



Greenkeeper International



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Practical Greenkeeping

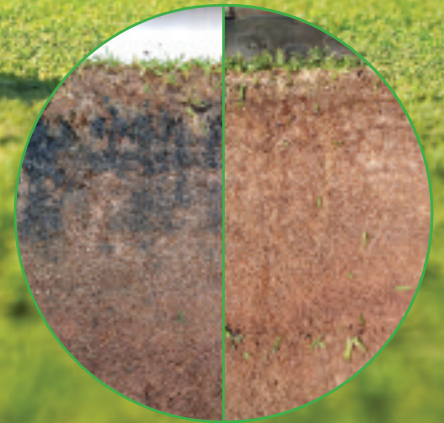
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The magazine for BIGGA members Greenkeeper International exists for you, our members. Since 1987 BIGGA has helped thousands in golf greenkeeping to progress their careers, find inspiration and get involved in our varied and vibrant community. This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

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Welcome

BTME in 2023 was so vibrant. I had a slight concern that its success was partly due only to a keenness to reconnect post-Covid. I'm delighted therefore that by just about every indicator we measure, our 2024 event was even more positive, with more exhibitors, more visitors and more Continue to Learn delegates.

BTME, plus the GCSAA's excellent Conference & Trade Show the following week in sunny Arizona, have led me to reflect on the importance of events like these.

Despite all of our digital progress, it is clear people still love to connect in person. There was a vibrancy to practically every hall, classroom, bar and restaurant I encountered in Harrogate.

I've always believed that BTME is a force for good; people arrive with the weight of the world on their shoulders and find solutions and a helping hand from their peers, educators and exhibitors. This was especially true this year after the longest and wettest of autumns.

Recognition is also hugely important: whether from being nominated for or winning an industry award; being congratulated on career progress or product development; or just seeing friendly

“ I am grateful to everyone who invests money and time into making BTME such a success

faces. People thrive on the dignity that recognition brings, and BTME is unparalleled in providing this.

But we also have to understand that the twin driving forces of our event are the investment provided by our nearly 150 exhibitors and the thirst for knowledge that saw over 5,000 hours of education delivered in more than 2,000 individual educational experiences. I am hugely grateful to everyone who invests their money and time into making BTME such a success.

We are fortunate that BTME occupies a near-perfect week in the calendar and that Harrogate provides a wonderful base for us to fulfil all of our ambitions for the event. Let's do it all again in 2025!



Jim Croxton
BIGGA Chief Executive

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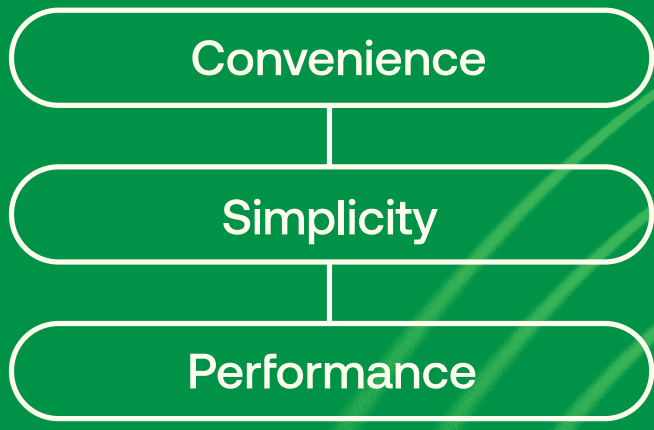
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We are committed to the continual professional development of our members, working with the leading bodies in golf for the good of the game.

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



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First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- Syngenta honours £500 pledge for charity as runners brave storm at BTME
- Roddy Williams on how to unlock sustainability on a shoestring budget



The winners

Operation Pollinator Award:

Huntercombe Golf Club
For consistently delivering outstanding ecological habitat creation and management.

Ecological Project of the Year:

Canterbury Golf Club
For implementing an ecological project that contributes to a better environment.

Conservation Champion of the Year:

John Milne, Garmouth and Kingston Golf Club
For making significant contributions to environmental and ecological management making a positive impact on the landscape and biodiversity.

Sustainable Project of the

Year: Royal Dornoch Golf Club
For implementing a sustainable project that contributes to a more sustainable environment.

International Environmental

Golf Course: Golf della Montecchia, Italy
For efficient management across nature conservation, turfgrass, waste and water.

UK Environmental Golf Course

of the Year: Colmworth Golf Club
For leading the way in sustainability across nature conservation and turfgrass, waste and water management.

Winners announced at 29th Golf Environment Awards

The 29th Golf Environment Awards (GEAs) saw winners crowned in six categories.

The coveted awards ceremony, hosted by STRI Group during BTME, was attended by UK and international golf clubs to celebrate and reward industry professionals who dedicate their time and energy to protecting and enhancing the environment.

Tina Jessop, head of brand and communications at STRI Group, said: "The GEAs shine a light on the impressive work from each finalist, and we hope these awards will continue to empower all golf clubs to begin implementing environmentally

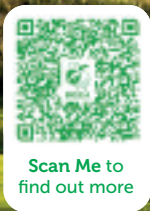
sound practices on their courses."

Golf courses represent 33% of the UK's open space and, when managed properly, can significantly enhance biodiversity, conserve rare habitats and be a leading sector in promoting positive environmental practices.

Winners received a £750 grant to help fund further ecological and environmental projects at their clubs, a visit from an agronomic consultant, entry to the Foundation Award in Amenity Horticulture course and promotional materials for digital platforms. The Conservation Champion award winner was also granted BIGGA membership. **GI**

The BIGGA Calendar

March: Martyn Taylor, Wallasey GC
Download the desktop calendar by scanning the QR code below



Hardy runners brave high winds as Syngenta honour £500 pledge



High winds led to the cancellation of the Syngenta 5k Early Bird Run at BTME, but that wasn't enough to stop a few hardy souls heading out and getting it done anyway.

Storm Jocelyn brought winds of up to 60 miles per hour, forcing plans for the annual run to be shelved.

But a small group of dedicated individuals still pulled on their running shoes and pounded the pavements of Harrogate, undeterred by the miserable conditions.

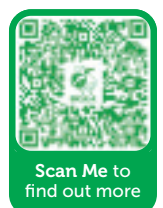
Syngenta also kindly honoured their pledge to donate £500 to the Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund.

Intended to encourage everybody to benefit from the health enhancements and stress relief of regular exercise, especially through the dark winter months, the Syngenta Early Bird Run has become one of the main events at BTME.

Speaking before the cancellation, BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton said: "I am grateful to Syngenta for continuing to support the BTME 5K Run in aid of our Greenkeepers' Benevolent Fund.

"The run provides a wonderful opportunity during an intense week to clear minds, gain fresh air and exercise and raise money for an excellent cause.

"It's always a joy to see so many people up early to enjoy the camaraderie of the run and we know that exercise, especially with other people, is an excellent method of combatting the stresses and strains of modern life." **GI**



What's on this month



Dates for your diary

1 March

BIGGA South East Region Golf & Dinner Day – Walton Heath GC

5 March

BIGGA L&D Roadshow, Northern – Castle Eden GC

6 March

BIGGA L&D Roadshow, South Wales – Tredegar Park GC

7 March

BIGGA L&D Roadshow, Northern – Conwy GC
 BIGGA L&D Roadshow, South East – Hampton Court Palace GC

13 March

BIGGA L&D Roadshow, South West – Thornbury GC
 BIGGA/CAFRE Seminar Programme – CAFRE, Greenmount Campus

14 March

BIGGA East Anglia Section, workshop with Tom Stidder – Ipswich GC

A greenkeeper's best friend – George



Owner: Kerr Rowan
Club: Kilmarnock Barassie
Dog's name: George
Breed: Golden retriever
Age: One year
Favourite treat: Chicken
Favourite place: Yet to find one here, but at West Sussex he loved the pond on the 6th hole
Naughtiest moment: Once got caught ripping up a new hedgerow in front of the club secretary!
He is happiest when: Out for a walk, bounding across the course



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

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



The misconception that sustainability has to be costly



Roddy Williams

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

All around the world, we are seeing clubs big and small finding ways to become more environmentally responsible while reducing their costs at the same time

Unlocking sustainability in golf facilities doesn't have to break the bank. By strategically integrating key sustainability goals and adopting best practices, even on a shoestring budget, clubs can transform into more efficient, nature-rich and sustainable havens. Contrary to the misconception that sustainability efforts are inherently costly, success stories from clubs worldwide showcase innovative solutions that yield environmental, social and financial benefits.

Take Hunley Hotel & Golf Club in England, for example. Their initiative to rewild designated areas of the course not only created valuable habitats but also saved 2,500 litres of diesel annually. By allowing meadows to flourish and managing them with annual cut-and-collect practices, the club reclaimed 60 man-hours per week during peak seasons, alongside the significant fuel savings.

Simple adjustments, like changing mowing patterns, can also make a substantial impact. Anderstein in The Netherlands reduced mowing time by 20 per cent and saved over 600



The Grove upgraded to a precision spraying system

litres of diesel by altering their fairway mowing direction. Similarly, Master Golf Course in Finland reduced turf maintenance, saving approximately €5,000 yearly by designating 10 hectares as long grass rough.

Embracing technological advancements can further enhance sustainability while cutting costs.

The Grove, in England, upgraded to a precision spraying system, reducing product application by 10

per cent through individual nozzle control and GPS technology.

Likewise, Houghton, in South Africa, have used soil moisture meters to micro-manage irrigation – reducing water consumption by 45 per cent and saving roughly 8.25 million litres per month in the summer.

Energy efficient machinery can also save fuel and reduce costs. At Royal Liverpool, a fleet of electric mowers and utility

vehicles are saving the club £7,000 each year.

Having invested in hybrid mowers and battery-powered tools, Quinta do Lago, in Portugal, are also saving 9,000 litres of diesel and 3,000 litres of petrol per annum. This equipment has also reduced noise and pollution potential, contributing to a quieter, safer golfing environment.

Another common misconception is that taking sustainability and climate action is difficult. As these examples show, it's often simple actions and improvements made in small doses.

A good approach is to pause to look at things through a slightly different lens, considering if there might be a more sustainable – and often more cost-effective – way of maintaining an area, purchasing an item, or making a decision.

As pressures mount regarding water access, energy consumption, and material resources, clubs can seize opportunities for no-cost, low-cost and wise investments in sustainability – with a multitude of payoffs.

You can find more ideas at sustainable.golf/ highlights and please do share your own with us. **GI**

“Houghton, in South Africa, have used soil moisture meters to micro-manage irrigation – reducing water consumption by 45% and saving roughly 8.25 million litres per month in the summer”

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From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- Ten BIGGA members attend the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in US
- ICL Continue to Learn scholars reap the benefits of the initiative at BTME



Michael Russell & Daniel Martin

Details revealed for 2024 Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards

Entries for the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards are now open.

The annual awards offer greenkeeping students of all ages, backgrounds and experience levels the chance to further their career and network with industry leaders.

The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year winner will receive enrolment in an internationally recognised 10-week turf management remote study course at The Winter Turf School, at

the University of Massachusetts; a one-week placement at a prestigious golf course in the UK or overseas; and an all-expenses-paid trip to Toro HQ in the USA. The Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year will also receive a one-week placement and the US visit, as well as a trip to Continue to Learn at BTME.

