



# Greenkeeper International

**“It’s important to have a sense of humour”**

Harborne Course Manager Jim and Deputy Course Manager Vicky on working with your partner



■ **From Your Association**

It’s the final countdown to BTME 2024

■ **Careers**

Peter Moore reflects on his move to Woodhall Spa

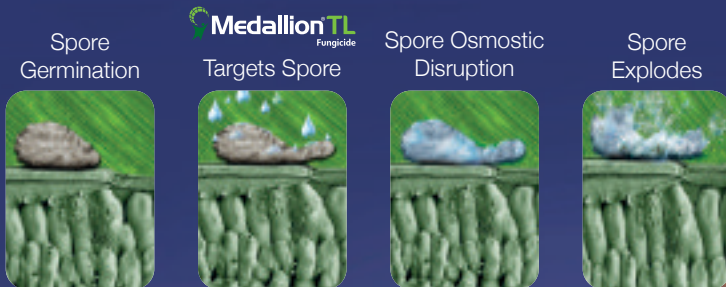
■ **Practical Greenkeeping**

The R&A’s Alistair Beggs’ vision of the future

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TM



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.

#### Contact us Email

Membership enquiries, including changes of address  
[membership@bigga.co.uk](mailto:membership@bigga.co.uk)  
Letters and editorial enquiries  
[info@bigga.co.uk](mailto:info@bigga.co.uk)

#### Post

BIGGA, Coxwold House, Easingwold  
Business Park, Stillington Road,  
Easingwold, York YO61 3FB

#### Phone

Membership services 01347 833 800

#### Social

[f golfgreenkeepers](https://www.facebook.com/golfgreenkeepers)  
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#### The BIGGA team

Chief Executive Officer Jim Croxton  
Chief Operating Officer Sami Strutt  
Chief Financial Officer Steve Wragg  
Head of Communications Karl Hansell  
Editorial Assistant Lorna Taylor  
Design and Brand Executive  
Libbie Waddleton  
Head of Business Development  
Lauren Frazer [lauren@bigga.co.uk](mailto:lauren@bigga.co.uk)  
Business Development Manager  
Gavin Rees [gavin@bigga.co.uk](mailto:gavin@bigga.co.uk)

#### Publishers

Greenkeeper International is published on BIGGA's behalf by 18Players. For editorial enquiries, email Dan Murphy: [d.murphy@18players.com](mailto:d.murphy@18players.com)

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# Welcome

A very Happy New Year to all our members and everyone involved in the greenkeeping industry. Let us hope that 2024 behaves a little better than 2023 did when it comes to weather – it would be nice to have some actual seasons!

One thing that will happen as it should is BTME. We closed out 2023 with everything in exceptional shape and it looks like being a stellar edition of our flagship event. The Exhibition Halls are almost full, with 7 per cent more space sold than for 2023's excellent show already. All the key manufacturers, distributors and suppliers will be there, and we are hugely grateful to them for supporting what is such an important event for our industry.

Additionally, the Continue to Learn programme looks like it will break records, with places booked some 20 per cent up. Our conference, classes and seminars are a critical event for the golf industry, providing education and inspiration, and it is gratifying to see it go from strength to strength. I firmly believe it is the single most influential event on the way golf facilities are run each year.

I very much look forward to seeing so many of our members and friends in Harrogate for a brilliant few days.

“ Our conference, classes and seminars at BTME are a critical event for the golf industry

There will be something for everyone, from the Young Greenkeepers Conference, for those just starting out in the industry, to our BIGGA Celebration, where we will show our appreciation to a number of our members at the end of their careers who have given so much to their profession.

I am particularly excited to be formally launching the First Green initiative. We need to work hard to engage young people to be aware of the profession, and this initiative, which helps golf facilities to bring school children on to the course to see the profession of greenkeeping at first hand, will be a game-changer. Make sure you check out First Green next to the BIGGA stand in Hall 3.



Jim Croxton  
BIGGA Chief Executive

## Here to support you when you need us

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# First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- Download the 2024 BIGGA calendar and see all the winning photos
- Roddy Williams on how you can extend your club's climate action



## R&A expands Sustainable Agronomy Service to golf facilities worldwide

The R&A has announced the expansion of its Sustainable Agronomy Service to provide expertise and best practice advice to all levels of golf facilities in Great Britain and Ireland and continental Europe.

First launched in the Asia-Pacific market, the service will now offer support to facility operators worldwide in the delivery of sustainable agronomy, golf course auditing and benchmarking, management planning and strategic advice, annual maintenance programme planning, and project management support and drainage design.

The service is already actively supporting and guiding clubs to become more resilient and sustainable

in the face of changing legislation on pesticides, climate change and access to resources.

Clubs such as Haydock Park, West Sussex and Blackwell are among over 100 facilities in Great Britain and Ireland and continental Europe already being encouraged to use more resilient grass mixes and improve growing environments for grass, in addition to making the turf less reliant on pesticides.

"We're here to provide expertise and support to golf facilities, highlighting the most efficient and accessible methods surrounding sustainable golf course management," said Alistair Beggs, head of agronomy at The R&A.

The Sustainable Agronomy Service includes a team of agronomy experts

which has acquired a wealth of knowledge and experience from its active role in supporting world-class golf championships run by The R&A each year – including The Open and AIG Women's Open.

The team will offer facilities a bespoke service with ongoing support and advice in the planning and implementation of effective and sustainable management practices.

Paul Woodham, head of agronomy, Europe, at The R&A, said: "The introduction of the service in Great Britain and Ireland and continental Europe forms part of the organisation's aim to encourage facilities to adopt a more sustainable approach to the management of courses." **GI**

## The BIGGA Calendar

January: Peter Meek, Bath Golf Club

Download the desktop calendar by scanning the QR code below



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Peter Meek, Bath GC — winner of the Greenkeeping category





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# Free online green skills courses

A groundbreaking project is offering a series of free online green skills courses to anyone working in the sports turf industry.

The courses, available through the Innovation South Virtual Campus (ISVC) learning platform, are designed to be accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or prior knowledge, and include the following topics:

- Carbon literacy
- Introduction to sustainable

resource management

- Water conservation technologies
  - Tree planting and climate change
- BIGGA members can claim CPD credits for taking part.

A number of colleges across Hampshire and Surrey are also providing free training opportunities for businesses working with electric and hybrid vehicles and renewable energy technologies such as heat pumps and solar.

The colleges participating in the

project are: Sparsholt College, Andover College, Basingstoke College of Technology, Alton College, Farnborough College of Technology, Merrist Wood College, Brooklands College, North East Surrey College of Technology and East Surrey College.

The ISVC is a project initiated by a group of regional colleges and universities in collaboration with the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership. It is funded by the Department for Education.

## What's on this month



### Dates for your diary

10 January

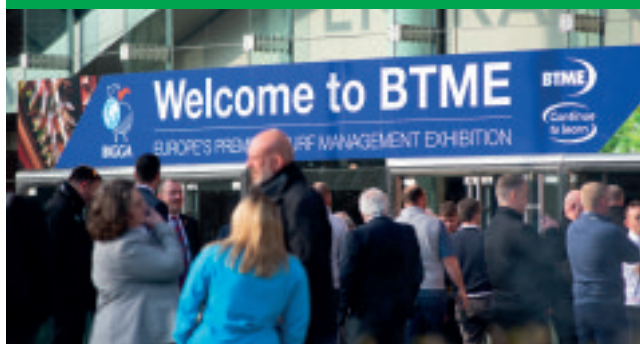
BIGGA L&D Roadshow, Scotland – Kilmarnock Barassie GC

17 January

The BIGGA Annual General Meeting – Online

21-24 January

Continue to Learn – Harrogate Convention Centre



23-25 January

BTME – Harrogate Convention Centre

## A greenkeeper's best friend – Milo



Owner: Ashley Bulpitt

Club: Copewood Grange GC

Dog's name: Milo

Breed: Cocker spaniel

Age: 19 months

Favourite treat: Any treat is his favourite!

Favourite place: Sand bays (because he's not allowed in bunkers)

Naughtiest moment: He dropped his ball into a hole once and tried to dig it out!

He is happiest: He's always happy, especially when we get to work in the morning



# BIGGA

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

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## EuroMillions winner Roberts: I love my job at Rhos-on-Sea too much to leave

Rhos-on-Sea Course Manager Paul Roberts has no plans to quit his job despite winning big on the EuroMillions lottery.

Paul and his wife Ceri scooped a £1million prize in November 2023, though he initially feared bad news when his partner leapt out of bed at 7am one Saturday morning.

"She was screaming and running around the bedroom on her tiptoes," he said. "We'd just bought a puppy a few days earlier and I thought, 'Oh no, the dog's dead'. Then she said, 'We've won', and she was holding her phone. I didn't know what she was talking

about and then she said, 'The EuroMillions last night – we won!'."

Paul checked for himself and confirmed the news, sparking "hysteria around the house", which is home to the couple, their five children, and three dogs. Although it may not be home for much longer, with house-hunting on the agenda.

"We're looking at buying a bigger place for us all, and a bit closer to where I work," said Paul, who was at Holyhead GC for five years before moving to his role at Rhos-on-Sea. "I've already bought a set of Callaway Apex Pro irons and a Hyundai Tucson!"

Despite the windfall, it feels very much like business as usual for the 45-year-old, who is more than happy to carry on with the career that has brought him so much joy over the years.

"When I was younger, it was either turn pro or do the job I do now. I've worked at most of the top courses in my area, done Open Championship support and those sorts of things.

"I helped build up and improve things at Holyhead and the owners at Rhos-on-Sea asked if I could do the same here. It's a project I'm excited about, so I've got no intention of walking away from that." **GI**



## Moir dedicates university honour to 'greenkeepers at all levels'

**Gordon Moir was awarded the University Medal from the University of St Andrews and dedicated the honour to greenkeepers across the industry.**

The former director of greenkeeping at St Andrews Links Trust received the award at the university's winter graduation ceremony.

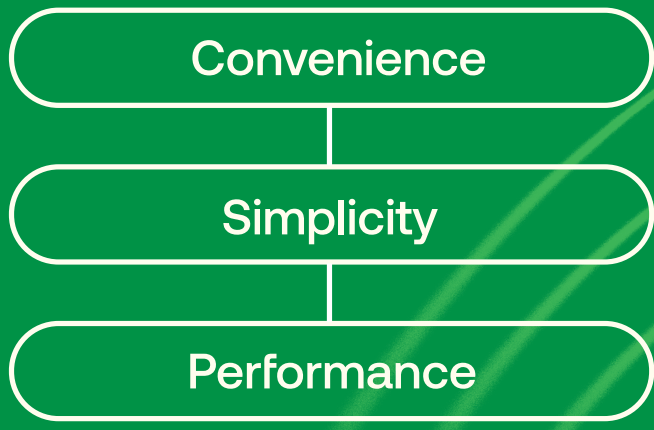
"It's an overwhelming experience. It's been a great opportunity to receive this on behalf of all greenkeepers across the country working at every level, from small clubs to championship courses," said Moir.

