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Greenkeeper International



Daniel Parker and Jack Vowell

Congratulations to the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year 2024 award winners

■ Practical
Greenkeeping

The Great British Bunker
Study findings

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

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Welcome

You may have noticed that this month's magazine has come in a heavier package than normal. October is always such an exciting month for anyone involved in the Association as we launch the Continue to Learn programme for the following January.

If you live in the UK, you'll have received the 2025 brochure with this magazine, and you can also check out the programme on the BTME website and on the BIGGA smartphone app.

I'm delighted to say that head greenkeeper and course manager members will also have received the relaunch edition of one of the most popular initiatives that BIGGA has undertaken in recent years.

Your Course is a magazine that goes out to approximately 1,500 golf clubs in the UK and seeks to inform golfers about the activities of greenkeepers.

In this edition, we've tackled winter preparation and climate change, and over the course of the coming years we'll address a variety of topics.

There is also a growing library of features on our website under the Your Course banner, and I hope you find these resources useful as you go about communicating with the

Your Course
magazine
seeks to inform golfers about the activities of greenkeepers

various stakeholders around your golf club.

October's magazine is always a special treat as we also get to acknowledge the success of some of our most talented up-and-coming members via the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards. Congratulations go to Jack Vowell and Daniel Parker and to all the other finalists.

They give us confidence that the future of our industry is in safe hands, but for there to be a future for them we must ensure we continue to provide outstanding learning opportunities, while also ensuring golfers better understand the importance of greenkeepers to the health of the sport.



Jim Croxton
BIGGA Chief Executive

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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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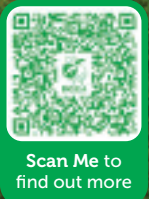




First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- Former Gleneagles first assistant joins R&A Sustainable Golf team
- Rose leads tributes to profession on Thank a Greenkeeper Day 2024



Scan Me to
find out more

Workforce salary survey – what did you tell us?

Earlier this year, BIGGA invited its members to participate in an industry-wide survey looking at the state of the golf industry in 2024.

It was the second consecutive survey hosted in collaboration with the GCMA, The R&A, England Golf, Wales Golf, Ireland Golf and Scottish Golf and the latest by BIGGA.

CEO Jim Croxton said the findings were a reason for optimism.

"The workforce is critical to the health of our sport," he said. "We need two things for golf to thrive – we need a place to play and people to operate those businesses.

"My main takeaway from the survey is that despite there being some negative numbers, the trends are

nearly all positive."

Croxton said salaries had outpaced inflation over the last three or four years - a sign of strong growth.

"That's not just driven at the bottom end by minimum wage but also at the top end by golf clubs that recognise the importance of highly qualified and professional greenkeepers," he said.

"The general direction of this survey is showing some real positives."

Key findings

Staffing numbers

The average number of greenkeepers at golf courses in the UK is 7.6, compared to 6.54 in 2023, 6.3 in 2022 and 5.5 in 2019. But 72% said there

were not enough greenkeepers at their facility.

Salaries

18% of course managers earn between £45-50,000; 38% of head greenkeepers earn between £35-40,000; 68% of deputies earn between £25-35,000.

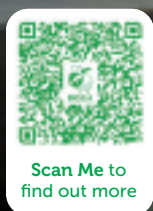
Recruitment

25% of clubs said they had unsuccessfully tried to recruit in the past year - the most popular reason given was a lack of qualified applicants (70%); 75% of respondents said they hired someone with lower experience and skills than they would like, just to fill a vacant role. **GI**

The BIGGA Calendar

October: Alex Brougham, Trentham GC

Download the desktop calendar by scanning the QR code



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find out more

Former Gleneagles first assistant joins R&A Sustainable Golf team



The R&A Sustainable Golf team has appointed James Walker, R&A scholar and previously first assistant at Gleneagles, as assistant championship agronomist.

The R&A Sustainable Championship Agronomy Team provide agronomic support to all R&A Championship venues, and James joins the team following nine years of education and experience in the industry.

With extensive experience in the USA as part of the Ohio International Intern Program and at Championship golf courses in the UK, James will offer a wealth of knowledge to further elevate the offering from The R&A team.

"James is one of the first appointments to go through both the African Turf Academy and an R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship – both of which we are proud to provide support and funding for," said Richard Windows, Head of Sustainable Agronomy: Championship Courses.

"The two-year R&A Scholarship is a new pathway into

agronomy and provides full funding on all areas including further education, BASIS and FACTS qualifications, as well as training from The R&A Sustainable Championship Agronomy Team. We are extremely impressed with James' career so far and have no doubt he'll be an excellent addition."

Supporting Gleneagles for four years, delivering the Solheim Cup and Senior Open Championship, and a season on the Old Course at St Andrews to help deliver The Walker Cup, James brings with him a championship-driven resume.

"I am thrilled to be starting my new role as part of The R&A Championship Agronomy Team. I have been fortunate to travel the world, learning and experiencing agronomy at a variety of levels," he said. "I've been privileged to hone my skills through experience at iconic venues including Congressional CC, Lake Nona G&CC, JCB G&CC, St Andrews and Gleneagles. I've been on an amazing journey so far, and I am truly grateful for the managers and mentors that have helped me along the way." **GI**

A greenkeeper's best friend – Lottie

Owner: Bruce Watson
Club: Cardrona
Breed: Hungarian Vizsla
Age: Eight



Favourite treat: Whatever the team are eating

Favourite spot on the course: Anywhere she thinks there are pheasants

Naughtiest moment: She has a great knack of yawning during HOD meetings in the hotel

My dog is happiest: Being driven around the course on a golf buggy

What's on this month



Dates for your diary

3 October

Mental Health First Aid 2-day course – Stover GC

7 October

BIGGA National Championship 2024 – Royal Burgess Golfing Society and Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society



9 October

BIGGA South West and South Wales Golf Management Trophy – Isle of Purbec GC
BIGGA Northern Region Golf Day – Brampton GC

10 October

BIGGA Scotland/SGCMA: Golf Industry Managers, Working in Partnership – Kilmarnock Barassie GC

Kilmarnock Barassie



17 October

Mental Health First Aid 2-day course – Cherry Lodge GC

21 October

Mental Health First Aid 2-day course – Waltham Windmill GC

Correction

In the September issue of GI in our Open Support Team review feature, we mistakenly named Nicholas Ball, from Little Aston, as Nicholas Bourne. We apologise to Nicholas for the error.



BIGGA

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

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



Rose leads tributes to your work on #ThankAGreenkeeper Day

Justin Rose led the praise as stars from across the world of golf and beyond lauded your work on #ThankAGreenkeeper Day.

The annual event returned on 10 September as golf lovers were invited to show their appreciation to the hardworking professionals who make the sport possible.

The two hashtags – #ThankAGreenkeeper and #ThankASuper – generated tens of thousands of engagements, achieving a reach of almost 9 million.

Major winner and Olympic gold medallist Rose was among those to express his gratitude to greenkeepers, setting the tone for many others to follow.

“Greenkeepers across the world – thank you,” he said. “Obviously, golf is an incredible game but even better when we’re putting on fast, pure surfaces.

“But listen, I know its early mornings, it can be a labour of love, but we appreciate everything you do.”

Perhaps the most unlikely voice added to the outpouring of positivity was that of Basil Brush, who took the time out from his busy schedule being a fox to offer his support to greenkeepers.

The occasion coincided with World Suicide Prevention Day, which brought to mind that although greenkeeping can be the greatest job in the world, there are also times when it is a hard, lonely profession.

Thank A Greenkeeper Day is a fun initiative that places you and your efforts centre-stage for 24 hours – but one day each year is not enough, which is why BIGGA works tirelessly to champion greenkeepers every day. GI

“Greenkeepers across the world – thank you”

In numbers:

During #ThankAGreenkeeper Day 2024...

#ThankAGreenkeeper
#8

highest trending point on X among UK topics

612
posts

9,396
engagements

2,064,327
reach

#ThankASuper

2,526
posts

46,635
engagements

6,620,164
reach

Caption



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“The IQ dual-clutch F24/R24 gear box was chosen as it makes manoeuvring the tractor around the course whilst operating the equipment so easy.

Another feature we really like is the Auto PTO function or the Headland Management System, it is brilliant for when we get to the end of the run with the aerator, we can lift the implement up, the PTO automatically cuts out, we can turn around then lower again and PTO restarts by itself.

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Daniel Spencer, Letchworth Golf Club



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From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- Dudley welcomes 40 children to the course for First Green event
- What you can expect from Continue to Learn at BTME 2025



The R&A to officially support Continue to Learn at BTME in 2025

The R&A will be recognised for the first time in 2025 as formally supporting the Continue to Learn conference programme as part of its commitment to a sustainable future for golf and golf courses.

In recent years, The R&A has demonstrated its support to BTME and Continue to Learn by hosting presentations with guidance based on expert research and experience of staging major events.

R&A representatives have been a mainstay on the Continue to Learn

programme for many years, providing world-leading agronomic advice and hosting panel discussions in the context of major events held throughout the year.

The Golf Course 2030 programme was launched at Continue to Learn in 2018 and research participants have returned each year to discuss their findings and proposals.

Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of The R&A's Greenkeeping Scholarship and events are anticipated to take place at BTME

and Continue to Learn to mark the occasion.

Jim Croxton, BIGGA CEO, said: "We're proud The R&A has recognised the pivotal role greenkeepers play in the success of the sport through this commitment to supporting the Continue to Learn conference programme and wider education opportunities provided by our annual gathering, BTME.

"It will only enhance the BTME experience and help ensure the game is still thriving in 50 years' time." **GI**

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

'Make as much mess as you can'



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.

Having a group of kids running through your bunkers is the stuff of nightmares for most greenkeepers, but Dudley Course Manager Stewart Marshall actively encouraged such behaviour during a recent First Green event.

The club joined forces with The Grace Mary to Lion Farm Big Local charity to host the event, which welcomed around 40 children and 35 parents to the Midlands venue.

Stewart is on the committee of the charity, which delivers a wide range of social welfare activities aimed at improving facilities and service provision for people living, working and volunteering in the area.

Despite being in the middle of greens renovations, he was delighted to welcome people of all ages, many of whom had never set foot on a golf course before.

"We amalgamated a charity day and the First Green event into one, and it was a great occasion," said Stewart. "As well as catering for them all, we put on an online course for the parents, while the kids were out on the course, to educate them on safe internet use for their children at home."

The youngsters were taken on an eco-walk of the course by a Wildlife Trust expert, who taught them about the flora and fauna. Along with taking a turn on each of the stations

providing hands-on STEM-based learning, they were given an opportunity to rake bunkers, change holes, divot fairways and tees and even play a few shots in the nets and on the green.

Providing an example of the kind of fun the children enjoyed, Stewart said: "I split the kids into two groups and asked the first lot to run through a bunker and make as much mess as they could!"

"The other group had to rake the bunker and then they swapped places. They loved it."

Stewart's biggest hope is that the experience has put greenkeeping on the radar as a career option for the children.

"A lot of greenkeepers were golfers as kids, and when they left school or college they maybe started to help out as a summer job, found they enjoyed it and got into it from there," he said.