The award is available to all greenkeeping students studying towards eligible qualifications who have been a greenkeeper for a

minimum of 12 months, while the Young Student Award is open to those aged 21 years or under and studying for a Level 2 award at the time of application.

2023 winner Michael Russell said: "The benefit you get from being able to network with people who've got that same passion for the industry, it's just amazing."

Entries close on 12 April.

Please contact education@bigga.co.uk with any queries. **GI**

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

'Trip of a lifetime' for BIGGA delegates

The delegation who attended the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) Conference and Trade Show enjoyed "the trip of a lifetime"



Stephen Davey, Fraser Jardine and Edward Irvine at TPC Scottsdale's 16th hole

For over two decades, BIGGA and Bernhard and Company have selected 10 members of the association to fly out to the United States and access the incredible education and networking opportunities presented by the event.

The BIGGA Delegation is among the most respected initiatives in the greenkeeping profession, and the latest beneficiaries certainly made the most of their experience.

Harry Cannon, head greenkeeper at Sunningdale, had a good feeling about things from the moment he met his fellow delegates at BTME.

"It was great to meet the delegates before heading to Phoenix together and also a chance to thank Bernhard and BIGGA personally for this wonderful opportunity," he said.

"I knew immediately after meeting this group of likeminded greenkeepers we were going to have the trip of a lifetime.

"Where we were in Phoenix, Arizona, there are some very

extreme weather conditions, so maintaining a golf course seems almost impossible."

Delegates soaked up a week-long educational trip featuring numerous site visits, seminars, networking events and demonstrations.

Robert Acheson, course manager at Thonock Park, revealed how the group gained some expert insight on an outing to one of the many spectacular courses in Arizona.

"We had a fantastic, behind-the-scenes visit to Grayhawk Golf Club," he said.

"The course superintendent Ernie Pock was very welcoming and happy to talk us through his career in the trade."

For Stephen Davey, head greenkeeper at Queenwood, the whole trip was a revealing and informative experience.

"My time over here has really opened my eyes to the different challenges faced by golf course managers in terms of climate



The 2024 BIGGA Delegation

- Robert Acheson, course manager, Thonock Park GC
- Harry Cannon, head greenkeeper, Sunningdale GC
- Stephen Davey, head greenkeeper, Queenwood GC
- James Hampson, deputy head greenkeeper, Llanymynech GC
- Stuart Imeson, owner and course manager, Dunstanburgh Castle GC (unable to travel)
- Eddie Irvine, head greenkeeper, Trump International
- Fraser Jardine, deputy head greenkeeper, Trump Turnberry
- Richard Ponsford, course manager, Clevedon GC
- Luke Sheldon, head greenkeeper, Beau Desert GC
- Richard Stephens, course manager, Vicars Cross GC

and grass species transition," he said.

"Alongside some excellent research and leadership classes, I've taken a lot of new skills and ideas on board to hopefully put into practice at Queenwood."

Trump Turnberry's Fraser Jardine had a standout highlight, with the deputy head greenkeeper well aware he was a long way from home in more ways than one.

"My personal favourite was the visit to TPC Scottsdale, which was set up for Phoenix Open," he said. "We got to stand at the famous 16th hole.

"The desert style courses could not be any more different from a west of Scotland links course! It truly was a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget." **GI**



Congratulations to the following members who have achieved CPD Approved status

- Stuart Adams, Cardigan
- Ashley Allpress, Guildford
- James Beattie, Fairhaven
- Mark Blake, Stoneham
- Tom Bromfield, Trentham
- Alex Brougham, Trentham
- Gary Burgess, Wallasey
- Lee Connell, Wallasey
- Steven Henderson, Kirkcaldy
- Antony Kirwan, Romford
- Gordon McKie, St Andrews Links Trust
- Adam Mitchell, Tehidy Park
- Ritchie Morrison, Newmachar
- Ian Nichols, Orsett
- Jason Norwood, Reay
- David Perdisatt MG, Mullingar
- Robert Sandilands, Formby Ladies Golf Club
- Ben Shaw, Wallasey
- Lee Williams, Stanedge
- Melissa Winkworth, Goring & Streatley
- Kimberley Yeldham, Flempton

Congratulations to the following members who have achieved their CPD Milestone

- Ashley Allpress, Guildford
- Iain Macleod, Life Member
- Ryan McCulloch, Goswick Links
- Wendy O'Brien, Beaverbrook
- David Perdisatt MG, Mullingar
- Melissa Winkworth, Goring & Streatley

Take a moment to complete England Golf's water use survey

England Golf is seeking to gather data about water use on golf courses to help "flip the narrative" and provide better support to clubs.

If you represent a golf club in England, please get involved by answering a short survey that will contribute towards a greater understanding as to the status of water use across the country.

Complete the survey to be in with a chance of winning a FootJoy rain suit.



The BIGGA Drinks Reception sponsored by ISEKI

The event sponsored by Iseki UK drew more than 100 guests on the eve of the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in Phoenix

Coming hot on the heels of BTME, the BIGGA Drinks Reception saw many exhibitors from the bustling halls of Harrogate's Convention Centre taking the opportunity to attend.

Familiar faces from Iseki, Aquatrols, Campey Turf Care, Howardson Group, TurfCare, Indigrow, Bernhard & Company, and MJ Abbott were among the attendees.

The BIGGA delegation also took in the event as part of their packed schedule, joining the association's CEO, president, chairperson, and several members of the team, alongside a host of course managers, greenkeepers, and Continue to Learn presenters.

"The BIGGA Drinks Reception is always a

brilliant opportunity for us to catch up with members and valued exhibitors who make the journey to the GCSAA event so soon after BTME," said BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton.

"With something like 15,000 people in total attending the Trade Show, the BIGGA Drinks Reception ensures lots of UK visitors get the chance to catch up and network in what is otherwise a sometimes bewilderingly big and busy event.

"It was great to catch up with so many of our members and exhibitors who seemed thrilled with the excellent BTME event just a few days before.

"We are hugely grateful to Managing Director David Withers and Iseki UK for generously sponsoring the reception."



Second from top: Iseki's David Withers and Jim Croxton Bottom: Sami Strutt and Lauren Frazer



© Adrian Mortram Associates

BIGGA Delegation with Bernhard and Company to become biennial event

After 23 years and more than 220 delegates, BIGGA and Bernhard and Company have come to an agreement that will see the delegation initiative become a biennial event.

BIGGA members will now head to the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show every two years.

In the intervening years, members of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) will participate in a new delegation that will see them travel to the UK to attend the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition (BTME) each January.

Every year, around 10 per cent of attendees to BTME travel from overseas and BIGGA is proud that the global reputation of the trade show and education programme is such that Bernhard and Company and the GCSAA are eager to provide an enhanced opportunity for American turf professionals to attend the show.

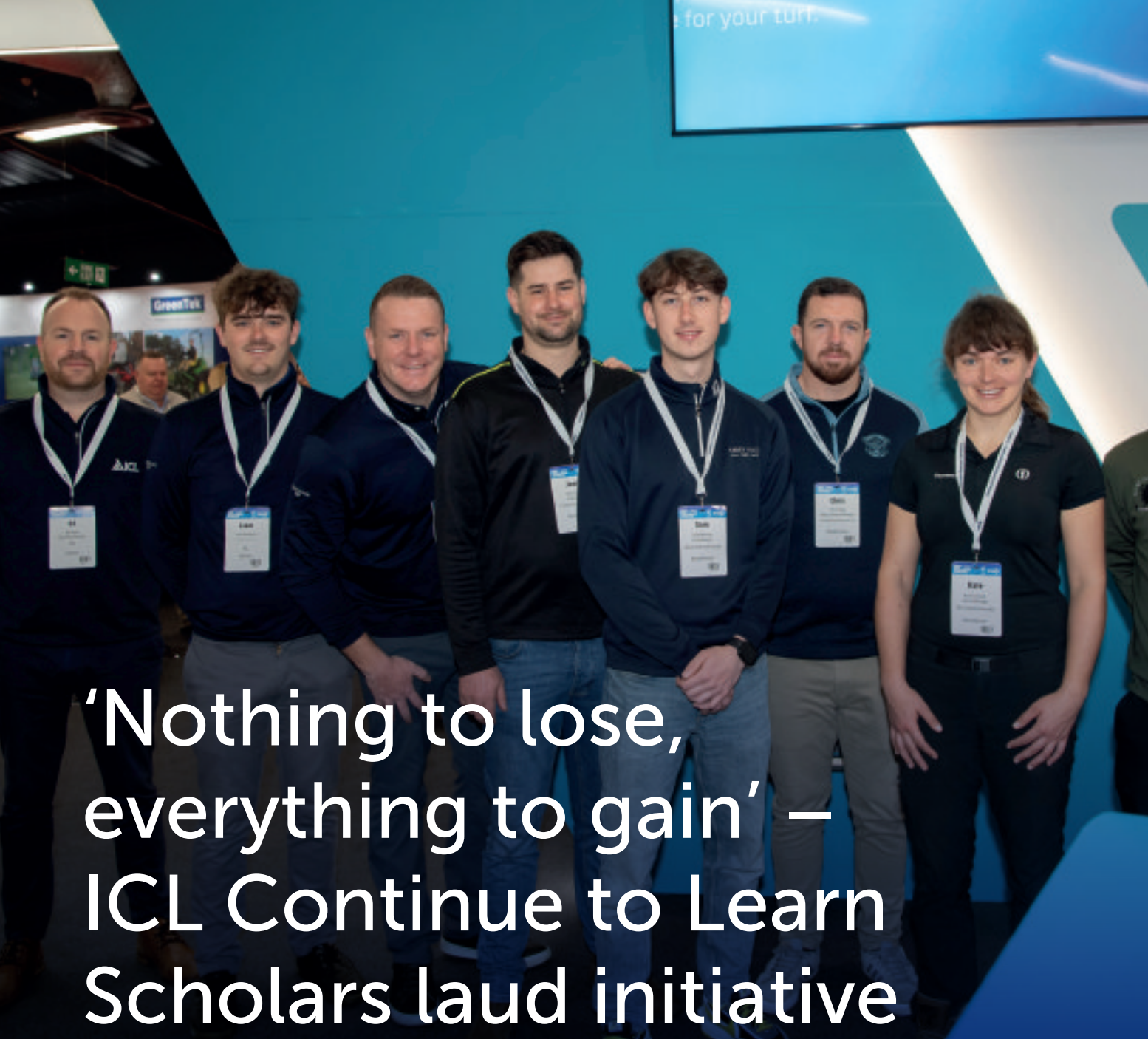
As always, Bernhard and Company will continue to support BIGGA members. Conversations are ongoing at the moment, and any educational opportunities that come to light during those times will be shared with members in due course.

The next BIGGA Delegation with Bernhard and Company will take place in 2026, when the GCSAA's Conference and Trade Show heads to Orlando, Florida.

Applications will launch in summer 2025.

