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Greenkeeper International



“Greenkeepers are battling unrealistic expectations. We need to educate people about the sustainable way of doing things”

Phil Stain shares his key learnings from four decades as course manager at Hollinwell

■ Practical Greenkeeping
Formby Ladies' long-term success

■ Personal Development
Chris Tritabaugh on leadership

■ Member Interest
Greenkeeping Pebble Beach-style



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April 2025



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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BIGGA

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

BIGGA's activities on a national and regional level are underpinned by the generosity of our industry partners and supporters. BIGGA's various member benefits, learning and development opportunities and other activities are made possible due to the ongoing commitment shown by these companies, organisations and individual donors. From our supporters through to our national patrons and partners, our thanks go to them all for their dedication to BIGGA and its members.



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- Jaey Goodchild takes on new role at the R&A Sustainable Agronomy Service
- Ferndown team help restore heathland with Dorset Wildlife Trust



Greenkeeper's epic 400-mile walk raises funds for homeless charity

Greenkeeper Jack Percival turned a personal struggle into a powerful message of hope by walking more than 400 miles to raise money for a homeless charity and promote men's mental health.

Jack, who was most recently course manager at The Leatherhead Club, was approaching a year since he was admitted to a psychiatric hospital after attempting to end his own life, and he wanted to "flip the narrative".

The Glasgow Rangers fan decided to walk from his home in Epsom to the Scottish giants' Ibrox Stadium, garnering donations along the way to support the charity he set up.

Percy's Homeless Hub feeds up to 150 people each week and helps

addicts to detox. The £11,000 raised by Jack's incredible efforts will go towards a new mobile soup kitchen.

Jack hopes sharing his story will encourage others to speak up about mental health.

"I was coming up on the anniversary of a major life event and I wanted to do something positive," said Jack, whose charity work saw him win BIGGA's Outstanding Contribution Award in 2019. "The old soup kitchen in the back of our van was falling apart, so we needed a new one and I thought doing this walk would be worthy of raising some money."

"I also wanted to raise awareness around mental health and share my story, just to get people talking."

Jack's initial plan was to complete the walk inside three weeks, but blisters slowed progress to 31 days.

He described it as "the toughest and most enjoyable" experience of his life, with some particular highlights.

"There were so many people I spoke to who had stories about mental health and addiction," he said.

"And there were others who were just glad to know somebody was out there talking about this stuff."

"At one point, I was walking down a canal and a guy was canoeing alongside me while we chatted about mental health and his experiences."

"Moments like that and the support and encouragement I had along the way made it all worthwhile." **GI**



The BIGGA Calendar

April: Daniel Smith, Dartmouth Golf & Country Club

Jaey Goodchild joins R&A Sustainable Agronomy Service



The R&A Sustainable Agronomy service has announced the appointment of Jaey Goodchild as its agronomist for Great Britain & Ireland.

Jaey brings a wealth of experience in golf course management, having started his career in greenkeeping at Chobham Golf Club before progressing to deputy course manager. He then spent five years in the same role at Richmond Golf Club

before moving on to Bowood Hotel, Spa & Golf Resort as course manager.

His hands-on expertise and deep understanding of turf management will be invaluable in his new role with The R&A Sustainable Agronomy Service.

"I am very excited to be taking on this role," said Jaey. "It will be challenging, but I'm part of an industry I've been passionate about for years, filled with colleagues and friends I respect.

"What excites me most is working alongside those people in roles I've experienced firsthand — I understand their challenges, their motivations and the incredible sense of achievement that comes with success."

A Cranfield University graduate with an MSc in Sports Surface Technology, Jaey has built a distinguished career in turf management, seamlessly combining his academic expertise with hands-on industry experience.

Throughout his career, he has been actively involved in tournament support, volunteering at several events. In his new role, he looks

forward to applying his knowledge and experience to drive sustainable course management practices.

Paul Woodham, sustainable agronomy lead Europe, including UK, at The R&A, said: "We're thrilled to welcome Jaey to the team," he said. "His 25 years of experience in golf course management will be a tremendous asset in supporting our clients with expert guidance, ensuring their courses continue to thrive for decades to come."

Jaey's agronomic passions include fine turf restoration, tournament preparation and plant health strategies, all of which align with The R&A Sustainable Agronomy Service's mission to promote sustainable course management. Outside of work, he is an avid outdoorsman who enjoys trail running, hiking and exploring the natural world. **GI**



Read Jaey's column on Page 66

0-0 What's on this month

Dates for your diary

2 April

BIGGA Yorkshire Section Water Conservation & Legislation – Moortown Golf Club

7 April 2025

BIGGA East Anglia Section Golf Day - John O'Gaunt GC

8 April

GCMA Advanced Management Certificate: Building Resilience and Managing Mental Health – Oxford

8 April 2025

BIGGA North East Education Day - Chester-le-Street Golf Club

9 April 2025

Mid Anglia Spring Golf - Aspley Guise & Woburn Sand Golf Club

9 April 2025

BIGGA Cleveland Section Irrigation Workshop - Castle Eden Golf Club

15 April

BIGGA Scotland Legacy Golf Day - President v Vice-President match – Longniddry Golf Club

15 April 2025

BIGGA Sheffield Section Education Day - Rotherham Golf Club

21 April 2025

BIGGA Surrey Bowl 2025

22 April

First Green STEM Field Trip – St Andrews Links Trust

23 April

Central Scotland Golf Championship – Leven Links

24 April

BIGGA Highlands & Islands Golf Championship – Hopeman Golf Club

29 April

GCMA Advanced Management Certificate: Golf Course Management for Club Managers – Moortown Golf Club

30 April 2025

East of Scotland Golf Championship – Goswick Golf Club



BIGGA Regional Patrons 2025

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



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





Ferndown team up with Dorset Wildlife Trust to restore heathland

The greenkeeping team at Ferndown have been working alongside Dorset Wildlife Trust to help restore heathland areas at Upton Heath Nature Reserve.

Half the team went along for a day in February to trim gorse, pull pines and collect any dead wood that was deemed to be having a detrimental impact.

Their work helped re-establish optimal conditions for the area and opened up some stunning views from the pathway.

"We enjoyed working with Anna and Nathan, the two representatives from the Wildlife Trust, and seeing the difference we made at the end of the day," said Head Greenkeeper Daniel Murray.

"The Dorset Wildlife Trust relies on voluntary groups in order to keep our nature reserves in pristine condition and we admire the work they do.

"I would encourage others to follow suit as it's a

worthwhile and fun exercise, which is great for team bonding.

"We were all very tired at the end of the day, but we had great fun and will definitely do it again."

Ferndown are working towards gaining GEO certification, with community engagement like this being one of the steps they are taking, following on from their work with the Dorset Bird Club.

They have also reduced their carbon footprint by introducing electrical equipment to maintain the golf course, while there are also plans to remove the reliance on mains water supply.

Danny added: "We have an obligation and a moral duty to care about the environment and we are taking the steps to become more eco-friendly, sustainable and help out our community, not only this but we really enjoy it." **GI**

'Congratulations Pete!' – Formby Ladies greenkeeper brings up 40 years' service

Peter Tudor has racked up an incredible 40 years of service at Formby Ladies Golf Club.

The dedicated greenkeeper marked four decades at the historic Lancashire links on 1 March.

Rob Sandilands, the course manager who has worked alongside Peter since 2016, paid tribute to his long-serving

colleague's "impressive" achievement.

"Forty years' service is truly special, and working as hard as ever, rain or shine, after all these years makes it even more impressive," he said.

"That is why Pete is so well respected and valued as part of our team.

"Congratulations Pete!" **GI**



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From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

Member's Choice



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find out more

Member's Choice opens on 18 April. Submissions for Proposal to Present are open until 11 April.

- CEO Jim Croxton discusses BIGGA's involvement with the Golf Forum
- Refund of Fees scheme helps towards education costs for greenkeepers



Sign up for the BIGGA National and follow in the footsteps of the greats

The course managers at Royal Liverpool and Wallasey are excited to welcome greenkeepers to compete in the 2025 BIGGA National.

Honours up for grabs include the BIGGA National Challenge Trophy (scratch medal over 36 holes) and the Challenge Cup (Stableford over 36 holes). A team event on day one will see the top four scores from players in each Region being counted. There is also a prize fund worth up to £2,000, including daily longest drive and nearest the pin prizes.

A gala dinner will be held at Wallasey Golf Club after play on day one.

Royal Liverpool's James Bledge and Wallasey's John McLoughlin are both looking forward to hosting the two-day event in October.

