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# Greenkeeper International

## Laurie Owen: BIGGA National Champion 2024

Gog Magog's course supervisor shoots the lowest round in BIGGA National history



### ■ From Your Association

The countdown to BTME begins in earnest

### ■ Sustainability

Five conservation projects you could start today

### ■ Practical Greenkeeping

SRUC on how to approach succession planning



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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

I believe that, by practically any measure, BIGGA is the most people-focussed organisation in golf and the wider turf industry. Supporting greenkeepers, collectively and individually, is at the heart of everything we do.

Reflecting back over the last month really brought this home to me. It started with a quarterly National Board meeting, in which we focussed heavily on advancing our strategy to improve the lives of greenkeepers.

Immediately after the Board meeting, I attended an extraordinary event at Beaconsfield Golf Club. A charity day was held in memory of Robert Reeves, their former head greenkeeper who died tragically young in 2023.

To see so many greenkeepers, trade representatives and club members come together and raise substantial sums for Rob's family was humbling and inspirational. We are privileged to be involved with an industry full of fantastic people.

During the month, I also had the opportunity to engage with the Committee for Golf Club Salaries, a group that positively impacts the salaries and conditions for many of our members, before

**Supporting greenkeepers, collectively and individually, is at the heart of everything we do at BIGGA**

then discussing workforce and sustainability issues at a meeting of all the GB&I golf industry leaders at the BMW PGA Championship.

I then had the pleasure of meeting this year's excited FTMI class as they began their educational journey, before heading to Edinburgh to witness golf of the highest quality at our national championship.

All of this while greenkeepers across the nation work wonders in what seems like constant rain.

It's been an inspiring and important month, and I look forward to many more of them as we build towards conference season and our flagship event, BTME.



Jim Croxton  
BIGGA Chief Executive

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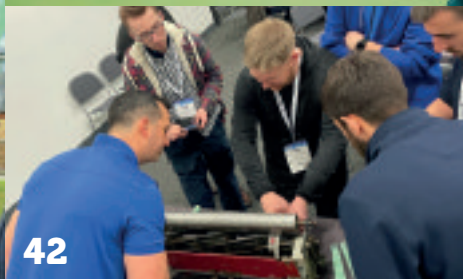
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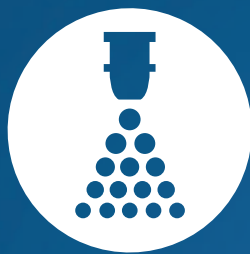
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BIGGA's activities are underpinned by the generosity of our industry partners and supporters. BIGGA's various activities, initiatives, learning and development opportunities and member benefits are made possible due to the ongoing commitment shown 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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*Daniel Spencer, Letchworth Golf Club*



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# First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- Five per cent increase recommended for golf club staff salaries for 2025
- Dates for your diary: what's happening this month



## Adrian Kitchinson's long Lincoln career celebrated

Lincoln Golf Club held a day of celebration to mark Adrian Kitchinson's 47 years of service.

Adrian, who has spent 24 years as head greenkeeper, is moving into semi-retirement as he takes a hands-on role in the succession plan at the club, where Andy Gillum is stepping up to the top job.

In tribute to his exceptional service – which started at the age of 16 after he left school – the club hosted a day of thanks to recognise Adrian's decades of hard work and dedication.

Club Manager Louis Booth said: "Adrian has been involved in everything over the last period, leading on the installation of the course irrigation system, the recent course

architectural plan and developing the strong team we have today."

Highlights throughout Adrian's tenure include hosting the England Under 14 Championships in 2022 and being appointed chairperson of the BIGGA East Midlands Section, and he still plans to play an active role in the association.

"I'm a big believer in BIGGA and all the work they do," he said. "I've never met a bad greenkeeper. Going to these golf days, events and seminars to meet other greenkeepers has been a great thing for me for sharing ideas.

"It can be quite a lonely life out on your own on the golf course, but these things remind you you're not the only one."

To recognise the key role Adrian has played at the club, he was granted life membership and will still be working two or three days a week to help Andy and the team.

"Myself and the chairman agreed we wanted to promote from within when I stepped aside," said Adrian.

"Part of the agreement was that I would do two or three days a week for a couple of years, so the team could still bounce ideas off me.

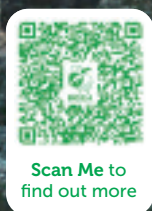
"They've all been here a long time as well and I was conscious of giving them a chance at the job."

Louis added: "Enjoy semi-retirement Aidy. We hope you now have more chance to play the course that you've worked so hard on all these years." **GI**

## The BIGGA Calendar

November: David Ball, Thetford

Download the desktop calendar by scanning the QR code



## Committee for Golf Club Salaries recommends five per cent increase in 2025

Following extensive research, the Committee for Golf Club Salaries (CGCS) has recommended a five per cent increase in the salaries of golf club staff for 2025.

The increases will be added to the salary calculators provided on the CGCS website and take into account the National Living Wage increase, which is set at 5.8% in 2025. The recommendations also consider the prevailing economic environment and the importance of golf facility staff to the overall industry.

In addition, the CGCS salary calculators consider geographic regions, facility size, core responsibilities, club rating, qualifications and experience, ensuring recommendations can be tailored to individual members of staff. Research is taking place to enable the creation of calculators for additional golf facility roles, including assistant manager and equipment manager or chief mechanic.

The CGCS is comprised of representatives of BIGGA and the Golf Club Managers' Association (GCMA) alongside

independent golf club experts.

As in previous years, the CGCS states that these recommendations are intended to ensure golf facility staff are suitably paid and valued by their employer in today's turbulent economic environment. The CGCS has no power to compel golf facilities to adopt these recommendations, but with the securing of new and competent staff becoming ever more difficult, the committee asks venues to seriously consider adopting the recommendations.

Alongside salaries, golf clubs are also urged to ensure that suitable attention and resource is given towards the growing concern that is mental health and wellbeing, as well as providing adequate opportunities for career pathway support, training and development.

Head to the CGCS for more information and to explore the salary calculators, guidelines and principles of good pay. **GI**



## A greenkeeper's best friend – Charlie

Owner: Jon Worrall  
Club: Barton-On-Sea Golf Club  
Breed: Pomchi  
Age: 10 years old



**Favourite treat:** Smackos  
**Favourite spot on the course:** The first tee pretending to be the course marshal  
**Naughtiest moment:** Rolling around in the mud straight after a shower  
**My dog is happiest:** When riding on the gator with Dad



## What's on this month



### Dates for your diary

#### 7 November

The Campey Bert Cross Memorial Trophy –  
Fleetwood Golf Club  
BIGGA Scotland Legacy Group, Texas Scramble –  
Lochore Meadows

#### 12 November

BIGGA Conference, Scotland – Doubletree by  
Hilton, Dunblane  
Irrigation Turfgrass Technician (Lantra approved) –  
Leicester City training ground

#### 13 November

BIGGA Conference, Northern – Toughsheet  
Community Stadium, Bolton

#### 14 November

BIGGA Conference, Central England – King Power  
Stadium, Leicester



#### 19 November

BIGGA Conference, South West & South Wales –  
Somerset County Cricket Ground, Taunton

#### 20 November

BIGGA Conference, South East – American Express  
Stadium, Brighton

#### 21 November

BIGGA Yorkshire Section X-Mas Golf Day – Fulford  
Golf Club

#### 27 November

BIGGA South Coast Turkey Trot – Bridport & West  
Dorset Golf Club  
BIGGA North Wales Section X-Mas Golf Day –  
Welshpool Golf Club  
BIGGA Scotland Awards – Doubletree by Hilton,  
Dunblane



Our programme of local and regional  
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local activities near you





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# From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- Last chance to book a place at November's BIGGA Regional Conferences
- BIGGA members join the BMW PGA Championship Volunteer Support Team



## FTMI's class of 2024 gather for launch event

The latest crop of FTMI delegates gathered for a fantastic launch event in September.

Each year Jacobsen and BIGGA invite 20 up-and-coming association members to participate in the training programme credited with developing some of the 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.

Jacobsen Global Digital Manager Adam Underwood was in attendance as this year's event started out at the Ransomes Jacobsen Factory in Ipswich.

"FTMI will have actively supported over 200 greenkeepers in achieving their professional goals over the last 11 years, and Jacobsen is more excited than ever to continue to support this year's delegates in their learnings," he said. "It is a privilege to not only build and service Jacobsen golf mowers in the UK, but to also build the acumen of our dynamic industry professionals." [GI](#)

### The delegates

- Miles Burnett, deputy head greenkeeper, Stonehaven
- Mark Downing, deputy head greenkeeper, Launceston
- Edoardo Fauro, deputy head greenkeeper, Walton Heath
- Stuart Fergusson, first assistant, Trump Turnberry
- Ryan Fiander, deputy head greenkeeper, Lees Hall
- Haydn Gray, first assistant, Royal Cinque Ports
- Stevie Hood, first assistant, Crownwood
- James Hyman, first assistant, Berkshire
- Dan Martin, irrigation manager, London
- James Massey, deputy course manager, Wilmslow
- Matt McCreadie, greenkeeper, Tadmorton Heath
- Gary Morrison, deputy course manager, Bruntsfield Links
- Sam Norman, first assistant, Abbey Hill
- Peter Pattenden, senior greenkeeper, Carden Park
- Daniel Robson, first assistant, Castle Eden
- Jarno Ruscoe, deputy course manager, Yeovil
- Andrew Sellars, senior greenkeeper, The Grove
- Charlie Sorrell, first assistant, Seaford
- Mark Viner, deputy head greenkeeper, Ogbourne Downs
- Gary Wilson, senior greenkeeper, Western Gailes

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



# 'Now I want to be a greenkeeper'

First Green has now engaged 300 young people and there are exciting plans to develop the initiative further

**First Green continues to flourish after three further events were hosted and a major landmark was achieved.**

Woburn Golf Club and Dartmouth Hotel, Golf & Spa joined the list of host venues in September, while Royal Liverpool staged an event for the second time in October.

The total number of young people now engaged by the STEM learning programme is an incredible 300, and beyond the numbers there is a real impact being made on individuals.

We have been collecting feedback from students, teachers, volunteers and BIGGA members, and it is the words of the young participants that underline how First Green is changing perceptions around greenkeeping.

"My favourite part was about the machines and learning about the parts and what they do," said one youngster. "Now I want to be a greenkeeper so I can use the same machinery and technology."

Another added: "We need more greenkeepers! They care about more than just the grass."

- **Number of events held:** 8
- **Regions covered:** Central, Northern, Scotland, South West & South Wales
- **Locations covered:** Royal Liverpool (twice), The Bedfordshire, St Andrews, Clevedon, Dudley, Dartmouth Hotel & Spa, Woburn
- **Young people engaged:** 300 pupils and students from age 8-18
- **Members engaged:** 36

While the children have been soaking up the experience of using golf courses as classrooms, school staff have also been hugely impressed by the offering.

"I was genuinely thrilled with the event and excited about the potential for further collaboration between the school and the golf club," commented one. "The staff involved were outstanding - engaging, enthusiastic, and consistently going above and beyond to ensure our students felt both welcomed and valued. I cannot praise them highly enough for their effort and professionalism. The trip exceeded all expectations, and the students clearly expressed how much they enjoyed and benefited from the experience."

The feedback from members who have thrown their support behind the initiative has been no less glowing, with one enthusing: "The engagement with the students was superb. It's great to share our workplace with local schools. It was a great team event which brought everyone together with great pride for what they had achieved."



# First Green: Phase Two

## BIGGA's Workforce Project Manager Jenny Bledge discusses the plans to push First Green to the next level



All secondary schools, special schools and colleges have a responsibility to provide careers education to young people from 11-18 years old. Although primary schools are not required to provide career-related

learning, the benefits of starting early are clear. Research shows that children begin to fix their attitudes to work from as early as six.

Currently, the First Green programme is geared at school groups from age 10 upwards, with the lesson plans suitable for that age range up to 14.

We plan to develop the lesson plans further over the autumn and make sure that events are tailored for older age groups (14 and over) where the STEM focus is still important, but there is also an emphasis on valuable career guidance and providing quality experiences of a workplace.