"This award helps to highlight the excellent work greenkeepers do at all levels in terms of the environment and sustainability."

Moir, who began his career in his home town of Fraserburgh and whose first role at St Andrews was as head greenkeeper on the Eden Course, joined graduates from the university's International Education Institute, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, School of Classics, School of Management, and School of Modern Languages in celebrating their academic success. **GI**



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# Golf and Climate Action



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

The biggest single topic at BTME will relate to the ever-growing impact of climate change

As a new year dawns and another exciting golfing season beckons, it is a good time to take stock and look ahead with fresh commitments.

A few weeks ago, world leaders gathered for the global climate summit COP28 to try to establish new agreements and frameworks to tackle climate change – an issue of huge significance and increasing urgency for the whole of society.

At BTME this month, GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation and The R&A will host a dedicated Golf and Climate Action seminar, exploring what it takes for your club to get on to the front foot.

The impacts of a changing climate and increasing weather extremes are being felt across the sport of golf in

the form of flooding and drought, more frequent and severe storms, increasingly common extreme heat days and changing pest and disease patterns as, locally and globally, biodiversity adapts.

At the same time, there is a growing expectation that all individuals, sectors, businesses and sports play their part. This means taking action to reduce emissions and, in the case of land managers like golf, seeking to increase carbon storage. Reporting on carbon emissions and climate impacts is also becoming a legal requirement for some sizes of business and to access public funds.

Naturally, it may seem complicated – what to say, what to do, where to start, what and how to calculate over what timescale and

so on – but it can be quite simple, with specialist support and tools available to course and club managers.

GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation introduced the Driving Net Zero initiative

for golf and climate action two years ago. Since then, custom carbon footprint solutions have further developed as part of programming that also includes reduction plans and credible mitigation. **GI**

## How to extend your club's climate action

- **Commit** – Written material and posters are available through GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation to enable you to demonstrate your commitment and outline what you will do on your net zero pathway
- **Calculate** – By inputting some key data into the FREE OnCourse Sustainable Golf programme, a comprehensive carbon footprint can be calculated for your club. This comes with a carbon reduction plan guided by analysis of emissions. The carbon reduction plan includes no and low-cost in-house activities, as well as larger projects and ideas for capital investments and how to drill down into deeper Scope 3 emissions embodied in supply chains
- **Contribute** – If you'd like to counterbalance your 'currently unavoidable carbon emissions', Sustainable Golf can guide you to the most credible and effective blend of local to global mitigation
- **Communicate** – Position and represent your club as a Climate Leader, promote your credentials and make accurate claims. Explore ways to engage staff, members and visitors on your journey

### Find out more

If you'd like to find out more, please sign up to the joint GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation and R&A Golf and Climate Action seminar at BTME in January or drop us a note at [hello@sustainable.golf](mailto:hello@sustainable.golf)





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# From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- Sami Strutt says farewell to BIGGA after more than 30 years
- The final countdown to BTME 2024 - discover what we have planned



BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton, with Origin Amenity Solution's Andy Russell

## Origin Enterprises makes £1,200 donation to Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund

BIGGA has accepted a generous donation from Origin Enterprises after staff at the agri-services organisation selected the Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund as one of its charities of the year.

Employees at Origin Enterprises, the parent company of BIGGA Premium Partner Origin Amenity Solutions, raised £1,200 for the fund through a series of fitness-based activities.

The Benevolent Fund, BIGGA's official charity, assists current or

past members and their dependants by providing financial support and practical help during difficult times.

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton said: "We all hope never to need the support that a benevolent fund can provide, yet we also know that times are tough for many. If a grant or offer of support can relieve some of the burden and help as a family tries to get back on track, then any small donation can prove priceless.

"The heartfelt thanks of everyone

at BIGGA goes out to our colleagues at Origin Amenity Solutions for this wonderful gesture."

Origin Amenity Solutions Commercial Director Andy Russell added: "I am delighted that we were able to make this donation to such a worthy cause."

Scan the QR code to make a donation to the Benevolent Fund through JustGiving. **GI**



Scan Me to find out more

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



Paisley GC



Basingstoke GC

# BIGGA Awards finalists revealed

The finalists for the Greenkeeping Project of the Year and the Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year have been revealed.

Basingstoke Golf Club, Dudley Golf Club and Sandiway Golf Club are vying for the Greenkeeping Project of the Year Prize, while one of Paisley Golf Club, Portlethen Golf Club or Walton Heath Golf Club will take home the Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year.

Basingstoke relocated to Dummer Golf Club after selling its land for housing development, with a £20 million investment for the purchase and redevelopment of the course, driving range and all buildings.

After being kept alive by donations from members, Dudley is on the up

after an immense amount of hard work to transform the condition of the course.

Sandiway's Project 1946 is about restoring the course to align much more closely with how it was presented all those decades ago, using detailed aerial images captured by the RAF.

Paisley is in the running for the Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year after hosting the Scottish Area Team Championship, its first national tournament since 2006.

Providing the competition for that prize will be Portlethen, which staged Scottish Golf's Boys' Open Championship, earning glowing praise.

"Neil Sadler and his team at Portlethen went above and beyond

for our Boys' Under 16 Championship when the course was flooded and he and his team got the course playable again, allowing us to get the championship to its conclusion," said Toni Finch, seniors events manager at Scottish Golf.

The final nominee in that category is Walton Heath, which provided a superb stage for the 2023 AIG Women's Open.

The 20-strong greenkeeping team at the Surrey Club overcame a number of challenges en route to providing a fitting course and setting for such a prestigious event.

The winners will be crowned at the BIGGA Celebration, sponsored by Jacobsen, at BTME 2024 during a ceremony that will also see someone honoured with the Outstanding Contribution Award. **GI**



Dudley GC



Walton Heath GC

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# Updated funding for trainee greenkeepers

BIGGA and Premium Partner Baroness have updated the support made available to members of the association.

The move follows a restructuring of the way education is delivered to trainee greenkeepers.

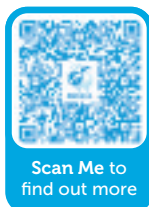
Previously, BIGGA members studying towards their Level 3 Advanced Golf Greenkeeper, Level 3 Advanced Sports Turf Technician or the SVQ Sports Turf Greenkeeping SCQF Level 6 were eligible to apply for a scholarship, made possible by Baroness.

However, with the Advanced Golf Greenkeeper qualification being decommissioned in 2023 and Advanced Sports Turf Technician being delivered as an apprenticeship, there is no longer the requirement for those taking part to self-fund the training, making the scholarship redundant in England.

As a result, BIGGA and Baroness have now teamed up to enhance the association's existing Refund of Fees Scheme, enabling BIGGA members to claim 80% of costs towards any relevant education or training that is relevant to their career as a greenkeeper.

With the support of Baroness, the maximum amount that may be reimbursed has been boosted to £500.

Scan the QR code below to download an application form and apply for a Refund of Fees grant. [GI](#)



**BIGGA**  
CPD Continuing Professional Development

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

Alexandru Lungu, Walton Heath

Paul Selbie, Hainault

Graham Burnett, Nairn Dunbar

Wayne Mulrooney, Churchill & Blakedown

Michael Cooper, Nizels Golf & Country Club

Steven Tierney MG, Golfpark Zurichsee AG

John Thornton, Feldon Valley

James Bruder, Walton Heath

Paul Farthing, Rudding Park

Phil Helmn MG, Affiliate

Charlie Sorrell, Seaford

David Howe, Roehampton

George Pitts MG, Sunningdale

Michael Budd, Shirley Park

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

Paul Selbie, Hainault

Simon Ashford, Rhyl

Michael Budd, Shirley Park



John Geddes (right)

# Geddes honoured at Scotland Awards Lunch

John Geddes was the recipient of the Walter Woods Award on a day of celebration at the 2023 Scotland Awards Lunch.

The lunch and prize-giving ceremony took place at Stirling Golf Club in December, with BIGGA Scotland and Northern Ireland Chair Gordon McKie on hosting duties.

Geddes was bestowed with the highest individual honour in Scotland and Northern Ireland, awarded for his lifetime of achievement within the industry and outstanding contribution to the association.

Richard Russell claimed the Legacy

Award for his significant contribution to the greenkeeping industry during a fine career, while the Harry Diamond Award for the best student greenkeeper was given to Strathmore Golf Centre's Cameron Redden.

"Congratulations to our 2023 award winners, all of whom deserve the recognition," said McKie.

"It was great to see our members receive the appreciation of their peers, from the young, in Cameron Redden, to our most honoured recipient of John Geddes.

"This is a fantastic event in our calendar and is a highlight for all." **GI**



Cameron Redden (left)

## Full list of winners

**Golf awards:** Scottish Champion – Euan Bogle (Stirling Golf Club); Elliott Small Trophy – Alistair Morrison (Durness Golf Club); George Brown Trophy – Benn McLeod (Musselburgh Golf Club)

**Section awards:** Gordon Moir Award (Central Section) – John Reid (The Dukes); Steve Dixon Award (East Section) – Gary Morrison (Bruntsfield Links); Iain MacLeod Award (Highlands Section) – Caroline Munro (Bonar Bridge); John Geddes Award (North Section) – Euan Polson (Royal Aberdeen); Jim Paton Award (Southwest Section) – Cameron Wylie (Machrihanish Dunes); Stuart Taylor Award (West Section) – Jonny Caldwell (Paisley)

**Individual awards:** Legacy Award – Richard Russell; Harry Diamond Award – Cameron Redden; Walter Woods Award – John Geddes

# Greenwood set for Scotland and NI presidency role



BIGGA Scotland and Northern Ireland will welcome Stuart Greenwood as president in 2024.

Greenwood will bring vast experience to the role, having been a

member of BIGGA since its inception.

He has served on committees at all levels, including a five-year term on the Board of Management.

The former course manager at North Berwick Golf Club will succeed Jim Paton when he officially takes up the

role on January 1.

Greenwood will seek to build on the work of Paton and his predecessor, Ronnie Myles, in creating a programme of events for members who are eligible for the Scottish Legacy Group. **GI**

# We want to hear from you



Steve Lloyd  
Chairperson

An online AGM provides an opportunity for more BIGGA members to attend – make sure you're among them

Communication is at the heart of what we do at BIGGA, and we pride ourselves on ensuring it's a two-way thing.

That's why the BIGGA Annual General Meeting is an important event, providing an opportunity for members to have their say on how the association operates.

You will probably be aware that the AGM is usually held in person during BTME in Harrogate, but this year's will be a little different.

Taking place on January 17, the week before BTME, the 2024 AGM will be held virtually using an online meeting system.

By doing this, we hope to encourage more people to attend and exercise the voting rights that are afforded to full members. I would urge anyone who is able to attend the online AGM to please do so – we want to hear from you.

I mentioned BTME above, and what a fantastic event that is set to be this year. While the AGM may be online, BTME is very much about getting people together in the same room and all the benefits that brings.