"Royal Liverpool has a rich history of amateur championships so we are delighted to host the BIGGA National Championship," said James.

"The opportunity to showcase our links alongside our friends at Wallasey Golf Club is a huge privilege and honour and we all are very much

looking forward to welcoming you all in October."

John added: "Wallasey Golf Club is delighted to welcome BIGGA members to play in the National Championship.

"It's the first time the club has hosted the event and myself and the team are honoured to be able to showcase the course to the wider greenkeeper community."

The BIGGA National Championship 2025 is sponsored by Golf Finance and MJ Abbott. **GI**

The BIGGA National Board is comprised of the following members who volunteer their time to support the association:
Kevin Fish, Antony Kirwan, Andrew Laing, Gordon McKie, Lucy Sellick, Andy Smith and Jez Ward
BIGGA President Ronnie Myles, BIGGA Chairperson Steven Lloyd



INSPIRE THE
NEXT GENERATION



First Green FAQs

Workforce Project Manager Jenny Bledge answers the questions she is often asked about the initiative.

Hosting a First Green field trip is a great way to engage students in STEM learning while showcasing the role of greenkeepers.

Many of you have shown an interest in this initiative and here are some of the most common questions I find myself answering.

What does a typical event look like?

A field trip lasts 2-3 hours with multiple activity stations run by a greenkeeper or volunteer offering hands-on learning.

How much time and effort does it take to host?

Preparation mainly involves co-ordinating with the school and creating the agenda. BIGGA provides structured lesson plans and materials for our members to simplify the whole process.

Which activity stations should I start with?

We offer 13 lesson plan guides, but great starter stations include Cool Tools, Soils, Calculating Areas and How Far Does the Ball Roll. You can also create your own using our guides as a reference.

What about insurance and risk assessments?

Your golf club's public liability insurance covers all on-site activities, including this event. Schools have their own cover for educational visits but may request proof for risk assessments. All lesson plans we provide include risk assessments to share with school staff.

Do I need any special equipment?

Most activities use equipment already available on the golf course, such as soil probes, water testing kits and course maintenance tools. Laminated worksheets, clipboards and dry-wipe markers are also useful.

Do the team need a DBS/Disclosure check?

No, a check is only required if you plan to visit a school regularly and lead events independently, without school staff present.

Many clubs hold SafeGolf accreditation, adding an extra layer of security for schools and parents.

What if my team are hesitant to take part?

That's OK! Many greenkeepers quickly adapt and enjoy leading activities. Our lesson plans and toolkit provide support and some clubs find hosting is a great team-building exercise.

How do I get schools involved?

Many schools seek unique field trips and First Green aligns with their curriculum. Secondary schools list Careers Advisors on their websites, so start there. For primary schools, contact the school office to find the best person to speak with.

What about bad weather?

Field trips can run in various conditions. Plan for shelter, waterproof activities and advise students on suitable clothing. Some clubs use gazebos or umbrellas to keep stations dry.

Can hosting a field trip benefit my club?

Absolutely! Many clubs report increased interest in greenkeeping careers, positive local press coverage and stronger relationships with the community. It's also a great way to showcase your club's commitment to sustainability and education. **GI**

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.

Get involved by scanning the QR code



Pre-season is over, now for the real challenge

As we strive to deliver the best playing surfaces, it's vital we don't neglect ourselves

I like to use a football analogy when I consider the life of a greenkeeper. We might not be on quite the same wages or attract the same level of adoration, but we do have to be at our best when the playing season arrives.

In last month's board column, Gordon McKie spoke glowingly about BTME, which as he rightly said was another fantastic event. I see the annual trip to Harrogate as part of what I would call our pre-season, a mini break from the planning and preparation.

But now we're into April and, after all the toil of winter, we're ready to step on to the pitch for the real challenge. With that comes pressure and expectations, which can prove to be a strain on our mental wellbeing.

I recently completed a Mental Health First Aiders course and that was an eye-opener for me, especially as someone who has experience in dealing with such issues.

Many of us face similar challenges but it's important to have coping strategies for when things get particularly tough, and one aspect of that is being



“ All too often we overlook the importance of maintaining our own wellbeing”

able to talk about it openly.

As greenkeepers, we are primarily in charge of maintaining a golf course, but all too often we overlook the importance of maintaining our own wellbeing. We work in an industry where any number of factors outside of our control can dictate what we can do, when we can do it, and what standard we can do it to, but we are also judged by those who don't fully understand that.

Just like footballers face constant media scrutiny, we endure daily criticism

from golfers who think they know better, or who speak without thinking at all.

Having owned restaurants and bars, I'm familiar with critics and there is the same pressure to produce a consistent product seven days a week, just like on a golf course. I can compare it to the diner eating scallops for the first time and complaining they are undercooked, when the highly trained chef knows very well they are done to perfection.

The levels of expectation

continue to rise and nobody, however experienced or thick-skinned, is immune to the stresses and strains that come with that.

So, as we head into the new season, I want our members to know two things: you are not alone and help is available. **GI**

- Find out more about the Mental Health First Aid initiative



Scan Me to find out more

We have a seat at the table and people are listening

CEO Jim Croxton discusses BIGGA's involvement with the Golf Forum, a crucial platform for the organisation's advocacy efforts

A fundamental part of my role is working behind the scenes to advocate for the profession and ensure greenkeepers are not overlooked in the governance of the game.

Our involvement with the Golf Forum demonstrates that very clearly, as we have a seat at the table alongside every major organisation in GB&I golf.

This platform allows BIGGA to directly influence conversations that impact the wider golf industry, ensuring the interests of our members are represented.

In discussing the most pressing challenges facing the industry, two key areas have emerged as primary focus points: workforce development and sustainability.

On the workforce front, we are making significant strides. We're developing a comprehensive website to promote jobs across the golf industry, creating opportunities for passionate individuals to discover careers in greenkeeping and beyond.

Related to that, we've started to look at how we can take what's great about our industry and translate



that into a promotional campaign to attract people to the profession. At the same time, we're working to ensure golf clubs understand the importance of being responsible employers who value their staff.

Sustainability has become another crucial conversation. The golf industry needs to demonstrate its environmental credentials and that relies on having the data to back it up, which is something all key stakeholders are working hard to achieve.

I subscribe to the view that golf courses are generally far better for

the environment than practically any other land use apart from nature reserves, but we need to do more to challenge the misconceptions of those who see it differently.

We were also out and about with England Golf and the GCMA for a five-date roadshow in February discussing the importance of strategic planning, with BIGGA again front and centre.

Finally, at our recent board meeting, aside from reviewing what was a hugely successful BTME, we discussed how to adapt our membership criteria and categories to become a more inclusive

association.

This is an ongoing conversation and one of the key pillars of our refined strategy, which itself is underpinned by our goal to improve the health of the profession and the lives of our members. **GI**



The BIGGA Picture



With
Jim Croxton, CEO



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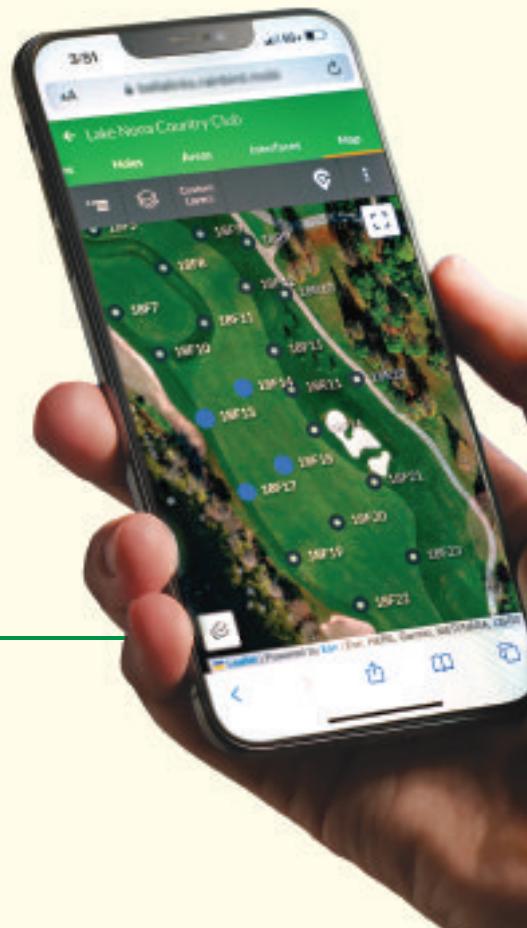
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Gareth Owen (AGK)