We don't want to stop here, however, and once we move into the spring and more events get booked in the diary, we will be working on First Green for adults in terms of second careers, ex-military and those looking for a change.

We have also been attending various school careers events across the country over the past 12 months, and we encourage all members to get involved in these events in your local area.

School career events are a great way for greenkeepers to share their career stories and inspire young people.

**“Your experiences could  
inspire the next generation”**

By joining in with events in your local area, you can show young people what being a greenkeeper is all about and how it can lead to a fun and rewarding career.

Your experiences could inspire the next generation to consider a future in turf management.

There will be a number of different careers events taking place and many different ways you can engage with young people.

Over the next few months, we will be sharing a database of such events in your regions for you to get involved with, along with launching a host of resources that members will be able to access to help you at these types of events.

If you have any suggestions for how we can help our members with school engagement or have any questions about outreach in your local area, please email [jenny@bigga.co.uk](mailto:jenny@bigga.co.uk) **GI**

### Ways to engage

- **Video tour/day in the life**  
Produce a video of your workplace, which can be 'A Day in the Life of' or an informational video
- **Careers fair**  
Have a stand to provide information and advice on your line of work and career pathways
- **Parents' evening**  
As above with the opportunity to engage with parents and carers
- **Careers lunchtime drop-in**  
Attend a lunchtime drop-in session to give a 20- to 30-minute talk on your job role or sector area
- **Careers carousel/Speed networking**  
Speak to students for approximately five minutes on your job role in a carousel style format
- **Employer in lesson**  
Going into a particular lesson and linking your job with the curriculum. i.e. how you use maths
- **Assembly**  
A short talk on your sector or your job role
- **Employability session or workshop**  
A presentation or workshop covering areas such as CV writing and preparing for interviews
- **Apprentice visit or talk**  
A talk from an apprentice on the route they chose and why, and what is involved in an apprenticeship
- **Work shadowing**  
Provide a work shadowing opportunity for one or more students
- **Mentoring**  
Provide face-to-face guidance for a student or group of students on a regular basis, helping them to prepare for the world of work
- **Virtual/Online session**  
Can't make it in person? Host online sessions
- **Teacher placement**  
Welcome a teacher at your workplace and provide them with an insight into your sector and how they can link it to their teaching

### About First Green

First Green is an innovative environmental science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education outreach programme using golf courses as hands-on learning labs. The initiative aims to introduce young people to the career opportunities available in golf and showcase the skills required for these roles. In doing so, First Green hopes to inspire the next generation of greenkeepers.



Scan Me to  
find out more

Get involved by scanning the QR code

# 'The networking opportunities are unbelievable'



Antony Kirwan,  
South East

These events offer the chance to share our experiences and learn from our fellow greenkeepers - make the most of it

The BIGGA Conferences are upon us and BTME is just around the corner, providing some fantastic networking opportunities in the months ahead.

I have been a regular attendee at the South East Conference, which this year is being held at the American Express Stadium in Brighton in November, and I can attest to the huge value of these events.

Being in the same room as your contemporaries provides such a rich environment for peer-to-peer learning, and I always return from a conference with fresh ideas.

Not only that, but the time away from the day job to chat – whether it's about greenkeeping or general life – is always a reinvigorating experience.

The list of speakers, many of whom I've heard from before and found to be highly engaging and insightful, will ensure this year's conferences are a treat for those who can attend. If you can make it, you really ought to get along.

The same goes for BTME and Continue to Learn, which will soon be here again in Harrogate in January.



**“Everyone looks out for each other”**

You meet so many people there who end up becoming friends.

You will sit down to take in a class or seminar, and by the end of it you will have swapped details with the person sat next to you and added a valuable contact to the growing list of people you can turn to for advice and help when you need it.

That's the great thing about this industry – everyone looks out for

each other and there's a real sense that people just enjoy seeing other greenkeepers succeed, so they'll do all they can to help each other along the way.

As our attentions turn towards winter, I wanted to briefly reflect on the summer we had, which was a good one on Costa del Romford!

We avoided any of the extremes of the weather, meaning it was a little

kinder than some recent summers, and the course has remained in fine fettle.

I have to say from everything I see, the standard of golf courses across the board is improving and that's a sign of the investment that's going into the game and the skill and work ethic of greenkeepers.

BTME and Continue to Learn are a big factor in that, driving an increased level of professionalism across the industry and providing the tools required to attain the high standards we all aspire to. **GI**





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**Oliver McCloskey (S)**  
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**James Smith (GK)**  
Hollywood

**Samuel Walters (AGK)**  
Windmill Village Golf and  
Leisure Club

## International

**William Bowden (I)**  
PGGW Turf, New Zealand

**Tom Martin (I)**  
The Metropolitan, Australia

**Andrew Richiger (I)**  
Turf Star Western, USA

## Northern

**Jamie Baker (AGK)**  
Middlesbrough

**Kevin Caples (GK)**  
**Reece Pattenden (GK)**

Ashton-in-Makerfield

**Robert Cooper (A)**  
Temple Newsam

**Benjamin Davies (GK)**  
**David John Holt (AGK)**  
Aberdovey

**Jordan Kane (AGK)**  
Close House

**Kristian Robison (AGK)**  
Mottram Hall

**David Simpson (A)**  
Sandiway

## Northern Ireland

**Phillip Shields (GK)**  
Holywood

**Adam Wilson (HGK)**  
Castlereagh Hills

## Scotland

**Kerr Edgar (GK)**  
Cabot Highlands

**Alasdair Fraser (A)**  
Southernness

**Daniel Magee (APP)**  
Kings Links

### Key

**A** Affiliate Member

**AGK** Assistant Greenkeeper

**APP** Apprentice

**ATP** Approved Training Provider

**CA** College Assessor

**CM** Course Manager

**DCM** Deputy Course Manager

**DHGK** Deputy Head Greenkeeper

**FA** First Assistant

**GK** Greenkeeper

**G** Groundsperson

**HGK** Head Greenkeeper

**HG** Head Groundsperson

**I** International Member

**L** Life Member

**M** Mechanic

**P** Partner

**R** Retired Member

**RP** Regional Patron

**S** Supporter

**ST** Student Member

**SUP** Superintendent





**John Wilson (GK)**  
Irvine

 **South East**

**James Baker (GK)**  
Sedlescombe

**Joshua Earl (GK)**  
The Wisley

**Scott Lonsdale (GK)**  
**Isaac Peate (AGK)**  
Cottesmore Hotel, Golf &  
CC

**Jamie O'Connell (FA)**  
Knole Park

**Matt Sirott (AGK)**  
Royal Wimbledon

**Daniel Walker (AGK)**  
New Zealand

 **South West & South  
Wales**

**Mark England (AGK)**  
Cricket St. Thomas

**William Farrow (GK)**  
**Michael Flint (M)**  
Meyrick Park

**Garry Letheren (GK)**  
Tavistock



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Jack Wellings, JCB G&CC

Scott McTaggart, Erskine

Daniel Parker, Knighton Heath

Jonathan Scoones, The Caversham

Duncan Sieling, The Richmond

Steven Lloyd, The Worcestershire

Marc Wilcock, Conwy

Steven Connolly, Ansty Golf Centre

Jonathan Roberts, Manchester



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

Tony Long, Golfclub Breitenloo

Richard Johnstone MG, Royal Aberdeen

Marc Wilcock, Conwy

Jonathan Roberts, Manchester

Steven Tierney MG, Golfpark Zurichsee AG

# 'An unforgettable eight days' – wondrous Wentworth wows BMW PGA Support Team



Image Credit: Dominic Wright

The BMW PGA Championship provided an “unforgettable” experience for the Volunteer Support Team in attendance.

BIGGA members joined the Wentworth home team for the flagship DP World Tour event at the Surrey venue in September.

With challenging weather conditions to an inside-the-ropes view of a thrilling play-off finale, the volunteers were certainly treated to a fitting spectacle.

Dominic Wright, assistant greenkeeper at Fulford Golf Club, was blown away by it all.

“Volunteering at the BMW PGA Championship was an unforgettable eight days and I absolutely loved it,” he said.

“It was my first experience volunteering at this prestigious championship and it didn't disappoint.

“It was amazing to be involved in such a large-scale event and to see how everyone works tirelessly, how meticulous the planning and the execution of every detail was. Being part of this was a great professional experience.”

Discussing the range of duties the volunteers were entrusted with, Dominic added: “One of my favourite roles was being on standby duty. We covered several greens over the week, ready to help out if required, whether it meant blowing debris off the greens or squeegeeing away excess water, but mainly it meant we got to watch some incredible golf.”

And it wasn't just first-time volunteers like Dominic who soaked up the occasion. Calum Forsyth, head greenkeeper at Elgin Golf Club, was returning for a fourth time but is still hungry for more.

“This being my fourth year at the BMW PGA Championship, I thoroughly enjoy volunteering, meeting new people in the industry and familiar faces, trading ideas and techniques we all use at our clubs around the world,” he said.

“I look forward to hopefully getting another opportunity again.” **GI**



## The 2024 BMW PGA Volunteer Support Team

- Joshua Burling, Cottesmore G&CC
- Jack Wellings, JCB G&CC
- Joshua Smith, Piltown
- Brandon Wilkie, Camberley Heath
- Dominic Wright, Fulford
- Calum Forsyth, Elgin
- Edd Lovatt, JCB G&CC
- Louis Dunn-Allen, Sudbury
- Charlie Wilkinson, Brookmans Park
- Casey Phillips, Royal Worlington & Newmarket
- Cameron Redden, Strathmore
- Gareth Earles, Cardigan
- Kane Stone, Oakland
- Lee Blackburn, Clandon
- Tom Cable, Guildford
- Jakob Schur, Sand Moor
- Ben Anderson, Strathmore
- Martin Turna, Royal Worlington & Newmarket
- Tom Lowe, Woodhall Spa
- Dan Broadwith, John O'Gaunt
- John Ingham, Tandridge





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# Last chance to book for BIGGA Regional Conferences

There is still time to book your place at the BIGGA Regional Conferences in November.

Throughout the month, BIGGA will be presenting a series of educational events around the UK, with members and guests invited to participate in a full day of learning and networking opportunities.

Members can attend any venue of their choice, regardless of regional boundaries, so you are free to choose whichever event you wish.

Each conference is hosted at a top-class facility and provides an outstanding array of speakers, who will vary depending on the venue.

Royal Birkdale Course Manager Sean McLean will be on the Q&A panel at the Northern Conference in Bolton and is looking forward to being part of it.

"The BIGGA conferences bring together people from across the industry with so much experience and provide a great opportunity to enhance your knowledge and to network," he said.

"I've attended things like this

throughout my career as I see them as a chance to further my education and pick up hints and tips.

"No matter how busy you are, there's real value in taking time away from the course to speak with and listen to your peers – you're always likely to learn something that will make your job easier or help you to do things better."

This year's stellar line-up also includes several members of The R&A's agronomy team, Dr Mark Hunt on the impact of weather systems on golf course management, and Bruntsfield Links Course Manager Richard Jenkinson on the differences between links and parkland courses.

Check the What's On listings on the BIGGA website for the full line-up for your chosen event.

The conference series begins in Scotland on 12 November and concludes with the final event in the South East at the American Express Stadium in Brighton on 20 November. **GI**

## Dates for your diary

### 12 November

**BIGGA Conference - Scotland & Northern Ireland**

Doubletree by Hilton, Dunblane

### 13 November

**BIGGA Conference - Northern**

Toughsheet Community Stadium, Bolton

### 14 November

**BIGGA Conference - Central England**

King Power Stadium, Leicester

### 19 November

**BIGGA Conference - South West & South Wales**

Somerset County Cricket Ground, Taunton

### 20 November

**BIGGA Conference - South East**

American Express Stadium, Brighton

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# The BIGGA app

## Get all the information you need in one place with the newly updated BIGGA app

The BIGGA app brings greenkeeper education and training into the palm of your hands – and it's the perfect companion for your trip to Harrogate.

A one-stop shop for all your needs, the app has been specially designed to give you fast access to all of the career-development opportunities available to BIGGA members, including CPD and Continue to Learn.