We offer our thanks to Bernhard and Company for their continued support of BIGGA members. [GI](#)





‘Nothing to lose, everything to gain’ – ICL Continue to Learn Scholars laud initiative

The ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship once again underlined its enormous value after the latest five participants reaped the benefits of the initiative



Each year, BIGGA Premium Partner ICL Turf & Landscape invites five BIGGA members to attend the education programme at BTME.

The two organisations recognise that the valuable career-development opportunities provided by the multi-day event are not available to every greenkeeper, with the cost of education, travel and accommodation proving an obstacle.

The scholarship seeks to provide a level playing field for ambitious members who would otherwise miss out.

Chris Hale, deputy course manager at Taunton & Pickering, was among the five selected in what was the eighth cohort of ICL Scholars.

“I really enjoyed my time at BTME, the education classes were

exceptional, and I learnt a lot of new ideas and tips from them,” he said.

“I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to be provided with as much education as I gained through ICL, so I’m very grateful for the chance to attend BTME and benefit from 15 hours’ worth of classes and workshops.”

Jamie Caswell, Blue Course supervisor at Frilford Heath, was also delighted to have had the opportunity.

He said: “The scholarship gave me

I would encourage anyone to apply for the ICL scholarship



“The scholarship gave me the chance to meet and learn from some amazing people



The ICL Scholars class of 2024

- Chris Hale, deputy course manager, Taunton & Pickering
- Sam Norman, assistant greenkeeper, Abbey Hill
- Kate Stillwell, course superintendent, West London City 9
- Jason Norwood, course manager, Reay
- Jamie Caswell, Blue Course supervisor, Frilford Heath

the chance to meet and learn from some amazing people and it will definitely aid my continued learning and development, which I'm incredibly grateful for."

Fellow scholar Kate Stillwell, course superintendent at West London City 9, selected her best moments.

"The highlights for me were meeting the other scholars and seeing this year's latest innovations in machinery and products," she said.

"I would encourage anyone to apply for the ICL scholarship – you have nothing to lose and everything to gain, not only for yourself but also your team."

Following a selection process, the ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship provides the five candidates with three nights in

a hotel and a comprehensive education package worth £500, and enables BIGGA members who may otherwise be unable to attend Continue to Learn and BTME to participate.

To earn an ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship, BIGGA members must demonstrate a real commitment to developing their own professional abilities by engaging with BIGGA's Continuing Professional Development scheme.

Whether through in-person learning, reading this magazine, or accessing resources on the association's website, BIGGA members have access to thousands of learning opportunities, all aimed at helping improve their professional abilities. **GI**

BTME fills me with optimism



Gordon McKie
National Board Director,
Scotland & NI

The annual trip to Harrogate never fails to lift my mood for the year ahead

In the many years I have been attending BTME, I've always left with a renewed sense of optimism and this year was no different.

To see so many people in Harrogate in January – record numbers, in fact – who share the same passion for this industry, all coming together to learn, to network and to socialise was a wonderful thing.

It seems now the event is on everyone's radar and the popularity of BTME continues to grow. The massive uptake for the Continue to Learn programme was particularly pleasing to see and a big reason why my levels of optimism were so high this time around.

While I saw many familiar faces, some who have been going as long as I have, I was also heartened to see a lot of new faces – a clear sign that this industry is moving forwards and bringing the next generation along with it.

I'm sure many newcomers will have been blown away by the scale of the event, with thousands of attendees, a vast trade show and the huge educational opportunities that come with Continue to Learn and the various seminars, not to mention the invaluable peer-to-peer learning that takes place, sometimes almost incidentally through conversations at a stand or perhaps even the bar!



“The massive uptake for the Continue to Learn programme was particularly pleasing to see

Ours is an industry where those with long service and hard-earned knowledge are more than happy to share the benefit of their wisdom with others, no matter what stage they are at in their careers or where they work. I witnessed countless examples of that at this year's show, with experienced greenkeepers only too willing to offer advice and guidance to their younger counterparts and indeed to each other – after all, learning in this line of work is an ongoing process and you never know it all even after decades doing the job.

And much changes over time with new ways of doing things, new technology, new legislation and different economic, environmental and social factors to consider. An event like BTME helps bring us up to speed on all of those things.

Over the years and being in the position I'm in, people have got to know my face and will come up to introduce themselves, have a chat and ask questions – 'How do you do this?', 'What's the best way to achieve that?'. I always enjoy the opportunity to share some

of what I've learned to help others improve.

That's what BTME and BIGGA as an association are all about – helping people to broaden their knowledge and skills to make themselves integral at their clubs and beyond. By doing that, we are building a stronger, brighter future for greenkeeping and for golf.

I firmly believe it's a good time to be involved in this industry and that things are on the up. We must always strive to make things better for our members and we are heading in the right direction. **GI**

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Member Interest

Where we meet your fellow turf professionals and share their stories

■ A round-up of all the winners from BTME 2024, including Outstanding Contribution, Project of the Year and Championship Team of the Year



MacIndoe: West Surrey's new irrigation system is a 'game-changer'

Alec MacIndoe is no stranger to irrigation projects, but he's no less excited about his third one than his first.

Here, West Surrey's golf course superintendent talks through the work, its potential benefits, and the unrelenting support of his board and the members.

"When I came to West Surrey nearly 10 years ago, I did a full audit of the whole golf course, including the irrigation, and it was obvious that even though the system was only around 15 years old, it hadn't been properly maintained.

"We brought in Roger Davey, who I'd worked with on two other installs, as our irrigation consultant but we had no expectations of doing anything

with it immediately.

"However, the drought of 2018 really caught us out – we couldn't get enough water where we wanted it, we had leaks; the system wasn't sufficient to run a successful members' club.

"We went to tender in 2019 but then Covid hit, so it wasn't until October 2023 that we actually started with the project, which has run largely on schedule up to its March finish date.

"It's a complete upgrade of the existing system, with most of the mainline staying in the ground and being extended, and we're doubling the number of heads.

"The support this project has had from the outset has been fantastic. We held a course presentation specifically for the irrigation audit, spelling out

the pros and cons to around 150 members, and the response was unanimous - they were fully behind us, and they were left in no doubt that this would safeguard the future of the club for the next 20 years or more.

"I've also enjoyed the full backing of the board and they have been fantastic throughout. It's a big investment but they've been so supportive and we've carried out the work with hardly any disruption.

"We've now got areas covered with irrigation that we've never had before, we can increase all our surrounding areas of greens, we can water under trees in areas that historically would've been dusty in the summer – it's a complete game-changer for the club."

GI



**More reasons
to celebrate**

1,145

Record number of places
booked on the Continue to
Learn programme

245

Conference days sold.
The Young Greenkeepers
Conference was also a sell-out

The **BIGGA** Celebration

JACOBSEN

The BIGGA Celebration welcomed BTME attendees to gather in the grand surroundings of Harrogate Convention Centre's main auditorium to recognise the achievements of greenkeepers across the country and beyond.

Hosted by the Jazzy Golfer and in association with Jacobsen, the event provided an opportunity to celebrate everything that is good about the greenkeeping industry.

The BIGGA Awards shine a light on the exceptional work of greenkeepers at all different levels, and the 2024 winners encapsulated that perfectly.

Each of the three headline categories crowned clubs, teams and individuals with fascinating stories to tell.

Many congratulations to all the winners and indeed the nominees, who were worthy and gracious finalists. **GI**

30

Continue to Learn classes, out of 48, completely sold out

4,234

Number of visitors attending

145

Number of exhibitors – a 7% increase on 2023

Outstanding Contribution
sponsored by **JACOBSEN**

Dean Cleaver





This award is presented to a BIGGA member whose contribution is deemed to have been above and beyond the call of duty – Dean Cleaver fits the bill perfectly.

Cleaver, who started out at The Leicestershire Golf Club in 1974 after realising a career in professional football may be beyond his reach, first joined the committee of a greenkeepers association at just 17. By the time he was 38, Cleaver had become BIGGA's youngest ever chairperson.

Clearly not one to waste any time, that same year – 1996 – he also led the formation of the Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers Associations (FEGGA) and has acted as executive officer ever since, building a network of organisations to promote greenkeeping and enhance the support available to turf professionals, whether a country has thousands of golf courses or just one.

Today, FEGGA unites 23 associations around the world, including the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the Turfgrass Managers Association of South Africa.

Despite his incredible contribution over many years, Cleaver – who will retire later this year – was still stunned to claim the award.

"I was in shock to be honest, even the day after I still couldn't quite believe it," he said.

"It's not like I didn't know I had done all those things they listed, but it's over such a long time and I'm just not one of those people who presumes they'll get any kind of recognition like this.

“ I consider myself one of the lucky ones – I found something I love doing at the age of 15”

"I consider myself one of the lucky ones – I found something I love doing at the age of 15 and I'm now 66 and still love it."

The only downside for Cleaver was that his wife Linda, who has worked alongside him for more than two decades, was unable to be in attendance, but with good reason – their youngest son and his partner were expecting their third child.

While others can readily point to the legacy of Cleaver's long and distinguished career, the man himself is a little more reticent to broach the subject, but modesty can't prevent him from acknowledging the significance of FEGGA and his role in its ongoing success.

"It's not all my work and a lot of credit is due to so many people, but I always say from when we got it up and running, I felt like it was something I would always want to be a part of.

"I got to know these people representing other associations, and at that time there were only 11 in existence, and I was interested in how they fitted into their country's golf industry.

"The journey from that point was all about gaining more

“A few years ago, I would have said I’d be doing this forever”



professional recognition and more respect for greenkeepers. It was also about bringing greenkeepers together and creating a community, because you’re more powerful when you’re together.”

With retirement now imminent, there are just a few hints that Cleaver isn’t ready to separate himself entirely from a world in which he has immersed himself for over five decades – but he will certainly make the most of his post-work years, knowing just how precious life is.

“A few years ago, I would have said I’d be doing this forever. The last two years have not been so great as I lost my mum and Linda lost both her parents. They were all good ages and had good lives, and we were able to do some really special things with them, but it does hit you and changes your thinking.

“All the things we want to do together, and the things we want to do for ourselves, can only be done if we’re fit and

Challenging, satisfying, inspiring – Cleaver on the appeal of greenkeeping

“I will fight the corner for greenkeeping any time. It’s a career that can bring you a lot of satisfaction and it has so many facets. It can challenge and inspire you in so many ways.

“We always try to impress upon people in the industry the need to acquire all the skills they can – from science and agronomy to people-management.

“It can also provide some tremendous opportunities and rewards, and it can take you to different places and expose you to such a wide variety of experiences and people. That relates back to community – greenkeeping offers a chance to be part of something bigger than yourself.”

BIGGA Chief Executive Jim Croxton on Cleaver

"During a 50-year career, Dean Cleaver has shown an unwavering commitment to uniting greenkeepers, no matter their golf club's location or standing in the game. Possessing a work ethic instilled in him at The Leicestershire by his mentor, Paddy McCarron, Dean spent decades supporting the activities of first the British Golf Greenkeepers Association and then BIGGA when it was formed in 1987.

"His commitment to a Europe-wide project led to the formation of FEGGA in 1996 and that has provided a network that links established associations such as ours with those in countries where golf is still an emerging sport.

"Dean's legacy will be felt for decades to come and in this, the year of his retirement, BIGGA could not be prouder to present him with our most prestigious accolade, the Outstanding Contribution award sponsored by Jacobsen."