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Tom Bath (GK)

Michael Manser (AGK)

Wallasey

Jordan Bruffell (GK)

Royal Birkdale

Pete Caddies (AGK)

Waterton Park

Jack Cary (AGK)

Gathurst

Matt Catchpole (AGK)

Waterfront

Philip Church (G)

Tapton Park

Craig Lalley (P)

Greg Milton (P)

James Wright (P)

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Ryan Murphy (GK)

Ramside Hall

Alistair Nicklen (APP)

Matfen Hall

Max Webster (APP)

Eaglescliffe

Conor Whitbread (APP)

Ellesmere

Rob Woods (CA)

Oldham College

Joanne Duck (A)

North Cliff

Dale Pennington (AGK)

Chorlton-cum-Hardy

Sam Cowens (AGK)

Goswick Links

Alfie Wilson (AGK)

Bondhay

Tim Clover (GK)

Easingwold

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Glenn Oliver (GK)

Hilton Templepatrick

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Royal Belfast

Steven McDowell (G)

Causeway Coast & Glens

Borough Council

International

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Rae Golf, Estonia

Nolan Stark (I)

Turf Star Western, USA

Michael Poch (I)

Foxborough CC, USA

Charles Sheffield (I)

North Ridge CC, USA

Jack Brooks-Hanrahan (ST)

Edmond Brosnan (ST)

Kevin Downey (ST)

Mark Duggan (ST)

Nicholas Fitzgerald (ST)

Ethan Hayes (ST)

Finbar Hughes (ST)

Noel McCarthy (ST)

Harry McSweeney (ST)

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Scotland

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Martin Kohler (GK)

Kingsknowe

Ross Fenwick (A)

SRUC

Daniel Green (AGK)

Jamie O'Hara (GK)

Pollok

Scott Mackintosh (GK)

St Andrews Links Trust

Kurt Yule (AGK)

Bamburgh Castle

Finn Taylor (AGK)

Conner Holland (GK)

Kilmarnock (Barassie)

Morgan McQueen (GK)

Dumfries & Galloway

Central

Harry Browett (AGK)

Ogbourne Downs

Richard Brown (AGK)

Ladbrook Park

Jack Core (AGK)

Richings Park

Saff Freemantle (P)

Kress UK & Ireland

Matt Goss (GK)

Hunstanton

Tommy Hall (GK)

Droitwich

Antony Meese (AGK)

Chilwell Manor

Jacob Painting (APP)

Friford Heath

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Boston

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Thornbury Golf Centre

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James Rattenbury (CM)

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**Jasper Marks (HGK)**

Highfield School

Richard Hawkins (P)**Laurence McCrory (P)**

Origin Amenity Solutions

Timothy Peeling (S)

Envu

Correction: Jake Challenor

In January's Greenkeeper International, we mistakenly listed Jake Challenor (South East) as working at Mill Hill School. His correct place of work is Mill Hill Golf Club. We apologise for the error.

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



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Jake Boardman, Frilford Heath
Matt Grinham, Salford
Tommy Spender, Highwoods
Roberto Leonardi, Shooters Hill
Andrew Wilson, Whitecraigs
Alistair Hogg, Loch Lomond
Kevin Murphy, Turfgrass.ie
Eric Foerster MG, CGCS, TORV LLC
Oliver Henderson, College Pines
Edoardo Fauro, Cabot Saint Lucia
Gary Morrison, Bruntstfield Links
Miles Burnett, Stonehaven
Noel Anthony Long, Golfclub Breitenloo
Ryan Fiander, Lees Hall
Haydn Gray, Royal Cinque Ports
Nathan Walton, Elland
Stuart Broom, Honiton
Aaron Allibon, Orsett
Daryn Curtis, Shirley Park
Alfie Dodd, Brampton

Chris Browett, The Richmond
Peter Pattenden, Carden Park
Stephen Mancini, Prestwick
Adam Butler, Bedford & County
Gary Tonge, Royal Aberdeen
James Parker, Machrihanish Dunes
Paul Fowkes, Kilworth Springs
Adam Footitt, Luffenham Heath
Kieran Ruffle, Hoddington Estate (Atlas CC)
Leigh Powell, Windlesham
Craig Jordan, Ashley Wood
Joseph Priestley, Birley Wood
Lee Jones, Conwy
Matthew Palmer, Edgbaston
Charley Walker McAll, Sunningdale
Stuart Adams, Cardigan
Tom Silcock, Prestbury
Kate Stillwell, Golf Club of Kópavogur and Garðabær
Oliver Henderson, College Pines
David Warner, Woking
Adam Kelly, Woodbridge

Congratulations to the following members who have achieved their
CPD Milestone

Craig Berry, Leven Links Golf Course
Jake Boardman, Frilford Heath
Ryan Fiander, Lees Hall
Jack Wellings, JCB G&CC
Stuart Adams, Cardigan
James Parker, Machrihanish Dunes
Michael Ellis, Sunningdale

Jack Sims, Nevill
Edward Stant, Trentham
Adam Butler, Bedford & County
Lee Connell, Wallasey
Tom Silcock, Prestbury
Oliver Henderson, College Pines



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Kress staff members at BTME

BIGGA and Kress form partnership as autonomous mower manufacturer offers greenkeeper support

We are proud to announce that Kress has become the association's latest official Partner.

Kress, a frontrunner in sustainable greenkeeping technology, had a major presence at BTME 2025 and was lead sponsor of the BIGGA Celebration on the opening evening of the annual trade show and education programme.

The company has been manufacturing electric motors exclusively since 1928 and in 2017 joined the Positec group. Hailing the start of a 'quiet revolution', Kress launched in the UK in 2019 and in 2023 unveiled a professional range of GPS mowers.

Nicki Jones, Kress marketing manager, said: "We are so excited by the uniqueness of our products and their ability to solve some real-world issues for those who are keen to work more sustainably with the land, protecting their own health as well as the environment."

Tony Macer, Kress UK & Ireland director of sales, added: "We believe a partnership with BIGGA can give us opportunities through education to change the mindset of

the employees and encourage them to embrace robots as an additional team member who can take care of the more mundane tasks while they concentrate on the jobs that require their unique skills."

BIGGA's business affiliate programme is a mutually beneficial scheme that enables leading companies within the sports turf industry to formalise their support for the association and its members, in turn helping underpin the association's membership benefits, Continuing Professional Development programme and all educational activity.

Lauren Frazer, BIGGA head of commercial and marketing, said: "We've long admired the Kress ethos of creating sustainable and innovative technology and so I'm extremely proud that they have made the decision to partner with BIGGA and help further our mission to make the world a better place for greenkeepers."

"Across their two years exhibiting at BTME, Kress have shown themselves to be among the most exciting brands on the market and we're excited about working closely alongside them." **GI**



Refund of Fees scheme a 'no-brainer'

The Refund of Fees Scheme supported by Baroness continues to pave the way for ambitious greenkeepers to advance their professional development.

The scheme enables BIGGA members to claim 80% of education and training course costs up to a maximum of £500.

Wentworth Club's Deputy Courses Manager Stefan Carter has applied on multiple occasions and encouraged others to do the same.

"Initially it was for things such as my spraying courses, so my PA one, two and six," he said.

"I also used it years ago for my chainsaw felling courses, but for the last four or five years it's helped towards the cost of undertaking my foundation degree and my bachelor's degree.

"For me, it's a no-brainer; it takes two or three minutes to fill out a form. Why not take advantage of the fantastic opportunities provided by BIGGA to help with your professional development?"

Bradley Taylor, assistant greenkeeper at Beau Desert,

was directed towards the scheme after expressing a desire to undertake various courses, with the financial support allowing him to add spraying qualifications to his CV.

"I had been speaking to people for a while saying, 'I want to do this course, I want to do that course' and somebody mentioned the Refund of

Fees," he said. "I thought, well, if I can get my money back, then that's so much better.

"This scheme unlocks the opportunity to do things that you wouldn't normally have the chance to do." **GI**

“It takes two or three minutes to fill out a form”

Scan the QR code below to download an application form and apply for a Refund of Fees grant.



Scan Me to find out more



“This scheme unlocks the opportunity to do things that you wouldn't normally have the chance to do”



Baroness Director Adam Butler

“When I was a young boy, aged 16, I found it very difficult to get into greenkeeping and find the support to pay for courses and qualifications. I eventually did it off my own bat, with my parents' help. Some people don't have that help and it puts them off and they go and seek work elsewhere. I think it's very important that we welcome people into the industry and make it as easy as possible to get the qualifications to then climb up the ladder and earn the money they deserve. That's what makes the Refund of Fees scheme so important to us.”

