially for nesting birds.

Finding the right balance for a mosaic of different habitats on any type of golf course is what helps deliver for nature while making them enjoyable and challenging places to play golf.

How do you recommend managing grassland?

Grassland management and introducing more wildflowers is an easy process that can be replicated across most golf courses, regardless of what soil you sit on. Both long and semi-rough can be invaluable for nature. In shorter grass, that could be things like birdsfoot trefoil, which come up with lovely little yellow flowers. They don't grow too tall and people are still going to be able to find their golf balls, but allowing those flowers to come through in those short rough areas is great for many pollinator species. In longer rough, especially those areas close to play, we want it to be quite thin and wispy, which allows the flowers to come up and flourish and, again, this is a mutually beneficial solution for both golf and nature.

Moving to a cut and collect methodology in your rough management will really help wildflowers, which will struggle to compete against grasses in a high nutrient soil, so removing your arisings and keeping it as nutrient poor as possible will really benefit wildflowers and be a positive in terms of golf conditioning.

If you have space further from play, some thick tussocky grassland can be good for small mammals that are important prey for a range of birds like Kestrels and Barn Owls.

Do you have any recommendations for wetland management?

Having gradual edges to wetlands and differing heights of vegetation around a wetland provides a variety of habitats for wildlife. If you have space around a wetland, can you have a little bit of semi-rough or longer vegetation that catches a ball? That helps nature and your members might also thank you.

Natural edges and longer vegetation around a wetland along with native submerged plant species could also help improve water quality.

An important consideration for wetland management is invasive species, species like Himalayan Balsam are becoming more widespread across our landscape. Invasive species have a serious detrimental impact on native species. Golf courses can have a positive impact by making a concerted, continued effort to remove these

need a licenced person to advise before you can move it – so think carefully about where you place them.

Legislative reduction of pesticide use is affecting golf course management across the UK. These changes are vital to protect our environment. But nature can lend a helping hand if you help it too!

How can specific course types adapt to help nature?

So many of our UK golf course types

“Golf courses make up about 126,000 hectares of the UK’s green space and we don’t want them to close. We want them to remain as golf courses – albeit optimised for nature – because otherwise they are often turned into built environments.”



The Arctic tern, increasingly rare on our shores, loves the landscape of a links course

invasive species on their land and allow native species to flourish.

How does woodland fit in?

Courses often own significant amounts of woodland that never come into play, and while greenkeepers might not manage it all the time like other habitats, it’s helpful to have an awareness of what’s important in that woodland and what would need protecting.

Maintaining a diverse structure within the woodland is important to support a range of species. Doing things like opening up glades and ensuring you have that natural progression – from short to longer turf, into scrub and then into woodland.

Deadwood is a massively underrepresented habitat in the UK, we have historically tidied things up and kept things clean, meaning the species that rely on this habitat are in serious decline.

There are always concerns about health and safety to do with keeping dead trees. But if a tree is in a dangerous position and needs to come down, can you keep that wood, and can it be placed in an area away from play? Natural woodland features also support a range of different

species. Bats, which are a key indicator to the strength of your habitats, will use rot holes and tear out wounds and many other natural cracks and crevices. Birds will make their own holes in trees and use natural cavities too, so keeping those natural cavities for nature to flourish in an area that is absolutely not conflicting with golf, allows you to provide for nature, almost without even trying.

Ancient and veteran trees are also an immensely valuable wildlife habitat and one you’re likely to have on your course. If you can protect and keep those trees it has huge value to nature.

Do you have any recommendations for how clubs communicate about their work?

The communication and engagement side of how we talk about nature and golf courses is one of the most important things. It helps people understand why you are making changes on your course and it creates an opportunity for people to engage with nature more closely on your course. You also have an amazing opportunity to help improve the reputation of golf by sharing your

experiences and stories of helping nature on your golf course. Golf courses have been delivering for nature for such a long time, but nobody has been willing to talk about it, and I really hope that’s where this partnership has an impact. **GI**



About Marie

Dr Marie Athorn
is Business
Conservation

Advisor to The R&A, RSPB.

Marie has a PhD in the biodiversity benefits of constructed wetland habitats and previously she worked in ecological consultancy. She joined the RSPB – the UK’s largest conservation charity – in January 2020 to undertake the new role of business conservation advisor to The R&A as part of a new partnership between the two bodies. A lifelong golfer, Marie has combined her passions to increase awareness and support for biodiversity and conservation on the golf course.