It's quick and easy to download and set up your profile. Once logged in, the full range of benefits on offer via the app are available at your fingertips.

You can browse the full Continue to Learn programme and add sessions to your own personalised schedule. Want to learn more about the stellar line-up of speakers who

will be in attendance? We've got you covered, with profiles on each one, as well as a list of the sessions they will be delivering.

With the app's Notification Centre, you can network with peers and speakers, stay informed of last-minute session changes and notices, and more easily navigate the event.

There's even a facility for direct messaging, allowing you to reach out to the people you're most interested in speaking to.

So, if you're heading to Harrogate in January, make sure to download the BIGGA app and you'll be ready to hit the ground running. **GI**



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## PREMIER TURF MANAGEMENT EXHIBITION



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- Get up-to-date resources to help you identify and deal with problems on your golf course
- Get notifications about events, webinars, competitions and other useful information directly to your phone





# 'I've been going to BTME for 20 years and look forward to it every year'



Turfgrass expert Dr John Dempsey can draw on vast experience in the industry and will again be addressing BTME delegates in January

Dr John Dempsey has been going to BTME for the past two decades, but he still gets excited at the prospect of heading to Harrogate.

In 2025, John will be delivering two half-day classes and taking part in the conference, having been a contributor to the event's vast educational output since 2013.

John started his greenkeeping career in the 1980s, and by 1993 he had risen to become the superintendent of Ireland's oldest golf course, The Royal Curragh, a position he held until 2019.

John has travelled extensively and presented his work at conferences and seminars across the globe, but BTME holds a special place in his heart.

"It's always a great week and it's something I look forward to," he said. "You get to meet so many people and your voice is nearly gone by the end of it!"

"I've been going about 20 years on the trot, and since around

2013 I've been doing presentations and classes. After all this time, you still learn new things and meet new people.

"I'm very much on first-name terms with the BIGGA staff and it's always nice for my wife, Mary, and I to see them all."

With a first-class honours degree in turfgrass science from Myerscough College and a PhD in plant pathology from the Centre for Research in Biosciences at the University of the West of England, John has spent the past 15 years conducting independent research focusing on crucial areas, such as turfgrass disease management, nutritional programmes and the use of surfactants.

His work has led to the publication of numerous influential papers and articles shedding light on the intricacies of infection processes, turfgrass defence mechanisms and methods to enhance disease suppression while improving growth and quality. **GI**





## Grass cutter to agronomist: The road to turfgrass professionalism

**When:** Tuesday 21 January

**Format:** Conference

In this session, John provides a look back over 40 years of involvement in the turfgrass industry. Beginning with, 'What was golf course maintenance like back in the last century?', he illustrates the management procedures in place during the early 1980s. Covering aeration, topdressing and nutritional programmes during that period, the session then moves through the 1990s, into the 2000s and to the present day. What has made the greatest impact on turfgrass maintenance over the years? Innovations such as vertidrain, foliar nutrition, sand specifications, plant growth regulators, surfactants, moisture meters, use of robotic mowers and drone technology. John will also cover the challenges turf managers faced in the 1980s and how these evolved over the years to include golfer expectations, chemical restrictions, environmental issues and the pressures this lifestyle has on your wellbeing and family life.

### Turfgrass management strategies to mitigate selected abiotic and biotic stresses

**When:** Tuesday 21 January, 1.15pm-4.30pm

**Format:** Half-day class

Presenting alongside Dr Deborah Cox (Lagan Valley Scientific), Dr Michael Fidanza and Dr Stan Kostka (Pennsylvania State University), John looks at abiotic stresses of turfgrasses, which involve any environmental condition that limits plant growth, plant quality, surface playability and ecosystem functionality. Examples of commonly observed abiotic stresses in turfgrass include drought, high temperature, low temperature, low irradiance, traffic, soil salinity and soil chemical phytotoxicity. Selected biotic stresses on managed turfgrasses include diseases and plant parasitic nematodes, which compromise plant health and function. These abiotic and biotic external factors have intensified in recent decades due to global climate change and population growth resulting in diminishing water resources, increasing weather extremes and increased demands of public green spaces. Regional climate and weather patterns, turfgrass species and cultivars, soil biological, chemical and physical properties, maintenance practices and societal expectations toward turfgrass can influence the relative importance of specific abiotic and biotic stresses to managed turfgrass ecosystems. Four scientists from diverse backgrounds will share their knowledge, insight and experience with understanding, managing and sustainably mitigating the various aspects of economically important abiotic and biotic stresses to golf course turf.

### Data analysis for turfgrass management

**When:** Wednesday 22 January, 9.30am-12.45pm

**Format:** Half-day class

Statistical data analysis is crucial in turfgrass research, enabling the examination, transformation, modelling and assessment of data to discover valuable insights, inform conclusions and aid decision-making. By applying statistical methods to data sets, researchers can identify patterns, understand relationships, test hypotheses and estimate probabilities. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of various aspects of turfgrass science such as genetics, physiology, pathology, entomology and responses to environmental stress, supporting the optimisation of growing conditions and maintenance practices to meet aesthetic, functional and safety standards.





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## Better latte than never – Tom Lowe's circuitous route to greenkeeping



**What have accountancy, owning a coffee shop and greenkeeping got in common? On the face of it, not all that much**

**– but Tom Lowe thinks the three main strands of his working life could come together quite nicely.**

Tom is now senior greenkeeper at Woodhall Spa, having only moved into the industry as an apprentice at the prestigious Lincolnshire venue in 2021.

The 2023 BIGGA National champion started out as an accountant and later owned a coffee shop, but it is in greenkeeping that he sees his future, and it's one where all his varied experiences can be combined.

"I've definitely got some good transferable skills when you look at the

possibility of one day moving into a management role," he said. "Budgeting, planning, managing a small team – I have experience of all that.

"I think that's probably 10 years down the line, and I wouldn't want to take on anything like that before I was ready, but I have some good managers and mentors to learn from."

Chief among those is Tom's current boss, Woodhall Spa's Director of Courses Peter Moore. Having taken the role in July last year, it was not long before Peter offered Tom the opportunity to step up to the level of senior greenkeeper.

It is a clear show of faith in Tom and one he intends to repay, with the Devon native eager to continue his impressive early professional

development in turfcare.

"Peter is very approachable and obviously very knowledgeable," explained Tom. "I can ask him anything, but very often I don't even need to ask – he's very good at explaining why we're doing things. He will do presentations so everyone understands what we're doing and why, and it just makes the team stronger."

Aside from bolstering his agronomic skill set, Tom is also an advocate for mental health, and will be undertaking a course to strengthen his knowledge.

"Having struggled myself with mental health, it's something I'm interested in," he said.

"I'd like to think I can see when people are struggling, but taking a proper course on it is really useful." **GI**



# BIGGA National Championships

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Leaderboard

Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Total		Name		Score	
Score	Par	Score	Par	Score	Par	Score	Par	Score	Par			Score	Par
84	-	25	81	45	-					Robert Stewart	19	✓	
31	86	33	86	64	172					Anthony Padellaro	32	79	
37	78	30	81	67	155					David Padellaro	34	41	
28	90	31	91	59	180					Sam Pate	41	80	
32	78	33	75	66	169					Neil Stewart	32	82	
		34	-	76	-					David Thompson	30	77	
				43	59	180				Sam Pate	29	96	
				57	72	163				David Jones	32	82	
				63	64	153				David Jones	30	98	
						171				Sam Pate	20	84	
						58				Sam Pate	26	109	
										Sam Pate	31	79	
										Sam Pate	27	81	
										Sam Pate	33		







# Former pro Laurie Owen seals BIGGA National success

With a blemish-free opening round, the Gog Magog greenkeeper was a cut above the field

BIGGA National champion Laurie Owen joked that he “would have tried a bit harder” if he had known a course record was within touching distance.

The Old Course supervisor at Gog Magog Golf Club in Cambridge shot a bogey-free 64 at Royal Burgess to sign for what could be the lowest single round in the history of the event.

After coming up just one stroke shy of the course record, former professional Laurie said: “I didn’t know that. If I had known, I would have tried a bit harder!”

“It was pretty special – 64, bogey free. It felt easy. Of course it isn’t, but it was nice to put one of those rounds in.”

Laurie shot 72 in tougher conditions at Bruntsfield Links to finish six under across the two days, five shots better off than his nearest rival, and his display underlined the quality of a player who once plied his trade in the pro game.

“I used to play professionally, but I gave that up because I wasn’t enjoying it,” he said. “I was playing on the Alps Tour, but the professional life wasn’t for me so I went back to doing what I enjoy, which is greenkeeping. Now I’m back enjoying my golf and enjoying my life.”

Reflecting on the experience at two of the oldest golf clubs in the world, where a total of 75 competitors – including seven former BIGGA National winners – took part, Laurie added: “It’s been a great couple of days. We’ve had good fun, met a lot of new people, I’m just really happy to be here and come away with the trophy.

“It’s good to see new faces. We’re all in the same boat when it comes to the greenkeeping, so it’s brilliant to get everyone together playing golf days like this.”

In bad news for anyone wishing to get their hands on the trophy, Laurie confirmed he will be back to defend his title in 2025, when the BIGGA National Championship heads to Royal Liverpool and Wallasey.

“That’ll be pretty special,” he said. “It’s two courses I’ve never played before. Very historic with The Open. Can’t wait to be up there next year and hopefully have another couple of good days and enjoy the golf.” **GI**

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Clockwise from top left: 1.Laurie Owen 2.BIGGA National Championship Regional Cup winners - Scotland and Northern Ireland Region: (l-r) Benn McLeod, Euan Bogle, Paul Teviotdale, Darren Shaw 3.BIGGA National Championship Challenge trophy 4.Laurie Owen goes up to collect the BIGGA National Championship Challenge Trophy at the presentation ceremony 5.Bruntsfield Links

## BIGGA National Championship results

### BIGGA National Championship Challenge Trophy

- 1 Laurie Owen, Gog Magog
- 2 Harri Matthews, Aldersey Green
- 3 Euan Bogle, Stirling
- 4 David Simpson, Crieff
- T5 Craig Davidson, Mortonhall
- T5 Benn McLeod, Musselburgh

### BIGGA National Championship Challenge Cup

- 1 Richard Bailey, Queenwood
- 2 Jack Cornes, The Mere

### Affiliate

Robert Cooper, Temple Newsam and Roundhay

### BIGGA National Championship Regional Cup

Scotland & Northern Ireland: Euan Bogle, Stirling; John Stuart, Newmachar; Paul Teviotdale, Montrose Links; Darren Shaw, Auchmill

### Senior Prize

Darren Shaw, Auchmill

### Daily Prizes

- Day 1 Cat 1 – Euan Bogle, Stirling
- Day 1 Cat 2 – Richard Bailey, Queenwood
- Day 1 Cat 3 – Mark Hudson, Wath
- Day 2 Cat 1 – Jack Cornes, The Mere
- Day 2 Cat 2 – Richard Bailey, Queenwood
- Day 2 Cat 3 – David Fellows, Cocks Moors Woods



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# From links to parkland

## Richard's done it his way

Course Manager Richard Jenkinson is loving life at Bruntsfield Links, just don't mention the leaves...



### Richard's career

1991-2004: St Andrews

2004-2008: Archerfield Links

2009-2016: gWest

2016-2022: Golf House Club – Elie

2022-present: Bruntsfield Links





**Richard Jenkinson knows he has gone against the grain in moving from links courses to managing a parkland track, but he is enjoying the journey his career is taking him on.**

Despite its name, Bruntsfield Links is located in the suburbs of Edinburgh rather than on some windswept coastline.

But for Course Manager Richard, who started out at St Andrews, even having 13 years under his belt on the Old Course has not diminished the pride he feels for his current place of work.

"Going from links to parkland is something that's probably quite uncommon," he said. "Most people would go the other way, from parkland to links, but it certainly hasn't left me any less impressed by where I am now."

"I've been fortunate in my career with where I've worked, but Bruntsfield is a very welcoming club, the fourth oldest in the world with a rich history. It's a prestigious club with a great reputation not just within Edinburgh but in the world."