To be eligible for the scheme, you must:

1. Be a Full Member or an Assistant Greenkeeper member of BIGGA
2. Have been a member of BIGGA for a minimum of two years
3. Have paid your own course fees and be able to provide proof of payment (e.g., receipt from the training provider and credit card slip or statement)
4. Have completed a course or component part of a course and be able to provide evidence of completion e.g., certificate/end of course report etc
5. You may apply for a refund prior to starting a course to ensure that you have funds reserved, that will then be paid on course completion as in (3.) above
6. The course must not be subsidised already by BIGGA*
7. The course must be relevant to your job as a greenkeeper e.g., Diploma in Greenkeeping, SVQ, spraying course, first aid, IT, language course etc
8. Only one claim against the fund is allowed each year

*Continue to Learn attendance cannot be paid for with funds from the Refund of Fees scheme

Recipients of Refund of Fees 2024

Patrick Brown, Fulwell
 Stefan Carter, Wentworth Club
 Paul Doran, Theydon Bois
 Graeme Gallimore, Launceston
 Jack Hall, Kilworth Springs
 Steven Henderson, Kingsknowe
 Peter Moore, Forest Hill
 David Shaw, Envirosport
 Ian Stow, Walton Heath
 Bradley Taylor, Beau Desert
 Daniel Waring, JCB Golf and Country Club
 Shaun Whittle, Broadstone

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Member Interest

Where we meet your fellow turf professionals and share their stories

- Two UK greenkeepers on volunteering at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am
- How you can progress your greenkeeping career through online learning



Hamre-Kebby on the power of failure and how to adopt a growth mindset



Fana GolfKlubb
Course Manager Ben
Hamre-Kebby shares
his insights on the
power of failure.

In today's turf industry, the pressure to succeed can be overwhelming. As a result, many of us develop a deep-seated aversion to failure.

But what if failure is not the end of the road but a detour leading us to unexpected opportunities? What if it is not a reflection of our abilities but part of the learning process?

Research suggests those who embrace failure as a learning experience tend to be more resilient, creative and successful.

A key factor that determines how

we respond to failure is our mindset. Individuals with a fixed mindset believe their abilities and intelligence are fixed traits and that failure reflects their limitations. However, those with a growth mindset see failure as an opportunity to learn and improve.

The concept of a growth mindset has been popularised by psychologist Carol Dweck, whose groundbreaking research has shown that our beliefs about intelligence and ability have a profound impact on our motivation, resilience and, ultimately, our success. By cultivating a growth mindset, we can reframe our relationship with failure and unlock our full potential.

Embracing failure, however, is not just about having the right mindset, it's also about developing resilience and

perseverance in the face of adversity. So how can we harness the power of failure?

Reframe it as a learning experience. Instead of seeing it as a reflection of your own worth, see it as a chance to learn.

Ask yourself: What caused this failure? How can I improve to mitigate similar future failures? How can I learn from this experience?

Embrace failures as opportunities for growth. Remember that success does not come from avoiding failure but rather the understanding and acceptance that without failure, there will be no success. The power of failure lies not in avoiding it, but in embracing it as a natural and inevitable part of success. **GI**

'A pinch-me moment' – Pebble Beach experience wows star- struck greenkeepers



The paradise that is Pebble Beach

A trip to California to be part of the team during the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am provided an experience two UK-based greenkeepers will never forget.

Few golf courses evoke the same degree of awe as Pebble Beach. You don't have to be a fan of the sport to admire the beauty of its setting, but the finer details of its playing surfaces are best appreciated by those who know their turf, and the California links is as good as it gets.

For Elgin Head Greenkeeper Calum Forsyth and Stirling Deputy Course Manager Euan Bogle, who volunteered there during February's AT&T Pro-Am, it was the experience of a lifetime.

The opportunity came about through some good old-fashioned networking, with the pair having struck up a friendship with Ruben Aitchison, who was then at Royal Aberdeen, while they were all part of the volunteer team at Wentworth for the BMW PGA.

They remained in touch via a WhatsApp group which also

included Bramhall Course Manager Ian Kirwan, and when Ruben went on to join the Ohio State Program he invited them all out to Pebble Beach.

"We didn't even hesitate," said Calum, who had the full backing of his club. "We ended up booking flights and we were out there."

Although the Monterey Peninsula course was familiar to them, seeing it in person was akin to meeting a major celebrity. There was something almost surreal about it.

"I've seen a lot of amazing golf courses before, but somewhere as iconic as Pebble Beach, to actually be standing on it and part of the team, was unbelievable," said Euan. "You never get used to those views; it never sinks in. It really felt like living in a bubble for a week."

Calum was similarly star-struck, adding: "You're stood there

as a golfer and a greenkeeper on a course that you've only seen on TV or played on a simulator, and you're actually there. You almost have to say it to yourself, 'I'm standing on Pebble Beach' – it is a pinch-me moment."

The pair were immediately struck by the impeccable playing surfaces, with barely a blade of grass out of place. Attaining something so close to perfection requires attention to detail on a level rarely seen, if only because in most cases there just aren't enough hours in the day.

That was perfectly captured in one passing moment that Euan happened upon as he was making his way from one hole to the next to go about his duties.

“You never get used to those views; it never sinks in. It felt like living in a bubble for a week”

"I drove by one of the assistants lying down in the rough with a measuring tape and a camera trying to measure how long the rough was to determine how much it had grown in two days," he laughed. "The fact that they were even able to have time to do that while getting ready for a tournament was just mind-boggling."

Calum was put to work on gathering data to feed into the supers and first assistants, as well as the PGA. While he cannot disclose the numbers, he did reveal some work had to be done to bring green speeds down in light of the weather conditions.

"I was collecting data on trueness and smoothness, green speeds and so on," he said. "That data helped the team work out how they were going to approach things the following day.



Euan Bogle

About Pebble Beach

Pebble Beach Golf Club, located on the stunning Monterey Peninsula in California, is one of the world's most renowned and picturesque golf courses. Established in 1919, it has hosted numerous prestigious events, including the U.S. Open multiple times.

The course is famous for its breathtaking coastal views, with several holes running alongside the Pacific Ocean, creating a challenge for golfers of all levels. Designed by Jack Neville and Douglas Grant, Pebble Beach features a combination of lush fairways, challenging greens and dramatic elevations, making it a must-play destination for golf enthusiasts. Beyond its beauty, Pebble Beach holds a special place in golfing history, providing an iconic setting for many legendary moments.

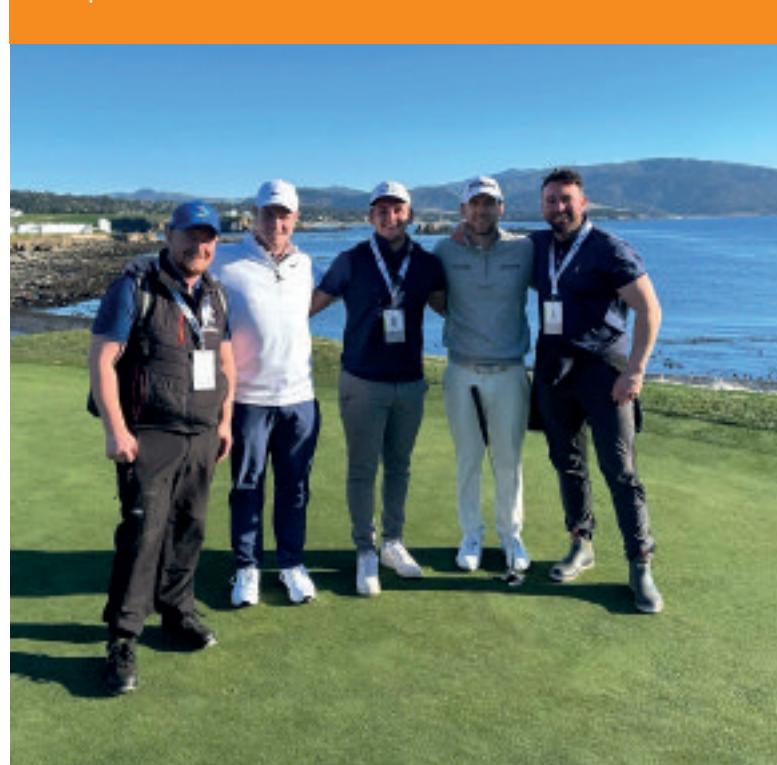


The 10th fairway



Euan, Ian and Ruben

Calum: "I got this picture of all of us together with Bob McIntyre and Russell Henley on the 18th green. We followed Bob round on the practice day because I've met him a couple of times, so we were just chatting with him as he was doing his practice round."