"I hope some of those kids will have enjoyed it enough to think that greenkeeping might be something they'd like to do." **GI**



I've seen the future of greenkeeping and it's bright



John Keenaghan,
President

Spending time with the finalists of the Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards at Oulton Hall filled me with an enormous sense of optimism.

The greatest privilege of being BIGGA president is having the opportunity to meet so many people from across our wonderful industry.

That was never more apparent than during the couple of days I enjoyed at Oulton Hall in Leeds when it was the host venue for this year's Toro Student Greenkeeper Awards.

Spending time in the company of those finalists and seeing first-hand the level of enthusiasm they have for this profession, and the incredible knowledge they have gained – not to mention their hunger to learn even more – was truly one of the highlights of my year.

Ultimately, two deserving winners were crowned – Jack Vowell as Student Greenkeeper and Daniel Parker as Young Student Greenkeeper – but each of those finalists can be proud of their achievement in getting to that stage and of how they carried themselves.

It left me with a tremendous feeling of optimism for the future of greenkeeping to know we have such talented and dedicated people in this industry who harbour a



“It left me with a tremendous feeling of optimism for the future of greenkeeping”

strong desire to just keep on getting better.

Back in the day job, I'm delighted that we've recently got back up to a full complement of seven staff after being down on numbers at Chipping Sodbury for the past couple of years.

It has been difficult at times to balance my work there with my responsibilities as president, but now that we're back

on top of things I'm getting more opportunities to get out and about.

I've been down to Devon and Cornwall for an autumn golf day and over to Ipswich for a match against the GCMA, which happened to fall on my birthday. I'll also be playing in the BIGGA National Championship and I'm looking forward to seeing some old friends up in Scotland.

In November, the National Conferences will roll around and I'll be attending all of those, which is a great opportunity to check in with fellow members from across the country.

Before then, we have the small matter of undertaking a sizeable drainage project, installing 4,000 linear meters of fairway drainage into the golf course.

We lost 47 days to course closures last year, and we don't want to end up in that situation again, so this is a crucial and timely investment, and I can't wait to get it done. **GI**



ICL Continue to Learn Scholars revealed

The five participants of the ninth ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship have been revealed.

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

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

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

For Ruth Etches, assistant greenkeeper at Trentham, news of her selection was timely and brought a smile to a face that might otherwise have been wearing a pained frown.

"Receiving the phone call from BIGGA to congratulate me on being one of the ICL Continue to Learn Scholars to attend BTME 2025 was incredible," she said. "I am currently recovering from jaw surgery so to have news like this is a huge boost.

"I feel honoured to be selected and can't wait to utilise the scholarship to its full potential at BTME 2025. I'm grateful to be given the opportunity to explore avenues for my future career."

Ryan Leicester, deputy course manager at Warrington, was delighted to be among the latest cohort after finding it was a case of third time lucky.

"I am absolutely over the moon to get the ICL scholarship," he said. "This opportunity will help me further my career and I can't wait to get there and meet the other scholars.

"I have applied for this three times now so for all those who don't get it first time, try and try again!"

The scholarship provides the five candidates with three nights in a hotel and a comprehensive education package worth approximately £500.

I am absolutely over the moon to get the ICL scholarship

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

Whether through in-person learning, reading this magazine, or by accessing resources on the association's website, BIGGA members can enjoy thousands of learning opportunities, all aimed at improving their professional abilities. **GI**

The ICL Scholars class of 2025

- Aaron Allibon, first assistant at Orsett
- Bradley Taylor, assistant greenkeeper at Beau Desert
- Ruth Etches, assistant greenkeeper at Trentham
- David Cooper, deputy course manager at Downfield
- Ryan Leicester, deputy course manager at Warrington



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Welcome to our new members

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Colin Gemmell (GK)
Alexander Thackwray (GK)
Prestwick St Cuthbert

Craig McDonald (AGK)
Cardross

Northern

Michael Brotherton (APP)
Newbiggin

Jacob Cunliffe (AGK)
Jack Stagg (GK)

Alex Walley (AGK)
Ryan Williams (AGK)
The Astbury

Daniel Ember (GK)
Harrogate

Steven Lewis (APP)
South Moor

Thomas Watson (GK)
Beauchief

Central England

Oliver Babington (CM)
Hatchford Brook

Vaughan Bednall (AGK)
Mickleover

Nicky Byrom (DHGK)
The Astbury

Tommy Drewett (M)
Chris Griffiths (AGK)
Woking

Daniel Foster (GK)
Woburn G&CC

Simon Harris (GK)
Stoke Park

Bradley Jones (HGK)
Colworth

Scott Kruck (APP)
Northamptonshire County

Mark Lennon (APP)
Forest of Arden Hotel & CC

Simon Price (APP)
Ansty Golf Centre

Charlie Rycroft (GK)
Aaron Teevan (AGK)
Bloxwich

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



Woking

South East

Fitch Bell (APP)

Thorpeness

Oscar Boxall (AGK)

Ham Manor

Benjamin Fereday (AGK)

Joel Raisbeck (AGK)

Woking

Callum Fielding (APP)

Royal Blackheath

Justin Gray (AGK)

Brentford FC

Marcus Locke (GK)

Thetford

Rhys May (APP)

Southwold

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Stoke-by-Nayland Golf & Leisure

South West & South Wales

Simon Sweetland (APP)

Honiton



The Astbury



BIGGA

CPD

Continuing Professional Development

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

Patrick Brown, Wentworth Club

Scott Fraser, Pannal

Jake Boardman, Frilford Heath

Anthony Lownds, Chapel

Ben Shaw, Wallasey

Stefan Carter, Wentworth Club



Wallasey

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

Stefan Carter, Wentworth Club

Christopher Hale, Taunton & Pickeridge



Wentworth Club

Harrogate Convention Centre in North Yorkshire will once again play host to Continue to Learn at the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition (BTME) in 2025.

Held from Sunday 19 January to Wednesday 22 January, Continue to Learn boasts an array of expert speakers and unrivalled professional development opportunities.

The education programme is the largest of its kind in Europe and welcomes greenkeepers, course managers and turf professionals from across the world.

"BIGGA exists to make the world a better place for greenkeepers," said CEO Jim Croxton. "One of our key strategies for that is making sure they have the best education they can.

"The Continue to Learn programme at BTME is our absolute centrepiece.

“BIGGA exists to make the world a better place for greenkeepers”

"We deliver hundreds of hours of education. Over 1,000 greenkeepers will engage with the Continue to Learn programme, meaning more than two hours for every golf club in the UK and beyond will be taken across the few days in Harrogate."

As well as the two-day conference programme, there are classes held across full or half days from Sunday to Wednesday, covering topics relevant to greenkeepers at all stages of their career journey.

The seminars, held on Tuesday and Wednesday, are offered free to all attendees on a first-come, first-served basis.

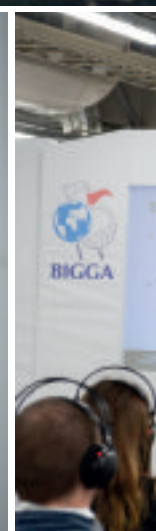
BTME itself runs from Tuesday to Thursday, with networking opportunities aplenty, while the winners of the BIGGA Awards 2025 will also be revealed.

For information on how to book tickets and the discounts available to BIGGA members, see the

enclosed Continue to Learn brochure. International members can view the brochure online using the QR code below.



Scan Me to find out more



Continue to Learn at BTME 2025

The comprehensive educational programme at BTME 2025 represents Europe's largest learning opportunity within sports turf



Meet the speakers at Continue to Learn

The extensive programme has something for everyone, from experienced golf course managers to apprentices taking their first steps in the industry

Continue to Learn's stellar list of speakers includes world-renowned experts, professional educators and BIGGA members eager to share their learning and experiences.

The three delivery streams – classes, conferences and seminars – are designed to cover a broad range of topics, including management, wellbeing, mechanics and agronomy.

Here, we put 10 of our esteemed speakers in the spotlight.



Dr Micah Woods, Asian Turfgrass Center

Micah is the founder and chief scientist of the Asian Turfgrass Center. Since graduating from Oregon State University in 1998, Micah has been traveling extensively, collecting data and advising turfgrass managers across Asia, Australia, North America, and Europe.



Vicky Elliott-Potter, Elliott-Potter International Consultancy

Vicky has worked her way up to board-level positions in regional and international media corporations and worked with business owners in all sectors. This will be the fourth consecutive year that Vicky has attended and supported BTME.



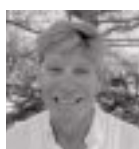
Dr John Dempsey, Independent Turfgrass Research

John has 40 years' greenkeeping experience and was superintendent of Ireland's oldest golf course, The Royal Curragh. He has conducted independent research for the past 16 years and has headed Independent Turfgrass Research since 2019.



Professor Elizabeth Guertal, Kansas State University

For 28 years, Elizabeth taught at Auburn University in Alabama. She retired in June 2022 and now works for Kansas State University in an international position. Elizabeth works, writes and teaches in the area of turfgrass management.



Dr Thomas Nikolai, Michigan State University

Thomas is known worldwide as the Doctor of Green Speed due to his research focusing on golf course putting green mechanical and cultural practices that increase turfgrass health and customer satisfaction.



Henry Bechelet, ICL

Originally trained as an agricultural agronomist, Henry joined the turfgrass industry as a trainee agronomist in the early 90s. He has spent around half his career engaged in independent consultancy and the other half on the commercial side of the industry.



Dr Andy Owen, ICL

Andy is the international technical manager for ICL Growing Solutions, Turf and Landscape Division. He is a sports turf agronomist and a soil scientist who has previously worked as a researcher at STRI and a lecturer at Myerscough College.



Kevin Fish, Contemporary Club Leadership

Former club manager at the Glen Golf Club in North Berwick, Kevin was named the UK Golf Club Manager of the Year in 2004 and was in the first group of Europeans to be awarded the CCM (Certified Club Manager) qualification in 2008.



Richard McCann, The iCan Academy

Building on his own experience and expertise as a motivational speaker, professional speaker, inspirational speaker and keynote speaker, Richard has brought together a talented team of associates to form the iCan Academy.



Lora Caven, Caledonia Coaching

Lora is a multi-award-winning entrepreneur with an international career in business and over two decades of dedicated personal growth. She has helped and inspired people worldwide to live their most expansive and meaningful lives.

Classes

Classes are held across full or half days and cover a wide range of subjects for greenkeepers at every stage of their career. Classes take place Sunday to Wednesday and are usually held in the Queen's Suite, within Harrogate Convention Centre, although a limited number take place in the adjacent Crowne Plaza hotel.

Seminars

Held on the Tuesday and Wednesday, BIGGA offers free educational seminars for all attendees to BTME. There is no need to book, and seats are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, so make sure you arrive early to guarantee a spot. Seminars will be held across two speaker stages, in Halls 3 and 4.

Conference

The two-day conference programme is held on Monday and Tuesday, with sessions typically between 40 to 60 minutes in length. Apart from the day's first and last speakers, there will usually be two sessions taking place at the same time, enabling you to choose which you would like to attend.