He acknowledged a "friendly rivalry" with BIGGA National co-hosts Royal Burgess, with whom Bruntsfield share much in common, not least a desire to balance a storied club history with a golf course that presents a modern twist on a traditional layout.

Richard inherited a course bolstered by a major redevelopment overseen by Mackenzie & Ebert, and the work he and his nine-man team have since done to improve playing conditions has firmly cemented Bruntsfield's place among the best inland courses in Scotland. And the hard graft will certainly not stop there.

"I came in after the redevelopment work, and the priority then was really to improve the conditions and presentation to take things up a level or two," he said.

"We recently had Tom Mackenzie back in, and he's done a report for us five years on from the development, so the club are on the cusp of looking at that and seeing what we'd like to do further."

"That may mean changing one or two bunkers, or

additional tees, or enlarging tees, or taking some away – they're the kind of things being considered at the moment."

The site benefits from a stunning setting affording arresting views across the Firth of Forth to Fife, so it is little wonder Richard revels as much in tending to the surfaces here as he did at the Home of Golf.

As well as the 18-hole course and a driving range facility, the greenkeeping team maintain a nine-hole pitch and putt, and although Richard has few complaints about the challenges his job throws up, there is one that rears its head at this time of year that he could do without.

"The aspect I least enjoy is leaves and trees," he said. "It's obviously part and parcel of a parkland course, and

**“It's a prestigious club with a great reputation”**

you just accept it and get on with it, but it is quite a big thing for the whole team to manage."

Despite that burden, Richard is heading into a time of year he generally relishes, and he will be putting in the hard yards during the winter months to ensure Bruntsfield adheres to the high standards now expected of it, just as he did last year.

"The start of 2024 was obviously very wet," he said. "But we looked after things going into winter with regards to some of our practices, like preventative measures for disease, and that meant when we got into the spring of this year we were in a good position, and we weren't really chasing growth."

"We fared quite well with drainage as well, as we're a pretty free-draining site, so often we would be one of the only courses in Edinburgh that's open if there's a bad spell of weather."

"We'll get on top of things again this winter to make sure we're in a good position for whatever comes." **GI**



Founded in 1761, the Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society is the fourth oldest club in the world and one of Scotland's most prestigious.

In October 2018, a two-year redevelopment with the highly acclaimed golf course architects Mackenzie & Ebert was completed. The £1.2million investment has transformed Bruntsfield's course into a par 71 of 6,466 yards, producing a layout worthy of the demands of the modern-day golfer.

The primary focus was to restore and replace Bruntsfield's bunkers to the original shape that Dr Alistair MacKenzie laid out back in 1922. A select number of holes have been reconfigured to account for modern equipment and make best use of the Bruntsfield's rolling mature parkland over 150 acres.

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# 'It's a very special place'

Chris Yeaman has overseen a transformation of the course at what is widely recognised as the oldest golf club in the world

**After 14 years as course manager at The Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh, Chris Yeaman continues to be inspired by its history and beauty.**

Being charged with the care of the course at the world's oldest golf club was not a responsibility Chris – who is 47 years into a greenkeeping career that started straight from school – ever envisaged having.

He had played at the historic parkland venue during a BIGGA East of Scotland Section outing and heard the position was to become vacant, though he didn't fancy his chances of landing the job.

"I thought I'd give it a try, but I

didn't expect to get it because I just assumed there'd be people with more experience than me – I'm a bit like that, I tend to put myself down a bit," he said.

**“It is a wonderful place to work”**

"Anyway, I applied, got a second interview and they liked what they saw and what they heard. That was it – three months later I started."

That was back in 2010, and the many years of toil and sweat he has since poured into his work at the course has only deepened his affection for it.

"It's a very special place," he said.

"We're the oldest golfing society in the world, heading towards 300 years old in 2035.

"I probably will not be working here then, but I'd like to stay on until quite a bit towards that.

"I never thought I'd be here, but I feel very privileged to be here now. It is a wonderful place to work."

The sweat and toil were necessary to bring the playing surfaces up to the condition you would expect of such a prestigious venue.

Chris knew the challenge he was taking on when he accepted the position, and he met it head-on.

"One of the reasons I got the



Instituted in 1735, The Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh is not only regarded as the world's oldest golfing society but also one of golf's most prestigious clubs.

Named for its original members – a 'burgess' being a freeman of the Burgh – the society first played on the common lands of the Bruntsfield Links, before moving to Musselburgh in 1874. Just a few years later, in 1894, they moved on once more, finding a more permanent home in Barnton, a few miles to the west of Edinburgh's city centre, where the society can be found today.

A course of this quality has always attracted some famous admirers, including a few regal players. In the 1920s, the course was a favourite of two princes who would both become kings, the Prince of Wales and his brother the Duke of York, with the former a Burgess Golfing Society captain.

## Chris' career

1977-1979: Magdalene Fields

1979-1985: Turnhouse

1985-1989: Gogarburn

1989-1990: Kilspindie

1990-2000: Swanston

2000-2010: West Linton

2010-present: Royal Burgess



job is because I gave a 20-minute presentation on the condition of the course, and I was completely honest about the condition it was in, which wasn't great," he explained.

"It was quite a damning report because the course was in need of work in all departments, and they appreciated the fact that I was up front with them in laying out all the problems."

That forthright approach not only helped land Chris the job but also earned him the firm backing of the club to institute all the changes that were required.

The improvements in the 14 years since have been vast, with Royal

Burgess providing precisely the kind of joyous experience you would hope for.

"We've made a lot of changes since I've been here because we want to keep moving forward," said Chris. "We are an old club, but we wanted to bring it into the modern era."

"We've changed all the bunkering, with only three bunkers remaining from the James Braid redesign in 1925, we've done a lot of tee work and a lot of drainage – things which hadn't been done for a long time."

The putting surfaces have also been brought up to scratch after Chris and his team implemented programmes that were sorely needed, and there

are plans to address two greens that still require some attention.

"The greens were struggling because there was nothing in place – there was no aeration done, and there was no topdressing policy," he revealed. "We've put a lot of different measures in place to improve things."

"We've got two more greens we'll be working on over winter, and they're just a challenge because of where they are. One of them is at the bottom of a hill and doesn't get a lot of air or light, but we'll be taking some trees down, installing new drainage and doing the work to improve those as well. We're always working to make things better." **GI**



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## Assistant Greenkeeper

### The Ashley Wood GC, Dorset



The Ashley Wood Golf Club is situated in North Dorset with spectacular views across the countryside. We are looking for a motivated and enthusiastic individual to join our current team of five.

The successful applicant would need to demonstrate NVQ L2 or equivalent in Greenkeeping/Sports Turf Management, PA1, PA2 & PA6 spraying qualification - chainsaw certificate would be advantageous, sound knowledge of modern machinery usage/maintenance and a strong understanding of health & safety. We offer a competitive basic salary of up to £30k plus overtime, PPE, additional training, pension scheme, staff clothing and courtesy of the course.

To apply, please email your CV and covering letter to Steve Sanger, General Manager:  
[generalmanager@ashleywoodgolfclub.com](mailto:generalmanager@ashleywoodgolfclub.com)  
Closing Date: Nov 17th

## Deputy to the Course Manager

### Childwall Golf Club, Liverpool



Childwall Golf Club is seeking a Deputy to the Course Manager to maintain and enhance the golf course.

The Ideal applicant will be a deputy or acting deputy for min 12 months, highly motivated, career driven and will collaborate with the Course Manager to oversee day-to-day operations. Requirements include a minimum NVQ3 or equivalent, PA1/2 & PA6 and aspire to NVQ4/5 or degree. Strong computer, H&S and leadership skills, exceptional attention to detail, effective communication and interpersonal skills, and flexibility to work irregular hours.

Competitive salary up to £35k depending on experience, qualifications, inc overtime, pension, uniform, BIGGA and playing rights.

To apply please send a covering letter and CV to:  
[office@childwallgolfclub.co.uk](mailto:office@childwallgolfclub.co.uk)

## Experienced Greenkeeper

### Pannal Golf Club, North Yorkshire



An exceptional career opportunity has arisen at Pannal Golf Club, an 18-hole Championship parkland golf course near Harrogate, North Yorkshire. Most recently the Club hosted the England Golf Championship Senior Men's Open Stroke Play Championship and the North of England U16s Championship.

The golf course remains at the centre of Pannal's development plans and this is the opportunity for you to play a key role in the club's continued success.

The ideal candidate will possess NVQ Level 2 or equivalent and a minimum 3 years' experience. Salary circa £28k. The position offers a full range of benefits incl. 5 weeks holiday per year.

To apply, please email Neil Horton, Course Manager:  
[neil@pannalgc.co.uk](mailto:neil@pannalgc.co.uk)

## Greenkeeper

### Schloss Miel Golf Club, Germany



Schloss Miel in Swisttal, ranked among Germany's top 10 courses, is seeking a passionate Greenkeeper (m/f/d) from March 1, 2025.

Our 18-hole parkland course, with historic oaks and modern machinery, offers a unique work environment. Responsibilities include course maintenance, machinery operation and landscaping.

We offer a complimentary club membership, shared housing near the course (double room, €250/month), and a competitive, negotiable salary.

Experience as a greenkeeper and an EU work permit are required.

Apply by December 31, 2024, by sending your CV to Alexander Thelen: [a.thelen@schlossmiel.de](mailto:a.thelen@schlossmiel.de)

We look forward to receiving your application!

## Assistant Grounds Manager

### York Racecourse, North Yorkshire



York Racecourse stages some of the best racing action in the world over an 18-raceday season from May to October.

We seek an Assistant Grounds Manager with a passion for turf husbandry and exceptional team leadership skills to join our award-winning team. The role would suit a sports turf professional with a horseracing, sports or turf industries background who is seeking to develop their career in sports turf by learning from one of the best Grounds Managers in the UK.

We offer a competitive salary and benefits including pension, holiday and time off in lieu, life cover (DIS) and performance bonus scheme.

To apply, please email your CV and covering letter to Conundrum Consulting Ltd: [search@conundrum.co.uk](mailto:search@conundrum.co.uk)



## Recruitment

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

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

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

Visit [www.bigga.org.uk](http://www.bigga.org.uk) to see our latest opportunities and find out more about advertising your position.

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





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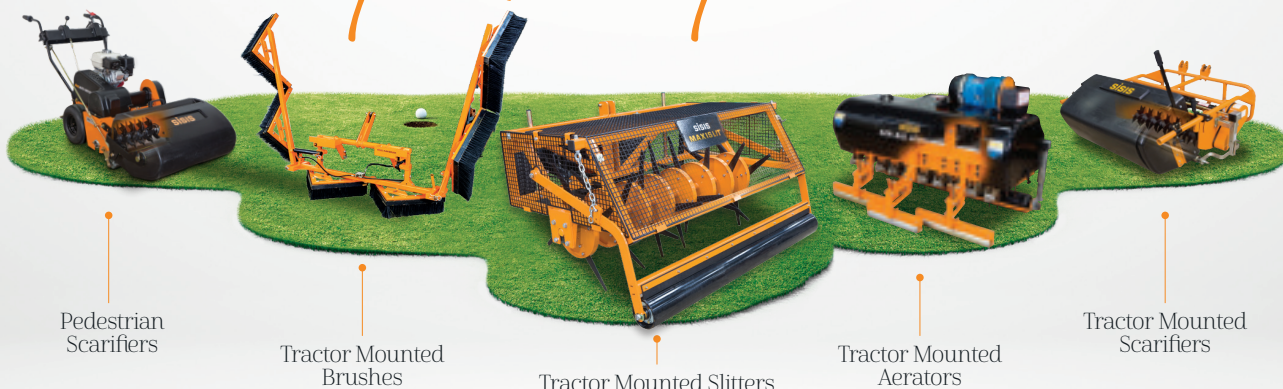
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# Practical Greenkeeping

Refine your skillset and expand your knowledge



**Rhys Butler discusses the challenges he faces at his renowned links course at the end of a year in which rain was a recurring theme**



**What we do in... November**

**Club: Royal St Davids, North Wales**

**Royal St Davids is quite a difficult site to manage because it's low-lying and has a high water table, which presents a specific set of issues.**

It's not a high-and-dry links course - you might compare it to somewhere like Hoylake or Lytham, where the water table is also a big factor.