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Magic Mushrooms!



While not exactly “magical”, mycorrhizal fungi do offer a great number of benefits for managing grass plant health. Mycorrhizal fungi are not new or genetically engineered organisms, in fact, they have been fundamental to the survival and growth of plants for over 450 million years (Brundrett & Tendersoo, 2018).

There is no doubt that the maintenance of high-quality turf for sports pitches, golf courses, and general amenity areas is important in providing functional, recreational and aesthetic benefits to society and the environment. However, the management of high-quality turf requires significant input to satisfy the high expectations for appearance and playability. The maintenance needs to be balanced with ecological responsibilities. Particularly as European legislation is now focussed on the reduction in the use of chemical plant protection products and fertilisers by

2030. Thus, the need for a different, more sustainable, management approach is more important than ever (Bosi et al., 2023). While mycorrhizal fungi are certainly not new, their application in turf management is a relatively recent practice.

So, what exactly are mycorrhizal fungi, and what do they do?

Mycorrhizal fungi are specialised fungi that form mutually beneficial symbiotic associations with plants. Mycorrhiza literally means “fungus root”.

There are four principal types of mycorrhiza—arbuscular mycorrhiza, ectomycorrhiza, ericoid mycorrhiza and orchid mycorrhiza.

Most turf grass species associate with arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF). These specialised fungi colonise the plant roots making use of the sugary carbohydrates released by the plants into the soil through root exudates. In exchange, the fungal hyphae extend through

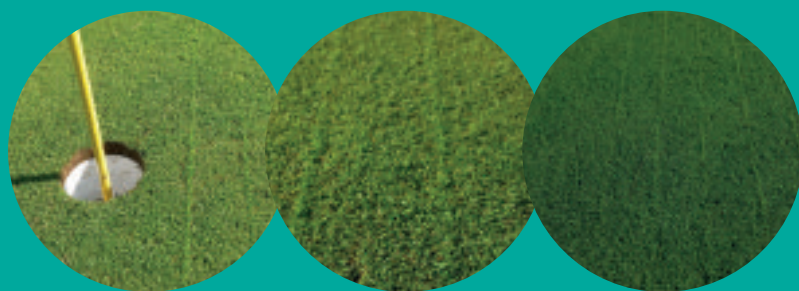
the soil enhancing the plant root system and improving plant access to water and nutrients. When root cells are colonised by AMF, specialised structures form within the cell: the arbuscles, where nutrient exchange takes place and special shared storage organs called vesicles. When water and nutrients are abundant surplus supplies are stored in the vesicles. When shortages occur, the plant makes use of these, allowing plants that have AMF associations to survive for far longer than non-mycorrhizal plants (Amaranthus & Simpson, 2011).

Mycorrhizal fungi greatly increase the rooting volume, which translates to faster growth and establishment. Studies have shown that AMF are highly beneficial to the establishment of fine grasses (Koske et al., 1995; Pelletier & Dionne, 2004).

When AMF were introduced at time of sowing, grass established significantly faster with differences being observed within three weeks

Overseeding Trail

Pictures taken 9 days after overseeding with
Symbio's Mycorrhizal Grass Seed Coat



Application Guide

For overseeding, mix 1.5kg of Symbio's Mycorrhizal Seed Coat with enough grass seed to cover 5,000m²

For seeding, mix 3kg of Symbio's Mycorrhizal Seed Coat with enough grass seed to cover 5,000m²

Grass seed sowing rate	Seed coat / 20kg seed
4g/m ²	1.5kg
10g/m ²	0.6kg
25g/m ²	0.24kg

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

Available in 500g and 1.5kg pack sizes

seeds. The technology in commercial inoculants has advanced in recent years, with many products having a good shelf life and compatibility with a wide range of fertilisers and pesticides. Inoculants are also available in a variety of forms such as granular (Symbio Mycorrhizal Inoculant), powder (Symbio Mycorrhizal Seed Coat) and liquids (Symbio Liquid Endo), accommodating a wide variety of equipment and application methods. AMF can be introduced during construction and aeration, or at times of seeding or overseeding allowing rapid colonisation of new roots and swift establishment of turf. Consider applying AMF with grass seed that offers additional environmental benefits such as Origin Amenity Solutions Carbon4Grass and Tetraploid Technology mixes.