Sustainable Agronomy

The R&A will provide a range of education sessions across the entire Continue to Learn programme.

These sessions provide you with an insight into the range of work being done to support the industry.

Sustainability is a key issue in the golf industry as courses, facilities and venues seek ways to boost their green credentials. The desire to establish environmentally friendly practices is leading to new and innovative approaches to problem-solving.

In an effort to champion sustainability within the industry around the world, The R&A delivers research, support and services across sustainable agronomy.

This means the provision of expertise and best-practice advice to all levels of golf facilities, aiding in the

effective management of courses worldwide.

Included within that is guidance on the delivery of sustainable agronomy, golf course auditing and benchmarking, management planning, strategic advice, annual maintenance programme planning, project management support and drainage design.

With a vast wealth of knowledge gained from supporting clubs at every level of the game, The R&A's team of specialists has every angle covered.

The R&A is committed to delivering a service that promotes sustainable golf and encourages future development of environmental practices, while supporting facilities all over the world to deliver optimal course conditioning on a year-round basis.



What is Golf Course 2030?

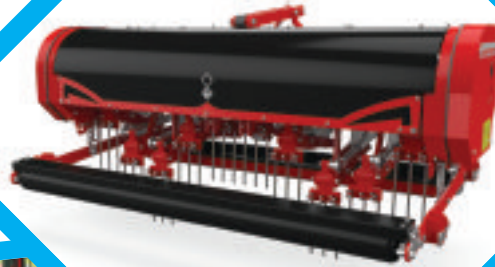
The R&A's Golf Course 2030 initiative encompasses a range of projects focused on the themes of sustainable agronomy, resources, biodiversity and climate.

It is the organisation's way of helping the game of golf to manage the impact of climate change, consider how resources are used and be proactive in preparing for the impact future regulations may have on course conditioning.

Working with affiliates, industry bodies and academic and research institutes around the world, The R&A aims to identify key sustainability issues and explore opportunities for innovation and practical solutions for the golf industry to adopt. **GI**

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Member Interest

Where we meet your fellow turf professionals
and share their stories

- Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award winners announced
- See the latest industry job vacancies in the UK and further afield



'Your greenkeeper shed is on fire' – George Reid recalls Little Hay blaze



When a fire destroyed a shed containing half a million pounds of greenkeeping equipment, George Reid and his team at

Little Hay had to roll back the years.

The incident occurred in August when a blaze broke out at the Hertfordshire venue following a mechanical fault in one of the machines housed in the facility.

George had finished for the day and rushed back to the course to be greeted by the sight of five fire engines tackling the flames.

"I was at home in the shower when I got a phone call to say, 'Your greenkeeper shed is on fire'," he explained. "By the time I got there

the whole thing was destroyed – it was gone, up in smoke, half a million pounds of equipment."

The four-man greenkeeping team had to revert to traditional methods to maintain a complex that includes a 23-bay driving range, a six-hole pitch and putt, footgolf and disc golf alongside its 18-hole course.

For George, who started in the industry 55 years ago, it was all very familiar, but it was an eye-opener for the apprentice and another less seasoned staff member.

"It would have been very easy to say, 'We can't do this or we can't do that'," he said. "But we weren't going to take that approach. We were out there doing whatever we could by hand.

"It took us back a lot of years

to doing the sort of things I was doing when I first started out in greenkeeping in 1969."

Thankfully, Ley Hill loaned a greens and tees cutter and Denham provided a fairway cutter, and the team – who are using a portacabin as a temporary shed – got back on top of things.

The setback means George hasn't been able to undertake autumn renovations, but he is confident he and his team will deal with any fallout from that, while the club will also be looking at how to restock the fleet.

"It's an opportunity to see if we do need to make changes," he said. "We're looking at robot mowers, something we would never have considered before, so it does give us a chance to reassess things." **GI**



Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards



The winners of the prestigious Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year awards were crowned at a spectacular event at Oulton Hall in West Yorkshire

Two talented greenkeepers took home the top prizes at the 35th Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards.

The duo who had travelled the furthest proved victorious, with Jack Vowell, of Farrington Park in Somerset, and Daniel Parker, of Knighton Heath in Dorset, claiming the titles.

Following regional judging earlier in the year, 10 finalists were selected to contest the awards at Oulton Hall, where there was further examination of their abilities with a series of tests that gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and passion for the greenkeeping industry.

The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award was presented to Deputy Head Greenkeeper Jack, by Jon Cole, divisional business manager at Reesink Turfcare and main award judge.

Runner-up in the main category was Jack Wellings, senior greenkeeper at the JCB Golf and Country Club and a student at Myerscough College.

The Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award was presented to Daniel, apprentice greenkeeper at Knighton Heath, by David Timms, national accounts manager for Reesink Turfcare and young award judge.

Runner-up in the young category was Alex Fox, apprentice greenkeeper at Woodhall Spa and a matchday groundsperson at Lincoln City FC and Wembley Stadium. Alex is a student at Bishop Burton College.

The nomination period for the 2025 Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards will begin at the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition in January.

About the awards

The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award was introduced in 1989, with the Young category added in 2016.

Previous winners and finalists have gone on to become some of the most influential characters in the greenkeeping industry, helping shape the sport of golf in the UK and further afield.

The awards offer greenkeepers of all ages, backgrounds and experience levels a chance to excel, with winners afforded once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to further their career and network with influential industry leaders.

The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year winner's benefits include enrolment in an internationally recognised 10-week turf management remote study course, The Winter Turf School at the University of Massachusetts, and a one-week work placement at a prestigious UK or overseas golf course.

Both winners will head to the USA to visit Toro HQ, R&D and manufacturing, with the Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year victor also enjoying a one-week work placement, as well as a trip to Continue to Learn at BTME, including four days of education, five nights' accommodation, travel and £125 expenses.

The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year, Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year finalists:

Front row – William Moore, Alex Fox, Daniel Parker, Morgan Bowen, Cameron Redden; **Back row** – Matt McCreadie, Jack Wellings, Jack Vowell, Jack Chapman, Patrick Brown



Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year:
Jack Vowell

For Jack Vowell, scooping the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award fully vindicated his decision to change careers.

A former recruitment consultant, the 30-year-old switched to greenkeeping five years ago and is a student at Bridgwater and Taunton College.

Farrington Park's deputy head greenkeeper is a handy golfer as well, playing off +1, and has represented Somerset at county level.

What was your initial reaction to winning the award?

Complete shock. It's such a strong field, and when the runner-up [Jack Wellings] had his name read out, I thought, 'No chance – he's fantastic compared to me, a very clever guy', so it was just a complete shock when my name was read out as the winner for this year.

Who did you break the news to first?

Obviously, all the other finalists were here to celebrate with, we've formed a really close-knit group just over a short time, so that's fantastic. I spoke to my girlfriend and family to let them all know the news, and I just couldn't believe that it was me to be honest.

Is there anyone you'd like to shout out for their support in helping you achieve this?

My boss Andy Grabham gave me an opportunity five years ago and has supported me the whole way through it. I can't thank him enough for everything he's done. My family as well have been fantastic.

“There's so much to do in the industry and so much to learn”

I changed careers five years ago, and no one did anything but support me. They said, 'If this is what you want to do, you go and do it' – and it feels nice to get the recognition and proves I made the right decision.

How did your career change come about?

I've done a few different things, and before I came to Farrington Park I was working for a recruitment company, and I just made a complete change. I was thinking about being a PGA pro, and then my current boss gave me an opportunity to try greenkeeping – I fell in love and haven't worked a day since.

What do you love about greenkeeping and the wider industry?

It's so different every day, there's no routine. Yes, there's day-to-day basics that need doing, but it's a living product, it changes every day, it changes throughout the year and it's never the same. For me, it's exciting, and it's great to see how your work develops into something worthwhile.

It's such a supportive industry. There is no one against anyone in this industry – anyone's there for you to pick the phone up to, and you build these relationships, and people will talk to you. If you've got an issue and I can't relate to it, I probably know someone who can.

‘The industry is in extremely safe hands’ – Jon Cole, divisional business manager at Reesink Turfcare and main award judge

The five main finalists were very impressive, and they have done themselves and their clubs proud. They show that the industry is in extremely safe hands going forward. It was a closely run competition and everyone acquitted themselves well. Jack, however, showed a balance of professionalism and technical knowledge, which he knew how to deliver.

What would your advice be to those who aspire to follow in your footsteps?

Just have a go, there’s no harm. Even applying and getting to a regional interview is a great experience. It gives you circumstances under pressure that you might not have experienced elsewhere. It’s a brilliant opportunity. Again next year, there’ll be 10 strong candidates that come to national finals, and it’s a fantastic opportunity to meet other guys and network with people from all around the industry, not just greenkeepers.

I would just tell anyone to have a go at anything. Any competition that comes up you should be knocking on the door for your boss and asking, ‘Can I do this? Can I go here? Can I go and learn this?’. There’s so much to do in the industry and so much to learn. Just don’t ever close the door, keep all your channels open.

Have you considered what this win might mean for your career prospects?

I’ve had a little think to myself and some time to reflect, but I’m just excited about the opportunity and the chances it’s going to bring. I’m about to experience some amazing things over the next 12 months, and I want to take every opportunity I can.



Left: Toro Young Student
Greenkeeper of the Year:
Daniel Parker

Right: Toro Student
Greenkeeper of the Year:
Jack Vowell

Jack's advice for the 2025 hopefuls

Leave no stone unturned. Put as much effort in as you can, learn as much as you can prior to coming here, but also when you get to the finals, make sure that you take the time to talk to people and listen and learn from their experiences. A lot of greenkeeping is about learning about people, so spend the time to get to know your fellow competitors and other people that are here. You'll learn an awful lot very quickly just by listening to people.

How important is it to have awards like these to recognise emerging talent in the industry?

Really important. It's not just the fact that people are attending these awards, it's the guys who are supporting and putting back into the industry and supporting development and trying to make this industry more attractive to others to join it as well.

Without BIGGA, without Toro, without Reesink, this wouldn't happen. They've created a fantastic opportunity for us all to learn, to build friendships, to build relationships. Their support is crucial, so we need to be really thankful to them but also continue to take advantage, because the moment people don't, they might not be there anymore.

Are you optimistic about the future of greenkeeping?

I think it's really bright and there are a lot of young passionate people. There have been guys here who are 17-18, and they throw themselves into everything they can. Some are off to the States to learn bits and pieces, some are happy where they are, but they're all trying to gain different experiences. It's a brilliant industry and the more young people we can drive forward into that industry and show them how great it is, I think it's all positive.

“It's great to see how your work develops into something worthwhile”

Daniel Parker saw off a strong field to claim the Young award, though he had a hard time believing it.

The apprentice greenkeeper and student at Sparsholt College dedicated the win to the team at Knighton Heath.

The 20-year-old is hoping this early career success is a sign of things to come.

What was your initial reaction to winning the award?

It was more disbelief and confusion than anything. When your name gets read out, you have all these emotions going around your head – it's just a lot of confused thoughts and thinking, 'What's happening?'. But it's just brilliant.

Who did you break the news to first?