We say it a lot, but greenkeeping can be a lonely business at times, so having the opportunity to meet up, network,



**“ It has been a pleasure for me to be able to give a little something back to the industry I love so much, and I hope I can continue to do that**

share your problems, get advice and to build on your understanding of the industry is a fantastic thing.

Along with the social side, which is really important and provides a timely reminder that there is always help and support out there, and other people going through the same things, the educational aspect of BTME and Continue to Learn is huge.

It looks like we'll have excellent numbers again in Harrogate, and the array of things to do, see and engage with is really quite

something. I'm looking forward to seeing many of you there.

After BTME, it will of course be back to business as usual, and I hope people can go back to their clubs enthused and optimistic for the year ahead.

I'm certainly excited for what 2024 has in store, as it's the last year for me in my post as chairperson. One of the things I'm most looking forward to, and it's something we'll speak about at BTME, is seeing how the First Green Initiative develops and

continues to grow.

This is an initiative that will really open doors for people to be welcomed into this industry, creating an understanding of what we do and all the great opportunities there are for careers within greenkeeping and the wider ecosystem of golf.

It has been a pleasure for me to be able to give a little something back to the industry I love so much, and I hope I can continue to do that in the year to come. **GI**



# Sami Strutt reflects on 30 years with BIGGA as she prepares to say goodbye



Ahead of joining the Bernhard Academy as education director in April 2024, Sami Strutt is saying farewell to BIGGA following a career spanning more than 30 years

I have loved working for BIGGA, and I anticipated spending my entire career with the association.

Being able to have so much input into a business that I joined when I was so young was amazing, but I'm certain that this move is the right decision. This opportunity with the Bernhard Academy is one that I never imagined would be made available to me, so it is one that I couldn't turn down.

The BIGGA team may think they need me, but they will go on and prosper. We've got a great team that will step up and build their own legacy. BIGGA will become theirs and not mine anymore.

Over the past 30 years, I have seen BIGGA make its mark on the industry. The work we've done over the years to promote what greenkeepers do and make sure they are equipped with the professional skillset they need to do their jobs and deliver what golfers want – BIGGA has played a very big part in that.

I never in a million years thought I



L-R: Sami Strutt, Linda Cleaver, Jonathan Smith, Wendy Cole BTME 2023 Industry Lunch

**“** I never in a million years thought I would be chief operating officer of BIGGA. That I managed to do so is testament to the people I’ve worked with who have championed me



would be chief operating officer of BIGGA. That I managed to do so is testament to the people I’ve worked with who have championed me throughout my career. BIGGA has enabled me access to education, although I had to do the hard work! People like Neil Thomas, the first executive director of BIGGA; John Pemberton, who was the next leader of the business; and my mentor Ken Richardson, who played a massive role in my career.

When Ken retired, I took on responsibility for organising Continue to Learn. I can remember sitting there on the first day and thinking, ‘I’ve got to put together a programme of my own? How do I do that?’.

Back then, there were seven or eight classes, some seminars and the conference. Today, we have 49 classes alone, in addition to the two-day conference, the Young Greenkeepers Conference, the Breakfast Session and 14 seminars.

When I became chief operating officer

in January 2022, I handed responsibility for organising Continue to Learn over to Deb Burnett. That was one of the easiest things to do because I knew she was a safe pair of hands. Deb has been embedded in Continue to Learn since she started working at BIGGA, and so she understands what it is all about.

The chief operating officer role is very different to what I had previously done. In the past I was constantly achieving things like BTME, Continue to Learn, FTMI, Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year or the BIGGA Delegation with Bernhard and Company. I was always involved in something that had an end date. But as COO, I was supporting people to achieve those targets for themselves.

The opportunity to work with Bernhard and Company as education director of The Bernhard Academy was one that happened very quickly. BIGGA already works closely with Bernhard and Company, as they are one of our valued premium partners. The Bernhard Academy is proof of their investment

in developing greenkeepers and it enhances what BIGGA has been doing for the past 30 years, which is providing accessible education for greenkeepers and those who work in the sports turf industry.

BTME 2024 will be my final event wearing the BIGGA jumper. I’ve seen BTME grow from just two-and-a-half exhibition halls to six halls with an international conference alongside it. People come from all over the world to attend BTME, and it has become the heartbeat of our industry.

I’m excited to see everyone there. I think there’s going to be lots of cups of tea, lots of chats, lots of hugs and probably a few tears along the way. But I’m not leaving the industry and I will continue to attend BTME.

Although this isn’t goodbye, I just want to say thank you to everybody for being so amazing. The members, all the people I’ve worked with, those who are no longer with us; they have turned me into the person I am today, and I am so grateful. **GI**

 **International**

**Nicolai Larsen (I)**

Royal Copenhagen,  
Denmark

**Bogdan Lupu (I)**

Aphrodite Hills Resort,  
Cyprus

**Jason Gray (I)**

JRM Inc, USA

**Chris Furneaux (I)**

Minthis, Cyprus

**Jason Haines (I)**

Cabot Cape Breton,  
Canada

**Fridrik Gudmundsson (I)**

Golfklubber Ondverðarnes,  
Iceland

**Michael Mohring (I)**

**Marcel Stork (I)**

Golf Club St. Leon-Rot,  
Germany

 **Northern Ireland**

**Gary McLelland (GK)**

**Michael McAfee (AGK)**

**Richard McMullan (HGK)**

**Gary McFadden (AGK)**

**John O'Brien (GK)**

**Jonathan Hemphill (GK)**

**David Smyth (AGK)**

Portstewart

 **Scotland**

**Iain McKnight (FA)**

**William Chalmers (GK)**

**Gavin Connelly (GK)**

Stirling

**Ryan Beck (P)**

ICL

**Alan Wilder (APP)**

Roxburghe Hotel & Golf  
Course

**Cameron Shaw (APP)**

Mains of Taymouth

**Bez Brown (APP)**

**Reece Mclauchlan (APP)**

The R&A

**Spencer McCulloch (APP)**

Goswick Links

**Paul Todd (CM)**

Glenbervie

**Robert Bacon (GK)**

Loch Lomond

**Charlie Hamilton (AGK)**

Renfrew

**Scott Davidson (AGK)**

**Malcom Ritchie (AGK)**

Trump Turnberry

 **Northern**

**Joseph Sedgwick (AGK)**

Stocksbridge & District

**Connor Robb (AGK)**

Oakdale

**Nicholas Cussans (G)**

York

**Austin Garner (AGK)**

The Mere Golf Resort &  
Spa

**Nigel Chesters (A)**

**Simon Macczak (AGK)**

Aberdovey

**Joseph Parry (AGK)**

Conwy

**Tom Hudson (AGK)**

Bingley St Ives

**David Collins (APP)**

Fulford

**Chris Pattison (GK)**

Macclesfield

**Michael Barney (GK)**

Eaton GC (Chester)

**Arthur Bryn Jones (GK)**

Royal Winchester

**Matthew Shimwell (A)**

Terralift

**Steven Wilson (GK)**

Bradford

**Scott Sayers (AGK)**

Ruthin-Pwllglas

**David Wilding (GK)**

**Nicholas Marron (AGK)**

Wallasey

**Colin Noble (AGK)**

**Richard Hall (AGK)**

**Adam Gosper (DCM)**

**Paul Smith (AGK)**

**Andy Crossley (AGK)**

Sand Moor

**Daniel Treble (GK)**

**Rob Marchbank (DCM)**

Royal Birkdale

**Andrew Clark (AGK)**

Kirkbymoorside

**Paul Murfet (AGK)**

Porthmadog

 **Central England**

**Paul Robinson (CM)**

**Mathew Hatton (GK)**

Melton Mowbray

**Joe Hayes (AGK)**

Bradfield College GC

**Charlie Mould (GK)**

Oxford

**Jack Gammon (APP)**

Breadsall Priory Hotel

G&CC

**Lucy Rogers (AGK)**

**Mason Bernstein (AGK)**

**Shaun Carroll (M)**

**Dale Morley (HGK)**

**Tim Race (GK)**

King's Lynn

**Sam Gardiner (AGK)**

Harpenden Common

**Ben Howles (APP)**

Wharton Park G&CC

**Kieran Woodward (GK)**

**Reece Goddard (AGK)**

Leicester City FC

 **South West & South Wales**

**Cameron Richards (GK)**

Sherborne

**Neil Roy (GK)**

Saunton

**Ben Jupe (AGK)**

Hockley

**Daniel Barter (M)**

**Thomas Barter (DHGK)**

Bovey Tracey Golf Centre

**Ruben Shehean (APP)**

**Ross Edwards (APP)**

Tracy Park Golf & Country  
Hotel

**Waseem Kalam (AGK)**

Cricket St. Thomas

**Rachel Jeffery (A)**

**Ryan Coles (A)**

Knowle

**Zeke Davies (AGK)**

Celtic Manor Resort

**Clive Collett (AGK)**

**Michael Timothy**

**Etheridge (AGK)**

**Chris Short (FA)**

Forest Hills

**Philip Jonas (GK)**

St Davids City

 **South East**

**Tim Collier (HGK)**

Eastbourne Downs

**Shannon White (AGK)**

**Aaron Part (AGK)**

Wentworth Club

**Andrew Foster (A)**

Ely City

**Jack Savoia (AGK)**

Dulwich & Sydenham Hill

**Jack Stevens (AGK)**

North Hants

**Dave King (FA)**

**Michael Stott (GK)**

Royal Automobile Club

**Charlie Collins (APP)**

Crowborough Beacon

**Kieran North (APP)**

The Grove

**Harry Leney (FA)**

**Harvey Joy (GK)**

**Ashley Galloway (AGK)**

Royal Mid-Surrey

**Matthew Cleverdon (GK)**

The Richmond



# Welcome to our new members

Portstewart

**Paul Edwards (CM)**  
**George Baldwin (AGK)**  
**Steven Adams (HGK)**  
Bentley G&CC

**Paul Matthams (GK)**  
The Warren G&CC

**Peter Graham (AGK)**  
Rookery Park

**Aaron Church (APP)**  
Abridge G&CC

**Paul Brooker (ATP)**  
Plumpton College

**Kieron Watkins (AGK)**  
Harpenden Common

**Luke Williams (GK)**  
Banstead Downs

**Evan Jones (AGK)**  
Walton Heath

**James Chiverton (GK)**  
The Wisley

**Liam Buggs (APP)**  
Halesworth

## Key

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



**BIGGA**

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

**BTM**

# Six things to do and see at BTME 2024...

We take a look at some of the star attractions at Europe's premier turf management exhibition later this month – see you all in Harrogate!



The golf industry is changing faster than ever with new rules, advancing technology and fresh challenges posed by the economy and our changing climate.

BTME provides BIGGA members and the entire golf and sports turf industries with the tools required to overcome those challenges, helping to create a strong and vibrant sport for generations to come.

Harrogate Convention Centre will again open its doors to thousands of visitors from the UK and around the world for an event like no other.

Featuring an unmissable mix of insightful conferences, enlightening education, a vast exhibition, and legendary networking opportunities, BTME has it all.

It all kicks off with Continue to Learn on January 21, with BTME running from January 23 to 25.