As BIGGA Chairperson

Cleaver accepting his award



With FEGGA students in Sweden

healthy. We have that chance now so it's the right time."

Longer holidays, family time, and a few bonus outings on the golf course are now on the agenda, but a couple of FEGGA duties will extend beyond Cleaver's official retirement date – just loose strings to be tied up, and not a suggestion that this retirement is perhaps more of a 'winding down', he insisted.

"We have a scholarship programme in Sweden and we're recruiting for those. It runs from April until October and we run an extensive education programme with seminars and workshops.

"I've done most of the work in regards to that, so the board have asked if I would continue with that for this year.

"We're also working on a new initiative which we hope will launch in October and that's a week-long education programme for all the greenkeeper associations. Given the work I've done on that already, I've said I'll see it through until it's up and running."

When presented with the fact that this sounds a little more like semi-retirement, Cleaver replied: "Somebody did say to me at BTME, 'You're not going to be one of those people who retires and then you start doing all these things that are actually work, are you?' – but I promise you, it's just these two things!"

As Cleaver prepares to call it a day, he still harbours aspirations for what will become of the industry he is leaving behind. While his practical input may eventually recede, his emotional investment in greenkeeping and golf will not.

"For all the progress we have made, there is one area where we still haven't achieved what we want to, and that's for greenkeeping to be a first-choice profession for young people.

"There are very few people at 15 and 16 years old saying, 'I want to be a greenkeeper when I leave school, I want to go to Myerscough and do a degree in turf management'.

"That's something we have to keep working for because we still have a way to go on that journey." **GI**

Dudley Golf Club was on the brink. The coffers had run dry and closure was imminent. General Manager Rob Woodall had already told the 130 or so members it was just a matter of time.

Then Covid hit and the Worcestershire club found a way through the hardship, with donations helping to keep the doors open.

But this is a story that goes far beyond mere survival; this is the tale of a club now thriving, with Course Manager Stewart Marshall at the forefront.

Leading a team of just three, Marshall – who had previously rolled up his sleeves as a volunteer before taking the role in May 2022 – implemented innovative and often cost-free sustainable solutions to transform the presentation of the course and more than double membership numbers to 300, steering the club away from a grim fate that had once seemed inevitable. And he did it just in time to celebrate Dudley's 130th anniversary.

The former operations manager has shown what can be achieved through creative thinking, resourcefulness, and no short amount of hard graft, making Dudley's Greenkeeping Project of the Year award triumph a richly deserved one indeed.

"It's an amazing honour," said Marshall, whose efforts alongside Tony Salt and Darren Povey helped Dudley land hosting duties for a county match last summer. "We were just blown away by it.

"I didn't even think we belonged at an event like this, but to win this award shows we obviously do.

"I've seen the effort and the desire from people to get us to this stage and they deserve recognition too.

"I don't think this is the end either; I don't want to rest on this and there's still more we can do."

“ I don't want to rest on this and there's still more we can do ”

Marshall has tapped into the potential of the club's significant catchment area and called on the power of community to get results.

In one instance, a local school was having its astroturf pitch upgraded and Marshall contacted them to ask if the club could have the old turf. They agreed and this enabled the construction of temporary tee boxes for winter at zero cost.

It's exactly the kind of thing that has made the whole journey an enjoyable one for Marshall, who sees Dudley as representative of many clubs across the country.

"The main feeling for me has been excitement. I love helping to produce a product that people can enjoy – they can finish a day at work and come and play golf and the fact that makes them feel good is great.

Greenkeeping Project of the Year
sponsored by



Dudley



Congratulations

Dudley Golf Club

on winning the category of
Greenkeeping Project
of the Year



2024



Rob Woodall and Stewart Marshall with Andy Russell from award sponsor Origin Amenity Solutions

"I think there are a lot of clubs in our position and we represent the silent majority who probably don't get the attention or the acclaim they should, so this is a win for them as well."

The significance of the occasion was evident in the emotional reaction from the Dudley duo, with Marshall returning to his table and burying his head in his hands in disbelief.

That it meant so much to him and Woodall was not lost on the others in the room, and many were quick to offer their congratulations. Dudley's story certainly captured the imagination.

"A lot of people came and spoke to us and said, 'That's what awards ceremonies should be like – you weren't robots up there'. People could see the raw emotion, which to be honest I wasn't even aware of myself."

To top it all off and to extend the celebrations into

Club Manager Woodall on Marshall

"He's just so passionate, it's phenomenal. How he keeps going, I don't know. Stewart was desperate to come and work for us and even said he would do it for nothing. I'm so pleased for him and his team because I've seen the work they put in and they really deserve this."

the following day, Marshall and Woodall took in one of Harrogate's most noted attractions.

"We treated ourselves to breakfast at Bettys Tea Rooms, so we did it properly!" Marshall laughed.

He will now continue with his Level 2 Greenkeeping apprenticeship at Pershore College while he seeks to grow the burgeoning reputation of his beloved Dudley. **GI**

Four examples of Dudley's resourcefulness

- Acquired unwanted wooden planks from a local timber yard for the construction of bridges and reused old materials to create flower beds and pathways
- Engaged with local schools to enhance and promote the ecological offering of the site
- Hosted fun social events in the clubhouse to raise money for equipment
- Collaborated with environmental groups and rehomed rescued hedgehogs



“ I love helping to produce a product that people can enjoy ”

Championship Greenkeeping Performance of
the Year with  **BERNHARD**

Walton Heath



The Walton Heath team

Walton Heath looked resplendent when the AIG Women's Open paid a visit in August, the Surrey venue betraying none of the signs of the punishment it had recently recovered from.

Following the news the club would be hosting the only UK-based women's major championship in 2023, a pest infestation and prolonged drought devastated turf quality, ultimately leading to the installation of a new irrigation system.

Vandalism further blighted playing surfaces but the team put in extra hours – often working under floodlights – to repair the damage.

Delays slowed progress but the greenkeepers stepped up and took on responsibility for reinstating turf on top of daily maintenance and other project work, eventually completing installation a full 12 months after the contractual end date and just in time for a US Open Final Qualifier, held across both of Walton Heath's courses in May 2023.

For Course Manager Michael Mann, the prize of Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year was a credit to the work of his entire team.



Walton Heath's AIG Women's Open team

- Michael Mann (Course manager)
- Wes Lenihan (Head greenkeeper, New Course)
- Edoardo Fauro (Deputy head greenkeeper, New Course)
- Kevin Butcher (First Assistant, New Course)
- Devyn Pohar (Senior assistant, New Course)*
- Jacob Roome (Assistant greenkeeper, New Course)
- Dan Hammond (Assistant greenkeeper, New Course)
- Evan Jones (Assistant greenkeeper, New Course)
- Tom Fretwell (Assistant greenkeeper, New Course)*
- James Bruder (Head greenkeeper, Old Course)
- Andy Gill (Deputy head greenkeeper, Old Course)
- Simon Torkington (First assistant, Old Course)
- Danny Wristen (Senior assistant, Old Course)
- Daniel Shaw (Senior assistant, Old Course)*
- Kevin Samson (Senior assistant, Old Course)*
- John Atkinson (Assistant greenkeeper, Old Course)
- Richard Byard (Assistant greenkeeper, Old Course)
- David Bruce (Construction & Projects Supervisor)
- Alex Lungu (Irrigation Technician)
- Alan Steen (Part-time gardener)
- Gary McKeown (Part-time gardener)
- Seb Paul (Part-time greenkeeper)*
- Graham Goldup (Course mechanic)*
- Michael Williams (Course mechanic)
- Robert Crosbie (Assistant course Mechanic)
- *Left since tournament

Newcomers since the Women's Open

- George Edwards (Senior assistant, New Course)
- Ian Stow (Senior assistant, Old Course)
- Liam Watson (Senior assistant, New Course)



Michael Mann, right, picking up the Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year award



“ We always had that belief that we would deliver”



“It’s huge for us,” he said. “Any kind of industry recognition is hugely positive and you can’t really ask for any more than that.”

“I could spend an hour talking about the challenges we had to overcome to get to the point of picking up this award, and it’s just nice to have come through all that and got the recognition for it as a team.”

The greenkeeping head count at Walton for the Women’s Open, excluding the workshop team and gardeners, was around 20 – a sizeable group, but still on the small side compared to other host venues for majors.

With the additional problems thrown into the mix for Mann and his charges to contend with, Walton Heath’s widely praised staging of the AIG Women’s Open was a tremendous success story.

It’s one that Mann puts down to hard graft and team spirit – values he and the whole hierarchy at the club hold dear.

“We always had that belief that we would deliver. No matter how tough it got, we always had that – but we didn’t know just how many challenges we were going to face.”

“Things came up and we were like, ‘What? Really?!’ – there was always something else to navigate.”

“But every time there was a challenge, the team rose to it. That’s something we’ve worked really hard on, our team culture. I’m always talking with the supervisor team and making sure we’re creating a nurturing and positive environment and getting the team to buy into it.”

“I think the work we’ve done has shown the outcome of that and it’s about so much more than the condition of the course; it’s about having created and motivated a team to deliver something really special.”

From a personal perspective, Mann puts the honour right up there with anything else he has achieved in his career, but it’s also not in his nature – nor in the ethos of Walton Heath – to let 2023 remain the high point; there is always more to strive for.

“We tried to get as many people to the awards as we could and then to win it, I said to the boys, ‘Enjoy this, make the most of it – because tomorrow it means a little bit less’.

“What I mean by that is we can’t rest on our laurels. We’re looking for continued improvement and we’re asking how we can refine things, what we can do for our members, and how we can improve our culture.”

“We’re always looking at how we can make things better, so it’s certainly not a case of sitting back and thinking we’ve cracked it.”

Mann also paid tribute to the other winners and finalists at the BIGGA Awards as, having started out at a club with far more modest means, he recognised that greenkeeping is a broad church with a congregation unified by a passion for the job.

“I started at Lagganmore Golf Course, which doesn’t exist anymore, and there were two, sometimes three of us, using equipment bought at agricultural sales, and we always carried a bagful of spanners and handful of bailing twine – there wasn’t much we couldn’t fix.”

“I’ve been fortunate to work at some of the best golf courses in the country since then, but that experience never leaves me, so when I see great stories like the one at Dudley, it just makes me appreciate the great work people are doing at all levels in this industry.”

“Even the other nominees in our category at Paisley and Portlethen, they have their own challenges too and it’s credit to them just to be nominated, so hats off to them.” **GI**

Life Membership:

BIGGA's greatest honour



I've loved every minute of
my greenkeeping career"

Life Membership was bestowed upon seven deserving recipients.

The distinction is awarded at the discretion of the Board of Management to any full member whose contribution to the association or profession has merited such recognition.

This latest cohort to receive BIGGA's greatest honour have not only witnessed vast changes and improvements in their time, but been pivotal in bringing them about.

John Geddes

Geddes retired from McDonald Golf Club after a lifetime in greenkeeping. He first joined SIGGA in 1966 and was involved in committee work, beginning with the formation of the North Scotland Section from its very start. He was chair of the Scottish Region from 2008 to 2010 and remains involved with the Scottish Legacy Club to this day.