I enjoy the challenges we face here, and it's been my job ever since I started to find ways to make the golf course better. With climate change, we're just getting heavier downpours all the time, and that means we end up with some very wet areas on the course.

We undertook course maintenance last month: overseeding tees, fairways, semi-rough, approaches, surrounds and greens and we hollow cored some wetter areas then.

This month we'll be

continuing to hollow core those areas that have been most affected by the wet weather and get some sand into them before seeding.

We'll also be raising a lot of the hollows that we have off the greens and converting them into mounds, blending them into the green surroundings.

We have found we haven't been able to complete some winter

programmes because it's just been too wet, so we'll be looking to do further drainage work on some areas.

On top of that, we'll make sure our ditches are clear, so there's no obstruction to the water running off the golf course quickly, and we'll have an additional pump to speed up that process.

Plans are in place for bigger projects to help address some of these

challenges. Our 15th hole is one of the lowest points on the golf course, and next year we'll be raising part of the fairway, the green and its surrounds by a metre.

There are dunes on the right-hand side of the 15th with lots of trees, bramble and vegetation there, so we will strip those back to bare sand and use that sand to raise the hole.

In addition, we'll create wetlands in those areas to provide some amazing habitat for wildlife. So it's a big project but one with lots of benefits for the course and for nature.

It's another example of the work we're doing to ensure the course continues to improve and to provide the best conditions for our growing membership. [GI](#)



**“We haven't been able to complete some winter programmes because it's just been too wet, so we'll be looking to do further drainage work”**

Caption



# Recognising the value of turf equipment technicians

The Turf Equipment Technicians Organisation (TETO) exists to improve recognition, opportunity, communication and education across the industry while creating valuable support networks



**55%**

of clubs don't have a dedicated  
turf equipment technician

**53%**

of TETs earn between £25-35,000

*Source: The Workforce  
& Facilities Survey 2024*



**Matt Axton**

Matt recently moved to Copt Heath as the workshop manager, having previously been head mechanic at The Belfry. He has also spent time working in Qatar and Bahrain.



**Chris Minton**

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



**James Wilkinson**

James has over two decades of experience in mechanics, much of which has been acquired in the golf industry. He is currently workshop and equipment manager for Arora Group based at the Buckinghamshire Golf Club.

**For too long 'mechanics' have been an undervalued part of the turf maintenance team, but an organisation aimed at championing the work they do – while providing a more fitting job title – is helping to elevate the role to its rightful place.**

TETO hopes to inspire the next generation of turf equipment technicians (TETs) and create pathways into a profession that is integral to the golf industry.

What started as a small WhatsApp group between a few key figures – notably Matt Axton, James Wilkinson and Chris Minton – has snowballed into something with well over 200 participants, including representatives from leading manufacturers.

That group provides practical help and advice, peer-to-peer learning and networking opportunities, while TETO also holds in-person meetings for its members to discuss the group's aims and future plans.

**“There is a shortage of qualified people who can do the job and that needs to change”**

#### **Where did the idea for TETO come from?**

**Matt:** “There was a group called the Real Turf Techs started by Trent Manning, an equipment manager in America who felt there was a need to grow the technical side of the industry over there. They had a WhatsApp group and a Twitter account and I got involved with that and said to James and Chris that we needed something similar in Europe, so we started a WhatsApp group and it's grown from there.”

#### **What are the key issues TETO is seeking to address?**

**Chris:** “There is a shortage of qualified people who can do the job and that needs to change. We're looking to bring more people in by taking on apprentices and turning that into full-time roles. We need to be able to provide the education to give people the skills to fill those roles and address the shortage we have in the industry.”

**Matt:** “The big problem that we've got in the UK is that we are not selling our side of the industry to schools and colleges. The younger generation don't even know there is a career there for them. I've spoken to some guys in America and when you compare like-for-like roles over there to here in the UK in terms of salaries and just how





"The workshop can be a lonely place for the technician and to have a group of over 230 like-minded individuals right there with you is a comfort. TETO has remained a professional, positive forum, and I would recommend any turf technician become a member and start to use this resource," Bruce Alexander, technical support at Ransome's Jacobsen

"It's a brilliant bunch that includes leading equipment technicians who have been able to provide invaluable advice and support to us as well as being generally a great group to be a part of," James Cleaver, golf course manager at Stratford Oaks Golf Club

"The TETO group is a community of like-minded individuals who have helped and enabled me to enter the industry and hit the ground running. I've never experienced help and support like it," Todd Bayliss, head mechanic at Frilford Heath Golf Club

"That WhatsApp group is a great platform to learn and discuss real-time issues with groundcare machinery," Paul Pelling, mechanic at Queenwood Golf Club

"The TETO group has helped me with keeping repair costs down, fault-finding and sourcing new suppliers," George Jones, head technician at The Shire Golf Club

"TETO has offered easy access to help and support in an area where most clubs have limited skill sets. There's always someone to help with a problem and guide you in the right direction," Chris Low, golf course manager at Coventry Hearsall Golf Club



### The role of a turf equipment technician

**James:** "Turf equipment technicians are responsible for maintaining and repairing all turf equipment and other machinery used by the facility. They have day-to-day responsibility for the smooth and efficient running of the workshop, including health and safety requirements and the management of all maintenance records.

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

"Their role is commercially effective for the club, as it minimises any dealer costs, which can be significant. It's also time-efficient, reducing the downtime of machinery which can be serviced or repaired quickly and on-site."

they're regarded, there's a huge difference. But that only changed in America because of the Real Turf Techs, so we're hoping to do the same with TETO over here."

### What would be the impact on the golf industry if nothing changes?

**Matt:** "Without mechanics, the industry would face severe challenges. This is likely to become more prevalent in the next decade as the current generation ages and begins to retire."

**James:** "I think the demands are getting higher and it doesn't matter what type of golf course you are. Membership fees are going up and golfers want to play all year round, and they expect the same conditions in winter as in summer. That puts huge pressure on greenkeeping teams and they need to be supported by highly qualified turf equipment technicians who are recognised for their skills and paid accordingly. If not, golf clubs are fighting a losing battle."

### What needs to be done to press that point home?

**“Without mechanics, the industry would face severe challenges”**

**Matt:** "You've got to educate the owners, you've got to educate the general managers of the golf clubs, and you've got to educate the members in the private clubs about the role and value of turf equipment technicians and why they're important. If golf clubs invest in the maintenance facilities and the workshops and give the technicians the equipment they need to do the job to a high level, it's only going to benefit the industry because the quality of everything will improve."

### How optimistic are you about TETO achieving its aims?

**James:** "I'm very optimistic. I can't say where we are going to be in 10 years' time but I want to be able to see progress. People often ask us, 'What are you looking to get out of this?' – and it's not personal recognition, but when I retire in 25-30 years, I want to know that I've made a contribution and made a difference. TETO can help us do that."

**Chris:** "The growth of the WhatsApp group has been huge and there's over 200 people in that now, so that's really promising. We've got people from John Deere, Toro and Jacobsen involved so the interest is there at a high level, plus the support from BIGGA, so I'm hoping it's only going to go in one direction." **GI**

### Scott Reeves, BIGGA Head of Membership

"Turf equipment technicians have always been an important part of the golf course management industry, but as technology develops and machinery becomes increasingly advanced, their role is now vital. TETO is an extremely useful resource for anyone involved in managing golf course machinery, enabling people to share knowledge and increase their effectiveness. BIGGA has always played an important role in facilitating such knowledge transfer and networking, and we are very happy to offer our support and play our part in helping them to develop their programme of events and to raise the profile of this key aspect of the golf industry."

Email [tetorg@hotmail.com](mailto:tetorg@hotmail.com) or follow @TETOrganisation on X to find out more

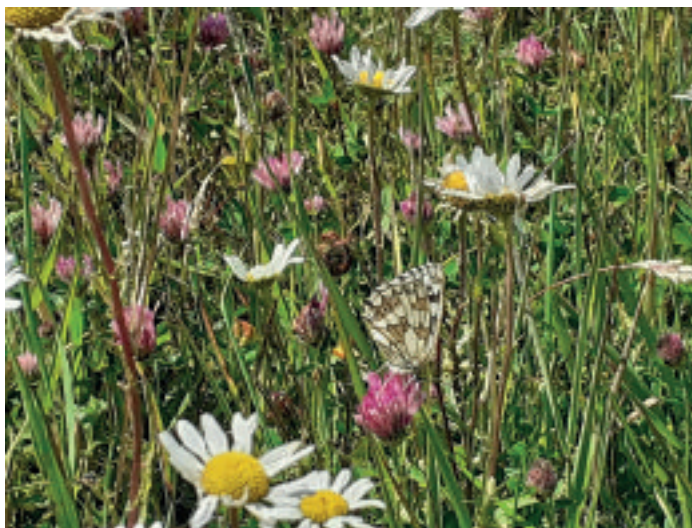




**Five conservation  
projects YOU could  
start today**



Cumberwell Park's Head of Conservation Jon Keepen identifies five projects practically any golf club could undertake to bolster their ecological credentials



### 1. Leave areas of unmaintained grass

Leaving areas of grass to grow without intervention is a great way to promote wild areas that are havens for wildlife.

I know some people might fear that such areas can be seen as a little bit messy but they don't even have to be next to fairways or in play – you could have them in places that are largely out of sight, like a greenkeeper's yard or somewhere on site that's not directly on the course.

Things like nettles and brambles are great habitats for creatures, and they add to the diversity of the course.

### 2. Sow wildflower seeds

A lot of courses are doing this already, which is great to see. Sowing wildflower seeds is another way to increase biodiversity and provide rich habitats for plants and wildlife.

Again, while this can be done in various places around the course, you can also do it on the fringes of the driveway into your golf club or around the clubhouse.

Consider replacing a flower border that might have had just perennial flowers in it with some wildflower seed instead – this is much more beneficial to insects, butterflies and bees.

### 3. Install bird and bat boxes

We have a lot of scrap wood lying around our sheds here from other projects, so I save that and we build bird boxes and bat boxes.

I appreciate not every course is going to see barn owls, but the boxes will still attract birds even in urban locations. Putting up a few small tit boxes around your course, on buildings or on trees, is a really good way of encouraging wildlife.



A course tour

“ Things like nettles and  
brambles are great habitats  
for creatures ”

#### 4. Involve the members

It's important to do things that involve the members and get them on board with your conservation efforts. We have a conservation notice board in our clubhouse that features pictures from around the course and information on the wildlife.

Members can report sightings of any wildlife they see while they are playing. So, if they see a kingfisher or something a bit rare, they can let us know, and it helps us build a really good picture of what's on the course.

If you keep the members up to date and involved, they will be behind you when you embark on any projects because they will see the value and understand what you're trying to achieve.

#### 5. Approach local wildlife groups

None of us are experts in everything so it helps to seek guidance from external sources who can provide that knowledge. For example, we have been working with the local branch of Butterfly Conservation for a couple of years and they do moth trappings throughout the summer months. Once a month, they'll come in and put moth traps out overnight and record their findings. That helps us to understand what we have on the course, and they can also advise on things we can do to encourage other moths and other butterflies.

There's a wildlife group out there for almost every animal, and they're more than happy to offer help and advice. It's definitely something all golf clubs should be seeking out **GI**

#### Why I love conservation

My role provides an opportunity to work in such a nice environment, out in nature surrounded by wildlife. You get outside early in the morning when there's nobody else around, it's calm and quiet and you have the chance to see nature at its best. When you're out and you see an owl - or some other wildlife - and they don't even notice you're there, you come to appreciate why conservation is so worthwhile. We've got woodlands here, lakes, wildflower meadows – they all offer something different and something worth looking after.





Members attend a conservation talk



#### About Jon

Jon started in greenkeeping in 2012 as an assistant at Cumberwell Park, in Wiltshire, and is now the club's head of conservation, having nurtured a lifelong passion for the subject.

In 2021, he was named Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year at the Golf Environment Awards, a prize given to outstanding individuals who make significant contributions to the success of environmental and ecological management, making a positive impact on the surrounding landscape and biodiversity.