Here are six things not to be missed at BTME 2024, plus a few more.

### 1. Check out our exhibitors

With more than 150 exhibitors covering services from advice and consultancy through to architecture and design and products spanning the range from turf and seed to ride-on machinery, the exhibition truly is a one-stop shop for every need imaginable.

It offers unrivalled networking opportunities for exhibitors and attendees, with a global audience descending on Harrogate.



Scan Me to find out more

### BTME in numbers\*

**150+**  
exhibitors

**21.5**  
hours of exhibition

**1.6**  
average days attended per visitor

**4,500**  
industry-specific visitors

**500**  
overseas visitors

**5**  
action-packed exhibition zones

\*Figures for BTME 2023

### What they said about BTME 2023...

Mike Fianza, professor of plant and soil sciences at Penn State University

"This is an outstanding trade show. It's great to see the companies represented and so many good things. The educational events are great. I look forward to coming again next year."



The exhibition hall

## 2, The BIGGA stand

The real heart of BTME, the BIGGA stand is where the team will be based throughout the show and where attendees can come for help and advice on anything relating to their personal or professional development.

Chat to BIGGA's regional team about getting involved with the association on a local level or sit down with a member of the Learning & Development team to learn about the exclusive career development opportunities available to BIGGA members.

It's the place to go to have a chat about how to optimise your BIGGA membership, renew or join the association, update your details, check out the career development area and get your face on the cover of Greenkeeper International.

There will also be a number of approved training providers on hand to guide you towards your career aspirations.



## 3. Continue to Learn: making education a priority

Continue to Learn is BIGGA's world-renowned education conference, providing the equivalent of two hours' worth of education for every golf club in the country.

That makes it among the most influential and important annual events in the golf and greenkeeping calendar.

This year's programme is divided into three parts: conference, classes and seminars.

The **conference** will feature a wide choice of sessions over two days followed by a half-day Young Greenkeepers Conference for young greenkeepers and those who are new to the industry.

Each day of the conference will kick off with a general session before splitting into two distinct programmes. At the end of the day, everyone will get back together for a key final session.

There will also be sessions relating to The R&A's Golf Course 2030 roadmap, with updates provided on the progress of related projects.

**Classes**, previously known as workshops, provide learning

opportunities based around a specific area of knowledge attendees would like to improve upon.

The broad range of topics covered includes everything from irrigation, renovation and turf machinery maintenance to strategic planning, managing stress and team building.

The **seminars**, meanwhile, provide an opportunity to gain knowledge without leaving the exhibition floor.

The free-to-attend sessions will be hosted by exhibitors at BTME, and headphones will be provided to all attendees to ensure they don't miss a thing.



### What they said about BTME 2023...

George Barr, course manager at Worthing GC

"Really impressed with the layout, and some of the stands are amazing. I've seen a lot of new faces and enjoyed seeing some of the old ones again."



#### 4. Meet our speakers

**Chris Tritabaugh, superintendent at Hazeltine National Golf Club**

Chris was responsible for preparing the course for the 2018 Ryder Cup, with Hazeltine set to host the event again in 2029.

**Dr Paul Redmond, director of student experience and enhancement at the University of Liverpool**

Paul has worked at a number of leading universities and has been responsible for guiding the careers of thousands of students and graduates.

**Professor Elizabeth Guertal, programme director at Kansas State University**

Elizabeth works, writes and teaches in the area of turfgrass management, with a specialisation in soils, soil fertility and turfgrass fertilisers.

**James Wilkinson, Turf Equipment Technicians Organisation**

An expert in maintaining turf equipment, James is currently workshop and equipment manager for Arora Group, based at the Buckinghamshire Golf Club.

**Dave Cottrell, owner and coach at Mindset by Dave**

With his own history of living with Type 2 Bipolar Disorder, Dave brings a relatable perspective to mental health education that you cannot find in a textbook.

Agronomist Lara Arias



**What they said about BTME 2023...**

Wendy O'Brien, course manager at Beaverbrook

"Good conferences and really good speakers, as there is every year. Lots of different things happening again, it's not the same old, same old – it's really nice to see some new innovative products and different people."

#### The BIGGA Awards

Among the highlights at BTME will be the BIGGA Awards, which recognise that high standards of quality and dedication are vital to the success of any golf course or championship. They reward the innovation delivered by BIGGA members who are at the cutting edge of their profession.

**Greenkeeping Project Award**

This award recognises those greenkeeping teams who have undertaken a specific project, completed within the past year. However, projects can be long-term, beginning in a previous year and can be construction, renovation or repair – the possibilities are endless.

**Championship Greenkeeping Performance Award sponsored by Bernhard and Company**

This award isn't just restricted to those clubs who host majors or European Tour events. A team may have done incredible work to get the course fit for professional or amateur events, such as national or important local championships. All nominations will be considered on merit.

**Outstanding Contribution Award**

In recognition of the growing number of members who undertake voluntary work each year for the betterment of the association or any number of charities. The winner may be someone who has raised significant sums for charity or given fantastic support to greenkeepers or the industry.



#### 5. The BIGGA Celebration

The BIGGA Celebration sponsored by Jacobsen is an opportunity to celebrate everything that's good about the greenkeeping industry.

The free-to-attend welcome event will recognise all the finest achievements of BIGGA members throughout 2023. The Jazzy Golfer will be on hosting duties during an event that includes the BIGGA Awards.



**Vicky Elliott-Potter, founder and director at Elliott-Potter International Consulting**

Vicky's knowledge is drawn from her experience of working her way up to board level positions in regional and international media corporations and working with business owners in all sectors.

**Gavin Oattes, owner and managing director at Tree of Knowledge**

Gavin is an inspirational keynote speaker, comedian and author of Shine, Life Will See You Now and Diary of a Brilliant Kid.

**Dr John Dempsey, turfgrass pathologist at Independent Turfgrass Research**

With 40 years' greenkeeping experience, John has conducted independent research for the past 15 years and since 2019 has headed Independent Turfgrass Research.

**Chris Minton, Turf Equipment Technicians Organisation**

Chris has been head mechanic and workshop manager for Leicester City Football Club since September 2017. He previously spent 12 years as head mechanic at The Belfry.

**Timmy Sethi, Adrian Mortram Associates**

Timmy has more than 10 years' greenkeeping experience, with a focus on irrigation maintenance, installation and design. He now works alongside Adrian Mortram on projects including Open venues and international championship courses.

**What they said about BTME 2023...**

**Ben Scrivener, deputy head greenkeeper at Abridge GC**

"Amazing show. Can't believe how busy it is – probably the busiest I've ever seen it. Really well put on and well organised. It's a pleasure to be here."



Motivational speaker  
Gavin Oattes




**What they said about BTME 2023...**

**Scott Nightingale, business development manager at TurfCare**

"It's been a really good and busy show for us. The first day was probably the busiest we've seen in the 20-30 years we've been exhibiting. The feedback we've heard about the show has been fantastic."





**What they said  
about BTME 2023...**

**Michael O’Keeffe, program  
manager at Ohio State University**

“Golf is back! I see a bright future for all the young people who want to get into this profession. Let’s get everybody in, get them educated and get them out there in the industry. I see the energy around here and I’m excited.”

The AIG Women’s Open trophy

## 6. See the Claret Jug and AIG Women’s Open Trophy

Want to get up close with two of golf’s most famous trophies? You’re in luck! The Claret Jug and the AIG Women’s Open Championship trophy will take the stage for the BTME 2024 Breakfast Session.

Taking place in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, adjacent to the Harrogate Convention Centre, the Breakfast Session will tell the agronomic story of the 151st Open and AIG Women’s Open, offering priceless behind-the-scenes insight into both major championships.

Host Gareth Jones will be joined by course managers James Bledge of Royal Liverpool and Michael Mann of Walton Heath, while the panel will feature representatives of The R&A’s Sustainable Agronomy Team, including Alistair Beggs, Adam Newton and Richard Windows.



The Claret Jug



The Syngenta 5k  
Early Bird Run



The BIGGA team



Daisy Lacey,  
GreenBest LTD



**What they said  
about BTME 2023...**

**Jason Norwood, head  
greenkeeper at Reay GC**

"It's good to be back in Harrogate and to see lots of faces again that I haven't seen for a while. The chance to network, see the machinery and the new products that are available has been really good."



GEO Foundation for  
Sustainable Golf

**And that's not all!**

If all that isn't enough, there's plenty more to see and do at BTME 2024, including:

- See artefacts on display from The R&A World Golf Museum's vast collection
- Take part in the 5K Syngenta Early Bird Run to raise money for the BIGGA Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund
- Head down to Electric Avenue to see the latest in battery-powered, robotic and autonomous machinery
- Take advantage of a whole host of support and welfare services on offer
- Check out the Sustainability Zone to get up to date on one of the most pressing issues facing not just our industry, but the entire planet



# BIGGA

British and International  
Golf Greenkeepers Association

BTME.ORG.UK



We're **BIG** on...

# CELEBRATING YOUR SUCCESS

The BIGGA  
Celebration is proudly  
sponsored by



Join us at the BIGGA  
Celebration sponsored by  
Jacobsen and be inspired  
by the achievements  
of BIGGA members  
throughout 2023.

Tuesday 23 January 5.30pm  
Everybody welcome.



# Member Interest

Where we meet your fellow turf professionals and share their stories

■ Harborne couple Jim Gilchrist and Vicky Cavinue talk about their careers and how they maintain the perfect work-life balance



## Keeping it Rhyll: Ashford on the highs and lows of a complete course rebuild



**Head greenkeeper Simon Ashford talks about the impact of a course closure and complete rebuild at Rhyll GC.**

"From the highs of being ahead of schedule in April – four greens and three sets of tees moved and three new bunkers completed – to being derailed by multiple issues in a four-week spell, it's been quite the journey.

"The sea defence project in Rhyll has been on the cards for some time and the golf club has been fighting for its existence since long before I picked up a set of bats or even started on the tools.

"The course was closed for 15 months on 31 December 2022. I came a little late to the project and

have frequently wished I'd been on board earlier to push for the resources needed, such as the budget for equipment, importing of turf (instead of relying on existing greens and tees turf) and the materials and aggregates we needed.

"The brief laid out in July 2022 stated the course would lose over 250 yards across five of the nine holes and included a clubhouse rebuild to become the UK's first carbon-neutral golf club and clubhouse.

"On my side of the project there are five greens, one fairway and eight sets of tees that needed moving and rebuilding, while keeping the overall loss of yardage to a minimum.

"We have around three months to complete the remaining areas,

including five bunkers and two sections of fairway. We've modified the plan a few times due to hiccups along the way, not least of all when the sub-contractors arrived and, among other things, chopped through the irrigation cables, damaged the irrigation control box on the first green and sheared off pipework, leading to significant delays.

"Despite all that, we're still on schedule to reopen the core in-play areas on 1 April 2024, with some seeded areas needing to be classed as temporarily ground under repair.