We had some quite high winds, so it was important to get the speeds right and avoid having balls oscillating on the greens."

Everything about the scale of the operation was on another level, with a dedicated and well-drilled team all setting about their tasks with care and precision. For two guys from average-sized teams who are used to turning their hand to any conceivable task on their own courses, it was an eye-opener to see how specialised and specific some roles were.

"There's one guy in particular who has done the same job for 14 years," said Euan. "He cuts the same four greens every morning, he rakes the same bunkers every morning, he fixes pitch marks on those same greens and he trims the sprinkler heads in the afternoon on those four greens. That's his job and he's an absolute expert at it; nobody could do it better."

Euan was on bunkers once the tournament started and even that was "next level", though it did provide him with inspiration for his own course.

"They double-raked every morning and had dedicated teams adjusting the sand levels in the evenings," he said.

"Obviously, we don't have a team of 30 and an unlimited budget, but there are small tweaks we can make, like bunker preparation techniques and ways to maintain course consistency."

"Even just refining simple things like raking methods can make a difference for members and daily players."

The on-site machinery also represented an embarrassment of riches, with every piece of kit imaginable there in duplicate.

"The shed, which they called a shop, was incredible – it had everything from buggies to greens mowers, fairway mowers, hand mowers," said Calum. "There were three mechanics, which in itself is impressive, on a team of 25-35 people. They had brand-new strimmers and blowers still in their boxes and ready to go if something packed up. It all just shows the scale of the operation over there."

The pair will both continue to put their names forward to volunteer at events, though when you show willing it can often be the case that such opportunities come to you.

"It's not just about the experience; it's about meeting people who can help you grow in your career," said Euan. "You go to one event, and suddenly, more doors open."

"You never know when you'll get that message asking, 'Fancy coming to work here?' – but if you put yourself in the right place, those messages will come."

Calum added: "The big reason I do it is for networking and the opportunities that come with that. The more people you know in the industry the better. It opens doors, whether it's trying to get involved in tournament support or getting jobs. If you've been to these top courses and done tournament set-up, that's on your CV and it helps to build your career." **GI**

Why being a part-time greenkeeper works for me

Cardigan Golf Club's Paul Legg explains how he has made the most of his contract to pursue professional development and personal satisfaction

I haven't let my 24-hours-per-week contract stand in the way of my progress or development.

Yes, I took my time to get CPD Approved but I have learnt at a pace that suits the balance of work and family life.

I am seen as an equal among my colleagues and I have been given the opportunity to achieve a variety of qualifications and CPD through training and knowledge-based learning.

The reason for me writing this article is to hopefully inspire those coming into this career, those coming towards the end of their careers who want to slow down slightly and to all course managers who may be looking for more flexibility from their teams.

My journey into greenkeeping

I had never even considered greenkeeping as a career. My working history through my teenage years and after school all revolved around retail work.

After 16 years of working within this setup, a change was due and it was actually my wife who came across the job advert on social media.

I remember the interview as if it was yesterday. Meeting the course manager with over 30 years' experience was daunting but this is how my journey began.

To go from working indoors out of the elements and dealing

with customers face to face, to working outdoors and in all weathers was a huge change and I didn't think I'd succeed.

My first shift was on a very wet and miserable March morning. I really was starting in the muddy mess of projects.

Just over two weeks later and we were in lockdown. It couldn't have been a better beginning! There were no golfers around and by the time lockdown was over, I knew how to use all the frontline kit.

I have amassed nearly five years' experience to date and I am thoroughly enjoying my career and do not regret the jump.

“ Being on a 24-hour contract gives me three full days on the course and two days with my family”

How it works for me

I'm sure there will be greenkeepers out there with questions surrounding my 24 hours, but the reality is it works for me and my family and also the golf club.

Within our team, we have three full-timers on a 39-hour contract, myself on a 24-hour contract, one on a 15-hour





My qualifications and CPD

- First Aid Trained
- QualPass Excavator 180 Slew
- Member of Atlas – The Citation Platform
- Agrovista Amenity Academy
- In-house training on all equipment we use on site

What I have lined up over the next couple of years:

- PA1/PA6 qualified and certificated
- PA2 qualified and certificated
- Chainsaw qualification
- NPTC Level 2 Safe Use of Aluminium Phosphide

“ I am still afforded the opportunity to continue my CPD”

contract and one who covers weekend work when required. Being on a 24-hour contract gives me three full days on the course and two days with my family.

My days vary from week to week and I can fit most essential family plans around this and not miss any work. If I have plans or am required to be somewhere other than work, then I can ask for certain days off without losing hours or holidays to cover.

Also, as we work outside, my course manager has the flexibility to have me in when the weather is at its best and not when it's a washout. This way I get utilised when needed and this works for both parties.

The small amount of hours on offer can be used to their fullest. And to be fair, I notice the changes more due to me being in work for three days a week. Especially the project work in the winter!

The downside of my 24-hour contract is the pay at the end

of the fortnightly cycle. But as my wife works, we make the household work and I get valuable time with my wife and kids.

My 24-hour contract is a permanent 24 hour and not seasonal. I am expected to work 52 weeks a year.

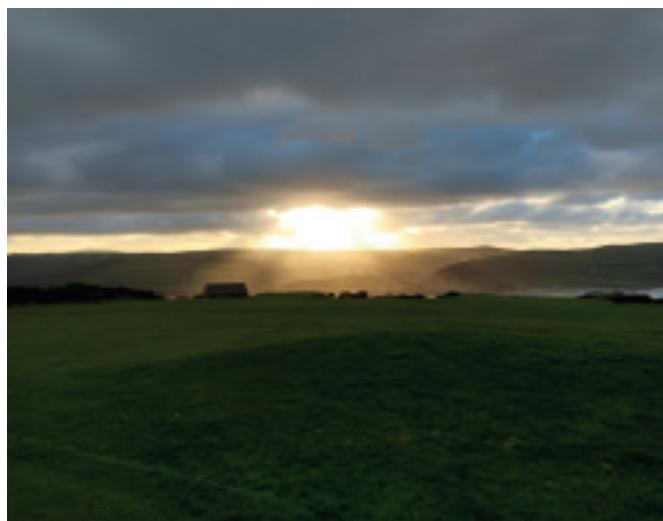
For those who wish to progress

Cardigan Golf Club and my course manager are passionate about CPD and have given me every opportunity to develop and make myself more valuable to them.

Even being on a 24-hour contract, I am still afforded the opportunity to continue my CPD. This is all down to the individual and how much they want their career to develop and progress.

I will be honest and say that it took me until last year to be CPD Approved, but the club and course manager have not stood in my way.

I am actively looking at niche skills which will make me even more valuable to my team and I urge everyone who wishes to grow to take their opportunities with both hands. I don't mean to rush things but to enjoy the journey and learn at a pace that suits you. Becoming more knowledgeable will make you a much more valuable asset. **GI**





Is online learning right for you and your career?

The flexibility offered by online studying enables many busy greenkeepers to access learning opportunities at times convenient to you, explains the SRUC's Stephen Maitland



Stephen Maitland

Lecturer in management at SRUC Elmwood Campus and year tutor for HND/Advanced Diploma Golf Management

In the recent past, studying for a qualification in golf and greenkeeping at a distance relied upon the distribution of large packs of paper-based teaching materials and assessments around the UK by Royal Mail. Contact with tutors was limited and the experience could be an isolating one. The delivery of courses using Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), such as Moodle, is unrecognisable compared with such a conventional model. Candidates from across the golfing world can now access electronic teaching materials and contact tutors instantly.

Studying online does, of course, have its challenges: many candidates are working full-time in the golf industry, many are married with young families and have other responsibilities to meet.

We are all familiar with traditional classroom-based learning environments; virtual learning is new for many.

Regular and timely responses from tutors, as well as IT and pastoral support, can make the move to virtual learning as smooth as possible.

Feedback from students studying online has consistently shown that learners find well designed and managed online environments intuitive and easy to use, even those who may have struggled with IT in the past.

The flexibility offered by online studying enables busy greenkeepers to access learning opportunities at times that are convenient to them. Candidates can, for example, choose to engage with learning materials, quizzes, video content, recorded classes and discussion forums on a 24/7 basis. Messages left for tutors outside office hours or from different time zones can be picked up the following day. This flexibility tackles the isolation traditionally felt by distance learners.