David Hannam MG

Hannam began his greenkeeping career nearly 60 years ago and was heavily involved with the BGGGA before the formation of BIGGA. He held senior roles in the BGGGA and was regional administrator during the 1980s. David was an early participant in the Master Greenkeeper programme, receiving the award in 1998.

Gordon Moir

Moir is a well-known figure in the industry, having held arguably the most famous position in the sport as director of greenkeeping for the St Andrews Links Trust. He began his career in his native Fraserburgh before moving south to work with Walter Woods at St Andrews, eventually taking over from Walter upon his retirement. Moir presided over numerous major tournaments including Open Championships, while always having significant involvement with associations.

"I feel very honoured to have been awarded Life Membership, but it feels strange to have been given something from an association which had already given me so much," he said. "It's largely due to the skills I developed through BIGGA that allowed me to achieve as much as I did in my career."

Ronnie Myles

Myles recently retired from his role as course manager at Buchanan Castle but remains involved in greenkeeping. A stalwart of the West of Scotland Section for over 20 years, he acted as chair and secretary over the years and was vice-chair of the Scottish Region, region president last year and remains involved with the Legacy Club.

"I never thought back in May of 1971 on my first day at East Kilbride Golf Club that I would ever reach such a high accolade," he said. "Without the close-knit greenkeeping family and BIGGA, I would not be where I am today."

Robert Patterson

Patterson began his greenkeeping career in his native Dornoch, where he rose to the position of course manager before moving to a similar role at Royal Aberdeen.

He has been both treasurer and chair of the North of Scotland Section as well as chair of the Scottish Region.

He said: "It's been a pleasure to be involved with so many dedicated and professional greenkeepers over many years, all with the same goal of giving our profession the recognition that it deserves within the game of golf and a profession that is very rewarding in lots of different ways."

Colin Webber

Webber came to greenkeeping late after making the big decision to convert the family farm into a golf facility. From small beginnings, the Portmore Golf Park became a thriving golf business encompassing an 18-hole course, 9-hole course, driving range and busy clubhouse.

Webber has been a huge supporter of BIGGA at Section, Region and National level, culminating in him being the association's president in 2020-2021.

John Wells MG

Wells recently retired from his role as course manager at South Herts GC but remains active in greenkeeping. He has served as both treasurer and chair of the Mid-Anglia Section as well as chair of the South East Region. He has been heavily involved over the years in BIGGA's learning and development activity and is a master greenkeeper.

"I was delighted when Jim Croxton called to say that I was being recognised for 47 years' work," he said. "I've loved every minute of my greenkeeping career, with my Master Greenkeeper award in 1995 the pinnacle." **GI**



2024 Life Members (from left to right): Ronnie Myles, John Geddes, Gordon Moir, Colin Webber, Robert Patterson

 Sprayer Operator of
the Year Award:

Dan
Waring





Dan Waring with Amenity Forum chairman, Ian Graham

Dan Waring of the JCB Golf & Country Club picked up the Amenity Forum Sprayer Operator of the Year Award (ASOOTY).

Managing all the turf and amenity spraying at the Utttoxeter club, he was praised for his meticulous attention to detail and adoption of new technologies to assure accurate application.

The ASOOTY awards highlight best practice and experience in the challenging role of ensuring accurate application on all amenity surfaces.

Sponsored by ICL and Syngenta and managed by the Amenity Forum, the awards seek to share top tips and advice that will raise the standards of spray application across the amenity industry.

Having worked for six years at JCB Golf, Waring has been the full-time spray tech for the past three seasons. One of the keys to his success has been continuous professional development, including a year in the US on The Ohio Program with an intensive focus on application skills.

He also regularly completes on-line sprayer training courses on tailoring the latest spraying technology and innovations from the agricultural sector to be adopted for amenity application. Working closely with Course Manager Callum Wark, Waring's role has been integral in using accurate application to deliver a full spectrum of conventional and biological plant protection products and nutrition, designed for a successful integrated turf management approach to overall plant health and turf quality.

“I would urge all sprayer operators to undertake as much training as possible”

“I would urge all sprayer operators to undertake as much training as possible to gain more knowledge on the products being used and the application technology,” he said. “That will enable people to be more confident in what they are doing and give the spray tech's role the credit it deserves.”

Presenting the award at BTME, Amenity Forum chairman Ian Graham said: “The skills required to competently apply professional plant protection products are often overlooked. Along with the formal training and accreditation process, there is the experience that takes years to acquire.

“Winners of this award have elevated the application process to an art, be that with a knapsack or a boom sprayer, to help maintain the amazing playing surfaces that sport has become used to enjoying all year round.”

ICL Landscape & Industrial Business Development Manager Lewis Blois, added: “We are delighted to support such an important cross-sector industry initiative with a continued commitment to raise standards and improve results.

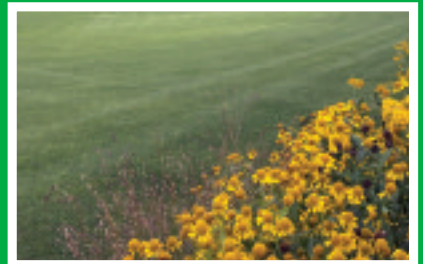
“Importantly, it has identified and recognised the range of spray application techniques and the differing skills involved across the amenity sector. It will provide a unique and vitally important resource for all involved in spray application.” **GI**





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Celebrating success



FTMI delegates

Alongside the BIGGA Awards showpiece, a number of other success stories were acknowledged in front of an appreciative crowd.

Graduates of the Future Turf Managers Initiative (FTMI) were welcomed on stage, Hirsala Golf's Janne Lehto received his Master Greenkeeper Certificate – the first person from Finland to achieve that status - while all those who achieved CPD milestones in 2023 were recognised.

Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Michael Russell and Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year Daniel Martin made an appearance, while BIGGA Photographic Competition prize-winner David Ball was also honoured.

Lydd Golf Club's Daisy Starling got her moment in the spotlight after receiving the Rising Star of the Year Award supported by Players First on the eve of the AIG Women's Open.

John Keenaghan was also formally introduced as BIGGA's new president, succeeding Andy Smith in the role, while Chief Operating Officer Sami Strutt waved a fond farewell at her final BTME as a BIGGA employee. **GI**



New BIGGA President
John Keenaghan

- 1. Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Michael Russell;
- 2. Janne Lehto (left), Finland's first Master Greenkeeper;
- 3. Rising Star Daisy Starling of Lydd Golf Club;
- 4. Thetford's David Ball, photo comp winner;
- 5. Departing Chief Operating Officer Sami Strutt



Outgoing President Andy Smith



3



5



- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| DARYN CURTIS | PHIL HELM M0 | RYAN OLIVER | STEVEN THOMAS |
| MARCUS DAVIES | RICHARD JOHNSTONE M0 | JOHNATHAN PEACOCK | JEREMY WARD |
| PAUL DORAN | ANTONY KIRWAN | MATTHEW PLESTED | DANIEL WARING |
| SAM EVANS M0 | MATTIAS KOLBORG | MATTHEW PERKS | BARRY WEST |
| DANIEL FISHER | ANDREW LAING | RICHARD PONSFORD | PATRICK WEST |
| SCOTT FORRESTER | ABIGAIL LAKER | LEIGH POWELL | ANDREW WILSON |
| JONATHAN GAMBLE | STEVEN LLOYD | STEPHEN OKULA M0 COCS | KIMBERLEY YELDMAN |

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Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards

ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship





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- All the latest greenkeeper role vacancies



Greenkeeper-turned-tutor Mason recommends apprenticeships for all

Derek Mason spent more than 40 years in greenkeeping and when the opportunity arose to give something back to the industry he loves, he jumped at the chance.

Taking on the role of lead tutor and assessor of sports turf and greenkeeping at Capel Manor, he oversaw an apprenticeship scheme that earned the college GTC-approved status as a training provider.

With enrolment numbers up across the Level 2, 3 and 5 schemes on offer, Capel Manor's reputation has flourished, and Mason is a strong advocate for providing work-based educational opportunities for greenkeepers.

"Apprenticeships are a good deal for the golf club," he said. "If they are non-

levy paying, they get 95% funding.

"The great thing about the greenkeeping apprenticeships is that the standard has been written by professionals in the industry, so there is a very clear outline of the requirements and a focus on enhancing the skills, knowledge and behaviours of the apprentices.

"They're also open to anyone, no matter how old they are or how long they've been in the industry. I had a guy come to me at 55 and say, 'I don't know if I'm too old' – he had spent 30 years as a greenkeeper and now he had this chance to get qualifications."

Mason said the profession has come a long way during his time, with advancements in health and safety, agronomy, technology and a greater

emphasis on mental wellbeing. He now hopes to see other experienced greenkeepers follow his example in moving into tutor or mentorship roles to guide the next generation.

"People like me have already got the skill set to move into a tutor role, you just need to be taught how to teach, and any college or institution will gladly help you with that.

"The rewards are not likely to be financial, but it's an opportunity to give back and use your knowledge and skills to help others. I knew I'd enjoy working with apprentices, but I never realised how satisfying and rewarding it is to be a part of someone else's journey and helping them to succeed. It's a great buzz and I'd recommend it to anyone." **GI**



'I feel like a different person' – graduates ready for anything after FTMI experience

The FTMI class of 2023 concluded their journeys in Harrogate as they each collected their certificates and reflected on just how far they have come

Seeing the graduates, who represent some of the brightest and best burgeoning talent in the industry, gather together to mark the culmination of a process designed to enrich their professional development is one of the highlights of BTME.

Jack Wellings, senior greenkeeper at JCB Golf and Country Club, was among the latest intake and he revealed the wide-reaching impact it has had on him.

"It has completely changed me as a person in a positive way," he said. "From when we started in Ipswich to now, I

feel like a different person.

"You go in on that first day and there are 25 people you've never met, and you come out of it thinking you've got 25 people who are going to be friends for life.

"I knew what I wanted before and doing this whole process has made me want it 10 times more."

Fellow graduate Craig Swindells, deputy head greenkeeper at Chipping Sodbury, is confident that he now has all the tools he needs to achieve his career goals, with FTMI developing a broad range of skills geared towards



Meet the class of 2023



- Jack Ashall, assistant greenkeeper, Knowle
- Will Barnes, deputy head greenkeeper, The Berkshire
- Kevin Butcher, first assistant, Walton Heath
- Dan Fisher, deputy course manager, North Foreland
- Jack Hall, assistant greenkeeper, Northampton
- Oliver Kirk, deputy course manager, Bury St Edmunds
- Stephen Mancini, senior greenkeeper, Prestwick
- Chris Naughton, senior greenkeeper, The Gleneagles Hotel
- George Nock, first assistant, Enville Golf Club
- Scott Patrick, golf supervisor/mechanic, R&A Lethamhill
- Aaron Peacock, first assistant, Horsham
- Levi Pethick, deputy course manager, Stoneham
- Sam Richards, first assistant, Sherborne
- Michael Sparke, deputy course manager, King's Hill
- Shane Stannard, deputy course manager, Adleburgh
- Craig Swindells, deputy head greenkeeper, Chipping Sodbury
- Nick Thorley, senior assistant greenkeeper, Saunton
- James Walker, greenkeeper, St Andrews Links Trust
- Jack Wellings, senior greenkeeper, JCB Golf and Country Club
- Bradley White, senior greenkeeper, Wentworth

management-level roles.