"I'm grateful to have had help from some of the diehard members who have come in on their days off to chip in with some of the more physical and time-consuming tasks." **GI**

Greenkeeper  
Files



Jim Gilchrist &  
Vicky Cavinue



## Meet the couple who are managing to maintain a golf course and a relationship together at the same time

Work-life balance can be a struggle at the best of times, let alone when the two become practically inseparable.

But Harborne's Course Manager Jim Gilchrist and Deputy Course Manager Vicky Cavinue have found a way to make it work – and both the golf club and the loved-up duo are thriving.

Jim and Vicky have been together for more than two decades, spending over half of that time at the heathland course in Birmingham.

Far from finding it all too much, the pair – who have a young son, George, and a playful dog called Fergus – can hardly believe their luck.

If you've ever wondered what it would be like to work with your other half, these two might just convince you it's actually a good idea.

### How did you meet and what were your first impressions?

**VC:** I first met Jim when we worked together at Hamilton Golf Club in Scotland, and we worked together for around two years before we moved on to other golf clubs.

The first things that struck me about Jim were that he was handsome and funny. I liked the fact that work was never boring when he was around; we were always laughing but always got the job done.

**JG:** Apart from being beautiful, what I noticed about Victoria is that she was quite petite, but she showed pretty much straight away that she was more than capable of taking on the role as a greenkeeper, with all the physical demands the job entails.

**“ I liked the fact that work was never boring when he was around; we were always laughing**

### How long have you been working together?

**JG:** We've been together as a couple now for around 21 years and have spent 14 of those working together on and off, with 11 of those at Harborne.

Vicky was working at Shirley Golf Club as deputy and, after giving birth to our son George, an opportunity arose where I was looking for an assistant greenkeeper at Harborne.

After careful consideration between the both of us and meetings with my committee, followed by an interview process, we decided this was the best option for everyone.

We have never looked back, and neither has the club, and Vicky went on to accept the role of deputy when it became available a few years later.

**How would you describe your working relationship?**

**JG:** We work very well together, as first and foremost I see Vicky as a deputy course manager and hopefully she sees me as her course manager.

That's not to say we don't disagree on certain aspects of the job as she has 26 years' experience and is a fine greenkeeper. Mostly we discuss and then agree I was right.

**VC:** Our working relationship is built on hard work and not taking each other too seriously, although we are well aware of the demands and expectations of the job.

**Does your son help out at all?**

**JG:** George is our wonderful 11-year-old son, and he certainly keeps us on our toes every day.

Occasionally he will help out with course set-up alongside his Mum and Dad for a few hours. He is starting to demand a higher hourly rate as he gets older, though.

**What's the best thing about working together?**

**VC:** The best thing about working with Jim is he knows

**“ Mostly we discuss and then agree I was right**

exactly how I'm feeling most of the time, and we both have the same mindset when it comes to work.

I can also keep tabs on what he is eating for lunch.

It's also quite handy being able to ask for a swap on a weekend morning after a night out.

**JG:** We know what the other is thinking in terms of tasks for the day and expectations of the course. I have complete trust in Vicky if at times I can't spend as much time on the course as I normally would.

It is also important to have a sense of humour around the workplace, while acknowledging that there is a job to be done.

**Any downsides?**

**JG:** Not so much a downside to working together, as it

**The team at Harborne**

**Jim Gilchrist** – Course manager (19 years)

**Vicky Cavinue** – Deputy course manager (11 years)

**Steven Marsh** – Assistant greenkeeper (18 years)

**Jay Hanks** – Assistant greenkeeper (2 years)

**Rorie Oakes** – Assistant greenkeeper (2 years)

**Connor Gough** – Assistant greenkeeper (2 years)



## About Harborne

Harborne is an unspoiled Harry Colt parkland course designed in 1893 and provides a challenge for both high and low handicap golfers.

The layout of the par-70 course is largely untouched from the original Colt design, with over 80 bunkers.

It provides a stern test of golf and tends to play longer than its 6,180 yards due to its undulating fairways.

A warm and welcoming clubhouse ensures the excellent overall experience extends beyond the course.





comes with the territory, and ultimately it was our choice to work as a pair, but we don't tend to have much time off together during the summer months – although this may be the reason it works. I suppose one downside could be that Vicky now gets to control what I eat each day at lunch.

**VC:** The worst thing about working with Jim is not having many weekends off together. We can never pull a sicky or just have a duvet day.

**What have your respective career paths been to date?**

**VC:** I started off as an apprentice greenkeeper at 17 years of

#### **Fergus the dog**

Fergus is a five-year old Cavapoo who we have had since he was just three months old. He loves being on the buggies and the fairway mower. He has a fantastic personality and loves being around people. He has been known to chase the odd squirrel and crow, but thankfully he has had no luck as they are too quick for him.



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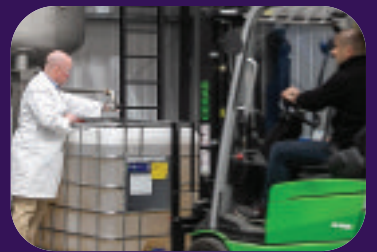
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A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a dark blue tracksuit with a crest on the chest, is walking on a golf course. She is holding a long pole with a bright yellow flag attached. The background shows trees with autumn foliage and a clear sky.

## A (Working) Day In The Life



**0530**

Arrive at the course, check weather, club diary and tee times for the day



**0600**

Brief the team of tasks for the day and complete morning course set-up



**1030**

Staff tea break and complete our daily staff quiz, guessing celebrity birthdays (reps love it!)



**1100**

Meetings with either general manager or greens chairman



**1200**

Continue with golf course maintenance



**1400**

Check weather and tee times for tomorrow.



**1430**

Job done, go home!

**Five tips for couples who work together**

1. Don't take each other too seriously
2. Respect and listen to each other (give and take)
3. Separate work from home as much as possible, especially around family
4. It's healthy to agree to disagree sometimes
5. Learn to say 'Yes, dear' every day!

age at Colville Park in Scotland.

I was the first female modern apprentice in Scotland and went onto achieve greenkeeping qualifications through GOSTA.

I've worked at several golf clubs, including Williamwood, Hamilton, Lilley Brook and Shirley, before arriving at Harborne.

I also helped out at the AIG Women's Open at Walton Heath recently and thoroughly enjoyed the full-on tournament experience. It was a great week and I met lots of fantastic people.

**JG:** I have been greenkeeping since 1991 after I soon realised I wasn't bright enough to pursue my chosen career as a football journalist.

I completed my YTS at Hamilton GC and gained my further qualifications and experience to eventually become the deputy before moving to Harborne as deputy in 2004 and then taking over as course manager in 2008.

**“ Our working relationship is built on hard work and not taking each other too seriously**

**What major or memorable projects have you undertaken at Harborne?**

**JG:** Working at Harborne for nearly 20 years has allowed me to complete many projects, but the one that has given me the most satisfaction was a rebuild of the majority of the greenside bunkers after some heavy rainstorms in 2016.

We worked many long hours alongside our chosen contractor Conor Walsh and the project was completed in four weeks.

Also, we have begun a programme of greens drainage since 2018 with Cameron MacMillan at Hydrowick Drainage, where we have drained 14 greens. We are hoping to complete the remaining four in 2024.

**What else is planned for the year ahead?**

**VC:** The main priority is to continue to produce a fantastic golf course for both members and visitors. We will also move on to new projects like a complete overhaul of the teeing areas on the course, as well as an intensive woodland management programme, so plenty to keep us busy! **GI**

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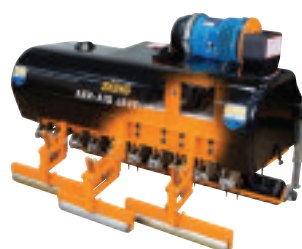
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# BIGGA Careers

Jobs, expert advice and peer-to-peer support

- **My New Job: Peter Moore becomes director of courses at Woodhall Spa**
- **All the latest greenkeeper role vacancies**



## Feldon Valley's John Thornton gains distinction in Level 2 Apprenticeship

Feldon Valley assistant greenkeeper John Thornton was delighted to secure a distinction in his Level 2 Apprenticeship and has ambitious plans for the future.

Thornton came out of the two-year course with the highest recognition after impressing across the eight units, though the distinction came as a shock to him.

It was Dave Coutts who broke the news, and Thornton praised the role played by his Pershore College tutor.

"I was delighted when I found out," he said. "I'd put in a lot of work across the two years and it's nice to get recognition and gratification at the end of something. I wasn't expecting it, because I got a merit on the exam, but I managed to get a distinction

overall."

The Level 2 qualification covers a broad scope of responsibilities relating to greenkeeping, providing a platform for a career in the industry.

With Thornton, 25, now plying his trade in the Cotswolds under the helpful guidance of head greenkeeper Chris Outten, he is eager to broaden his knowledge of the profession, having applied for a Foundation Degree at Myerscough College.

As well as pursuing further academic achievements, Thornton wants to gain more experience and tap into the expertise of his fellow greenkeepers to benefit from their wisdom.

"I'm a big believer that experience gets you to where you want to be, so I'm working at the PGA Championship

in Valhalla in 2024 under John Ballard, the superintendent there.

"I want to gain an insight into what his day-to-day work is like, even if it's a bit different during a major championship, because that's ultimately what I'd like to be doing – working at a major championship venue, either here or in the US."

And on the subject of learning from his peers, Thornton offered this as his best piece of advice for anyone seeking to make the most of the opportunities the industry can provide: "Network! I think it's so important to reach out to people, have conversations and pick people's brains. Greenkeeping is a bit of a fraternity in that sense, and everyone is willing to help one another." **GI**



# Peter Moore

Now six months into life at the National Golf Centre, Woodhall Spa, Peter Moore is making himself at home at the famous 36-hole venue. And with previous experience as head greenkeeper of the West Course at Wentworth, which hosts the BMW PGA Championship, he is relishing this new challenge that he feels he was made for.

### Tell us about your new role

I am the courses director at the National Golf Centre, which means I'm responsible for the conditioning of the Hotchkin and the Bracken golf courses, the driving range and the Academy short-game areas, as well as the clubhouse gardens and other grounds.

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

I want to improve the quality of the golf courses overall and I want to improve the member and visitor playing experience. I also want to create a working environment where people can grow and improve through training and development as a team.

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

I've always wanted to work at a bigger venue, that's where I'd always seen myself ending up, somewhere where the course is high up in the rankings. The Woodhall Spa job came at the right time and in the right place, and it has really suited me to be here.

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

Communication skills are really important, not just to golfers, but also to the staff in terms of explaining how I want certain things to be done and why you're doing them.

Organisation is also important. We've got a big team here and a big site, so things need to run in a certain order.

Also, I've found remaining calm, even during stressful situations, is key to maintaining a level head to take a logical approach to overcoming any problems that arise.

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

It's just a privilege to work on such a high-profile golf course, really. Woodhall Spa, particularly the Hotchkin Course, is a beautiful place to work, so I feel quite lucky when I'm walking around there in the morning.

Also, the team I've inherited is fantastic, and that really makes my life much easier and more enjoyable to know that I'm coming in to work with a good group of people on my side.