I phoned my dad first as soon as I found out. He was with some family at home, and they were all celebrating with me - they were all over the moon. I spoke to people at my club, the course manager [Graham Hastie] – him and all the other guys were completely thrilled because it's as much for me as it is for them. We're all part of a team, so it's wonderful to give something back to them as well.

Any people in particular you want to offer thanks to?

Everyone at Knighton Heath. I said to them many times before that I wouldn't be at this stage without any of them. They're all amazing. A big one would be my college tutor, Andrew Sims – he's phenomenal,

you sort of have to make sure you act like you've won it. I've got to make sure that everything I'm doing from now onwards is to the highest standard, to the best of my abilities. I also need to be putting myself forward more so other people can see that I'm still invested in the job.

What's your advice to those who would like to follow in your footsteps?

Just be yourself. When you come to an awards ceremony, some people try a bit too hard, but just be who you are day to day. You don't need to read textbooks word for word every night – have your knowledge, but don't try and compress all of that into your head, because you will lose that talking ability with everyone. You want a perfect mix of knowledge, being confident, good at speaking and good at talking to people.

What do you love about greenkeeping?

It sounds very cliché, but it's just being outside. My dad's a gardener, so when I was younger I'd go out with him. On weekends and bank holidays it would be, 'Come on then, let's go to work', and it was just really good fun. Even if you're just brushing a path or picking up leaves, you're outside, you're in the sun, you're with people who you want to spend time with.

I couldn't picture myself in a job where I'm not getting my hands dirty, where I'm not hands-on, I've not got oil everywhere, grease everywhere, mud up my legs. I don't mind that, I think it's wonderful.

“I've got to make sure that everything I'm doing from now onwards is to the highest standard”

very knowledgeable, has loads of time for everything, and any questions you have he will answer straight away.

I'm thankful to my family and my girlfriend, who has to listen to me going on and on about grass and different types of mowers. Every time I go out anywhere, it's always, 'Oh, that grass looks a bit interesting', and I'm picking bits of grass out, trying to identify it, looking at different trees everywhere. She probably gets most of the brunt of everything, but she's absolutely amazing.

What do you hope this award will mean for your career?

Well, I hope it's only going to go up, having your name out there. It's quite a lot of pressure – you have that expectation now that you've won that prestigious reward, so

What is your message to other young greenkeepers out there?

Take every opportunity you can and just grab hold of it with two hands and do it. There are a few people here like Alex [Fox], and he's applied for absolutely everything, and he's getting things – he's 17 and he has more experience than I do, and I think that's what you need to be doing, you need to be putting your name out there, you need to be emailing these course managers, emailing golf clubs, saying, 'I'm in the area. Can I have a walk round? Can I talk to you about things? Can I come help when you've got a competition?'. It's just getting your name out there and saying, 'This is who I am', and more people will remember your face, remember your name, and say, 'He knows what he's doing'. **GI**





Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year:

Daniel Parker



Left to Right: Jon Cole,
Alastair Rowell, David
Timms, Gillian Haverson
(all Reesink UK)

'The finalists shone' – David Timms, national accounts manager for Reesink Turfcare and Young award judge

The young finalists shone on the course walk, demonstrating a fantastic level of knowledge with enthusiasm and confidence. All the awards judges felt proud, pleased and privileged to be able to see the calibre of the next generation of greenkeeping in front of us. Daniel is destined for a long career in the industry and is a worthy winner of the Young award.

'Greenkeeping has a bright future ahead' – Jim Croxton, BIGGA CEO

Congratulations to Jack Vowell and Daniel Parker, two very worthy winners, and huge thanks to our friends at Reesink Turfcare and Toro for another truly inspirational Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year finals at Oulton Hall. It's been a fantastic event with 10 wonderful finalists all trying their best. BIGGA exists to try and improve the world for greenkeepers and looking at what we've had in front of us today and over the last few months through the process, I think greenkeeping has a bright future ahead.

Obituaries

Autumn 2024

We include an Obituaries section in Greenkeeper International on a periodic basis to pay our respects to BIGGA members and those close to the association who have recently passed away

If you would like to inform us of a member's passing, please contact us by emailing membership@bigga.co.uk





Mike Sheehan

1955-2024



Mike Sheehan was a happy and likeable man who applied himself in his professional life to reach the heights of group estates director at Hawkstone Park Golf Club.

Born in Liverpool, with five brothers and four sisters, Mike started his career in golf at Childwall in the pro shop in the late 1960s before he made the switch to greenkeeping and moved to West Derby, rising to head greenkeeper - a role also held by his brother Chris, a former BIGGA president.

With greenkeeping in the family, brother James became head greenkeeper at Truro, late brother Patrick was a greenkeeper at Ashton in Makerfield and sister Ann married Abbeydale's Allan Donlevy.

In 1983, Mike was headhunted to

become course manager at Mere Golf and Country Club, whose owner Mark Boler purchased Hawkstone Park in 2000 in a move that transformed Mike's career path. He became operations manager and then operations director before taking on the role of group estates director.

Upon his retirement in 2010, Mike started his own landscaping business.

Sid Arrowsmith MG, a friend and former BIGGA president, shared fond memories of Mike, with the pair having become firm friends in the late 1970s. Mike himself was a firm believer in the association and was active on the North West section committee for a number of years.

"Each year we would play in the SISIS trophy at Prestbury Golf Club, which was always a great day, followed by beer at the Olde Admiral Rodney pub

in Prestbury," said Sid. "Mike used our spare room at Hazel Grove as a halfway house.

"In 1979, Mike and I travelled to Scotland to play in the Fisons Finals at Crow Wood Golf Club. It was a great occasion, and it helped cement our friendship even more.

"He will be greatly missed by all who had the pleasure to know him. While I feel a great sense of loss, I also have a great feeling of joy as I recall those fantastic days that we spent together. RIP my great friend, Mike Sheehan."

Away from golf, Mike loved the Cheshire County Show, and his floral displays won awards every year.

His love for flowers was recognised at his funeral, with guests asked to wear something floral or bright.

Mike, who was twice married, leaves behind four children.



Trevor Bennett

1936-2024



Trevor Bennett was a long-serving head greenkeeper at Trevoze Golf Club in Cornwall, where he started at the age of 16.

Born in the old post office at Trevone, he began working at the club in 1952 under the guidance of his uncle, Freathy Tippet, who was head greenkeeper there.

Trevor had been working on a pig farm but found the smell intolerable, making the call of the golf course all the more alluring.

He stepped up to head greenkeeper in 1959 and remained in the role until his retirement in 2002, upon which Trevor was made an honorary member by director Peter Gammon in recognition of his services to the Gammon family and the golf club.

Trevor married Maureen Mullen at the Roman Catholic Church in Padstow in 1961, and the reception was held at the clubhouse.

The couple went on to have three children: Michael, Peter and Anne Marie.

During his long career at Trevoze, Trevor and his team had a huge impact in shaping

the venue, even going as far as to build a nine-hole pitch and putt course over a two-year period in the 1960s "in their spare time".

In 1993, they built the nine-hole Headland course to reduce congestion on the Championship course.

Trevor was also a keen golfer and first took up the game soon after starting work at Trevoze as a young boy, having found an old 3-iron in a rabbit hole. He and his uncle Freathy, who owned an 8-iron, would share the clubs to play a couple of holes on occasion out of sight of John Westlake, the then owner who did not approve of employees playing the course.

When Peter Gammon came to run things, he encouraged Trevor to play in competitions so he could better understand members' experiences and expectations of the condition of the course. He achieved his lowest handicap of 8 in 1962 and won several club competitions.

In a written notice to members, Trevoze said: "We have very fond memories of Trevor, and he will be missed by us all."

Image Credit: R J Bray & Son Funeral Directors

In Memoriam

**William Robertson
1949-2024**

**Peter Hall
1958-2024**



Latest job vacancies

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Head Greenkeeper David Byron and his team at Thorndon Park will not be struggling to fill their time this month



What we do in... October

Club:
Thorndon Park, Essex

October is a busy month for us as it's when we do the bulk of our fairway renovation work.

We're going to be hollow tining the fairways and overseeding on some of the weaker bits, and then we'll be topdressing with about 300 tonnes of sand.

This has been an annual project for us since I came in, because when I arrived in 2020, the fairways were not in great shape.

Since then, we've put a programme in place with the aim of improving the fairways year-on-year, and we're seeing good results.

The first year we used green waste for the topdressing to improve the soil structure and the nutrition, as well as breaking down the clay a bit.

In the years since then, we've used sand but will be going back to green waste

again next year.

Whereas before we had quite a bit of thatch straight into clay, we're now starting to see something of a soil profile forming and it's improving our drought tolerance.

When we did have a dry spell, we didn't lose any coverage and the recovery was also much quicker. The coverage and density is getting better, and there's far less moss coming through in winter, which

used to be a real problem here.

It's also helping to improve the worm casting, so now that we're getting more sand into the profile, the worm casts are not quite as bad.

We've had some really positive feedback from golfers as well – one said to me he's almost having to learn how to play golf again because he's actually got grass under his ball now!



The work we've done has led to significant improvements in the appearance and condition of the fairways, and it's nice that it's being noticed and commented on.

October feels different to how it used to.

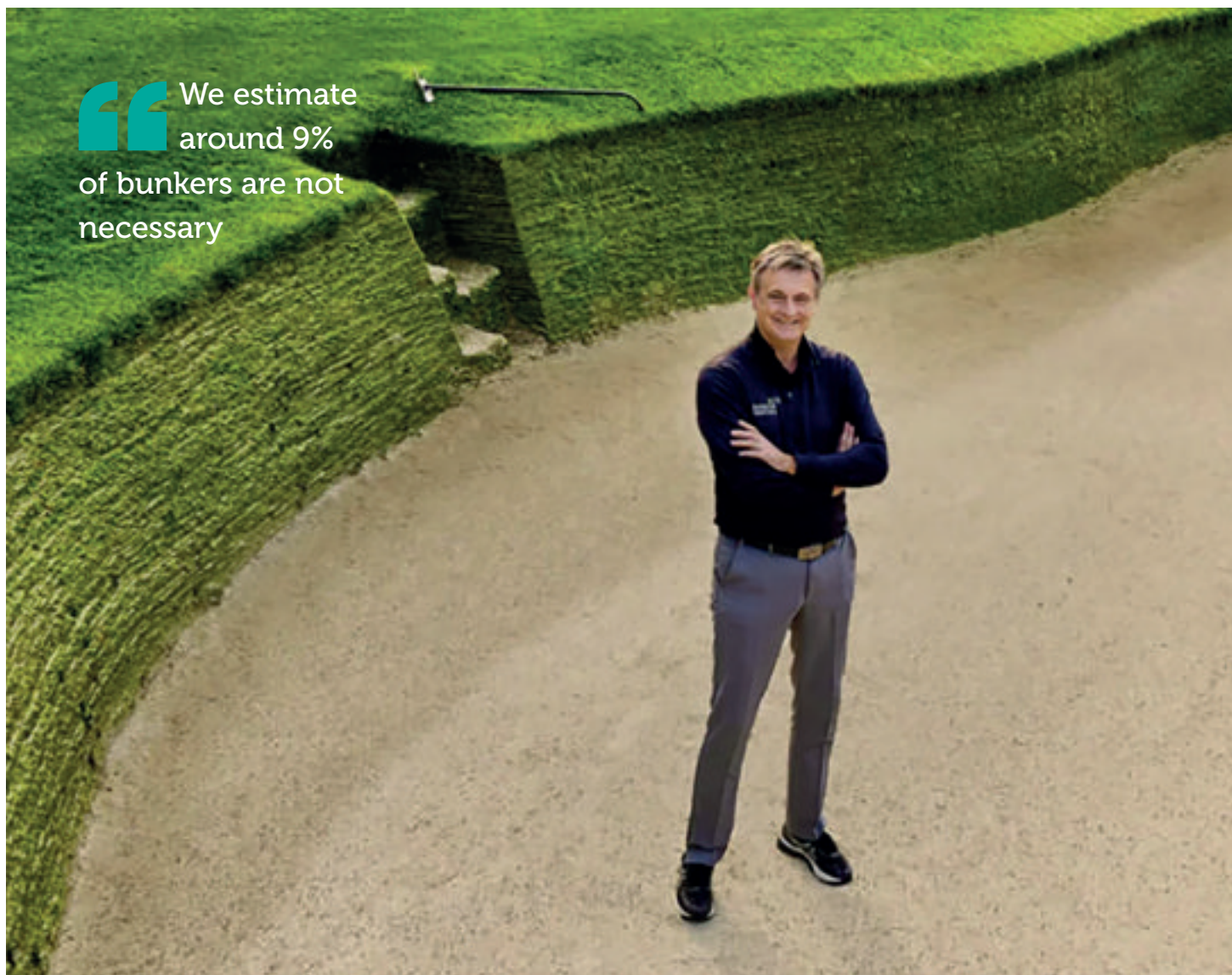
Previously, I would have taken bets on which day this month the first frost would come, but I wouldn't do that now.