"There's no agronomy whatsoever, it's a management-based qualification to help prepare you to make the next move up the ladder," he explained.

"My boss is due to retire in a few years and I've been where I am for 13 years, so it's possibly more imminent for me to move on to that next stage. This process has given me the skills I need so that when that position comes up, I'm ready to step into it."

Jack Ashall, assistant greenkeeper at Knowle, admitted his journey had been somewhat of a rollercoaster, but he ended up clear in his own mind that he was following the right path – once he had worked through some initial doubts.

"I thought before I started, 'I'm going to get myself a course manager's job, that's definitely what I want to do' – and on that first day I hit a bit of a wall and I thought, 'Maybe this isn't for me. I'm quite happy being an assistant.'

"But I went home, slept on it, and realised that was fear talking – fear of doing the hard work and being out of my comfort zone. So I pulled my socks up, reassured myself the doubt wouldn't last long, and I got on with it.

"Now I'm back to thinking I may not be ready quite yet, but it's definitely where I want to get to – a course manager position."

That ambition and sense of purpose is a common theme among the graduates, as is a desire to ensure they give something back when they are suitably placed to do so.



"We all spoke about where we see ourselves in 10 years' time and one thing that consistently came up was that we want to give back," said Michael Sparke, deputy course manager at King's Hill.

"We look at how well the mentors have done for us and nearly every single person said, 'I want to come back, I want to be a mentor, I want to be giving back and bringing on the next group of people'." **GI**

What is FTMI?

Each year Jacobsen and BIGGA invite 20 up-and-coming association members to participate in the Future Turf Managers Initiative (FTMI) – an intensive training programme which has been credited with developing some of the industry's most influential course managers and head greenkeepers.

First hosted in 2013 as a two-day education event, FTMI has since expanded around the world, with similar schemes now operating in Spain, Portugal, Australia and New Zealand.

FTMI has been designed to provide practical tools and guidance to help candidates to pursue their career aspirations. Working with professional trainers, mentors, Jacobsen and BIGGA staff, graduates gain a clear understanding of what the future holds and a realistic overview of the expectations that come with the role of manager.

FTMI takes place at Ransomes Jacobsen's headquarters in Ipswich, online education sessions, and two days of education at BTME.

Candidates are selected based on an anonymous judging criterion, with the panel gaining an insight into the achievements of each applicant, who must be educationally active on a national and regional level.





Caption



“ It has completely changed me as a person in a positive way”

Latest job vacancies

From trainee vacancies to senior management roles, new greenkeeping job opportunities are added daily to BIGGA's online recruitment pages. Our website receives 1.6m page views per year and 55% of those are to our careers pages. Visit bigga.org.uk/careers to see our latest opportunities and find out more about advertising your position. Call 01347 833 800 or email info@bigga.co.uk

First Assistant Greenkeeper

Colchester Golf Club, Essex



Colchester Golf Club is looking for an ambitious and motivated First Assistant Greenkeeper to assist our Course and Deputy Managers in leading a hard-working team.

The successful candidate will have significant involvement in the future strategy of the golf course. Applicants should have a minimum Level 2 qualification in Sports Turf Management or equivalent, minimum 3 years' experience, knowledge of pest species, prevalent diseases and grass species, excellent communication and organisational skills and knowledge of greenkeeping practices and principles. They should be fully competent in monitoring and maintaining workplace health and safety and have A1, PA2 and PA6 qualifications. A full, clean UK driving licence is essential as is a positive and flexible approach.

Applications to richard@colchestergolfclub.com

The deadline is 10th March 2024.

Deputy Head Greenkeeper

Flempton Golf Club, Suffolk



Flempton Golf Club is a heathland course and was founded in 1895. The course conditions and outstanding green complexes are excellent all year round. The club has maintained its traditional ethos and is regarded as one of the finest golf courses in the eastern region and one of the best 9-hole golf courses in the UK.

We are looking to recruit a deputy head greenkeeper to join our team.

The following qualifications are required: NVQ level 3, PA1,2&6, Chainsaw and Digger license (desirable), links and heathland experience (desirable)

The position is full time and weekend work on rota. The salary is competitive.

Please apply with CV and cover letter to

clubmanager@flemptongolfclub.co.uk

Irrigation Manager

London Golf Club, Kent



London Golf Club require an experienced technician to manage our extensive PVC system and associated infrastructure, including lakes, pump house and IT system.

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With a full-time assistant to be appointed, you will be part of the senior team alongside both Head Greenkeepers. You will have access to a fully equipped workshop and stores, healthy budget, your own utility vehicle, desk, PC and iPad, plus on-site accommodation is available.

Benefits include lunch and drinks provided, 25% off pro shop, 40% off food & beverage, free golf, staff events throughout the year, 6 free guest rounds per year and Friends & Family rates for golf.

Salary range £36.75-£40k

Please send covering letter and CV to janet@londongolf.co.uk

Temporary Assistant Head Greenkeeper and Seasonal Assistant Greenkeeper

Tyrifjord Golf Klubb, Norway



An exciting position has arisen for both a qualified Temporary Assistant Head Greenkeeper and a Seasonal Assistant Greenkeeper to join our maintenance team at Tyrifjord GK. The Temporary Assistant Head Greenkeeper candidate must have at least 5 years' greenkeeping experience and relevant qualifications. Flexibility is vital; five out of seven days a week on a rota basis will include Sat/Sun working during the season.

The role of Seasonal Assistant Greenkeeper offers an exceptional opportunity for personal development under the guidance of our experienced Head Greenkeeper.

Benefits include further training, pension contributions, healthcare insurance and a competitive salary.

Please apply via email with CV to nick@tyrifjord-golfklubb.no

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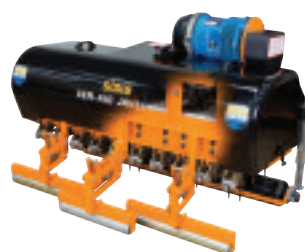
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For more information, scan here or visit collier-turf-care.co.uk



| Formulations | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Application Rate | Pack Coverage | Longevity |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 7-13-9 + 3.2MgO + 0.5Fe + 0.3Mn | | | | | | | | | | | | | 20 - 30 g/sq.m | 500 - 666 sq.m | In addition to sowing |
| 5-0-27 + 4.2MgO + 0.5Fe | | | | | | | | | | | | | 20 - 30 g/sq.m | 666 - 1,000 sq.m | 4 - 6 weeks |
| 16-4-8 + 3.6MgO + 0.5Fe | | | | | | | | | | | | | 20 - 30 g/sq.m | 666 - 1,000 sq.m | 4 - 6 weeks |
| 10-0-15 + 3.1MgO + 0.5Fe | | | | | | | | | | | | | 20 - 30 g/sq.m | 666 - 1,000 sq.m | 4 - 6 weeks |



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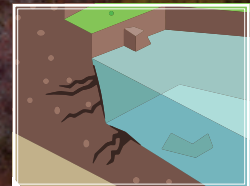
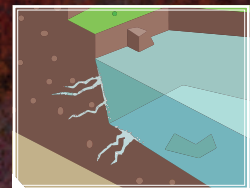
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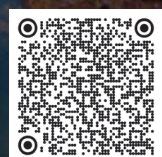
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Practical Greenkeeping

Refine your skillset and expand your knowledge



Greg Fitzmaurice, course manager at Hunley and Master Greenkeeper, on preparing surfaces for playing season



What we do in... March
Club: Hunley Hall,
North Yorkshire

It's that time of year when many of us will be looking at undertaking renovations on the greens to prepare them for the playing season. At Hunley, we do this in February or early March and, because it's not so disruptive, we can get smoothness back quickly.

Timing will vary as you wait for dry ground conditions to get maximum benefit, but you also need to consider what the tee sheet looks like to minimise the impact on golf.

The key is knowing what you want to achieve. There can be multiple issues that develop on greens and whatever the issue, we need to target the problem with a specific maintenance technique.

To judge whether the timing is right, carry out organic matter testing and get moisture, trueness and firmness measurements to identify potential issues. Visual inspections and soil samples can also highlight issues.

As we have slow-growing bents and fescues, our approach is minimal disturbance, so we generally avoid anything too disruptive in spring.

We do have a problem with finer

soils lower in the profile, which become compacted over time and slow the percolation of water. To alleviate this we opt for deep tine aeration to break up the soils at depth, followed by a decent topdressing.

It's vital to communicate such work to all interested parties. If people understand the reasoning it eases their frustration and it's not a shock when they go out to play and often they find conditions better than anticipated.

If circumstances dictate that you

can't complete the work, it's not a disaster – pressing on when the timing isn't right would likely produce an even less desirable outcome.

This year, if we deep tined when the greens were saturated, we wouldn't get the cracks and fissures we want and may worsen the compaction. If we couldn't do it, we'd just have to tolerate slower percolation rates. **GI**



“The key is knowing what you want to achieve. There can be multiple issues that develop on greens and whatever the issue, we need to target the problem with a specific maintenance technique.”



ET data drives soil moisture decisions

New research and agronomy tools can enable greenkeepers to manipulate moisture in the root zone, to better support turf plant health and soil microbial activity

New techniques to manage soil moisture could enable more effective responsible and sustainable use of water resources, and further enhance integrated control of turf diseases.

Key to the decision-making process and achieving more consistent control is better interpretation of evapotranspiration (ET) measures, and its specific application for turf surfaces. The Syngenta Turf Advisor app uses the internationally recognised Penman-Monteith equation that includes a crop coefficient for grass to give a net ET figure, which is an infinitely more applicable rate compared to meteorological data calculating direct evapotranspiration.

Typically, irrigation recommendations on greens have been to continually replace 70% of daily ET levels. However, many courses find that this results in too much water being applied and implications for surface quality.

In practice, most generally find that maintaining a 60% ET replacement rate is acceptable, but in some instances that could be as low as 50%. The model itself is extremely reliable, but each course needs to find what replacement rate works for them to hold soil moisture at an adequate point.

Once you have benchmarked the implication of ET rates for your course, it is an immensely powerful tool to optimise and tailor irrigation timing and rates to fix deficits, as well as reduce the need for hand watering.

Where understanding the implication

of ET and adapting turf management techniques enable the ET replacement rate to be reduced from 70% to 50%, for example, irrigation could potentially have been cut by nearly 28mm a month in mid-summer in the south, and more than 15mm in Scotland (Fig 1). That reduction would equate to almost 1.3 million litres or nearly 1,300 m³ of water saved during the growing season on a southern course's greens alone; along with any greater savings on tees approaches or wider areas of fairways that may be irrigated.

There are now many tools and techniques to manage moisture that are within the greenkeepers' toolbox. Data on local ET rates and natural rainfall enables more effective Qualibra wetting agent strategies to be implemented earlier in the season, when there is water resource available to make use of, compared to curative catch-up situations when soils have already dried.