The Brabazon at Woodhall Spa is one of the finest inland courses in Britain

The courses director at Woodhall Spa is enjoying life at the high-profile Lincolnshire venue that is the home of England Golf

“ I’ve found remaining calm, even during stressful situations, is key to maintaining a level head

## Peter on applying for a new job

### **Describe the recruitment process for your role**

I saw the job advertised on the BIGGA website and applied.

I was invited for an interview at Woodhall Spa with the General Manager (Richard Latham), the recruitment agency and some Board Directors.

I made it through to the final interviews with the General Manager and multiple Board members from England Golf, including the CEO Jeremy Tomlinson.

I had to give a presentation on how I would improve the agronomic conditions of the courses, the presentation of the facilities and how I would improve team performance.

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

They were looking for someone to bring fresh ideas to the table, a more modern approach to greenkeeping and someone who had experience working at tournament venues previously.

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

I think I made a positive impression on the interviewees, but I also spent time with the team at Woodhall Spa, so I made a good impression on them from the start and that put me in good stead.

The ideas given at the presentation really engaged all the people around that table, and that was what led to me getting the job.

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

Do your research, visit the site, speak to people already working there and decide whether the job and the place are right for you.

If you're going to be moving, you need to be confident that you'll be happy outside of work just as much as you will be at work. It's not just about finding the right job but the right overall environment.

Woodhall Spa is renowned for its incredible bunkering



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

It's not all about the turf. It's important to start building an understanding of how the business works. The higher you move up the chain, you realise how that's just as important as the turf element of greenkeeping.

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

The biggest career break I've had was when I went to the Ohio State Program in America because it really opened my eyes to what you can achieve within this industry. That inspired me and pushed me to do what I'm doing today.

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

I hope I'm still working at a high-profile venue, such as Woodhall Spa. Most importantly, I hope I'm still enjoying what I'm doing – if you enjoy what you're doing, it's not like a job. I'm passionate about what I do, and I'd like to still have that passion 10 years from now. **GI**

**“** I'm passionate about what I do and I'd like to still have that passion 10 years from now



# Latest job vacancies

## Deputy to the Course Manager



Childwall Golf Club, Liverpool

Childwall Golf Club seeks a dedicated Deputy to the Course Manager to maintain and enhance its exceptional facility.

Responsibilities include collaborating with the Course Manager, assisting with maintenance and strategic plans, supervising the established team and developing long-term maintenance strategies.

Applicants should have 2-3 years in a supervisory role, NVQ3 or equivalent, PA1, PA2, PA6 a must, chainsaw desirable, strong leadership and knowledge of course maintenance practices.

Benefits include a competitive package in excess of £30k including overtime, uniform, BIGGA and access to professional development opportunities and training programmes.

**Send your CV and a cover letter detailing your experience to office@childwallgolfclub.co.uk before 30th January 2024**

## Deputy Course Manager



Nippenburg Golf Club, Germany

Nippenburg Golf Club are searching for a Deputy Course Manager. Tasks include working closely with the course manager, leading the staff in the course managers absence, application of fertilisers, operating all golf course equipment.

Applicants should have a minimum 5 years greenkeeping experience, previous experience as first assistant/deputy head greenkeeper, sound knowledge of course maintenance, the willingness to perform and to work weekends and holidays.

Benefits include working in beautiful outdoor surroundings, a young, friendly and motivated team, good working conditions and a friendly working atmosphere..

Salary € 47,500 - € 50,000

**We would be delighted to meet you. Please send your application documents by e-mail to Paul Tait at tait23@live.at**

## Irrigation Technician

London Golf Club, Kent



London Golf Club require an experienced Irrigation Technician to manage our extensive PVC system and associated infrastructure including lakes, pump house and IT system. With a full-time assistant to be appointed, you will be part of the senior team.

Amenities include a fully equipped workshop and stores and a healthy budget. On site accommodation is available.

Benefits include free lunches Monday to Friday, employee discount on shop sales and food & beverage, free parking, sick pay after 12 months, staff events throughout the year, 6 free golf rounds per year, Friends & Family rate for golf.

Salary £36,750

**Please send covering letter and CV to Janet Smith, HR & Office Manager: janet@londongolf.co.uk**

## Qualified Greenkeeper

Machynys Peninsula Golf & Country Club, South Wales



Machynys Peninsula Golf & Country Club is a Nicklaus designed modern links Championship course in South Wales.

We are seeking to recruit Qualified Greenkeepers with the following attributes: A minimum of NVQ L2 in Sports Turf and Management or equivalent, a minimum of 2 year's experience as an Assistant Greenkeeper, competence using a wide variety of machinery associated with the job and a positive work ethic.

This is a wonderful opportunity to work on a Nicklaus Design Championship course.

A competitive salary ranging between £24-£27,000 plus overtime depending on qualifications and experience.

**For full details applicants should apply to:**

**Marcus Weaver (Course Manager) Machynys Peninsula Golf & Country Club, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, SA15 2DG  
Or e-mail: Marcus.weaver@machynys.com**

## Assistant Greenkeeper

Moray Golf Club, Scotland



Moray Golf Club are recruiting for an Assistant Greenkeeper. This is an excellent opportunity for an ambitious individual to work at a championship venue that's ranked highly both in Scotland and the UK.

The ideal candidate will be qualified to SVQ level 2 or equivalent.

A competitive salary package above The Committee for Golf Course Salaries recommendations is offered along with free golf club playing membership. Full clothing kit is included as is BIGGA membership.

**Applicants should send a CV and covering letter in writing to: Stevie Grant, The Secretary, Moray Golf Club, Stotfield Road, Lossiemouth, IV316QS or e-mail secretary@moraygolf.co.uk  
Closing date for applications is Friday 2nd February.**



## Recruitment

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

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

BIGGA's website receives 1.6 million page views per year and 55% of those are to our careers pages.

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# Practical Greenkeeping

Refine your skillset and expand your knowledge

- The R&A on why we need to embrace less intensive methods of agronomy
- Why good planning is the key to delivering a successful project



## What do you have to do to comply with the new regulations?

For our sector it is relatively easy to comply.

- You must keep an inventory of all regulated and reportable products held on site.
- If you are asked for regulated or reportable products and feel this request is suspicious, take details and report to police on 101
- If any of these products are stolen you must report the loss to local police using 101
- Include the volume stolen, product type and reference to the Poisons Act in your report

## New legislation on the purchase of chemicals and what you need to know...



You may have seen a new statement on the paperwork from your supplier: 'Contains a reportable

product', and it's important for you to understand what that means, writes Peter Corbett of Peter Corbett Consulting.

This statement relates to legislation introduced in October 2023 which requires all suppliers to inform customers that certain chemicals, predominately fertiliser products, are now classified as 'regulated' or 'reportable' under The Poisons Act 1972 Control of Explosives and Poisons Regulations 2023.

The regulations have been tightened by the Home Office to control the

purchase of chemicals that can be used to manufacture explosives. In our sector, we need access to a number of these chemicals to provide nutrients. End users of fertiliser must be verified by suppliers to confirm a genuine need for the products containing specified chemicals.

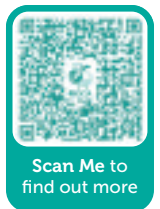
The 2023 Amendment adds several chemicals commonly used in both solid and liquid fertilisers. It also changes the inclusion rate levels of chemicals in the finished product. Many of the solid or liquid fertilisers we use in the golf sector contain some 'nitrate' salts and these will now be classified.

Ammonium nitrate (AN) has been controlled for many years and still remains a regulated product, but the

level of AN has been reduced. To purchase products containing more than 16.5% AN, buyers will need to provide full details, including a photo of the buyer prior to purchase.

A few fertiliser formulations in our sector may now become 'regulated' products, for example some outfield fertilisers with 20:10:10 may contain greater than 16.5% AN.

Any product containing even small amounts of ammonium, potassium or calcium nitrate are now reportable, so you need to be aware of which products are classified. It is a legal requirement that your supplier provides this information. Make sure you have the detail. **GI**





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# Planning for pollinators

Utilising out-of-play areas to create ecology habitats can balance responsible sustainable management of courses for golf and the environment.

Farleigh Golf Club, Warlingham, Surrey

While bumblebee queens and other pollinators are hibernating, now is the time to be planning where habitat creation around the course could give them maximum benefit in the summer and create an attractive golfing environment.

Operation Pollinator has shown that habitat areas for pollinators and other biodiversity can be successfully managed while maintaining high quality playing surfaces. Ecology initiatives can help greenkeeping teams engage with players, provide a positive promotion for clubs and highlight responsible sustainable turf management.

A primary planning decision is where around the course habitat can be created and managed for pollinators, without affecting play and the practicality of managing areas easily with the available workforce.

Parkland courses are often more able to introduce areas of pollen and nectar-rich flower mixtures that look in keeping, while planting on heathland or links courses is typically more limited to native wildflowers. But even here, pollen and nectar-rich plants can be cultivated around entrance roads, car parks and the clubhouse, along with more natural habitat areas required for breeding and hibernation.

Operation Pollinator research and experience from golf courses across the UK over more than 12 years has

highlighted the potential for the most extensive areas of wildflower creation on secondary tiger rough, along with smaller areas managed more intensively for specific habitats. Areas can often be established on carries that are rarely ventured into by players, but where they can enjoy the biodiversity as they play. Wildflower areas on walkways between holes and at the back of tees provide a more pleasurable stopping point if play is held up, as well as framing course design and direction. Fescue grasses and wildflowers in deep rough provide a visual continuity to first cut rough and, with coarse grasses removed, enable easier ball location of wayward shots to speed up players' rounds.

The experiences of over 600 greenkeepers and golf clubs signed up to Operation Pollinator reported one of the greatest challenges to

## Read this for:

- Establishing ecology areas
- Managing rough
- Joining Operation Pollinator



establishing attractive wildflower areas is invasion from coarse grasses that overwhelm wildflowers and the fine fescue rough in which they thrive. For some years using a selective grassweed herbicide was highly successful in removing grasses such as ryegrass and Yorkshire fog, while leaving the fescue and wildflowers unaffected. STRI research showed that selective herbicide techniques could create the same wildflower establishment in two years, compared to six to seven years of repeated cut and removal with all its associated labour, fuel and carbon release costs.

Syngenta R&D continues to evaluate new tools and techniques for responsible sustainable habitat and fine turf management, but until then the most effective route to open the canopy and reduce fertility is repeated cutting and removal of

vegetation. In most instances, once established, an annual autumn cut and removal allows the wildflowers to set and shed seed that will regenerate flowers. Generally, in the first year of establishing a perennial wildflower mix, repeatedly cutting the area every six to eight weeks can encourage stronger establishment, at the expense of any flowering in the first year. The key exception is where annual wildflowers have been included in the mix to give a quicker fix of colour in the first year. Once established, if you have extensive areas of wildflower habitat, there is the option to cut a proportion after the first flush of flowers, around mid-June, which will then encourage regrowth and new flowers that will prolong the supply of pollen and nectar later in the season. That is crucial to support larger populations of pollinators and ensure greater survival of species at different stages of their life cycle through the winter.