His efforts have had a transformative impact on the 54-hole site, where over 150 acres has been converted to rough grassland, creating green corridors for creatures great and small. Last year, Cumberwell Park achieved GEO Certified status.

Jon engages in conservation work away from the golf course, assisting the local community and wildlife groups, and has also recently earned a C licence to ring owls and kestrels.





# The Irrigation Workshop



John Kidson, of JK Irrigation Ltd, is hosting a series of irrigation workshops in the South East Region in December.

**Irrigation professional John Kidson is bringing his expertise to bear in a series of workshops next month.**

The managing director of JK Irrigation Ltd has over two decades of experience within the sports turf and pumping industries and he knows the vital importance of having a sound understanding of water management and system installations on golf courses. John, who previously studied at Merrist Wood and Plumpton College, wants to share his knowledge to help others develop an understanding and passion for water sustainability.

"I've always worked within the sports turf and mechanical industries" he said. "I started off as a greenkeeper and naturally evolved into an irrigation tech role, then onto larger scale projects, full course installations, pump sets and project management."

Speaking about the workshops that are on offer across three dates in December, John stressed the practical nature of the sessions.

"The workshops provide a hands-on learning experience that really delivers the key information in a way that is engaging and easy to understand," he said.

"We noticed a gap in the market for this kind of training and that's why we started offering these workshops. We've since had over 100 attendees and the feedback we get is always excellent." **GI**

## What's on offer at the workshop?

Industry training requirements continue to evolve and JK Irrigation and BIGGA recognise the importance of providing courses that are designed not only to improve and maintain professional standards, but also result in savings through greater efficiency in irrigation practice.

The BIGGA South East Region Irrigation Workshop is split between 50% practical and 50% theory, which embraces managing irrigation installations safely and efficiently through correct procedures and product selection.

**When:** 7am-1pm on 4, 11 and 18 December

**Where:** JK Irrigation, Enterprise Way, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 6HF

**Cost:** £50.00 per BIGGA member

**“The workshops provide a hands-on learning experience”**





**BERNHARD**  
ACADEMY

# Bernhard Academy announces autumn workshops

The Bernhard Academy has announced its autumn programme of educational workshops, designed to provide essential skills and knowledge to turf professionals and those managing maintenance equipment.

Created based on feedback from an industry-wide survey conducted earlier this year, the workshops will cover key topics of interest to professionals in the sports turf management sector.

The workshops will be held at the Bernhard Academy in Haverhill, in addition to other Academy hubs and selected venues around the UK. Attendees of the Haverhill workshops will also be treated to a tour of the Bernhard and Company production facility, offering an exclusive opportunity to see the renowned Bernhard Express Dual and Anglemaster grinding machines being manufactured.

Sami Strutt, education director for the Bernhard Academy, expressed her enthusiasm for the upcoming workshops:

"We're delighted to unveil this latest programme, which reflects the needs of the industry as highlighted in our recent survey.

"The workshops are designed to equip turf professionals with the knowledge and tools necessary to excel in their roles, whether on the course, with their teams or in the office."

The Bernhard Academy has evolved from primarily offering cutting unit set-up workshops to now providing a broader range of courses that address the diverse needs of turf professionals. With the inclusion of topics such as compliance for turf managers and financial management, the Academy is now able to offer more well-rounded workshops that benefit attendees in all aspects of their day-to-day responsibilities.

This expanded curriculum ensures that turf professionals and equipment managers not only hone their technical skills but also gain valuable learnings into better managing budgets and ensuring regulatory compliance, further enhancing their professional development. **GI**



**The autumn programme includes the following workshops:**

- Cutting Unit Set-up and Sharpening Techniques
- Principles of Benchmarking Sports Turf Surfaces
- Compliance for Turf Managers
- Financial Management: Bulletproof Budgeting



Scan Me to  
find out more

**“The workshops are designed to equip turf professionals with the knowledge and tools necessary to excel in their roles”**



# How to approach succession planning

Ian Butcher, programme leader and senior lecturer in golf course management at the SRUC, explores how golf clubs can develop and retain their best employees

Wherever I travel to golf venues I hear one consistent management issue again and again: finding good staff.

Now, the definition of good might vary among us. As an example of a core skill set, when I consider the SRUC learning community, I witness those greenkeepers: capable of high-quality work; happy to work with others; communicating and understanding ideas; and, at management level, problem solvers. In this article I will suggest adopting succession planning as a fresh approach to attract, retain and reward such talent within our teams, irrespective of age or gender.

In an ideal world our short, medium and long-term plans are clearly mapped out, resources are in place and our team members are fully capable of contributing, supervising, leading on these plans, over time.

Succession planning is a concept to protect this happy state of affairs from adverse change, firstly by identifying the talent pipeline within a team and then facilitating ongoing learning and continuing professional development (CPD) to nurture that talent. "To be prepared is half the battle", and retention is key.

However, research has revealed that fewer than one in 10 UK businesses have succession planning fully integrated into their practice, despite 30% of companies demonstrating a widespread recognition of its importance.

There are significant factors at play in our workforce that justify spending time creating a succession plan across your golf operations.

## Generation gaps

It has been identified by educationalists such as Purdue Global that there are, for the first time in history, five defined generations in the workplace.

Dr Paul Redmond, of the University of Liverpool, said: "The psychological contract between employers and Generation Z, as just one example, is challenging all sectors. This generation are looking for a lifestyle where work has its place but does not dictate their choices. They want to develop themselves and, to do so, seek constant feedback and support."

Perhaps Dr Redmond's most cautionary comment when discussing the issue of meaningful workplace dialogue is that: "Young people are more likely to leave line managers than organisations."

If we look, we can find an understanding between managers and new recruits.

"As a young person I am looking for the opportunity to apply myself – to see a clear path ahead. It's great working for an employer who sees that too," said Bryce Ketterhagen, 21, talking about his employer at Whistling Straits,

## Technology

A second feature of our changing world is the need for employee knowledge and skillsets to adapt to new technologies, data-led management approaches, even rising golfers' expectations across the member/visitor experience. Without minimising the risk to losing staff and improved





standard operating procedures (SOPs), greenkeeping teams may not maintain or improve on their hard-earned reputations.

### Employee turnover

According to research, the pace of employee turnover is now forecast to be 50–75% higher than UK companies have experienced previously, and the issue is compounded by it taking 18% longer to fill roles than pre-pandemic. Increasingly managers are spending time they don't have searching for new recruits in an expensive and competitive market.

So, what does succession planning look like in practice? Best practices have been widely identified and documented. Academic William J. Rothwell, for example, identified core elements as early as 2005 and has recently written on the subject again in 2023 in *Succession Planning for Small and Family Businesses, Navigating Successful Transitions*.

### Getting Started

Begin by securing support from the board or committee. A succession plan must be relevant to the whole organisation and be part of a regular performance review process. It is not a one-off event. Line managers are the most appropriately placed to identify talent, motivation and potential for development within the team. Flexibility with individuals, such as adapting a career plan, should always be built in.

## GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE WORKPLACE



### TRADITIONALISTS | Born: 1925-1945

Dependable | Straightforward | Tactful | Loyal

Shaped by The Great Depression, World War 2, radio and movies. Motivated by respect, recognition, providing long-term value to the company.



### BABY BOOMERS | Born: 1946-1964

Optimistic | Competitive | Workaholic | Team-orientated

Shaped by the Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, Watergate. Motivated by company loyalty, teamwork, duty.



Baby Boomers who are working past age 70 or do not plan to retire

**10,000**

Baby Boomers reach retirement age every day



### GENERATION X | Born: 1965-1980

Flexible | Informal | Sceptical | Independent

Shaped by the AIDS epidemic, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dot-com boom. Motivated by diversity, work-life balance, personal professional interest.



Startup founders who are Gen Xers – the highest percentage

**BY 2025**

Gen Xers will outnumber Baby Boomers



### MILLENNIALS | Born: 1981-2000

Competitive | Civic and open-minded | Achievement-orientated

Shaped by 9/11, the internet. Motivated by responsibility, the quality of their manager, unique work experiences.



Percentage of global workforce to be made up of Millennials by 2025

**18% | 12%**

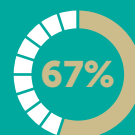
Millennials aged 25-34 living at home with their parents



### GENERATION Z | Born: 2001-2020

Global | Entrepreneurial | Progressive | Less Focused

Shaped by the Great Recession, access to technology from a young age. Motivated by diversity, personalisation, individuality, creativity.



Gen Zs who want to work at companies where they can learn skills to advance their careers

**80%**

Gen Zs who believe government and employers should subsidise, pay full tuition or provide direct training for students



### Review Requirements

Succession planning spans a range of operational levels and practices, not just a single role. Talented, motivated staff can be prepared for areas most attractive to them, including specialisms and other areas of the golf operation.

Competencies at various levels should be identified, and formal education has a role to play here, whether it be a foundation level apprenticeship or a degree in business management. It is important that line managers understand what is required at the next level. This, of course, can be compared to a Business Continuity Plan, a system of strategies and protocols that help a business continue critical functions during disruptions or challenges. The succession part relates to the human element.

"The value of promoting someone already in the team is they know what the direction of travel is," said Tim Bartz, greenkeeper at Whistling Straits. "They can keep the long-term stuff going according to the original intentions. If you bring someone in from the outside, there is a risk of being taken in a completely new direction, and if it doesn't work out you have to rebuild whatever it is you already had."

### Prioritising key roles

Not all positions within a team are equally critical for consideration. Key departures need to be prepared for so, if it happens, it's not a 'what do we now' moment. There is opportunity to identify potential within the team for internal promotions and meet the expectations of Generation Z, for example. Or attract new people to the greenkeeping team.

A perspective on the importance of finding local talent is offered by Jerry Mulvihill, course manager at Lofoten Links in Norway: "We are based in a rural area, where local people are starting to see the golf industry as a reliable employment option, with so many visitors to our venue. So, if we have a local community, let's train them up, invest in a workforce that isn't going to come and go who see us a lifelong employer for themselves or their family."

### Transparent communication and feedback

Dialogue and feedback should be open and part of CPD. Diverse experience is to be encouraged.

Helen Tupper and Sarah Ellis, hosts of the podcast Squiggly Careers, recommend career conversations that go beyond the 'what you can do' to include the 'how you contribute', which builds confidence in individuals. Introductions to a wider network, through volunteering or job swaps with other clubs, can benefit the whole club. The purpose of high-quality career conversations should be two-fold - to give employees the permission to be curious about career progression and provide practical support to make progress.

And if this approach means individuals see promotion elsewhere, then that can be a good thing.

"We invest heavily in our staff, both internal training, external training, including work overseas, and carrying out volunteering opportunities at high-end PGA or more local events," said Iain Dye, course manager at the Royal Automobile Club. "Succession planning is a key business aim. Having a good pool of talent, which has been heavily invested in by the club, gives us the opportunity to fill roles, if and when they become available. We fully understand that we can't promote everyone, but if staff that have been invested in by the club leave and go elsewhere, they will spread the word, and it breeds a positive reputation locally."

"Staff members can always come back again in the future, in more senior roles. If they do come back, they'll have gained valuable experience elsewhere."

Finally, succession planning should be measured for the benefits it brings, including improved job satisfaction, improved participation in learning, increased retention and the adoption of new fresh ideas and innovations.

### Summary

If we are to be resilient to a changing world, considering the impact of key personnel moving on would be wise.

A structured, consistent approach suitable to each venue is a means of managing the dynamics of diverse generations within any greenkeeping team. It can build resilience to change and inspire individuals and organisations to think ahead, rather than passively wait for change to arrive.

Much of the process has to do with identifying potential, or "the capacity to transition to the next level where substantive new skills are required". Leading a team using this approach means making sure the right people are in the right roles. It doesn't have to be bureaucratic, but through open communications around potential, a genuine enthusiasm can be built up that is transferable.

Originally, I wanted to identify a formal process between line managers and their teams, but succession planning can just be more informal, honest conversations between ourselves about the work we do now and in the future. **GI**

### About SRUC

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# Withstand the winter rain



Meldrum House is well equipped to withstand wetter winters with versatile Verti-Drain and Carrier

Meldrum House have become the latest golf course in a rapidly growing list to praise the versatility and effective aeration delivered by a Carrier and Verti-Drain 1513 from Redexim. Delivered in June 2024 by HRN Tractors, the combination has already been put through its paces, hollow coring the greens and handling the undulations of the site with ease, as Golf Course and Grounds Manager Kenny Harper looks to increase aeration to better withstand increasingly wetter winters.