Read this for:

- Managing soil moisture
- Understanding evapotranspiration
- Using ET data

“ Soil moisture levels have an important role in ITM strategies

ITM strategies

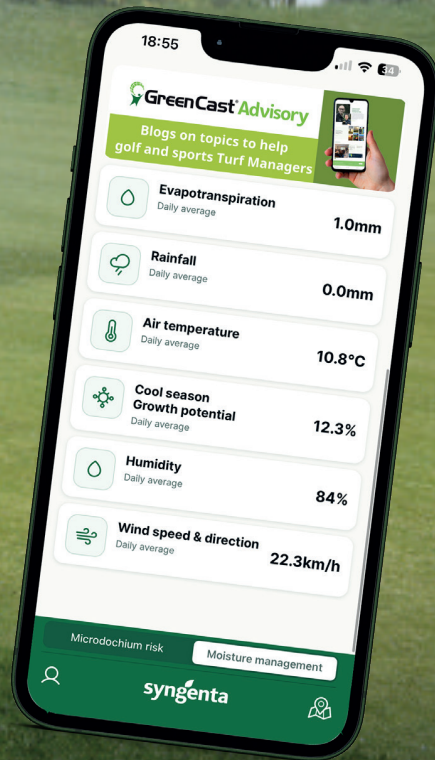
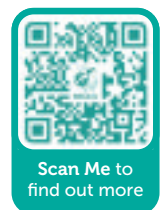
Soil moisture levels are also now being recognised as having an important role in ITM strategies for turf diseases, particularly with climatic changes producing weather patterns that have created new challenges.

Being able to track ET rates over time, and understand the implication for specific course location and risks, gives the chance to develop more reliable ITM and fungicide strategies.

Over recent seasons, dollar spot has been reported far more regularly and resulting in greater severity and duration of outbreaks. Research has highlighted a combination of dry root zone and leaf wetness is the highest risk scenario – which could clearly be an issue with repeated irrigation to counter high ET and dry conditions.

To minimise the impacts of fairy ring, course managers and irrigation techs now seek to maintain soil moisture in the root zone as tight as possible to 20-25%. Tracking ET patterns over a period of time gives a better appreciation of how fast soils are drying out, particularly when that can be matched to rainfall figures over the corresponding period.

The Turf Advisor app allows users to design a dashboard specifically for moisture management, including data sets for evapotranspiration, rainfall, soil temperature, growth potential, humidity and wind speed, for example, that will all impact on water use and requirement, to make proactive data-based ITM decisions. **GI**



Tracking evapotranspiration rate data will optimise irrigation for plant and soil health, as well as playing surface quality.

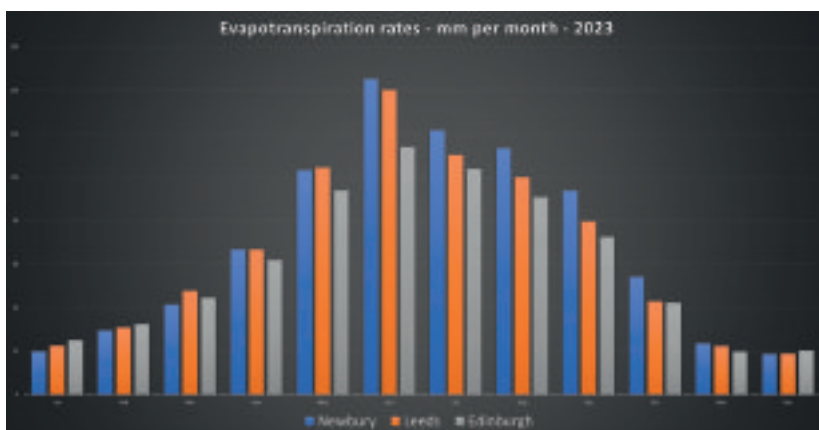


Fig 1. Turf Advisor records for 2023 highlight the seasonal and regional differences in evapotranspiration rates (mm/month).

Turf with a greater root mass is also likely to be more resilient to greater ET deficits. Integrated turf management (ITM) techniques to encourage plant rooting - including aeration, cutting height, nutrition, wetting

agents and Primo Maxx II PGR - gives the opportunity to stay in control with greater flexibility to respond to ET and managing moisture strategies through the season.



Author: Sean Loakes
Syngenta Technical Manager UK & Ireland



Autonomous
mowers:
Cutting the
grass so you
don't have to





Autonomous solutions are transforming our everyday lives and making their way on to our golf courses

'All you do is cut grass' – most greenkeepers will have heard that phrase at some point, probably more than once. For those in the know, it's practically a running joke, but for many others it's a genuine misconception about a profession that is commonly misunderstood and hugely underestimated. But just imagine what those people will say when they find out that cutting grass may soon be a thing of the past for greenkeepers.

Autonomous mowing solutions are not new, having been introduced to the market by Husqvarna as far back as 1995, when small, domestic-use products hinted at the potential of the technology.

Things have moved on quite a bit in the nearly three decades since, with the advent of more efficient and in some cases much larger products designed specifically with sports turf and golf course maintenance in mind.

To meet the requirements of golf facilities, the need for the kind of physical boundary wires associated with those early devices has been negated by satellite location systems, ensuring there are no obstacles to aerating, scarifying and general turf repair.

That same level of precision and reliability extends to the ability of the machines to fulfill their core duty, with electric cutting height adjustment systems allowing them to tend to everything from the rough to the fairways, cutting from 60 millimetres down to 10.

With machines out on the course doing the mowing, that frees up time for greenkeepers to see to the many other tasks they have, because as we all know, the job is so much more than just cutting the grass.

An opportunity, not a threat

There are professions in which automation is seen as a threat, with the potential for machines to do the jobs that were once the exclusive

“Autonomous mowers will effectively become an extra member of the team”

reserve of humans – and without the desire to ever have a day off sick, go on holiday, or hand in their notice.

But according to Yvette Henshall-Bell, president – European Business Unit at Husqvarna Forest and Garden Division, golf is steadily embracing the possibilities presented by automation.

“People see it as an opportunity and they’re eager to understand more about what this technology can do for them,” she said at BTME, where Husqvarna was showcasing its range of automated mowers.

“Because of that, we’ve invested quite heavily and doubled our customer-facing team in the UK. We have technical specialists – people

knowledgeable about the products, what they can do, and how they can benefit facilities – on hand specifically for people within golf and the wider sports turf industry.

“What we help them to understand is that these autonomous mowers will effectively become an extra member of the team.”

With many clubs facing the dual pressures of labour shortages and the ever-present demand for high-quality playing conditions, the option to bolster their workforce with technology-based solutions will be appealing.

It also needn’t be the case that anyone is forced to choose between

one solution or the other – automated or manual – as many clubs operate a combination of the two.

“Nobody is immediately going and replacing all their traditional grass-cutting machines with autonomous ones, and we wouldn’t expect that,” said Henshall-Bell.

“They will maybe try one or two, use them on a couple of holes, and then from there they look at expanding that and adding to their fleet to take on more of the golf course.”

A boon for sustainability

The topic of sustainability now dominates the conversation regarding the future of golf course maintenance, and it’s another area where automation may again provide at least part of the answer.

Pär Forsman, product manager for



The future of autonomous mowing

Although autonomous mowing products are already in operation at many golf courses in the UK, the room for growth is evident and Henshall-Bell is confident adoption rates will increase as those who already utilise the technology espouse its benefits.

“Greenkeeping as an industry is quite good at sharing best practice,” she said.

“I think we’ll see adoption continue to grow as we see the impact of that knowledge sharing.”

When asked what they would like to see from autonomous mowing products of the future, there are some recurring themes among greenkeepers – when, for example, will they be able to cut greens? And what about raking bunkers, blowing leaves, and removing dew?

All in good time, Henshall-Bell believes.

“Golf facilities want to provide great playing arenas and we can help them do that in the most sustainable and cost-efficient way.

“Once you spark the interest of what autonomous solutions can provide, you’re only limited by your own imagination. There’s so much potential.”

robotic lawnmowers at Husqvarna, explained how his company's products – built in a net carbon-neutral factory in Durham's Newton Aycliffe – and others like it can also demonstrate their value on that front.

"Lifecycle analysis compared an autonomous mower with one of our own ride-on mowers and showed an 83% lower climate impact – covering production on the unit, usage, and scrapping at the end.

"You can reduce that even further if the electricity used to power the mowers comes from renewable sources."

And Forsman pointed out that autonomous mowers are a quieter alternative, reducing noise pollution too.

"A lot of golf courses have neighbours around them who don't

want to be woken up at six o'clock in the morning by the noise of a petrol lawnmower, and these automated mowers are much quieter, which is also less disruption for the players."

What about the bottom line?

Beyond environmental pressures and those brought about by the demands and expectations of players, golf clubs must also weigh up the financial impact of any decision to change how they operate.

When it comes to the return on investment on these products, Henshall-Bell cited several factors that will feed into that calculation, including the methods currently employed by clubs to cut the grass, the cost of labour, and the frequency of cutting, but she pointed to some compelling figures.

As labour can account for up to 70% of the total cost of turf maintenance, swapping out ride-on and walk-behind mowers for an automated machine does present a financial benefit over a certain timeframe, taking into account the initial outlay.

"That's probably one of the first things we have to do with customers – sit with them and show the cost benefit to owning one of these products," explained Henshall-Bell.

"We can demonstrate a 30% saving on their cost over five years compared to someone sitting on a traditional grass-cutting machine, and we've seen examples of golf courses saving significantly more than that, up to 50%."

In many cases, the products are not sold but leased to facilities, who are then charged monthly. **GI**



“Once you spark the interest of what autonomous solutions can provide, you're only limited by your own imagination”



Say goodbye to thatch and poor turf health

Polly Gearing, from Origin Amenity Solutions, explains how microbial activity can improve turf health and the breakdown of thatch

One of the most common challenges for groundskeepers is the negative impact a build-up of thatch has on surface performance.

Microbes play a crucial role in turf maintenance, and their activity can have a significant impact on the health and quality of playing surfaces.

Let me explain how managing microbial activity can help to reduce thatch for truer, firmer and more consistent playing surfaces.

Decomposition of organic material saves money.

Excessive thatch build-up is a major barrier to achieving true, firm, and consistent putting surfaces.

Microbes, in particular beneficial bacteria and fungi, are responsible for the decomposition of dead and decaying organic matter such as

thatch. This decomposition process breaks down organic material into simpler compounds to release nutrients essential for plant growth. Without microbial activity, turf would experience nutrient deficiencies and organic material would build up, leading to the development of thatch.

Nutrient cycling

Microbes are instrumental in nutrient cycling within the soil. They convert complex organic compounds into simple forms that plants can readily

absorb. By cycling nutrients, microbes help to maintain a healthy nutrient balance in the soil, supporting vigorous and healthy growth.

Improving plant tolerance to stress

Certain beneficial microbes help to suppress the growth of harmful turf pathogens. These microbes compete with pathogenic organisms for resources, produce antimicrobial compounds, and stimulate the plant's immune response, thereby reducing the likelihood of disease outbreaks.

“When I took over, the greens had over 50mm of dense yellow thatch with black layer below and were rarely in play during winter. We trialled ThatchEater on one green and saw such positive results in one season that we rolled it out to all greens the following year. It has played a huge part in improving our surfaces to allow for year-round play and along with Compost Tea has increased bent grass composition whilst lowering fertiliser inputs.”