The seasons are changing, and it means you can probably maintain good playing conditions and extend the season later into the year, but it also means starting a little later too. It's like everything has shifted a good six or seven weeks.

It's part of the challenge of the job, but it's something you have to embrace. **GI**



The seasons are changing, and it means you can probably maintain good playing conditions and extend the season later into the year"



**“ We estimate
around 9%
of bunkers are not
necessary**

BIGGA teamed up with EcoBunker, the leading developer of synthetic golf bunker technology, to conduct The Great British Bunker Study, a research project with the aim of helping inform future designs and techniques. We caught up with civil engineer and avid golfer Richard Allen, who founded EcoBunker in 2014, to discuss the findings.

What was the purpose and scope of the study?

The Great British Bunker Study was a research project to inform better design and more efficient maintenance practices. We went out and conducted audits to understand how clubs manage and maintain their bunkers, and we looked to see if there was anything about the design of those bunkers that could be improved to ensure that maintenance process was more efficient.

We carried out 38 audits

predominantly across parkland golf courses, though a variety of course types were included.

What were the key findings?

The most common word that came up was ‘inconsistency’, with pretty much every golf club we went to having some issue with inconsistent bunkers.

The biggest concern we encountered was sand contamination – over 90% of those we spoke to said this was among their top three concerns. There’s a fairly widespread opinion that sand contamination mainly comes from the soil underneath the bunker; in reality it’s very often the stones, silt and clay that ingresses from the eroding edges of the bunker.

Although alternative edge construction methods are available, many clubs are still building their edges out of very traditional natural

soils and turf that can erode and contaminate the sand.

Every bunker gets a critical analysis, and the first question is, ‘Is it needed?’. Based on the audit, we estimate around 9% of bunkers are not necessary – they don’t come into play or they don’t impact on strategy at all. That’s lower than it would have been 10 years ago, but in recent times many courses have been getting rid of bunkers.

We also found that in instances where golf courses had undertaken a review of their bunkers with the help of an architect – and about six to seven of those we audited fell into that category – it was very difficult to find any bunkers that should be taken out, proving the value of professional advice.

Did any of the findings surprise you?

It did surprise me to learn that the visual style of bunkers was not very

The Great British Bunker Study: key findings

This BIGGA-supported piece of research has established some fascinating and practical insights into the state of sand traps on courses across the land

high up the priority list for a large number of golf courses. That's something I thought would have been a bigger concern for more golf courses.

Another thing that came across was that most golfers prefer a simple bunker in the traditional bean shape. You see a lot of very fancy, frilly bunker designs on some courses, but much of the feedback we got was that golfers would rather see a simple shape that's well maintained than a badly maintained work of art.

Perhaps most surprising of all was that many golf courses didn't want to remove bunkers as they are desperate to keep their course rating figures. There seems to be a general view that the more difficult a course is, the better it is, even if it means having more bunkers than you need.

Are bunkers becoming more of a priority?

They're definitely becoming more prominent on the radar. A lot of golf

courses are seeing improved conditions for turf quality on greens, tees and fairways, and as a result the spotlight now is turning to bunkers as an area that requires improvement.

The changing climate is impacting golf courses in many ways, and it's definitely having an impact on bunkers as we see heavier spells of rain and that can lead to damage, so bunker maintenance needs to be a greater priority.

Are there still improvements that can be made to bunker technology?

There are a lot of very good bunker liners out there but there is no perfect one yet. I don't know exactly what the perfect bunker liner is, but I think we've got the closest to it.

The way drainage is designed could be better, and a lot more bunkers could be designed to reduce the amount of water flowing into them by changing their shape or deflecting water around them.

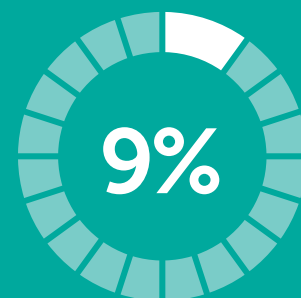
GI

38

audits conducted



More than 90% of those surveyed cited sand contamination as a major concern



An estimated 9% of bunkers are not necessary



1 in 6

bunkers add no strategic value for low-handicap (single digit) players





Planning and
implementing
drainage



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

Surface water management is an increasingly common and crucial area for greenkeepers to concentrate on during the winter months, explains The R&A's Gordon Howat

The autumn is now upon us, and as any hint of 2024 drought concerns are washed away by autumn rains, the focus naturally shifts towards drainage and the impact of water on the golf course. Indeed, the prominence of wet conditions and drainage has been one of the main themes for all clubs during the past 18 months. Excess surface water will eventually negatively impact turf health, and, as a result, the quality and performance of the golf course deteriorates. In turn, that impacts the greenkeeper's ability to maintain and present a golf course to the standards strived for. There can be no doubt that surface water management is very important.

So, what can be done about this? Well, first it is correct to take a step back and fully consider what the end goal is and what obstacles are in the way. I'm a strong believer that you must understand where you want to get to before the journey to any destination can be plotted. Ask yourself this: are my drainage outlets suitable and functional? Would using a small but efficient system be enough to fix large areas that are flooded by focusing on just one water source, or do I need to consider a bigger plan? What soils exist and is the topography sympathetic or problematic to existing conditions or a new drainage scheme? Once these variables are understood, it is important to look at what type of drainage is required and the machinery that would be best suited to install any proposed investment.

Pugh Lewis Ltd found the AFT 100 worked well at Royal Lytham & St Annes but reverted to the excavator for deeper digs



Difficult ground conditions at The Dukes in St Andrews forced Greentech Sportsturf to use a combination of excavator and trencher

The purpose of this piece is to understand the options and showcase some of the technologies available to help golf clubs better manage surface water.

Traditional piped drainage

We are all familiar with traditional piped drainage. A plastic perforated pipe is installed into the ground with a stone surround and cover, which is then overlaid with a sand or rootzone. These pipes will need to be suitably sized, and it is worth noting that if there is a situation where the fall (slope) is tight the use of smooth-bore twin-wall pipe is preferable. Typically, piped drainage is installed by means of a tractor-

mounted chain trencher, a wizz wheel or a tracked excavator. Each have their own benefits and constraints, and some jobs may require a combination of machinery.

You can see that a tractor-mounted chain trencher is the best all-rounder and would be suitable in most conditions. The exception would be if a particularly large pipe is to be installed – say 225 mm or greater – or where soil quality is so poor an excavator with a bucket is the only option. A moderately sized trencher such as the AFT 45 requires only a 45-55 HP tractor making this a tool that clubs can use with their existing tractors. The larger AFT 100 requires a 100-145 HP tractor so is more of a contractor’s type of equipment.

Your piped drainage options

The strengths and weaknesses of each piece of equipment are summarised in this traffic-light table

	Speed	Narrow trench	Wide trench	Clay soils	Sandy soils	Depth	Laser compatible
Chain trencher			Max 250 mm wide approx	Digging is generally fine but clay may stick in the chute			
Wizz wheel			Max 150 mm wide approx	Digging is generally fine but clay may stick in the chute			
Tracked excavator							GPS compatible dependent upon equipment/scope
Pedestrian trencher	Clean up is a bigger task						

Secondary drainage

Secondary drainage should be installed when the primary piped drainage system is insufficient. The installation of any form of slit drainage will speed up the movement of surface water into the primary piped drainage network below. The spacing of secondary drainage is often variable (sand banding and Koro slit centres differ as they are fixed by the equipment) but it is important to note that this light form of drainage cannot be relied upon to take water any great distance – so do not assume the spacing of the piped lateral drainage can necessarily be expanded if slits are to be installed. Secondary drainage should support a primary

drainage system and not necessarily alter the design. Secondary drainage comes in a few different forms, each with their own strengths and limitations. It is important to note that the lifetime of all drainage is limited, but this is especially the case with secondary drainage. However, good function can be managed by good maintenance – typically sand dressing and aeration.

Rope drainage

Passive Capillary Drainage (PCD) is perhaps more commonplace on greens particularly in the south of the UK. Often referred to as rope drainage, PCD is a stainless-steel

Your secondary drainage options

The strengths and weaknesses of different types of secondary drainage.

	Longevity	Ability to change width	Ease of establishment	Ability to fill slits with sand/grit	Ability to work in rocky ground	Backfilled in same operation
Sand slits						
Sand bands						
Koro slits						*
Gravel bands		**				

*topping up likely to be required on completion. Sand backfill only.
**only by changing the mole plough bullet diameter. Gravel backfill only.



The sand bander is adapted to allow for rope and sand to be backfilled simultaneously

core mesh wrapped in fibreglass, which draws water in through capillary action. It is typically laid at 1m spacings and is a good option for retro-fitting non-USGA greens because it is quick to install and involves limited surface disturbance. The only material used is sand, which is backfilled as part of a single process. There may be pros and cons for the club to consider when using non-traditional tried-and-tested methods of drainage.