Existing professional experience should form the basis of online discussions, activities and assessments. It is essential to recognise learning that has already taken place, and online learning provides the opportunity for reflection and further development.

The key is to find out what works for you. Don't just take my word for it – let's hear from three greenkeepers who have successfully completed online courses and emerged with qualifications. **GI**

Case studies

We meet three students who are successfully learning online



**Online
HND
Graduate**

Adam Wilson

My journey towards completing the Advanced Diploma in Greenkeeping has been a remarkable and rewarding experience. I found the

opportunity to further my education through online learning both appealing and practical. The flexibility offered by online learning quickly proved to be one of its greatest benefits. Balancing work and study can be challenging, but the ability to access course materials and lectures at any time allowed me to manage my schedule more effectively.

The use of a variety of digital tools and platforms made the learning experience engaging and interactive. From video

lectures and interactive quizzes to discussion forums and virtual labs, every aspect of the course was designed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Resources were readily available, and the technical support provided by the institution was prompt and efficient.

Despite the physical distance, the instructors were always accessible and responsive. The instructors' expertise and passion for greenkeeping were evident in their teaching, which greatly enhanced my understanding and appreciation of the field.

Completion of the Advanced Diploma in Greenkeeping has opened new opportunities for career advancement and personal growth such as self-discipline and time management skills. The knowledge and skills I acquired through the online programme have been directly applicable to my work, allowing me to implement best practices and innovative solutions in my role.



**Online
HND
Graduate**

Tizayi Tundu Sithole

I am from Zimbabwe, but I am now working in the USA as an assistant superintendent and am a proud greenkeeping

professional. I have been studying for my online HNC and HND studies in Golf Course Management under the R&A Greenkeepers scholarship programme.

Because of the academic qualifications I got online, there are now so many job opportunities within the turf industry available to me. Because of the studies undertaken, I am

now more confident with my expertise in turf management and can take interviews without many difficulties. I started my journey into greenkeeping to bring awareness that greenkeeping is a science and a life career. To date, I have been able to volunteer at three PGA tournaments in South Africa and the USA. I also hope to continue my studies with a master's program in turfgrass management.

I have inspired other youngsters from my country who followed my path, and I am happy to say they are all now fully employed and some are working overseas (Norway). Thus, the programme is worthwhile for those in Africa who wish to take their skills to another level in turfgrass management.



**Online
HND
Graduate**

Stephen Lawlor

I like being in a (traditional) classroom, it gives me the structure that I need, so when I was doing the HND distance learning I allocated time

to it and had to be diligent and stick to it, particularly when you have a family.

I think that's the big thing with distance learning, you have to be able to commit because if you don't, you'll just start falling behind and ultimately you could end up chasing your tail.

What I enjoyed about distance learning is that everything is there for you. It's up to you to sit down and go through the

information that you have in Moodle. I never really felt under pressure during the HND. I kind of always felt like I was on top of it and anytime I needed support, it was a case of just getting in contact with the tutors and there was never any issue.

Anytime there were any questions, or when it came to marking assessments, it was always done quickly, so you're not going to hang around waiting for results, trying to figure out whether you'd passed.

I'm not an IT expert but, overall, I found Moodle quite easy to deal with. If I'd submitted something the week before, I would go and check it for feedback. It was all smooth sailing.

If you have opportunities that are there in front of you, take advantage of them because they might make the difference when an opportunity comes further down the line.

Latest job vacancies

Assistant Greenkeepers

Royal Aberdeen Golf Club, Scotland

Royal Aberdeen are looking to recruit two ambitious Assistant Greenkeepers

The successful candidate must demonstrate the following:
Minimum SVQ Level 2 or equivalent in Sports Turf Management, a strong work ethic, work well as part of a team, flexible approach to work hours and weekend duties, be able to communicate effectively.

Employee benefits include private health care, life assurance, employer pension contribution, BIGGA membership, certified training and education provided, access to play both courses, team building and staff appreciation activities.

Full-time with variable start times, Monday to Friday with weekend overtime on a rota basis, 28 days holiday.

Salary reflecting experience and qualifications upon application.

Candidates should submit their CV to Richard Johnstone, Course Manager via email on coursemanager@royalaberdeengolf.com no later than Sunday 13th April 2025.



Course Manager

West Kent Golf Club, Kent

West Kent Golf Club is seeking an experienced Course Manager to oversee the day-to-day operations of our 18-hole downland course in Kent.

The role involves managing maintenance, staff and resources to ensure a high standard of course presentation and playability. Responsibilities include agronomy, turf management, team leadership, equipment maintenance, budgeting, and course improvement projects.

The ideal candidate will have 3-5 years of senior greenkeeping experience, a relevant qualification and strong leadership skills.

We offer a competitive salary, on-site accommodation (3-bedroom bungalow), a pension scheme, and opportunities for career growth. To apply, send your CV and cover letter to manager@wkgc.co.uk by 10th April 2025.



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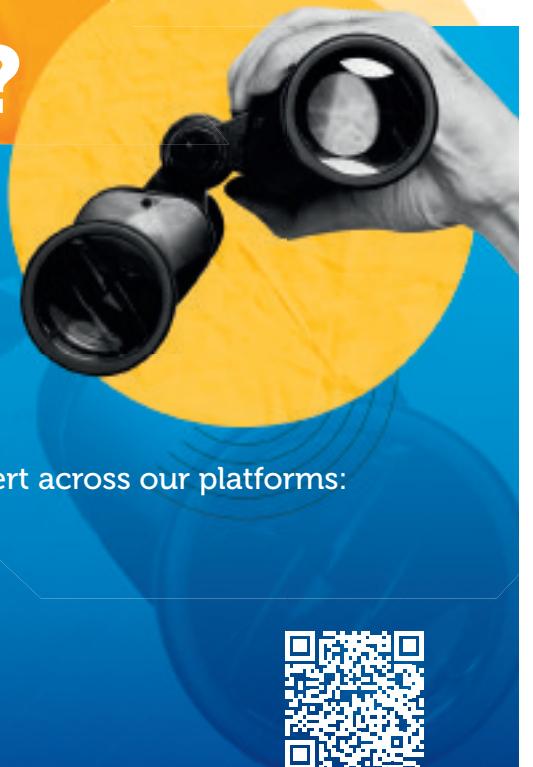
Contact our team and we'll help place your advert across our platforms:

Greenkeeper International

The BIGGA website

National and regional social media

Scan the QR code to post your advert or email us at info@bigga.co.uk



My New Job



Nigel Colley

After some time away from the job, the former Wilmslow course manager is back in the same role at a new club



“It feels like a bit of a blank canvas for me”

Nigel Colley took a seven-month hiatus from greenkeeping but returned in January to take up the role of course manager at North Cliff in his home town of Scarborough.

We caught up with Nigel to discuss his time away from the industry, his new role and advice on tackling job interviews.

Tell us about your new role

I'm managing an 18-hole course, with five holes on the cliffs overlooking the North Bay and the other 13 are traditional parkland holes. With a small team of five, we're working with limited resources and older machinery. My focus is on making small improvements that don't require massive investment – like raising tree canopies, improving light and air circulation and prioritising essential maintenance. It feels like a bit of a blank canvas for me.

What challenges do you face in your new role?

We're working with limited funds, which rules out a lot of bigger projects, so you make a difference where you can. Like a lot of parkland courses, we can suffer with waterlogging on the greens. It's about educating people, making incremental improvements and focussing on what can be achieved with minimal investment.

What perspective did time away from the job give you?

I realised that work-life balance was important to me. I wanted a job that would allow me to enjoy something I love doing without it taking over my life. I've been in a role where I've done hundreds of hours of overtime and it takes its toll. In this job I've been able to enjoy coming into work again and applying my knowledge and experience.

What advice do you have for greenkeepers going for an interview?

Be yourself. Don't pretend you know everything – if they ask a question and you don't know the answer, just say so. If you're at the interview stage the chances are you already have many of the skills they're looking for and they're more interested in you as a person.

What are the key skills for someone looking to make the step up to course manager?