Established Operation Pollinator areas require less time-consuming maintenance to continually cut and clear dense rough, releasing labour and machinery for more effective course maintenance - reducing the ongoing cost and carbon footprint of annual rough maintenance.

Having far exceeded its initial targets, Operation Pollinator is now the biggest environmental initiative in golf, aiming to build back the sources of pollen and nectar that support wider biodiversity. It shows that management of the course for player satisfaction can be sustainably achieved alongside providing an extremely valuable ecological resource for pollinators. **GI**

## **“ Sustainable practices support quality surfaces and ecology**



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



### **Corhampton restores biodiversity**

Corhampton GC, in Hampshire, has become recognised as a regional stronghold for the endangered small blue butterfly – within three years of focusing on specific habitat creation.

The club’s greenkeeper and course manager, Iestyn Carpenter, who has twice won the top accolade of Syngenta Operation Pollinator champion at the Golf Environment Awards, said: “We were told that if we put the habitat back then wildlife would find it. What has been amazing is just how fast that has happened. And the immense diversity of species that has been recorded so quickly.”

Carpenter, who has a team of five greenkeepers for the large site, has set up an Ecology Group of players that draws on the strengths and interests of the members.

“That’s a huge help, but also means that the members have a far better idea of what is involved with the greenkeeping and the overall course management, and the greenkeeping team appreciate the support they are receiving - which is extremely positive from both sides,” he said.

“The absolute priority has to remain the golf course and continuing to improve the playing surfaces year on year. So we need all the help we can get for any additional projects.”

Club member Aelwyn Emmett said: “We love our course and were highly motivated to get involved. We have the chance to do something really significant and make a huge difference.”



**Why the fabric  
of our courses  
must change**



Alistair Beggs,  
Head of  
Sustainable

Agronomy Services,  
The R&A, explains why  
we need to embrace  
less intensive methods  
of agronomy and  
presentation

**The level of expertise now available to the turf industry is unprecedented. It is being applied at all levels of the sport, from recreational golf clubs to professional championships. The improvements in course presentation and performance standards seen over the last 30 years have been significant and golfers now expect high standards wherever they play. The improvements we see have come from better education programmes, the establishment of more formal career paths for greenkeepers and better equipment, products and materials.**

However, we are now in a time of change. The industry is at a crossroads where the signposting towards standards, environmental protection and climate is not always clear. The education and career pathways are still there, but the climate is changing and making day-to-day greenkeeping more challenging. Resources such as sand and water are becoming far less available and, most importantly, pesticide legislation is changing – creating uncertainty over how pests, weeds and diseases will be effectively managed in the future.

However, there is hope that science, innovation and education will help to solve the challenges that we are likely to face in an effort to retain standards. Two things stand out for me as part of this journey:

One, more needs to be done to educate golfers and make them aware of the challenges the industry faces. It is golfers – as members of clubs, boards and as decision makers – who need to be informed so that they can make the correct and appropriate decisions in the future.

And secondly, the fabric of our golf courses must change. The courses we now play the game on might be fun and interesting to play, but many are not fit for purpose and unless changes are made (and made relatively quickly), turf management will become very difficult for even the best of greenkeepers to deliver on.

The first observation involves a cultural shift among golfers and requires a multi-faceted approach using a variety of sustainable techniques, resources and communication methods. It is important for this to be tackled at different levels of the game and as agronomists we will do what we can to influence, communicate and educate.

The second involves practical and physical change. It's important for clubs to appreciate the significance of making and integrating these changes before the predicted decline in standards and its impact on business is meaningfully seen. This article focuses on the second point.

Golf began on the seaside sands of Scotland and spread to similar land in England, Ireland, and Wales; then

further afield. These sites were identified for their inherently wonderful golfing characteristics – sandy, free-draining terrain, open and windswept with little, if any, offending vegetation to restrict grass growth, and digging a hole in them naturally provided a type of hazard which complemented the game very nicely – to which the bunker was born.

The development of the game then moved inland and in Great Britain and Ireland, the majority of golf is no longer played at the seaside, but in a range of environments and habitats from wet to dry, acid to alkaline, and on a range of soils. Poor custodianship in some cases has allowed rank vegetation to dominate, made worse by injudicious plantations of non-indigenous trees and vegetation. This fostered a concept that golf courses should be tree-bound and individual holes should be cosseted from one another by walls of vegetation. Over time, the game has separated itself further from its origins. As if these concepts weren't bad enough, what they did was create environments where grass could only be grown and sustained on a diet of

chemicals and pesticides, which the post-World War Two economy delivered. Until now.

We now have golf courses with far too much vegetation, much of which restricts airflow and sunlight penetration to turf and makes it very difficult to manage without recourse to pesticides. What is more, the roots of these trees and plants have blocked old and new drainage systems which don't work as they should – resulting in sites not able to get rid of water effectively, affecting playability in the shoulder seasons and during winter. Roots also directly compromise turf health and can predispose it to drought stress. Inadvertently, we have created courses that don't grow the right grasses because they can't get enough light and air, and courses that can't be kept open in wet weather because they can't get rid of excess water. This was bad enough 20 years ago, but now that the climate is changing and we are experiencing more extreme bouts of wet weather, coupled with changing pesticide legislation, we have a big challenge ahead.

We need to think about trees and



Golf was born on the Scottish coast where the land provided naturally occurring hazards



# “ The industry is at a crossroads where the signposting towards standards, environmental protection and climate is not always clear

## What are the benefits of re-balancing our golf courses?

If we get this process right – and we must – the results will include:

- Better views
- Enhanced biodiversity
- Greater connectivity of habitat to allow wildlife movement
- Better air movement
- More light to the turf
- Less leaf drop and collection
- Easier mowing programmes
- Reduced budgets and increased efficiencies
- Healthier turf
- Optimised drainage
- Reduced worm activity
- Fewer weeds
- Less reliance on chemicals


vegetation differently in the future. All vegetation has value to a degree and we both need and want it on a golfing site for structure and biodiversity. But we want the right types of tree in the right places and with a structure that allows grass to grow around them. For most courses, this means a re-balancing of the wider environment in which the game is played. It means more morning light from eastern and southern horizons, more airflow from southern and western boundaries, copses and clusters of healthy small leaved trees with room to grow and managed grassland between them in large enough compartments to ease maintenance and allow biodiversity.

This whole process needn't be overly expensive. However, what the process must have is a well-informed and robust plan – an ordered and structured methodology, timing led by an ecological expert who is prepared to liaise with the club. It is important to align strategies with the agronomist and greenkeepers to optimise the long-term vegetation footprint and ensure that work is done in line with legislation.

Now, let's turn our focus from trees to bunkers because, alongside poor vegetation balance, bunkers provide an area of risk around the future sustainability of golf courses. Bunkers were the best kind of hazard on the sandy links – they were natural. When bunkers were moved inland the construction of them brought with it a myriad of challenges. Firstly, when a hole is dug inland, it's not usually full of sand. So finding an off-site source of sand is the first challenge. Up until now, this has been relatively straightforward and reasonably cheap, despite debates on what constitutes a suitable sand and what depths of it should lie in the base/



Too much vegetation can lead to poor drainage and compromise turf health



“All vegetation has value to a degree. But we want the right types of tree in the right places and with a structure that allows grass to grow around them”

face of a bunker. This situation is changing; sands of suitable quality are becoming harder to source and furthermore, the product itself is becoming more expensive as is the haulage of it. We should also question the ethical nature of transporting bulky material from one side of the country to another.

Secondly, when a hole is dug in heavier inland soil, it can bring drainage challenges. This often leads to the introduction of pipe drainage into the base and, almost more importantly, the need for a positive outlet to discharge excess water to. Then there is the issue of whether a liner is needed, and which type.

All of this has changed what was originally a simple concept into an expensive endeavour that can take hours to perfect. Indeed, some top clubs now spend almost as much on bunker maintenance as they do on greens maintenance, because golfers now demand perfection from their bunkers. Any tolerance of imperfection, even in hazards, has gone, which is as far removed from the origins of the game as we can get. Has all this gone too far?

There is an understanding that as well as functionality, bunkers have a

visual and strategic role on golf courses. However, the cost of maintaining them can't be allowed to make golf courses vulnerable to the risks associated with sustainability. Bunkers will always have a role to play on most sites, but it makes rational sense, given the costs associated (now and in the future), to control numbers and to use value methodologies for constructing and maintaining them where they exist.

In essence, this is a call for clubs to engage with architects to significantly reduce bunker numbers and where possible, utilise natural features and grass bunkers as alternatives. Where bunkers remain, construct them in a way that offers golfers quality and greenkeepers an opportunity to manage them at reasonable cost, to a reasonable standard. Those that do this well will offer a fun and engaging challenge to future golfers at an affordable cost – surely the essence of sustainability.

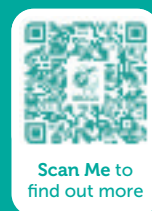
So, it's clear that golf courses need to act now if their vegetation balance and main form of hazard is not to render them vulnerable to the challenges facing the industry in the years ahead. There will always be exceptions, but for the majority of

clubs, their courses will need to look more like those of the past if we are going to manage them optimally and avoid agronomic declines in the future. This will be good for the grass, for biodiversity and for business resilience.

There is help and guidance available and developing an environmental management and bunker plan is a great start to making a facility more sustainable, but the clock is ticking. By the end of this decade, access to pesticides may be drastically reduced, so now is the time for change. **GI**

### Sustainable Agronomy

To learn more about The R&A's Sustainable Agronomy services email [sustainableagronomy@randa.org](mailto:sustainableagronomy@randa.org) or scan the QR code.



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# Conservation on the golf course

Wildlife can thrive on golf courses with  
just a little bit of help from greenkeepers

## **Greenkeeper Stephen Thompson has always put conservation at the heart of golf course management.**

He is passionate about wildlife and biodiversity and has won awards for his commitment to those areas.

After spending more than three decades at John O'Gaunt Golf Club, he is now at Woodhall Spa and still banging the drum for conservation.

## **What is the perception of golf courses in relation to conservation?**

Golf courses have always had a reputation in the past for being a bit barren, with grass cut wall to wall – but it doesn't have to be like that.

There are many ways in which a golf course can be an amazing place for wildlife to thrive and I've seen that first-hand through my involvement in many conservation projects.

The fact is there is so much more variety on a golf course than just

grass; covering everything from wildflower areas, trees, sand dunes, chalk, rivers, streams, ponds, heather – the list goes on.

As a greenkeeper, I am committed to providing excellent golf through good management of the playing surfaces and the surrounding habitat. I believe passionately that conservation can provide the best of both worlds – a high standard of golf, played in beautiful surroundings.

## **You installed nest boxes at John O'Gaunt GC – what were the benefits of that project?**

That was the first major project I was involved in, which started back in 1996 when we had barn owls nesting on the John O'Gaunt Course.

We put the box up in conjunction with the Hawk and Owl Trust, which was used for a couple of years before the barn owls departed and weren't

seen again for a while. When they were next seen it was on the Carthagena Course, so we put another box up there.