Vertical drainage

This form of drainage is particularly useful where a positive outlet is not available. In simple terms, drilling kit is used to drill into fissures in the rock below to discharge water into the ground at potentially quite a significant depth. While it is not the quickest method to evacuate surface water, any storm water that the system cannot immediately cope with can be attenuated temporarily and then allowed to evacuate downwards at its own pace. It should be noted that a geotechnical report and trial drilling is necessary to determine whether ground conditions are suitable below and to ascertain peak flow and the requirements and extent that attenuation is necessary. While a little different from the norm, this is a solution that without doubt has a role to play when more traditional methodologies may not be suitable, but it is reliant on the geology below. **GI**

Water harvesting opportunities

It should be noted that, while surface water and drainage is undoubtedly a problem in turf management, with this comes opportunity. Water security and the demand for water for irrigation purposes in the summer months is increasing all the time. The R&A work with The Environment Partnership (TEP) to maximise the opportunity to harvest and re-use this resource in a holistic manner that gives golf courses improved climatic durability in both summer and winter. Tom Young at TEP can be contacted on tomyoung@tep.uk.com should there be an appetite within your club to look at the bigger picture.

Contact us for help

If you have any drainage issues and wish to discuss this with The R&A team, please do reach out to us by emailing sustainableagronomy@randa.org



Scan Me to
find out more



MJ Abbots neatly installing sand slits using a Shelton Super Trencher wheel



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NORTHERN

13 November, Toughsheet Community Stadium

CENTRAL ENGLAND

14 November, King Power Stadium, Leicester City

SOUTH WEST & SOUTH WALES

19 November, Somerset County Cricket Ground

SOUTH EAST

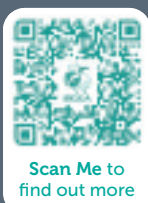
20 November, American Express Stadium, Brighton



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your place

Ecology expert to speak at Continue to Learn

Renowned golf course ecologist Bob Taylor will be presenting at Continue to Learn 2025 on the topic of heather and heathland management. We caught up with Bob for a chat about his career and why he is looking forward to BTME



Heather and Heathland Management

Presented by: Bob Taylor MCIEEM MBPR, Bob Taylor Ecology, and Sophie Olejnik, Oleo Ecology

Golf courses are one of the few land uses where valuable heathland habitat can be maintained and promoted with appropriate management. This class will look at what constitutes heathland and its principal components.

Ecologists Bob Taylor and Sophie Olejnik will contrast lowland coastal and upland heath, as well as determine management requirements for conservation while not losing sight of the playing of the game. The class will look at various management techniques for

establishing, maintaining and managing heathland, highlighting cost-effective methods and promoting heathlands as areas not only beneficial to wildlife but also to enhancing the prestige of the golf club. Scan the QR code to learn more.



About Bob

A consulting ecologist with over three decades of experience, Bob is an expert in applied habitat and species management, with a sound understanding of the needs of the game and the benefits that appropriate management can bring.

Founding Bob Taylor Ecology Ltd in 2021 to serve the golfing industry in an ecological advisory capacity, Bob works across the industry, often with recognised golf course architects. He is an accredited verifier for the GEO Foundation and is The R&A's preferred ecological adviser to The Open.

Bob's work has demonstrated that considering wildlife and the habitats on golf courses can run in parallel with providing an enhanced playing experience, with management being used to reduce frustration of slow play and lost balls and delivering real and tangible health benefits. Holistic management has become part of many golf clubs' routine management over the last 30 years, and Bob has been at the heart of that change.

How did you get involved in the crossover between golf and ecology?

I've been a passionate and enthused naturalist from an early age. I joined STRI back in 1989 and was given the opportunity to develop an ecological service specifically for golf.

At that time golf was being castigated as a negative land use, where chemicals, water and fertilisers were overused, but on visiting golf courses I quickly realised they could be rich nature reserves and could contribute in the fight against our declining habitats and the dwindling of many species.

This brought about the need for proactive management and awareness, and I've worked tirelessly over 35 years to enlighten golf clubs as to what they have and how to manage it.

How far has the golf industry come regarding ecology and conservation?

I think today, many golf clubs have moved from seeing ecological management as a luxury, something to aspire to if resources and weather conditions allow, to something that has become an integral component of their routine maintenance and management operations.

That has been further heightened following Covid as we now recognise more than ever the mental and physical health benefits that result from just being out in beautiful surroundings in nature.

Do environmental considerations mean compromising on the quality of playing conditions?

Golf and ecological management are not mutually exclusive in any way, and

**I quickly realised
[golf courses]
could be rich nature
reserves"**

in fact they both run hand in hand.

The timing of when you would do ecological management and the practices involved don't clash with maintenance programmes, and there is no need to see the former as being in competition with the latter.

Even on our most protected sites here, you're working to a directed management plan, and with consent and agreement you can bring about real ecological benefits without compromising on playing conditions.

Golf courses are now regarded as having a positive ecological impact because they're golf courses not despite that fact.

How well equipped are golf clubs to deal with the challenges posed by climate change?

I think golf doesn't yet fully understand the implication. People do need to become more aware of the problems and how to overcome them, because I think some things will be quite unexpected.

In Jersey, for example, there's a South African grass coming in called *sporobolus* that's extremely aggressive. We're also seeing different invasive species coming in that pose a threat.

We are seeing a shift in heather – something that is an integral part of so many of our Surrey heathland and West Sussex and Suffolk golf courses

– because it's becoming more difficult to manage with climate change.

Another thing is atmospheric nitrogen falling from the sky at a rate of 15 kilogrammes per hectare per year, and that's thickening the rough and leading to more lost golf balls!

We need to start thinking about managing to thin the grasslands down in a way that still maintains conservation interest.

There are many areas where we need to be diligent about how we're managing things and all the while making sure golfers aren't getting frustrated and leaving golf clubs.

How important is an event like BTME for sharing those messages?

BTME and Continue to Learn are vital because they provide a platform for the sharing of knowledge and the exchange of ideas. Sharing thoughts and opinions, listening to other people speak, hearing a different point of view – that's how we learn.

A big thing for me has always been trying to raise awareness, and I've been doing that for many years. That awareness also has to go beyond the people at BTME and beyond golf to reach those who think golf is for the privileged few and don't realise how good golf courses can be for the environment.

For example, our last lady's slipper orchid is at Silverdale, in Lancashire. All the rest have been picked. A total of 98 per cent of the lizard orchid population is at Royal St George's. These are the things people don't realise and we need to show them, we need to change that narrative and educate people on all the positive aspects of golf courses. **GI**



Why (and how) you should mentor an apprentice



Chris Dickson, year tutor for SVQ Sports Turf Greenkeeping at SRUC, explains the mutual benefits of work-based apprenticeship schemes – and talks to those who have experienced the programme

Here at SRUC, we are in a cycle of continuous improvement in our apprenticeship programme of creating greater support around innovative content, study skills and assessment. We believe an additional layer of mentoring support in the workplace is essential to building resilience, attainment, academic success, learner autonomy and a richer workplace experience.

According to the International Mentoring Foundation, mentoring can be defined as “a structured and personalised approach to professional development where an experienced individual (the mentor) guides and supports another person (the mentee) in their career growth and skill enhancement”.

The SRUC runs programmes that involve students spending a year in the field under a mentor - a scheme that offers mutual benefits for the mentor and apprentice alike.

This is now a fully work-based programme, therefore mentorship is key for student success. With our students' classrooms now being solely their own golf course or sports pitch, it is vital that their nominated mentor is on board with evidence gathering and reviewing progress, while passing

on their own knowledge. Through this scheme, Eyemouth's course manager, Keith Burgon, took on an apprentice, Ben McNeil, who has now finished year one of his work-based SVQ 2 Greenkeeping course. I asked Keith about the experience.

How did you start the apprenticeship journey?

The club had been considering taking on an apprentice for a few months but didn't make any final decisions. Ben then emailed the club captain to come and do some work experience during the Easter holidays. Ben was at the club for two days when we realised that we had found a very good worker who was keen to learn. He was shown how to rake bunkers, cut greens, tees and fairways, he managed to do each task to a good safe standard. Once we discussed it at the committee meeting, we decided to offer Ben an apprenticeship.

What was gained by the student induction session?

I attended the student induction session. This was good as it gave a clear picture of what Ben had to do to complete year

“Every youngster needs a start in any line of work. I really wanted to pass everything I had learned onto someone who was keen to learn and shows a real interest in becoming a greenkeeper”

– Keith Burgon, Eyemouth course manager



The apprentice's view

Ben McNeil says he benefitted significantly from Keith's mentorship during his work-based course.

"I have learned so much in my first year working at Eyemouth Golf Club. Keith has taken his time to show me how to carry out every task safely and to the highest standard. He has also explained why and when we do every task, and this had made completing year one a lot easier."

Why mentoring works

The shared experience illustrates for all of us the impact that mentoring can have that goes beyond skill development, essential as that is for high operational standards.

Mentoring in the workplace engages high-potential employees and prepares them for future key roles; it supports an individual adapting to a team environment; it builds essential confidence and a positive mindset; through BIGGA it can lead to the expansion of a professional network; and ultimately it retains and motivates team members.

Modern Apprenticeships will always remain a partnership between the learner, employer, college and let us not forget our funding bodies. However, by combining a structured, robust knowledge foundation with a real-world learning environment, it is clear we can set up young people to embark and succeed on a lifelong career in our changing industry.

If you wish to support a Modern Apprentice at your workplace, contact your local GTC Approved Training provider, or the GTC directly.

Keith Burgon and Ben McNeil



one of his apprenticeship. He also got a run through of how Moodle worked so when the coursework was issued, he could make a start without having to figure out how to work the system.

Why did you want to be the nominated mentor for Ben?

Every youngster needs a start in any line of work. When I was an apprentice, my course manager, George Thompson, mentored me along my journey to becoming a course manager, so I really wanted to pass everything I had learned on to someone who was keen to learn and shows a real interest in becoming a greenkeeper.

How much time do you spend with Ben completing portfolio activities during work time?

We work together on a regular basis. As we only have a staff of four, we always share tasks. Carrying out the college work was easy as every job Ben completed, we would video him carrying it out, so we had a record of it. This made the course so much easier to complete. **GI**

About SRUC

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) is on a journey to become Scotland's enterprise university at the heart of our sustainable natural economy. For more information visit sruc.ac.uk call 0131 535 4000 or email admissions@sruc.ac.uk





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Autumn applications on target

Syngenta application research has shown that results for disease and weed control can be affected by more than 50% through sprayer set up and operation alone

Sprayer operation holds the key to getting the best possible results from any application. Fine tuning aspects of nozzle selection, water volume and speed will all influence the ability to hit the target, and retain the product where it can work most effectively.

The challenge for autumn foliar



Author: Sean Loakes
Syngenta Technical Manager UK & Ireland

fungicide application, is to get this balance between the spray droplet spectrum to achieve the desired coverage and retention on the leaf, along with managing the risk of spray drift.

Nozzle selection has a massive implication on application performance. It's the point of delivery that governs consistency of spray across the surface.

Read this for:

- Spraying autumn fungicides
- New nozzle technology
- Practical ASOOTY tips

The Syngenta Turf website has a whole series of free and easy to use sprayer calculators, in conjunction with nozzle output charts, to work out how you need to adjust pressure and speed combinations that will deliver precise water volume applications.

Nozzle selection will also dictate the size of droplets produced and the spray pattern. A higher number of small droplets will help to give better coverage of a leaf surface and will typically stick better on the leaf, compared to fewer larger droplets that will give lower coverage, and can bounce or roll off the leaf surface.