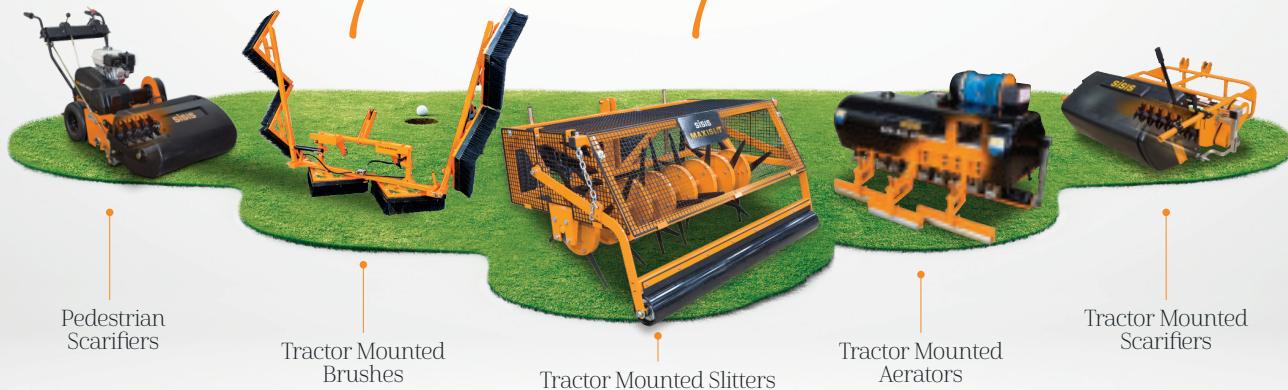
You need to be a good communicator, which means being able to explain what you need from your team but also being a good listener. It's important to keep on top of your knowledge and know the latest developments in technology and agronomic practices. Finally, believe in yourself and back your ability to do the role. **GI**



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Red seaweeds to stimulate physiology and enhance turfgrass resistance



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Melgreen SPRINTER

Supporting turf during establishment and the beginning of the season

Thanks to the red seaweed extract R-SEANERGY®, combined with manganese, Melgreen SPRINTER boosts root activity and photosynthesis in turfgrass, starting from the end of winter, during overseeding operations or during the establishment of new turf areas.

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

Pack Size: 5 ltr

Application: 3 ltr / ha



Olmix Technology
 R-SEALICA®

Melgreen ELITE

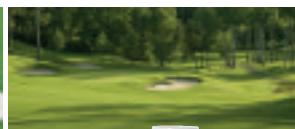
Enhance the resistance of turfgrass to stress

Melgreen ELITE is based on R-SEALICA® technology, a patented combination of the red seaweed extract R-SEANERGY® and a specific monomeric silica. R-SEALICA® technology activates the plant's genes involved in defense reactions against abiotic stresses, thereby enhancing the resilience of turfgrass.

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

Pack Size: 5 ltr

Application: 3 - 5 ltr / ha



Olmix Technology
 R-SEANERGY®

Melgreen ARMOR

Preserve leaf quality and support the protection strategy

Melgreen ARMOR combines the red seaweed extract R-SEANERGY® with highly efficient micronized copper to provide a nutritional supplement to turf protection programs and maintain the integrity and proper functioning of the leaf blades that make up the turf.

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

Pack Size: 5 ltr

Application: 2.5 ltr / ha

Olmix products are exclusively available from Collier Turf Care - collier-turf-care.co.uk



Practical Greenkeeping

Refine your skillset and expand your knowledge



Course Manager Neil McLoughlin is hoping he and his team can enjoy the fruits of their labour as the playing season begins

The first weekend of April is when our season starts, which means – providing the weather has been kind – our spring maintenance is done.

The focus at this point becomes ensuring the course is in top condition for our members, who would not be too keen to see us out there still working on the things that should have been done in March.

The team have been working hard on a bunker renovation project, so it will be a bit of relief for them to get back into doing day-to-day greenkeeping tasks.

However, being in Scotland means there is still an element of unpredictability with the weather.

We might still see snow or hard frosts, which means we still have to be flexible with our plans.

Of course, we always have to be prepared for potential flooding.

Being on a floodplain means we might need to quickly switch to debris clearing and water management if required.

Our experience in this area means we're always primed and ready to react and limit the impact.

But typically, we've completed most of our intensive spring

maintenance work by now, so this month is about refinement and quality improvement.

We are a 27-hole facility and we have the use of five robotic mowers on our nine-hole course, which has really helped to free up time to focus on those areas that make the difference in terms of presentation.

The machines cut the rough and semi-rough



What we do in... April

Club: Deeside, Aberdeenshire

areas two to three times a week, which is more frequently than we could manage manually without making compromises.

With that time-consuming task taken care of without taking any man hours out of the equation, we can get going on detailed work like edging and raking bunkers, weeding and hand-cutting greens.

There is a big emphasis on ensuring the playing surfaces are maintained to the highest standards, so we will be out there mowing and fertilising and just making sure we're on top of it all.

Ultimately, April is the month when we aim to have a pristine course that meets the high standards our members expect – and that's a challenge we relish every single year. **GI**



This month is about refinement and quality improvement"



Cut down on mowing stress

Mowing imposes intense stress on turf. When the daily action occurs with other environmental stresses, plants can struggle to cope

Every time a turf leaf is cut plants have to expend energy in repairing the wound. When that is occurring day after day, it can have limited opportunity to generate the energy for recovery – particularly when the leaf area vital for photosynthetic activity is being limited by the mowing too.

And if there are other stresses simultaneously imposed on the turf at the same time – such as drought, heat, excess light or nutrient deficiency – it can struggle to find the energy to withstand the damage. Under such conditions the plant can get progressively weaker, as well as resorting to drawing on other sources of carbohydrate in an attempt to fill the energy gap.

There is a complex physiological transformation going on within the

plant, with different genes controlling hormones that will be interacting to prioritise how it responds and where it utilises the available resources.

When turf is cut during mowing it triggers a response to stimulate growth. However, the plant's natural mechanism to mitigate against heat and drought stress is to slow down photosynthesis and shut down metabolic processes. Research has shown this double whammy effect of mowing under stress conditions can be particularly damaging.

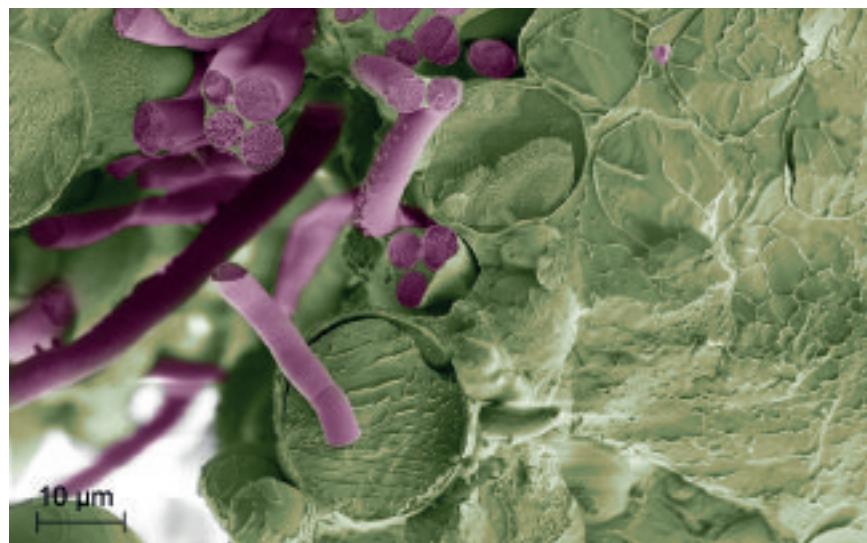
Trial analysis on fine fescue surfaces have demonstrated that even when turf looks green and healthy, mowing under drought or heat stress conditions can still adversely affect plant physiology.

This is one area where biostimu-

lants have an important role to play. Initially they can provide a small amount of readily available nutrients to alleviate the issues, but science is also showing how they can influence and regulate plants' gene expression and hormonal responses to stress.

This fascinating area of turf R&D begins to explain how and why some biostimulants are more appropriate than others in different situations.

Syngenta and the pioneering artificial intelligence (AI) company, TraitSeq, have been combining forces to use AI technology to uncover the intricate molecular interactions and identify highly specific indicators of a plant's cellular state, called biomarkers. When activated, these biomarkers can indicate how well a plant is responding to efforts to boost



Disease fungal hyphae will penetrate into the turf leaf more easily through mowing damage. ©Syngenta Jealott's Hill R&D electron microscopy dept.

“The next generation of biologicals aim to enhance natural plant processes”



Author: Sean Loakes, Syngenta Technical Manager UK & Ireland

Tips to minimise mowing damage

- Keep blades sharp
- Bench set-up mowers accurately
- Balance nutrition and irrigation
- Lower any height of cut progressively
- Use Primo Maxx II PGR
- Manage environmental stresses

its health or to block the effects of external, abiotic stressors.