This latest purchase is part of major ongoing investment by the new owners of Meldrum House, Apex Hotels Ltd, as they look to build on the course's reputation as one of the finest facilities in Scotland – nestled into the parkland surroundings of Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire. That claim means that client expectations are high when it comes to course condition, with Kenny supported by a team of ten on the year-round maintenance. "Last winter was one of the wettest on record which is making most elements of our job more difficult and means operations like aeration are more important than ever" Kenny explains.

"We tried all makes and models of tractor mounted aerator then contacted HRN Tractors, who we know quite well, about the Redexim Carrier and Verti-Drain. HRN's Wilson Morrison, together with Allen Whellans from Redexim, were both on the ball from the very first phone call. They arrived on time and the demonstration was impressive - the build quality in particular filled us all with the confidence that the machines

are going to last. Ticking all the boxes, we took delivery in June and are so happy with our decision."

He continues, "The variation in working depth, together with the range of tine options available, is something we really like and gives us much greater versatility and flexibility than our previous aeration set-up. We've already hollow cored with 8mm tines and can swap these for solid tines and work down to depths of six inches which we've not been able to do before and will significantly improve our greens drainage."

The Verti-Drain 1513 offers high-speed, low disturbance aeration. Paired up with the Redexim Carrier, the combination offers a lightweight solution for annual maintenance on sensitive turf areas such as golf greens. "The Carrier is powered by a 31hp engine so we've effectively gained a power unit which we can use with a range of implements. It's also fantastic and easy to control over the contours on our site."

"This was our first experience of Redexim and we went into it with a 'nothing ventured' attitude but we've definitely 'gained' an incredibly versatile set-up and hopefully the course and the members will all gain too as a result" he concludes.

For more information email [info@redeximuk.com](mailto:info@redeximuk.com) or call **01428 661222**



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# Fungicide longevity explained

As we move into winter and a key turf disease control period, one of the questions repeatedly asked is 'How long will my fungicide last?'

**Fungicide longevity is especially relevant with this season's conditions resulting in dollar spot and anthracnose outbreaks rolling on, and already creating serious challenges for microdochium patch pressure.**

What is increasingly apparent is that with climatic changes to weather patterns, decisions need to be made on conditions at any given time, rather than historical choices made on seasonal dates.

Scientific measurement of the fungicide's active ingredient's half-life can tell how much physically remains in or on a leaf, under a given set of labora-

tory conditions. However, for day-to-day turf management a huge number of variables influence how long the effects of a fungicide application will last in practice.

This comes down to:

- How effective the fungicide has

#### Read this for:

- Autumn fungicide strategy
- Disease forecasting
- Application advice

been in reducing the primary pathogen population

- How large the pathogen population was at time of application
- How well the application was made
- Prevailing conditions that will allow the disease to develop, primarily temperature and leaf wetness
- The greenkeepers' skills to influence and adapt conditions

Understanding how those variables will impact on results is important in creating an effective preventative fungicide programme, as well as the knowledge to adapt the programme



New techniques to optimise fungicide application timing can help get longer protection from disease outbreaks.

to conditions that will optimise performance.

Trials have demonstrated Integrated Turf Management (ITM), which combines cultural techniques to make conditions less favourable for disease and plants more resilient to the effects of infection, will slow down the build-up of disease and extend results from fungicide treatments.

### Disease knockdown

The impact of initial disease pathogen knockdown has one of the biggest effects on how fast the population can recover back to damaging levels. The potency of the selected active ingredient against the specific target pathogen is crucial, along with the mode of action appropriate to the time of year and conditions.

Today's fungicides primarily work most effectively to prevent the early stages of disease infection. Since that is before any signs of infection are visible on the leaf, it is reliant on risk assessment based on greenkeepers' experience and conditions, along with weather and disease forecasting to pre-empt when and where disease is likely to breakout.

The development of more sophisticated disease models, now available in the Turf Advisor App, along with digital mapping will further help with decision making in the future, with better timing of fungicide treatments guided by the app giving longer lasting results.

### Decline rates

Once applied, a fungicide's active ingredient starts to naturally breakdown into its constituent chemicals. The rate at which that change occurs depends on a number of factors, including:

- Exposure to light
- pH
- Plant absorption
- Plant metabolism
- Microbial activity
- Temperature

In most instances this is directly related to temperature – the warmer the conditions the faster the breakdown. It's no coincidence that warmer temperatures directly correlate to higher levels of growth and potential dilution of active in or on the leaf; with any re-

duction of effectiveness of a fungicide often associated with "growing out".

Where a fungicide is taken up by the root or crown of the plant, that can act as a reservoir to replenish the active in the growing leaf for longer periods. One new Syngenta active, which is taken up by the crown and leaf axils, for example, has been shown to have no apparent loss in concentration in the leaf 10 days after application.

### Day degree limitations

The fact that fungicide actives naturally decline faster at higher temperatures would suggest that applications based on Growing Day Degrees (GDD) would be a useful guide. Whilst it does have merit, the fact that each active declines at different rates would require a different GDD for each product. It also takes little account of other factors, including the fungicide's mode of action, clipping removal or climatic influence on disease pressure.

Furthermore, if the GDD were reached and a further fungicide applied at a time when disease pressure was low; it could be largely unnecessary, or may even be counter-productive if risk then rises when the optimum efficacy of the treatment had expired.

However, using temperature as a measure to think about timings, combined with enhanced disease modelling, has helped many turf managers move away from the simple calendar-based "monthly application".

The move now is to think more about adjusting application windows based on the weather conditions and amount of disease pressure, along with looking forward to predict future disease pressure and identify suitable application windows. **GI**

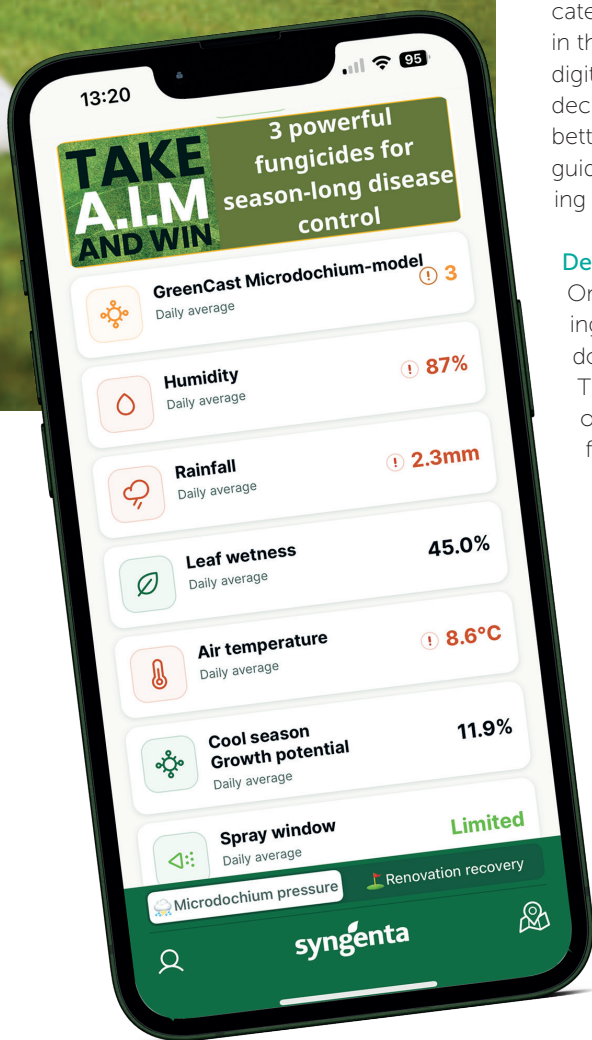


**Author:** Sean Loakes, Syngenta Technical Manager UK & Ireland

*Sean Loakes will present a Microdochium matters seminar session at BTME Continue to Learn in January.*



Follow the conversation





# Guarding the resource, together

Toro irrigation preserving the traditional links conditions of Royal County Down

Royal County Down Golf Club is in one of the world's most naturally beautiful links settings in the Murlough Nature Reserve. Considered one of the best courses in the world, the preservation of the traditional links conditions is of paramount importance to Links Manager Eamonn Crawford and his team who adhere to a strict links maintenance programme to provide a highly rated Championship course and keep the greens and approaches as firm as possible.

For this they looked no further than Toro and Reesink Hydro-Scapes and here we delve into what it takes to deliver an irrigation project which is about as big as it gets in the UK.

## What was needed, and why?

The club recognised the need to

update their irrigation system to take advantage of modern technology and to accurately re-define the areas to be irrigated.

The legacy system was designed in late the 1990s and featured a Toro CDS control system. The system had served them well over the last 20 plus years, but to better support the needs and requirements of the club, the design needed to be reviewed to incorporate more accurate water delivery. New control system technology needed to be implemented with the design to maximise efficiency and precision of water application. Secretary David Morgan says: "We have a social responsibility to manage our water usage, as well as an obligation to the course and our members to present it as a traditional links course. This

requires a certain level of irrigation control and precision to keep it alive but not green."

Specifically, Eamonn, who has worked at the club for 49 years and been links manager for 14, wanted a system with pinpoint accuracy. He knew he needed to provide an irrigation solution that future-proofed the club, ensured its longevity, retained its position as one of the best clubs in the world and in the process left a legacy for the next generation.

## What were the challenges?

The design and system needed to be brought up to date and in line with modern industry standards. The need for a strong focus on water conservation needed to be at the forefront of the project deliverables.





Royal County Down is a traditional links course using Toro irrigation to sustainably manage its water application.

“Being ranked as the number one golf course in the world comes with great environmental and social responsibility, while respecting the traditional maintenance of a links course and providing members with the ultimate golfing experience. Effective irrigation is integral to that and being seen to be guarding the resource as we achieve these things keeps the club where it should be: at the forefront.

David Morgan, Secretary, Royal County Down



Royal County Down's Links Manager Eamonn Crawford, left, and Irrigation Technician Andrew Mcalinden.

“All parties are rightly proud of this project and Royal County Down has a system which benefits from the latest technology and will serve them well into the future”

Simon Squires, Senior Manager Golf Irrigation, The Toro Company

The existing design featured a classic 90s double row fairway sprinkler layout, and the inherent inefficiencies within that layout meant that water was being applied to roughs and unmanaged areas where it was not wanted or needed. The system did however feature Polyethylene mainline pipework, which was in excellent working condition. This was able to be retained and incorporated in the new system design.

Three new holes had been built on the Annesley Links in the ten years previously and the irrigation system had been extended to cover these areas. In creating a new design, the club had the opportunity to properly integrate these course developments within the overall system revision.

MJ Abbott's team, led by Jim Price,

had some significant tracing and location of services work to undertake as they planned their installation schedules. This was imperative to prevent disruption to the customer and minimise the impact on golf course operations.

Installation ran simultaneously on the Championship and Annesley courses, starting in October 2023 and completing in Spring 2024 ensuring the club was able to prepare for the Irish Open in September 2024.

Winter 2023/24 proved to be the wettest and hardest in 25 years and the impact of the weather conditions the installation teams were subjected to cannot be overstated. The terrain of this links course with narrow fairways threading through sand dunes and combinations of mixed ground



conditions including sand, stones, bedded shale and stones meant that the mole ploughing operations encountered were challenging to achieve the high level of finish demanded by the project.

### Solutions

Eamonn and David had done their due diligence in terms of brand comparisons before specialist irrigation designer and consultant, Adrian Mortram from Adrian Mortram Associates, tendered for the project and Adrian was instructed to gear the irrigation system specification plans entirely towards Toro.

Due to the extensive scope of the irrigation renovation, Adrian spent a considerable period at the club completing a comprehensive design to ensure that the exact location of the retained pipework, connection points and existing sprinklers were carefully surveyed and recorded. The new components of the system needed to fully connect with existing to achieve the project goals.