Larger droplets have greater kinetic energy and velocity when they leave

Application technique can make a big difference in results and environmental protection

ASOOTY Winner's advice



Dan Waring won the prestigious title of Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year 2023. He's the specialist sprayer technician for JCB Golf and Country Club near Uttoxeter. Dan's top tips and advice for fungicide applications this autumn and winter include:

Water volume: My approach to spraying an autumn/winter fungicide would be to use a water volume of around 300L/Ha (dependant on the product), to help the spray stay on the leaf, to maximise its efficacy and get the most bang for your buck.

Speed: Keep your speeds low, around 4-5kph to reduce the risk of drift, helping it reach its intended target. My nozzle choice is dictated by a combo of the above, but would typically aim for a purple .025 for the leaf coverage it gives you.

Check your tips!: Regularly checking your nozzles for wear is a simple yet effective check that can avoid inconsistent coverage or costly mistakes. Using a simple calibration cone, or a more technical one such as the Spot-on calibration tools that we use, can see if your nozzles are OK.

Keep an eye on the weather: Checking the Turf Advisor app, Met Office or similar forecast for rainfall before you go out can save product from being washed off and wasted, as well as time.

Buffers: Before you start, check your product for its required buffer zone to keep spray away from ditches or watercourses, as some buffers will be greater than others.

Height: Boom height can have a significant impact on spray coverage but also spray drift. Using a simple cable tie, string or bar set at 50cm, attached to the boom end, will help you keep an eye whilst spraying.

Agitation: The formulation of the fungicide you are applying will determine the level of agitation you require in your spray tank to prevent any settling out of any product.



the nozzle tip and plummet directly to the ground, which is a huge benefit in reducing sideways movement and potential drift. Small droplets, with limited energy, can be caught by wind or air currents and moved around, so in anything but quite still conditions can be lost as drift. In application research trials up to 15% of the spray created as fine droplets failed to even reach the target surface.

Syngenta XC nozzles have been specifically designed for turf applications, with a low coefficient of variation that produces consistently more droplets per ml in the desired spectrum at any size, compared to conventional or flat fan nozzles. That significantly helps in

drift reduction in any conditions.

Historically many products for turf were tested, registered and applied at a water volume of 600 or up to 1,000 litres/ha. The issue with high water volume is that it can effectively over wet the leaf surface and lead to high levels of run off.

Newer foliar fungicides have typically been tested and recommended at water volumes as low as 200-250L/ha. That has advantages of improving the chance of retaining spray on the small turf leaf area, as well as enabling greater coverage per sprayer load that can reduce time spent filling and travelling, along with less weight carried on sprayers on the green.

To cover most turf applications, fit a nozzle holder with low drift Syngenta XC nozzles of 025 (purple) – typically for foliar applications of fungicides, PGRs or herbicides on greens at low speeds; an 04 (red) – for foliar applications on fairways or semi-rough at higher speeds, and an 08 (white) for soil target applications, such as wetting agents, Acelepryn insecticide or nematodes.

An understanding of the objectives for the specific treatment and its intended target will help to decide the application techniques to get the best results.



Care for your course with Turfco



Turfco designs and builds equipment that increases productivity, saving work hours while reducing fuel costs when operating on fine turf surfaces. Their product lines include topdressers, overseeders and blowers.

WideSpin topdressers reduce the number of passes and compaction to complete the job, while ensuring a consistent and even distribution of dressing materials in all types of conditions.

WideSpin 1550 topdressers are available in truck-mounted and tow-behind models with engine or hydraulic power options. They are available with standard electronic control or a patented digital Smart Controller. Standard electronic control models are easy to use and offer good value for the money. Smart Controller models offer rate calculation and programmable pre-sets for greater productivity, consistent spread and labour savings.

Featuring two angled spinners, the WideSpin 1550 can deliver a light application to 18 greens in 90 minutes. The unit can put down a layer of sand so light that a few minutes of irrigation will leave the greens playable and golfers would never know it had just been topdressed. The angled spinners drive the sand deep into the turf, where it belongs.

Turfco overseeding equipment is perfect for amenity areas including parks, recreation areas, estate grounds, golf courses and sports facilities.

The TriWave 60 and TriWave 45 are a new breed of overseeder that can significantly increase the success of overseeding operations by up to 30%, especially on contoured ground. WaveBlade counter-rotating blade technology creates a U-shaped slit (instead of the usual V-shaped slit of competitor products) providing more seed to soil contact, increasing germination.

The larger tractor-mounted TriWave 60 was the result of the



frustration of turf managers with regard to the overseeding process. Disruption of existing turf, the inability to follow ground contours and limited seed germination when using existing equipment, was the driving force behind its development.

The TriWave 45 is a self-contained trailed overseeder, which can be towed behind a utility vehicle, quad bike, bunker rake or tractor, and provides versatility and the

easiest operation of any overseeder on the market. Power comes from an 18.4 kW (25 hp) Briggs and Stratton Vanguard petrol engine and it quickly attaches to most turf vehicles, making it convenient and efficient to use.

The Turfco Torrent 2 is powerful all-purpose blower designed with significant input from golf course, grounds and turf managers. Available in tow-behind or tractor-mounted PTO-driven formats, it delivers unprecedented control over air speed, air direction, noise management and fuel consumption. This is a precision clean-up tool that can be used year-round to give golf courses or grounds a new level of polish and playability.

The wireless controller technology allows the operator to dial in the exact nozzle direction for optimal performance with fast, 360-degree nozzle rotation dramatically enhancing productivity and control.

Multiple air speed settings make it quick and easy to increase or decrease blowing force, while a dedicated button allows the operator to idle down when people are near, and then quickly resume operation at the original setting once they clear the area.

For more information visit www.turfco.com or call 07512 909792.

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Stay safe on the course

Perhaps we're biased, but here at Kubota we believe that utility vehicles are one of the unsung heroes of greenkeeping operations - quietly and effectively moving people and equipment around the golf course, in all weathers and standing up to the challenges of whatever the task at hand. In our pursuit of speed and efficiency, it is often easy to overlook some of the fundamentals to ensure that every journey is executed safely. Chris Hughes from the Kubota UK Groundcare aftersales team provides a re-fresher on some of the key safety features across the RTV X range and some top tips for optimising output.

It's maybe commonly thought that a utility vehicle is a pretty standard item, available from multiple brands with very similar specifications. Doing the same job but shifting the emphasis towards traction and control is the

Kubota RTV X range - largely due to the unique VHT-X variable hydrostatic transmission.

Similar to the system employed on fairway and greens mowers, Kubota's VHT-X transmission consists of a hydraulically driven series of gears and shafts - offering high-range, low-range neutral and reverse gears for optimal control over all terrain.

For the ascent or descent of hills, or when the vehicle is heavily-loaded or towing, low range can be selected. In low range, the operator has greater control over the vehicle and the likelihood of wheel spin and skidding is reduced thanks to the smoother power take up and hydraulically operated servomechanism which controls acceleration and deceleration.

Likewise, when selecting reverse gear, the hydrostatic transmission (HST) allows the RTV X to slow to a smooth and controlled stop. This is known as

dynamic braking or assisted braking and is more effective with an HST system, compared to continuously variable transmission (CVT) designs. Regulated by a brake valve within the HST, dynamic braking not only slows the machine, it also allows the operator to descend a slope with the confidence that it won't roll away!

The dynamic braking of the RTV X is complemented by the more traditional primary braking from the foot pedal which, when applied, reduces pressure within the HST and moves the kinetic energy to the four wet multi-disk type brakes.

Looking more closely within the Kubota VHT-X transmission, it is fully load-sensing. This load sensing system is as simple as it is reliable and would normally be found in larger and more exclusive products. This offers smooth and progressive drive to the wheels with the key benefit

“In our pursuit of speed and efficiency, it is often easy to overlook some of the fundamentals to ensure that every journey is executed safely”



Above and main image. The Kubota RTV X-1110

Kubota offers advice for taking control of utility vehicle safety

of superior traction. With traction in mind, the RTV X uses a limited slip front differential ensuring maximum drive to the front wheels, with a foot-operated rear differential available should additional traction be required.

Continuing on the theme of safety, the Kubota RTV range is specified to top level homologation, meaning that features such as seat belts, heat shields and mud guards come as standard (and may need to be selected as 'optional extras' on models from other manufacturers). With the Kubota VHT-X transmission and homologation approval optimising safety and control over the vehicle when operated and used effectively and as intended, there are a number of general 'good practice' guidelines greenkeepers should consider:

- Always be aware and mindful of available mass and towing capacities of the vehicle. These will be stated

within the operator manual and will vary from model to model. Overloading or uneven loading is easily done and, aside from being dangerous, can lead to increased and unnecessary tyre, suspension and transmission wear.

- Adjust suspension settings to match the expectant load or ride height. Kubota utilise a double wishbone and McPherson strut type suspension to combine strength with a smooth ride.

- When loading the cargo bed, utilise tie down hooks to ensure the contents is fully secure and, if equipped with a tailgate, ensure this is closed and locked to retain the designs structural strength.

- Slopes are a major contributor to loss-of-control and/or tip accidents, which can result in severe injury or worse. Take extra caution when traversing slopes, travel straight up or

down hill and ensure the front wheels are straight at the crest. Also consider reducing load when operating on hilly or uneven terrain.

- Driving through water can cause damage so keep the speed down below 10kph and ensure the water is no deeper than the centre of the wheel.

- Ensure tyre pressures are correct to maintain the inter-axle ratio and optimal braking. This will also help to prevent increased or uneven tyre scuff/wear.

- Following recommended maintenance schedules is key for machine longevity. Conduct daily checks and maintain service intervals to reduce downtime or costly repairs.

For more information on the Kubota RTV range, visit <https://kuk.kubota-eu.com/groundcare/series/rtv/>



A Day in the Life - James Bledge

Links Manager at Royal Liverpool Golf Club (Hoylake)
talks us through his working day

No two work days are the same, which is perhaps part of the appeal for greenkeepers nationwide, who work hard to maintain playing conditions for millions of golfers in the UK.

Follow along with James Bledge, Links Manager at the prestigious Royal Liverpool Golf Club - 13-time host of The Open - to see how newer technology like Husqvarna robotic mowers can support with course maintenance and become integrated members of the greenkeeping team.

04.50 – Alarm

No matter how many years you have been an early riser, it never gets any easier! I am extremely fortunate however, as my office is a couple of steps outside my front door.

I jump straight in the shower; I'm not quite physically and mentally prepared at this age to have a cold shower, so a nice hot one is just the ticket!

05.00 – Morning stretches

Like many greenkeepers I suffer from a bad back from years of raking, repairing pitchmarks and lifting sodden, wet revetting turf. My dogs love to clamber all over me, and often have a stretch too!

05.15 – Fire up the coffee machine

A coffee always sets me up for the day – flat white, latte or cappuccino.



05.20 – Check the daily plan.

I check that the plan is relevant from when it was made the previous night - has the weather changed anything? Do I have the correct number of staff? I make sure I am settled on this before my management team comes in before 6am.

05.30 – Review Husqvarna Fleet Services.