Stuart Mason, Padeswood and Buckley Golf Club.

“After an in-depth look under the surface, high levels of thatch were the obvious reason for poor turf health. I was keen to get the biology doing its thing! After our first season of using ThatchEater and Compost Teas, the difference was amazing. We went from high levels of tight thatch to a reduced amount, with it being a lot easier to pull apart and less dense. The condition of our greens improved and the surfaces already looked better health-wise. We continued using ThatchEater in the second year and again with visible results and improved turf health”. **Mark Hudson, Wath Golf Club**



Soil structure and aeration

Microbes play a vital role in aiding air and water movement within the soil profile. Some microbes such as bacteria and mycorrhizal fungi, produce substances that function as binding agents, helping to aggregate soil particles and create larger pore spaces. This improves soil drainage, aeration, and root penetration, which contribute to healthier turf growth.

Plant growth promotion

Certain microbial species promote plant growth by producing hormones which stimulate root development and increase nutrient uptake. Microbes can solubilise minerals making them more available to plants. These microbes contribute to enhanced turf vigour, increased sward density, and improved stress tolerance.

Reduce disruption

Working with soil biology can reduce physical practices. While aeration is an essential part of sports turf maintenance, with the microbes hard at work in the soil decomposing thatch, disruption on the surface in the form of more onerous, expensive, and disruptive maintenance can be decreased.

OAS ThatchEater is a proven solution to reduce thatch build-up and improve overall turf health. It utilises a carefully selected blend of beneficial soil fungi and bacteria known for their ability to rapidly degrade thatch into humus, a valuable soil component.

ThatchEater uses Biofixation technology. This unique process is used to enhance the metabolism of beneficial microorganisms and protect them from UV light and chemicals.

OAS ThatchEater aids in the promotion of root growth, leading to increased nutrient and water uptake - crucial for the health and sustainability of sports turf. Stronger and deeper root systems result in better overall sward density, contributing to a more aesthetically pleasing and durable playing surface. It releases food for fungi which promotes the growth of desirable fine grasses and leads to high-quality playing surfaces. Additionally, the conversion of thatch to humus through microbial activity helps to release locked-up nutrients into the soil. **GI**

For further advice call **0800 137 7222** or email **sales@originamenity.com**



Surfactants and their role in spring recovery

Turf management for the upcoming growing seasons

Weather Conditions 2023

As we look forward to a new growing season it is worth reflecting on the weather conditions we experienced last year, acknowledging the impact these may have on how we manage fine turf surfaces this spring.

Overall, 2023 was a wet year for the UK and much of mainland Europe. Although there were record-breaking temperatures in June and a heatwave in early September, by far the most impactful weather occurred in the second half of the year with a run of named storms and unsettled, wet and windy weather throughout the autumn and winter months.

Not surprisingly, it was recorded as a wetter than average year across most of the UK with some parts of the UK receiving over a third more rainfall than normal. For many course managers this has resulted in saturated ground

conditions, more closures than normal and the pressure of trying to protect fine turf surfaces from damage when there has been play on softer, less stable turf surfaces than could usually be expected for the time of year.

As we come into spring there is a collective hope that weather conditions will be kinder this year. However, it is worth bearing in mind that this prolonged spell of wet weather could impact turf management during the coming drier spring months. Being aware of this and adopting appropriate turf management techniques is good practice and should make for an easier spring.

Cycling between wet and dry soil conditions, especially following a lengthy spell of wet weather, triggers increased levels of dry patch in fine turf once warmer weather returns. Soil fungi or basidiomycete, responsible

for Fairy Ring activity, are also masked by the rain but remain persistent, ready to reappear once warmer conditions resume. Being aware of the symptoms, what to look out for and effective treatments can make the spring period easier to manage.

Dry Patch

Water repellency, dry patch, localised dry spot or hydrophobicity all refer to the same condition which occurs when the soil or thatch layer repels water instead of allowing it to penetrate and be absorbed uniformly. If left untreated, particularly on greens or other close mown turf, this lack of uniform moisture quickly results in patchy, unevenly growing turf surfaces that lack ball roll consistency and fail to respond evenly to rainfall, applied irrigation, liquid or granular fertilisers or indeed any other chemical inputs.



Identical irrigation inputs on a golf green suffering from dry patch. Core on left with uniform moisture and a healthy turf surface, core on right is dry and turf is drought stressed. Annual meadow grass often looks weak in spring – but the cause might be inadequate moisture not cold weather.

It is critical that there is uniform moisture in the soil profile for the turf above it to be able to take up moisture and nutrition through the root system, including nitrogen and other nutrients applied in fertilisers which dissolve in soil moisture ready for plant root uptake.

If water repellency is preventing water from moving uniformly through soils, it is also preventing fertiliser and other products from being taken up uniformly as well.

This prevents the turf from taking up what it needs to recover from winter stresses and reduces the benefits of what can be costly fertilisers. Maintaining uniform hydration is the foundation of sound greenkeeping, everything else follows on from that critical starting point.

Recovery of mixed swards comprised of annual meadow grass, bent and fescue will tend to lack uniformity in spring as the different grass species respond to warming soil temperatures at different rates. It is always worth checking that soil moisture levels are consistent, and that dry patch is not an additional factor contributing to lack of uniformity.

Dry patch impacts water movement in two ways. Firstly, water movement into the soil is prevented, with water sitting on top and evaporating or running-off onto lower lying ground. Secondly, below the surface, dry patch can also disrupt water's ability to move freely through the rootzone. This results in uneven distribution of water, and indeed anything it carries with it, and can also lead to preferential flow patterns where the water takes the



Water repellency can occur at the immediate surface as well as within the soil profile.

"easy way" through the soil, straight down past the roots.

Aquatrols Surfactant Products for Existing Dry Patch

Aqueduct and Aqueduct Flex (liquid and granular respectively) are specifically designed to rapidly treat localised dry patch. Aqueduct and Aqueduct Flex quickly help reverse the effects of water repellency, re-establish uniform moisture content and aid turf surface recovery. Once used as a 'reset' application follow up with a proven surfactant programme, making regular (usually monthly) applications of a suitable soil surfactant on a preventative basis for the remainder of the season. Aquatrols have a range of proven technologies designed specifically for a regular, preventative programme. For information on a surfactant programme appropriate for your specific site, please contact your local Aquatrols Account Manager.

The importance of making regular applications to deliver appropriate soil surfactant technology into the ground prior to any spells of hot, dry weather cannot be underestimated. Preventive, early applications made as a part of a regular programme are key to maximising turf surface performance whilst at the same time getting the best from natural rainfall, applied irrigation and fertiliser inputs.

Aquatrols develop technology to optimise soil – water – plant interaction, improve irrigation efficiency and thereby reduce water and energy inputs. We take seriously our responsibility to deliver products that will enhance water use thereby helping protect the future of our water environment. **GI**

Causes of Localised Dry Patch in Fine Turf

1. Organic coatings are natural substances produced by decomposing organic matter which coat soil particles and can create a water-repellent layer.
2. An accumulation of thatch, at the soil/turf interface can create hydrophobic conditions, especially as it dries down.
3. Certain soil microbes produce water-repellent substances contributing to the development of dry patch.
4. Sandy soils are more prone to hydrophobicity due to their high rates of infiltration.
5. Prolonged periods of dry weather can exacerbate dry patch especially on sloping ground which favours water run-off rather than infiltration. When the soil becomes extremely dry it is more likely to repel rain or irrigation water.

Treatment Programmes for Localised Dry Patch

1. Use proven, good quality soil surfactants to break down water-repelling substances and establish uniform water distribution and movement within the soil profile.
2. Adjust irrigation practices, supplementing or replacing with hand watering as appropriate, to ensure even water distribution and infiltration into the soil.
3. Regularly aerate greens and other close mown managed turf to improve uniformity of water infiltration at the immediate turf surface.
4. Prolonged spells of wet weather contribute to greater rates of thatch build-up. If thatch is identified as an issue, tackle it through appropriate, well-timed aeration and top dressing techniques.

Supporting R&A championships this summer



Richard Windows is Head of Sustainable Championship Agronomy, The R&A

With spring approaching, we are looking forward to another exciting season of professional and amateur championship golf

The R&A Sustainable Agronomy Team provide agronomic support to all R&A championship venues including all The Open, AIG Women's Open, amateur championships and qualifying for The Open and AIG Women's Open. Around 65 venues across Great Britain and Ireland are included in our portfolio with all course styles represented, including links, heathland and parkland.

We work very closely with championship venues and have a collective aim to deliver world-class playing conditions for both the

at Ballyliffin, the Senior Amateur championships at Saunton, the Boys' and Girls' Amateur Championships at Moortown and Alwoodley, concluding with the Curtis Cup at Sunningdale.

For the professional championships, The 152nd Open is being hosted at Royal Troon, with The Senior Open presented by Rolex at Carnoustie and the AIG Women's Open at St Andrews. Such an outstanding array of venues will undoubtedly provide a superb platform for the world's best amateur and professional golfers to compete and showcase their skills to golf fans.

natural, predictable and consistent performance that helps us to stay in control if the wind blows or there is heavy rain.

Setting the foundation beneath the playing surfaces correctly is a critical aspect to success. Through accurate analysis of the soil profile via in-depth laboratory testing, we are able to inform decision making on aeration, sanding and renovation plans and identify both what is needed but also what is not needed. From here we are able to tailor the maintenance plan with the end goal to create the foundation for firm, dry and healthy surfaces with strong rooting.

There are undoubtedly some challenges facing the greenkeeping industry from climate change, tighter legislation and the demand for ever-improving surfaces that are playable all year. The R&A's Sustainable Golf department believe the adoption and implementation of sustainable agronomy practices will provide the foundation to overcome these challenges at the same time as providing sustainable and enjoyable playing surfaces to drive participation levels across the game. These same practices are the cornerstone of providing world-class playing conditions for the world's best amateur and professional golfers. [GI](#)

“Through accurate analysis of the soil profile, we are able to inform decision making on aeration, sanding and renovation plans”

championship itself and day-to-day play at the venue. Achieving this in a sustainable and environmentally positive manner is a fundamental objective and involves responsible use of fertiliser, pesticide and water while also ensuring the playing surfaces are achieving key agronomic parameters. Playing performance objectives are set to be challenging yet realistic to avoid excessive inputs. The championships provide an excellent platform to showcase the venues and sustainable agronomy.

Our amateur championship season in Great Britain and Ireland commences with the Girls' U16s Amateur Championship at The Berkshire, then the G4D Open at Woburn followed by The Women's Amateur Championship at Portmarnock Golf Club, The Amateur

The delivery of sustainable championship agronomy focusses on three main areas. The first includes providing the ideal and optimum sward composition of the turf, the second involves the careful and accurate management of the soil profile and the third surrounds the protection and the enhancement of the sites' nature and biodiversity.

The sward composition of greens across R&A championship venues now averages at over 70 per cent fine fescue and browntop bent content. This is due to years of hard work and commitment by the greens staff and a careful balance being created within the maintenance programme to achieve an ideal environment for the finer grasses to thrive. From a championship perspective, fine-grass-dominant surfaces offer more



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

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