So, while we may not be in the grounds of Hogwarts, we may still find some magic in our greens if we choose to take advantage of mycorrhizal fungi. The appropriate use of mycorrhizae in turf management programs will not only benefit the environment but will also improve turf quality and provide cost savings. The livelihood of clubs often depends on the quality of the greens by reintroducing AMF in areas where they may have been lost, or in sandy more sterile rootzones, we can dramatically improve plant performance. The introduction of AMF can also have a significant economic benefit, by promoting early and rapid establishment allowing courses to open sooner, improving nutrient and water use efficiency, allowing cost savings and improving establishment of fine grass species allowing smooth firm and consistent playing surfaces. Introducing the magic of mycorrhizal fungi to your management program has never made more sense! **GI**

For more information contact
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Author: Dr Deidre Charleston,
Origin Amenity Solutions

and positive effects lasting for several months (Koske et al., 1995). This is particularly beneficial for species transition and when renovation windows are short. It also has a benefit during general overseeding, supporting emerging seedlings and helping them to compete against the existing sward.

Mycorrhizal fungi are important in the transport of nutrients that do not readily move through the soil, such as phosphorus. Mycorrhizal fungi release powerful organic acids and enzymes that help to convert phosphorus to plant available forms, promoting plant growth and establishment (Andrino et al., 2021). In addition to improving nutrient uptake, the extensive network of fungal hyphae in the soil improves plant access to water. Studies show that inoculation with AMF improves grass tolerance to drought conditions, increases plant biomass and improves morphological traits (Aalipour et al., 2020; Mahdavi et al., 2018).

The addition of AMF also produces greener turf with up to 60% more chlorophyll, enhancing photosynthesis and improving both plant growth and drought resistance (Koske et al., 1995; Gemma et al., 1997). Given that water is becoming increasingly scarce and more expensive, the application of AMF may well provide a promising method to improve water use efficiency in turfgrass management.

Undisturbed soils are full of beneficial soil organisms including mycorrhizal fungi, but under the intensively managed conditions used to maintain sports turf their presence is often reduced. Compaction, rigorous physical management practices, regular pesticide applications and inert sand top dressings can have a negative impact on soil biology, and mycorrhizal fungi (Amaranthus et al., 2012). The fastest and most effective way to restore mycorrhizal populations is to apply a commercial inoculant to roots or



Exploring advances in precision turf technology

More than 50 John Deere dealers have been given advanced training on how greenkeepers can make the most of the latest technological innovations developed by the company.

Held at Golf Club Pfalz – a complex in south-west Germany largely maintained using John Deere machinery – the event saw representatives from across Deere's European network of dealers trained by experts from across the golf and turf division.

Chris Meacock, Division Sales Manager for Golf and Turf, said: "Our innovation pipeline looks to improve every aspect of a machine's performance and that covers many

facets of a product.

"What's changing fast is the opportunity to use technology and data to make the process of using a John Deere product more efficient and productive for our customers.

"This event was a chance for the dealer network to see all our precision turf technology in action, working together to demonstrate the advantages of GPS-driven accuracy."

The training centred on the direct impact precision applications can have on reducing inputs while increasing accuracy and productivity through efficiency gains.

Dealers were shown how mowers

and compact tractors equipped with Deere's satellite-steering AutoTrac technology can reduce overlaps and fuel consumption. HD200 ProGator sprayers were demonstrating their ability to place fertilisers and herbicides in exactly the right place, avoiding spraying non-target areas and wastage.

The advantages of accurately mapping a course's tees, greens, fairways, bunkers and paths was presented using Starfire GPS receivers and dealers were given further training in how the data produced could be accessed and tailored for course managers using the John Deere



“ This training sets our dealer network up to be able to work even closer with golf courses who are looking to take their maintenance and management to the next level

Operations Center.

Sessions were also run on how OnLink – the cloud-based golf course management software acquired by John Deere in 2019 – automatically synchronises any machine and operator working anywhere on the course, allowing course managers to remotely create and assign tasks and meticulously manage equipment and labour costs.



Satellite-steering with AutoTrac

One of John Deere's key strengths is its ability to adapt technology from other areas of its global business and implement it in professional groundscape.

GPS steering in agriculture has been hugely popular for over 15 years, but its application on golf courses and sports pitches is now starting to develop.

The John Deere AutoTrac system used on fairway mowers and compact tractors has the potential to deliver huge benefits.

Assisted steering leads to less operator stress and reduced overlaps or gaps, which positively impacts fuel consumption and productivity.

Lazer-straight lines and cut patterns are also easier to achieve by removing operator inconsistencies, even in low-visibility conditions.