I ensure 'Trevor', 'Cilla' (both Husqvarna CEORA) and 'Robochop' (Husqvarna Automower 550) have had a successful night cutting and are where they should be. The machines are cutting the turf nursery, driving range, kids course & pathways. The robots are extremely reliable, and any adjustments we make to their areas and schedules help us achieve our very best from them. The Fleet Services app lets me know how long they spend cutting, charging, and parked so I can utilise them as efficiently as possible.





05.45 – Deputy and First Assistant arrive.

We discuss the day ahead and often the plan is tweaked as they may have seen a more efficient way to carry out certain tasks or wish to re-prioritise jobs.

06.00 – Team briefing.

I sit down with the team on Monday morning and communicate the plan for the week. We check in and make sure everyone is happy and if there are any issues to be resolved. We then discuss jobs in detail and occasionally the football results which are often the reason why the team 'doesn't like Mondays'.

06.05 – Course set-up begins.

Sometimes on a Monday we topdress which can be stressful when the weather doesn't play ball, and you have targets to meet. Our senior greenkeeper sends all the Husqvarna mowers to pre-mapped maintenance points where they undergo their weekly washdown and the blades are checked. If they are showing signs of wear, he swaps them out with discs that have been pre-equipped with fresh blades to ensure the quality of cut remains as high as possible.

06.30 onwards.

After a check in with our mechanic, I head out to the course to ensure everything is running according to plan. Sometimes I will rake bunkers, set up the range, or do some cutting. I try to prioritise jobs that can carry on should I be pulled away to do something else.

My morning consists of making sure all the jobs are going according to plan; I often take pictures and make notes about tasks or 'snag jobs' that need carrying out by the team in the afternoon.

I will have a lot of emails which I try and action, so I don't forget them. I also return to my whiteboard during the day to make sure the plan is set for the rest of the week.

The remainder of the day is filled with meetings, budget accounting, reports, rep visits and planning. Lately, I have been collecting honey with our lovely neighbour and we sell 'Hoylelake Honey' behind the bar for charity. The days seem to fly by and before we know it the team is leaving at 2pm.



20.00 – Drive around the course with the kids before bed.

I love to see the headlights on the Husqvarna mowers as they start their night shift. It's also good to see any irrigation working away before bed so I can rest easy. Sometimes if there is a nice sunset, I send the drone up to get some photos for the club's social media.

Some people may think living on-site isn't for them, but when the success of the golf course means so much, I can solve problems faster and easier which in turn relieves any stress, as issues are dealt with there and then and very rarely taken to bed. It is amazing having this green space on your doorstep.



Find out more about Husqvarna and their range of professional robotics solutions at:
www.husqvarna.com

Nutrition ammunition

Sickleholme Golf Club's journey to greens perfection
with the help of Origin Amenity Solutions



Sickleholme Golf Club

Nestled in the picturesque Hope Valley of the Peak District, Sickleholme Golf Club is a haven for golfers and also a prime example of exceptional course management. With stunning views, undulating greens and a challenging layout, the club has been recognised as the 'Most Underrated Golf Course in the UK' by Golfshake.com in 2024. This is a testament to the dedication and expertise of Head Greenkeeper Matt Holden and his team.

A commitment to excellence

Appointed as head greenkeeper in 2015, Matt Holden brought with him a wealth of experience from his upbringing in the Highlands of Scotland and his work experience placement at Royal Dornoch. His vision for Sickleholme was clear; to elevate the course to its maximum potential, ensuring it remains playable year-round while enhancing the natural beauty of its surroundings.

"When I first came to Sickleholme, I was struck by its potential," Matt recalls. "The location, the landscape and the existing layout were all fantastic, but I knew there was room to improve the playability and health of the course. It's been a labour of love, but I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved."

Over the years, Matt has cultivated a loyal and skilled team of six greenkeepers, whose collective experience exceeds 100 years. Together, they have transformed the course, making it a beloved destination for golfers who appreciate the challenge and scenery alike.

The nutritional greens programme

Central to Sickleholme's success has been the tailored nutritional greens programme developed by Mark Robinson, Technical Sales Representative from Origin Amenity Solutions (OAS). Mark has worked

with Matt for many years, creating a programme that balances nutrition, promotes stable and healthy turf and minimises plant stress and disease.

"It is important that we avoid growth spurts that could lead to increased stress and disease in the greens but more importantly, keeping our putting greens true and smooth helps with different paces and gives our players putting consistency and a better game", explains Matt. To achieve this, Matt utilises a range of OAS products, both biological and non-biological, which have proven to be instrumental in maintaining the greens' immaculate condition.

Key products in use:

- **Breaker BioLinks Wetting Agent:** Essential for retaining moisture in the soil, especially given the club's location on a hill where greens dry out quickly due to wind exposure. Matt applies



this monthly from mid-April to August to help combat Dry Patch, ensuring consistent moisture levels throughout the season. Matt notes, "Our greens are situated on a hill, so they dry out quickly. Even after the heavy rain, a few days of heat and wind and our greens start to show signs of stress. Breaker BioLinks has been a game changer in helping us retain moisture, especially during the warmer months."

- **CMS Shoot:** An organic fertiliser and biostimulant that Matt pairs with Breaker BioLinks. This combination is effective in managing stress and helping to maintain a strong sward. CMS Shoot, derived from condensed molasses solubles (CMS), boosts plant metabolism and stimulates beneficial bacterial and fungal activity in the soil. "CMS Shoot

has been fantastic in reducing stress on the greens and promoting a perennial sward" says Matt. "It's one of the key products in our programme."

- **Nutri-Link Root and Nutri-Link Revive:** A cocktail containing humic and fulvic acids, designed to boost root development and stimulate beneficial micro-organisms; organic acids and natural hormones to alleviate stress and improve plant recovery whilst stimulating microbial activity. "An essential product in our programme", adds Matt.
- **Autumn Green Bio Granules:** A high-potassium fertiliser with added iron, calcium, and magnesium, is Matt's go-to product for stress relief after maintenance work. "I apply this twice yearly to aid recovery and promote consistent growth. It plays a key role in keeping our greens in top condition."
- **Symbio BioTabs:** These all-natural soil probiotics are used monthly by the greenkeeping team. They contain beneficial bacteria and fungi that help maintain a healthy soil biome. Using this IMP programme Matt has observed "Our soil health has improved, and our turf is less susceptible to disease."

Results and Achievements

The consistent application of these products has yielded impressive results at Sicklesholme. Over time, there has been a marked increase in the prevalence of browntop bentgrass. Matt elaborates, "This shift is indicative of the favourable environment created by our nutritional programme, which has also led to a reduction in disease pressure on the greens. Our bentgrass has thrived, and we've seen a significant decline in Poa Annua. It's a clear sign that our programme is working well, creating the right conditions for the grasses we want to flourish."

Notably, the club has dramatically reduced its reliance on fungicides, cutting down from six applications per year to just one or two. Matt now only applies a contact systemic fungicide in October or November, with the most recent application in October 2023. This highlights the effectiveness

of the programme and also reflects the club's commitment to sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. "Reducing our fungicide use has been a big win," Matt remarks. "It's better for the environment and the overall health of the greens."

Innovations in soil management

Matt's approach to soil management has been equally transformative. He began using biological products six years ago to address issues with thatch and black layer. Symbio ThatchEater has been particularly impactful, reducing thatch levels to below 5% and eliminating the black layer entirely.

"Symbio ThatchEater has given us fantastic results. We haven't needed to core the greens in five years, which is a great progression", Matt says.

Regular aeration and annual scarification, combined with the use of OAS' biological products, have created a soil profile that Matt is pleased with. "Good aeration is key to maintaining healthy greens," Matt explains. "We do a form of light aeration every seven to ten days, and this, along with our greens programme, has given us fantastic results."

Conclusion

Sickleholme's journey to becoming a top-ranked course is a story of dedication, innovation and the effective use of advanced products from Origin Amenity Solutions.

Under Matt Holden's leadership, the club has not only achieved its goal of maintaining immaculate greens but has also set a benchmark for sustainability and excellence in course management. The results speak for themselves, a balanced nutrition and moisture management programme has led to a sustainable IPM strategy across the course.

"I strive for perfection, and with the support of OAS we're getting closer to that goal every day," Matt concludes. "

For further information or to discuss a bespoke programme for your club contact the OAS team on **0800 138 7222** or email **sales@originamenity.com**

Who is on your golf course leadership team?



John Kemp is The R&A's Project Manager – Golf Course 2030

How can you get your fellow leaders familiar with the challenges you face so that you can work together on finding the best solutions?

“What is The R&A doing about...?”

That’s probably the most common question I get asked when speaking to people in the industry, presenting to an audience of greenkeepers, planning with industry organisations, chatting with club managers or even in emails from club committees. It’s a fair question. As a global body for the sport of golf, The R&A works alongside many others to lead and support the industry in over 146 countries with 22,000 golf courses. The R&A and our Sustainable Golf team take our responsibility to lead very seriously and work hard to identify, research and progress key issues for golf course management and the sport as a whole.

“From a global level all the way to your own golf course, there are countless leaders capable of influencing and making sustainable change”

But it’s not just The R&A who lead – we work with industry bodies like BIGGA, national golf federations, working groups of industry people, academic institutions, researchers and many more. From a global level all the way to your own golf course, there are countless leaders capable of influencing and making sustainable change.

As you read this article, you’ll have flicked past pages about the launch of the Continue to Learn programme for 2025 and The R&A’s collaboration with BIGGA. You will, I hope, have identified opportunities in Harrogate in January to attend educational events delivered by The R&A’s network of experts

and agronomists – from conference sessions to free-to-attend seminars.

BIGGA members in Scotland might also have registered to attend the forthcoming Sustainability Workshops delivered in conjunction with Scottish Golf and the Club Managers’ Association. Those workshops are specifically designed to get golf course managers and club managers in the same room talking about the sustainability issues and opportunities shared by clubs in the UK and farther afield. These are just two opportunities that The R&A is supporting to help greenkeepers advance their knowledge of what a sustainable future for your golf course looks like, and there are many more events just like them.

There is one common theme with these events: they are also open for other leaders of your golf course and club to attend – club managers, secretaries, PGA professionals and directors of golf, boards of management and green committees.

So, some quick thoughts on golf course leadership:

- Who else outside your maintenance facility has a key role in the golf course?
- Who has a say in critical subjects like capital planning, annual maintenance programmes or even long-term strategic planning?

- When was the last time those leaders discussed sustainable golf course management?
- Have you invited these leaders in your club to attend Harrogate with you?

But you don’t have to leave your club to demonstrate exceptional collaborative leadership. On a weekly basis I see brilliant examples of greenkeepers working collaboratively with other influencers and decision-makers who will impact their daily job:

- Weekly management team meetings
- Staff exchange programmes where colleagues from other teams spend a day on the course
- Joint staff training or team-building sessions
- Holding a Green Committee meeting in the maintenance facility
- Member information nights and course walks
- Monthly newsletters
- Quarterly management reviews and budget tracking

I’m sure you have plenty of ideas yourself. So, the question for you is: what are you doing to get your fellow leaders familiar with the challenges you face and on the same page as you on how we can all address them?

GI



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

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