The design specified a Toro Lynx LSM control system. The capabilities and capacity of this 21st century technology gave Eamonn the level of control and accuracy demanded to operate the new design to its optimum level. The ability to control run times +/- 1 second, high speed communication and diagnostics being at the core of Lynx LSM ensured the client had the flexibility and precision to irrigate effectively and selectively.

The field control of the system is distributed throughout the courses from Lynx Smart Hubs, each providing up to four cable paths and able to operate up to 250 Lynx Smart Modules [LSM] per path. Maximising the watering window on any given watering cycle is achieved by the ability to operate a maximum of 50 stations per path simultaneously.

Reducing the watering window and reducing the impact of irrigation servicing and maintenance on golf courses which attract so many overseas visitors was a key factor in the overall scheme design and product choices.

Toro Infinity valve in head and Flex Series sprinklers were specified for the project. While both models offer the exact same nozzling, drive assemblies and therefore distribution uniformity, the club could easily see the benefits of using the Infinity sprinkler in key areas. These sprinklers are fully top serviceable, meaning ongoing

“Having the best technology and resources available is essential to ensure we deliver our links maintenance programme effectively and efficiently and to the best of our capabilities. There was never any doubt that Toro and Reesink were the partners for us in that respect.

Eamonn Crawford,  
Links Manager, Royal  
County Down



Eamonn adjusting irrigation levels out on the course.





Eamonn and Andrew inspecting one of the Toro sprinklers.



Andrew accessing detailed information back at the office.

maintenance in years to come is far less impactful on the golf course. The LSM module, solenoid and calibrated pressure regulator are accessed directly beneath the top cover.

Importantly the pilot valve can not only be accessed in the same way, but it can be completely removed for service/cleaning without the need to drain the lateral pipework.

#### What was the result?

This system, its design and installation are a classic example of how to redefine the areas of irrigation to act as a guardian of the resource.

Through technology, the club has increased its areas to be irrigated but uses less water and fewer wetting agents. The watering cycle is accomplished within a shorter watering window giving much improved flexibility during peak demands of the course for summer play.

Water application rates can be executed to the second, and with revised sprinkler locations water is only applied where it is required. Water wastage and excess power consumption are eliminated, and course conditions are improved.

The conditions could not have been worse for installation says Jim, but the project was delivered successfully and on time. Now the club has total and full responsibility for its resources.

David comments: "Now, we have full control in managing the system and water application. There's no wastage and we only use what is needed where it's needed.

"Irrigation really is made easy with Toro and this is the best system at this time and the process has been well worth it."

**“ This is now a fully connected course in real-time. To deliver a project of this magnitude in some challenging conditions on time is a huge success story for all involved.**

**Jim Price, MJ Abbott Ltd**





# Kubota: Celebrating 50 years in Europe

Half a century of innovation, dedication and community building

2024 marks the 50th anniversary of Kubota's arrival in Europe. While the opening of the first subsidiary in France in 1974 marked a significant milestone in the company's growth, Kubota already had a long and well-proven foundation of supplying advanced and innovative solutions in other strategic regions around the world. We take a moment to explore the long and illustrious history of one of the most recognisable brands in ground care.

The origins date back to 1890 where, at the age of just 19, Gonshiro Kubota started up a foundry in the Japanese city of Osaka – the foundation of the Kubota Corporation. Originally established to manufacture water pipes to prevent the propagation of

diseases, the combination of passion, heart and power saw the extension of innovations from the time to develop solutions for the food sector and the environment.

These three areas – water, food and environment – still make up Kubota's global mission, supporting the future of earth and humanity by contributing products to help abundant and stable food production, reliable water sources and a comfortable living environment. This is reflected in the 'For Earth, For Life' philosophy and strapline which overarches all company activities.

In the realms of agriculture and industry, the advent of Kubota's first kerosene-driven engine in 1922 marked a groundbreaking moment

which would go on to re-shape the landscape of farming and industrial practices. Fast forward to 1960, and the launch of the Kubota T15 – the first ride-on tractor in Japan. The rest, as they say, is history!

One of its three key strategic regions along with Asia and North America, Kubota's commitment to the European market has been firm from the outset. In the half century that has passed, Kubota has continued to expand in Europe with numerous subsidiaries in Germany, Spain, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and, of course, the UK to support the growth of these markets. Today, the company has a European workforce of approximately 5,000 employees and more than 1,300 dealers and





Just one year later, Kubota introduced the G2HST, G3HST and F2000 diesel ride-on mowers. Further innovations followed throughout the rest of the 80's and 90's including the development and launch in 1993 of the first zero-turn mower, the FZ2400, and what would go on to become industry-standard innovations such as the Kubota Glide Cut system, with the G18 mower launched in 1999.

The turn of the millennium saw no slowdown in Kubota's investment in research and development. They entered the sub-compact market with the launch of the BX2200 tractor in the year 2000, which was quickly followed by the launch of M Series in 2001 and STV compact tractor series in 2004. Mowers of various iterations hit the market, together with the first 4WD Kubota utility vehicle – the RTV900 - in 2005.

In recent years, growth has also come from new avenues. Advancements in alternative fuel sources has seen the development of effective electric offerings with the LXe-261 electric compact tractor and ZE Electric zero turn ranges introduced in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

Kubota have also acquired complimentary businesses as they strive to ensure their portfolio is fit for the needs of the market. This includes the formation of the Kubota Gianni Ferrari division in the summer of 2022, which has added a strong range of centre-collecting front mowers to their existing mower offering – a popular move around Europe.

Dealers from across Kubota's European network joined colleagues and suppliers in Barcelona this October to celebrate the 50-year milestone. Toasting a legacy of innovation and community and sharing new concepts and strategies, the future looks very bright 'For Earth' and 'For Life' with Kubota.



- For more information about Kubota, visit [kubota-global.net/kubota-eu.com](https://kubota-global.net/kubota-eu.com)
- Explore the Kubota Group Solutions Hub: [kubota-group.eu](https://kubota-group.eu)

distributors across the region.

The creation of Kubota Holding Europe (KHE) in 2017 further reinforced the company's corporate identity in Europe, bringing together employees from all divisions to deliver synergies across products and services to the distribution network and end users alike.

To best serve customers and guarantee responsiveness, Kubota Europe has established a number of facilities across the region including a KRDE Research Centre in France, two European Distribution Centres in The Netherlands and France, an Innovation Centre Europe (ICE) and a 22,000m<sup>2</sup> European logistics centre for the swift delivery of spare parts.

Kubota UK was established as a

wholly-owned subsidiary of the Kubota Corporation in 1979. The UK headquarters, strategically placed in Thame, Oxfordshire, is home to approximately 120 staff and is the hub for sales, assembly, parts, service, training and development. It also acts as a base to support the operations of the 35 authorised Kubota dealer depots throughout the UK and Ireland.

1979 was also a notable year for the Kubota product line-up – for it saw the introduction of one of the first true four-wheel drive 12hp compact tractors in the form of the B Series. In the same year, they also began employing hydrostatic transmission HST in their compact tractor range and developed a four-wheel drive ride-on out-front rotary mower.





# Is there any value in using a soil penetrant?

Kelly-Marie Clack, Origin Amenity Solutions UK Technical Manager on how soil penetrants can form a vital part of our integrated turf management plans





**Firstly, we need to understand what a soil penetrant is. Soil penetrants reduce surface tension and facilitate downward movement of water.**

This technology improves the speed at which water infiltrates from the soil surface into the soil profile. It is important to note that non-ionic soil surfactants do not change the soil's physical properties. It enables water to move as quickly as the soil's physical properties will allow. Primary and secondary drainage systems will improve the soil's physical properties and play a key role in managing soil moisture. Primary drainage removes excess water from the profile, while secondary drainage creates the connectivity of the surface to the primary drainage system. Drainage infiltration should also be supported with an adequate aeration plan for your soil type as well as a top-dressing strategy. Aeration should only be carried out in conducive conditions to avoid surface deformation by machinery tracks and the additional compaction in saturated conditions. Altering the soil's drainage ability will maximise the benefit of soil penetrants.

#### **Why do we need to worry about surface and soil moisture?**

During periods of prolonged wetness, our soils will become saturated and turf health will start to deteriorate. Turfgrass and soil microbes are aerobic, which means it is vital we

manage the air-to-water ratio in our soils. Visual symptoms of saturation stress can include a decline in sward density, reduced rooting and plant health (chlorosis), and an increase in thatch due to a lack of decomposition. Turfgrass stress can lead to disease outbreaks, surface algae, weed and moss invasion in a thinning sward and potential PPN damage.

Penetrants form an integral part of our integrated turf management plans by keeping our surfaces drier and can be supported by the use of appropriate dew management technologies. By reducing surface moisture and increasing soil infiltration we can improve air to water ratios in the soil, optimising soil health and supporting organic matter decomposition. In turn, we will see a denser sward coverage less susceptible to surface algae, weed, and moss invasion and a stronger and healthier turfgrass and root system. This will improve playing conditions throughout the year and overall surface performance.

So, quite simply, yes, there is value in using a soil penetrant to reduce surface tension and improve infiltration in the soil profile, as long as this is supported with good aeration strategies. Always remember that when your soil is saturated, you can only move that water if it has somewhere to go, which is why drainage is imperative.

For more information or advice on soil penetrants, contact Origin Amenity Solutions on **0800 138 7222** or email [sales@originamenity.com](mailto:sales@originamenity.com)

# The rise in organic matter demands action



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

The conditions over the past two years are increasing the rate of accumulation – and all courses need a plan to deal with this

Organic matter is perhaps the number one issue which has a negative influence on green health, performance and grass species management. Excess organic matter holds on to soil moisture, slows surface drainage and causes a softening of surface firmness in addition to being the perfect environment for the harbouring of turf disease pathogens. There are researched targets for managing the percentage of organic matter, ones which should be annually monitored to assess change – both positive and negative – and use the information to adjust the management programmes accordingly to keep control of organic matter.

Organic matter can accumulate at higher rates during extended periods

interrupted many of the usual pre-season renovation operations.

Generally speaking, we estimate that clubs reporting organic matter results between July and September may be seeing on average a one per cent increase in the top 20mm or remaining at their current levels compared to analysis reported 12 months prior. There will be winners and losers here with much depending on the green and sward type (soil-based parkland poa annua greens being more productive in the development of organic matter), along with the maintenance programme and local weather conditions.

It is important that there should be a plan in place to deal with this. We have commonly seen situations where, because of the poor weather

up, not just the need to reduce it via removal such as coring or scarification operations.

Poor drainage and a lack of aeration is one of the key causes. Renovation is therefore an opportunity for major aeration to depth to alleviate soil compaction which may be causing an issue linked to organic matter build up. Deep aeration most commonly involves deep solid tine aeration such as vertidrainage. We have frequently written about the importance of this work when and where required. It is important for root development and drainage. Again, the dilemma for the club is the cost of not acting with the correct timing and method of operation.

In summary, our message is to understand the extent of any change in the status of organic matter and communicate the causes. It should make sense why action could be needed in dealing with the effects of the weather experienced throughout the past year or so. Clubs may be tempted to shy away from the need to change scheduled maintenance plans and this may present the case for additional work or a different approach extending well into next year before an informed review will confirm whether the soil conditions are being appropriately controlled. **GI**

**“The dilemma for clubs is balancing the cost of not acting with the correct timing and method of operation to minimise disruption”**

of strong growth and wet conditions as the rate of its production – the accumulation of dead and decaying plant matter – outpaces the rate of natural digestion by microbial organisms and its dilution through top dressing. These microbes function less effectively in wet soils or ones with poor aerobic environments therefore increasing the risk of adding organic matter to the upper profile. The last two years have, for most, been a period where organic matter has been harder to control because of the environmental conditions and the havoc caused by the weather which

and enforced interruption to golf during the last year, clubs have erred on the side of the golfer and feared any further interruption caused by renovation, mini-maintenance or top-dressing applications.

This is coming at a cost down the line though, with some courses seeing organic matter increases of two-to-three per cent (>30% increase by volume). Failure to act on this could lead to disruptions if green performance deteriorates because of organic matter.

It is important that we understand the causes of organic matter build-



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





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