“Boundaries and guidance lines can be stored in the John Deere Operations Center too, allowing the next operator to follow the same pattern,” Chris adds.

Spraying with more accuracy

The cost of protecting turf from pests and diseases, and nurturing it with sufficient fertiliser, is a significant cost for golf courses.

Clubs are also under increasing pressure to ensure that chemical applications do not have any detrimental impact on the environment.

It's been 20 years since John Deere launched its HD200 sprayer, which works in tandem with a ProGator utility vehicle, but its

relevance to today's turfcare profession has never been greater.

Equipped with a Starfire receiver the machine has the ability to automatically turn on or shut off individual sprayer nozzles across the boom according to its position on the course – spraying around watercourses or the fringe of a green, for example.

Accuracy can be measured down to 2.5cm.

Remote management with OnLink

OnLink technology delivers two clever modules; OnEquip which provides a real-time feed on the machine's activity, such as run time, servicing intervals and idle periods, while OnLabor schedules work and assigns it to members of the team.

OnLink connects machines to the Operations Center so data gathered can be used to plan and improve operation efficiency – each machine's working hours can be balanced across its life cycle to reduce the cost of ownership. Mowing patterns, reducing the time required to complete work, can also be managed.

Alerts flag when maintenance is required along with owners setting geofences and curfews to stop the machine working outside of set locations or hours, increasing its security profile.

In the future the app-based OnLink hub will offer the possibility to plan for weather conditions, track the speed of greens and monitor soil moisture while also creating accurate budget forecasts.

GI

Tackling sustainability together



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

Tree management is an important part of creating more sustainable playing surfaces – can specimen trees that enhance a species-rich habitat help the cause?

Golf is leading the way with the implementation of Integrated Turf Management (ITM) and other holistic, best practice approaches in greenkeeping. Whilst sustainability initiatives are broadly welcomed, new approaches are sometimes met with trepidation. Tree management is a prime example.

Recently, a parkland course needed a plan to deal with shade, restricted air flow and tree encroachment. A recommended robust tree management plan was fully understood and adopted by the committee and communicated to members through the correct channels. Some were supportive, but a section of the membership lobbied against the advice, arguing that forest copses were being denuded of biodiversity-friendly undergrowth, that mature trees had been unnecessarily felled and that the course was losing an opportunity to capture and store carbon.

Let's put these points into context. The condition of tees and greens is the main cause of complaint that I hear in golf clubs. The often unchecked growth of trees

over the last half century or more can have a significant impact on the quality of the playing surfaces.

The R&A GC2030 programme research makes a strong case for the role of tree management in delivering more sustainable playing surfaces. To illustrate, here are some key messages from the latest GC2030 research publications:

From Grass Selection Guide

"Careful consideration needs to be given to ensure playing surfaces are not negatively affected by shade, poor air movement resulting in increased humidity and higher disease pressure."

From ITM for Parkland Greens Handbook

"The establishment of bentgrass will best succeed in situations where there is good access to light, whilst the risk of disease incidence will be reduced on both the bentgrasses and annual meadow-grass species. Bentgrasses are likely to fail under dense shade and high traffic... Not only is growth and recovery restricted in shaded micro-environments, but because the plant is weaker in shade, there is an increase

in the disease risk to all grasses... Managing the microclimate is the starting point to a better future."

As these research findings illustrate, tree management needs to be responsibly planned and carried out correctly, with compensation schemes an essential component. This may include replanting to encourage age and species diversity in areas away from the course and the playing lines.

With regards to carbon capture, Keith Duff recently addressed this challenge in his article 'The Tree Dilemma', referencing oft-heard suggestions that we should be planting a lot more trees on golf courses to "make better use of these areas to sequester carbon". Such arguments ignore the major issues caused by trees growing too close to greens and tees. As Keith explains: "Carbon retention and sequestration doesn't really get going for at least 10 years after planting and trees then need to be

maintained for at least 100 years to become effective carbon stores, so there needs to be a multi-generational commitment to woodland management and retention."

We should remind ourselves that grasslands are also pretty good carbon stores and that semi-natural habitats are even more so. Trees are good for sequestration until they die or are cut down, at which point the carbon generally goes back into the atmosphere unless the wood is used for a long-term productive purpose – which is not practicable for most trees removed from courses.

A happy equilibrium would be vegetation management with specimen trees that enhance a species-rich habitat. This approach complements the course design originally intended by the architect, updated for the modern game and aligns with the agronomic needs of sustainable playing surfaces. **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



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