We didn't really have anything then until 2012, when we had barn owls nesting on both sites and both bore chicks, but unfortunately that was a very wet year and none of the chicks survived. That's nature and things like that do happen.

The barn owls nested again in 2016 and were more successful in raising their chicks.

We also had a couple of kestrel boxes, which were used most years. We would ring the chicks and take the opportunity to measure and weigh them, so we were really monitoring them.

In total we had around 125 boxes, predominantly made up of lots of smaller ones which accommodated all different types of birds, including



“ There are many ways in which a golf course can be an amazing place for wildlife to thrive”



#### About Stephen

Stephen promotes ecology, conservation and biodiversity in greenkeeping and beyond.

The winner of the 2018 Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year, Stephen has appeared on television, radio and

in print, spreading the word for conservation.

His work over more than 30 years at John O’Gaunt saw the club pick up multiple awards, including the CPRE Mark from the Campaign to Protect Rural England Charity.

Stephen has spoken at numerous conferences and seminars, including the 2016 Badger Trust Conference and at the British Dragonfly Society in 2020, as well as delivering talks in schools.

Now at Woodhall Spa, Stephen’s passion for wildlife and conservation remains undimmed

blue tits and great tits. The bigger ones could be used by all sorts, including stock doves and jackdaws, while tawny owls used them occasionally.

And it wasn’t just birds that used them, with squirrels and hornets also sometimes making a home there.

#### Tell us about Operation Pollinator...

This initiative was set up in response to the declining bee population, with a 70% reduction in numbers. That’s a really alarming statistic, because bees are so important for biodiversity and conservation in general.

Operation Pollinator is a national project to create wildflower areas in out-of-play areas of the golf course, providing a nectar and pollen-rich habitat for all pollinating insects.

Golf courses up and down the country are trying to do their bit to help the bees by creating wildflower

areas, which has been going on for 12 years.

It's about promoting the growth of things like wild carrot, lady's bedstraw, birdsfoot trefoil and knapweed to create an environment that is conducive to pollination.

### Do you get many mammals on golf courses?

Yes, definitely. I've used various bits of equipment to record mammal activity on the golf course and have found a huge variety.

I've used trail cameras – the sort of thing you'll have seen on Springwatch. They can be set up pretty easily with timers, where you can leave them for a few days then come back and see what they've picked up.

Although they can be fairly expensive at the top end of the market, you can get cheaper models that will still do a decent job.

We recorded 23 species of mammal, including fallow deer, water vole, badgers, otters and many more.

### What about any other creatures you might find on a golf course?

I mentioned ponds as one feature of a golf course attracting a variety of wildlife, with bats among them.

We have done bat surveys with the aid of a bat detector, which transforms their frequencies into something humans can hear, and have found eight different species.

If you put a water feature on your course, wildlife will find it.

Other wildlife that finds its way to or near that particular habitat includes grass snakes, frogs, common toads, and common lizards.

Butterflies are also commonplace on many golf courses; I recorded 25 species at John O' Gaunt, while we recorded well over 450 species of moths using a moth trap, some of which – like the white-spotted pinion – are quite scarce locally, so that's quite exciting.

In addition, near ponds and streams you will see things like dragonflies and damselflies; I recorded 19 species at John O'Gaunt.

### And it's not just plants and animals that take up residence on golf courses, is it?

Certainly not. We recorded 157 species of fungi at John O'Gaunt after starting to log them in 2013.



Barn owl chick

### John O'Gaunt's nest box success

The installation of nest boxes at John O'Gaunt yielded tremendous results.

From 2005 to 2022, the boxes produced over 6,000 chicks, including:

- 4,380 blue tits
- 1,762 great tits
- 63 jackdaws
- 47 kestrels
- 33 stock doves
- 19 robins
- 6 barn owls
- 5 tawny owls

Many people will probably be able to identify some of the more obvious ones like dead man's fingers, fly agaric, beefsteak, and shaggy ink cap.

So, golf courses really do play host to a wide variety of living things.

### How important is it to keep track of exactly what is living on your golf course?

It's really important and there are a number of reasons for that. Firstly, by keeping a good record you can tailor your habitat management accordingly. There may be areas you want to target for improvement to boost numbers of a certain species, or to attract new ones.



Purple emperor butterfly

**How to communicate your conversation efforts to the members**

- Use social media
- Display information on notice boards
- Write and share articles about your work
- Publish identification charts
- Talk to them!

**“ I believe passionately that conservation can provide the best of both worlds – a high standard of golf, played in beautiful surroundings”**

In addition, by keeping track of the flora and fauna on your golf course, it helps the local experts and county recorders to have a clearer picture of things. They can see what’s moving through the county, what’s common, what’s uncommon, what’s on the increase or decrease – this is all important information to have.

Keeping such records allows you to show the members that the work you’re doing is having an impact, as you can point to the numbers and the diversity of wildlife as proof.



White spotted pinion moth

**Is conservation still a top priority for you in your role at Woodhall Spa?**

Absolutely, conservation remains an integral part of my job and always will. I passionately believe that golf courses are of huge importance for wildlife and I will continue to communicate that message to everyone. I gained a lot of experience and knowledge in my time at John O’Gaunt, which I am now able to bring all of that to Woodhall Spa and start communicating to a whole new audience.

I have already started on the nest box project here, and undertaken moth and dragonfly surveys. Woodhall Spa has two fantastic courses with a huge amount of potential in terms of wildlife and conservation. I very much look forward to the future and what it might bring. **GI**



Fly agaric fungi

**Find out more** about Stephen’s conservation efforts

Scan Me to find out more



Over **3,000** golf courses in the UK

Covering approximately **260k** hectares

**90,000** hectares designated sites of specific special interest



# How to deliver successful projects

Good planning is necessary for any project to be delivered successfully and with minimal pain for all involved, says Andy Wight of Oaklands College

How many projects have you heard of that failed in some way? Crossrail and the Post Office ICT roll-out may readily spring to mind.

Project design principles are essential guidelines that managers should consider when planning and organising a project. These will help ensure a project is well-structured, efficient, and successful.

## Have a clear objective

Define clear and specific project objectives outlining what the project is intended to achieve (end result).

A good starting point is to draw up a specification for the project. Objectives should be measurable and aligned with organisation goals, i.e. bring a measurable benefit.

## Get stakeholder involvement

Involve key stakeholders from the start to ensure their needs, expectations, and concerns are considered. For example if building a tee you would want to get the involvement of the members, management, club professional and your team. Reaching a consensus at the start can help avoid recriminations at the end of the project.

## Clearly define the project scope

What is within the project's boundaries and what is not? A well-defined scope helps prevent project creep and ensures a common understanding of the project's boundaries.

## Resource allocation

Once it's agreed what the project objectives are you can





allocate resources. Staff allocated to the project may have other responsibilities, so the duration of the project will be dictated by the time staff can devote to it. Use a resource analysis sheet.

#### Break down the task

Break the project down into small, manageable tasks to help with task assignment, scheduling, and resource allocation.

#### Establish a timeline and sequencing

Develop a schedule that outlines the sequence of tasks and activities, along with their estimated duration. One of the most suitable tools for this is the Gantt chart.

#### Manage risk

Have a risk-management plan to address potential issues and uncertainties that may impact the project's success. Consider health and safety risks to staff, visitors and public as well as risks to the environment.

#### Assure quality of work

Monitoring and quality control are vital. Check materials for quality, ensure they meet your specification. If used, monitor contractors to ensure they carry out each step as specified.

#### Communicate effectively

Develop a communication plan that outlines how project information will be shared with stakeholders, including the frequency and methods of communication.

#### Apply management and contingency planning

Develop contingency plans and strategies to deal with unexpected events that affect the project's progress.

#### Monitor and control progress

Implement a system for monitoring progress, include key performance indicators (KPIs) and milestones. Use this information to make necessary adjustments.

#### Document the project

Keep all the project documentation to record decisions, changes, issues, and lessons learned. Good documentation is crucial for accountability and as an aid to planning any future projects of a similar nature.

#### Consider sustainability

Consider the long-term environmental and economic impact of the project. For example, if building a tee consider drainage, shade and slope on banks for ease of mowing. **GI**



#### About Andy

Andy Wight has worked in greenkeeping and sports turf for over 45 years and now works at Oaklands College in Hertfordshire.

[andy.wight@oaklands.ac.uk](mailto:andy.wight@oaklands.ac.uk)

# See you at BTME



Gordon Howat is Senior Agronomist  
& Project Manager at The R&A

Our agronomy team is very much looking forward to talking about all things greenkeeping with you in Harrogate later this month

It is good to reflect on the successes and challenges of recent times to help us focus on the priorities for the fine turf industry in 2024. A lot of what sits at the forefront of the greenkeeping agenda can be captured by looking at experiences of golf courses in 2022 and 2023.

We look back at 2022 and remember drought stress, water scarcity and the monumental efforts required to promote good recovery. Last summer, at one point, looked to be on a similar trajectory. Water availability was under threat in late spring and early summer with another prolonged warm spell dominating the weather only for the rains to come in mid-June. And when the rain arrived it came in abundance. Suddenly thoughts veered to drainage, protecting areas of soft ground and trying to retain green firmness.

These last two summers bring into focus one thing: climate change. This is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. And it

feeds all the way down to turf management. Climate change, and the impact of climate change on fine turf management, will be front and centre of what myself and my colleagues in the Sustainable Agronomy Department at The R&A will be focusing on this year. This is reflected in the various presentations

**“ The last two summers bring into focus one thing: climate change. This is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity**

that we are providing to our partners at BIGGA at the outstanding BTME event that is so impressively delivered each January.

The first of the presentations will be A Vision for Sustainable Golf Courses. Aligning with much of the Golf Course 2030 outputs, Alistair Beggs, John Kemp, Richard Windows and I will be available in panel form to take questions on the topic. With climate

change impacting pest and disease incidence, yet the drive towards reduced chemical inputs gathering momentum, this is an important topic for the industry.

This also leads into The R&A's partnership formed with The Environment Partnership (TEP) where The R&A has access to the water

security expertise needed to form sustainable solutions for the provision of water and protection of the wider environment.

Water security will hit hard in the coming years, so TEP's Tom Young will be on The R&A stand later in the week to meet with delegates and answer some of the questions you may have.

Alistair Beggs, Adam Newton and Richard Windows will also host a

breakfast session on the Tuesday morning (January 23) to review the Open Championship at Royal Liverpool last summer.

This is always an enthusiastically received topic, where delegates can hear some of the stories from behind the ropes at Hoylake.

Later, Dr Simon Watson and Paul Woodham will review some impressive case studies from the year, allowing delegates to tap into some of the positive experiences they both had in 2023.

Lastly, and by no means least, John Kemp, our Golf Course 2030 Project Manager, presents on Climate Impact and the Implications for Golf Courses on the Wednesday morning (January 24).

This seems an appropriate way to round off BTME for The R&A, as all the above seem to work back to climate change in some way or another.

We look forward to seeing you in Harrogate, but in the meantime best wishes for 2024. **GI**



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