The research is looking to develop the next generation of biological products that enhance natural plant processes, leading to an improved nutrient use efficiency, increased tolerance to abiotic stress or better turf quality. It also seeks to improve the consistency of performance that can vary depending on environmental factors, such as temperature.

Syngenta has extensive data across different branches of science – such as genomics, proteomics, metabolomics, and phenomics. Using TraitSeq's sophisticated proprietary platform, scientists from both teams hope to leverage AI to analyse complex biological big data that impact a plant's ability to utilise available nutrients in the soil.

Once specific biomarkers can be identified, scientists hope to be able to quickly and accurately assess the efficacy of a new biostimulant in enhancing plant health.

Improved plant health and stress management also links to a reduction in disease risk associated with mowing. Where the leaf is damaged by mowing the fungal hyphae can get into the plant far more easily, at which point it is far harder to fight and infection breaks out.

The greater the damage to the leaf during mowing, such as tearing caused by dull or poorly set-up blades, the easier it becomes for disease to get in and overwhelm the plant's defences, compared to a clean cut with a sharp blade.

The use of Primo Maxx II can reduce turf growth by up to 30%. On less intensively managed areas of the golf course, such as fairways, that can enable significant savings in time and frequency of mowing – including reduction in costs, fuel and machinery wear – that will also limit turf damage.

While on greens, which may still be mown each day, the physical reduction in growth with the PGR removes a smaller proportion of leaf with each cut, which reduces stress imposed on the plant.

One of the notable, but often overlooked, advantages of Primo Maxx II is that the leaves have a higher water content and are maintained in a more turgid state, which makes them easier to cut cleanly, compared to untreated – particularly in a hot or drought stressed periods.

In many instances the use of a PGR strategy through the growing season can enable an alternation with rolling to maintain the same, or better green speed and smooth ball roll, with a clear reduction in associated damage or stress.

Adopting an integrated approach of appropriate new generation specific stress targeted biostimulants, along with traditional tools of PGRs, wetting agent and fungicide strategies, can minimise the effects of environmental factors, as well as the mechanical stresses caused by mowing and other greenkeeping actions.



Follow the conversation

A transformation **nine** **years in the making**

The greenkeeping team at Formby Ladies Golf Club may be small, but their impact has been immense



When Formby Ladies Golf Club won Ecological Project of the Year at the Golf Environment Awards 2025, it represented an achievement not 12 months in the making but nine years.

That is how long it had been since the club's Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) compartment had been classed as 'unfavourable', with trees and scrub overrunning the native landscape, blighting the rare coastal heathland and majestic Sefton Coast dunes – the largest system in England

– that lent the site its SSSI status.

Many of the playing surfaces were also in a condition that was felt to be out of keeping with the traditional firm, fine-grassed areas commonly found on such courses, with Formby resembling a parkland track more than the links heathland it was meant to be.

It was a stark warning that things had to change and Course Manager Rob Sandilands, who took the role that same year in 2016, was ready to get to work.

"As the 'unfavourable' classification suggests, if you make no changes to your management regime and the way you're doing things, nothing's going to change in terms of the condition of your compartment within the SSSI," said Rob.

"The course was being completely overrun and dominated by scrub, trees and different grasses. That wasn't just a problem from a habitat point of view, but also from a playing surface point of view.



“ The guys have worked incredibly hard. There's really only a team of four-and-a-half of us, so maintaining an England top 100 course with that amount of staff is certainly challenging, but we're pleased with what we do and how we do it, and we've got some very experienced and dedicated people who make it happen”

Rob Sandilands on Formby Ladies' GEA win

“It was having an impact on the shading, airflow, drainage and organic matter. When you have a combination of those issues, and very little fine grass in there, it's quite vulnerable to disease and there's a high reliance on fungicides.”

Futureproofing

A course-wide development plan with a significant focus on sustainability was implemented.

This tied in with the club's course policy document and included tree, scrub and sapling removal in areas of heather, while a change to the cutting regime helped to encourage a more uneven age structure.

Rob explained: “This is a form of futureproofing, ensuring there are young and old areas of heather at different heights, favouring different insects and breeding birds and promoting greater diversity in general.”

The team also undertook gorse reduction and ongoing control, removed trees and scrub from the dunes and encouraged more open areas of grassland where appropriate.

There was a focus on sustainable greenkeeping practices, with fewer inputs and a species transition to finer grasses on playing areas, along with a move towards greater water security.

The progress was evident, with informal site visits indicating the SSSI condition status was in between 'unfavourable-recovering' and 'favourable' in 2022.

“When they come along periodically to survey your compartment, they'll look at randomised plots and compare against previous records,” Rob explained. “They'll look at your



About Formby Ladies GC

Formby Ladies is thought to be the only club in the UK with ladies-only membership, while welcoming both male and female visitors.

The course is deceptively challenging, with tight, twisting fairways, undulating dunes and unforgiving heather in a setting which is both links and heathland.

Nestling on the same coastal estate as Formby Golf Club, it offers a distinctive challenge to visitors touring the renowned North West golf coast, with its surprisingly formidable design giving pause for thought on every hole.

As a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the greenkeeping team take great pride in preserving the variety of trees and foliage, which are home to many sorts of wildlife, including buzzards, deer, red squirrels, foxes and pheasants.

areas for improvement that they've previously identified and see if there has been any improvement."

In August 2023, Formby officially reached 'favourable' condition status after a full formal survey and land mapping by Natural England, with the course and wider surrounds greatly improved.

"The members have seen the playing environment improve from a sense of wellbeing, and there's some more open vistas on the course," he said. "They've also seen the playing surfaces dramatically improve over that time.

"Don't get me wrong, there were some difficulties early on when you're changing things like grass types, but we've got a lot more fine grass now than we ever had, which requires a lot less in terms of inputs and management.

"That has its own benefits because that's more appropriate to us and the club with our resources.

"It's about futureproofing the way we do things because ultimately we're looking to make sure the club's still here and going strong in the future."

Communication

Having the club's full backing, as well as the support of Natural England, The R&A, STRI and various consultants and contractors certainly empowered Rob to know he was on the right path, but he acknowledged the importance of keeping members in the loop.

"We've obviously had to communicate it well to members because we were changing a lot of things," he said. "It's important to be open and honest and as transparent as you can be in your communication content, but it's also the way you go about it.

"We've obviously done traditional newsletters, but we've also had presentation evenings, course walks and really just tried to be proactive with it.

"I think the key thing is to back it up with good, hard evidence and data. We would quite regularly have the greens performance tested, so we'd know the organic matter levels and we could see those dropping every time. We could also see levels of firmness, smoothness, trueness and so on increasing at the same time.

"If anyone did have any reservations about whether it was working, we'd





be able to show them the data to prove that it was, although it didn't come to that very often."

Milestone

Attaining 'favourable' condition status marks a major milestone in the club's efforts but does not mean the work is done. Rob and his team are continuing to push for evermore sustainable methods as they seek to produce a top-quality golf course and preserve the natural habitat in which it resides.

"We've started cutting and collecting our rough on an annual basis to try and thin it out and make it more playable," he said. "We've reduced organic matter on playing surfaces, we've reduced our reliance on fungicides and water and we've tried to use as many products as we can that are kinder to the soil profile, moving away from more synthetic, high-salt-based fertilisers.

"We've gone into overseeding and organic matter removal on an annual

basis and we're fostering a good amount of fine grass.

"We are managing in a way that is based around a minimal disruption regime. We will still renovate, but we will condense that into two windows a year. Outside of that, we wouldn't do much more topdressing, intensive aeration or any operations that are going to damage the fine grass."

Self-sufficient

The upshot is that the playing surfaces



are firmer, with fine grass more abundant, and the greens have not been blanket sprayed with a fungicide for the last six years.

Since 2019, the course has been self-sufficient for water after securing an on-site source of irrigation by installing a horizontal well de-watering system. Even the contingency irrigation supply comes from an on-site pond, removing any reliance on mains water. The sprayer refill tanks for greenkeeping operations are

fed by rainwater harvested from the roofs of the greenkeeping buildings.

All that Formby Ladies has achieved has come not from vast resources but from diligent and knowledgeable work over many years, with everyone at the club pulling in the same direction.

"We are very modestly resourced, but it's a reflection of us as a club," added Rob. "We're a unique club. We don't have that many full members, so we just cut our cloth accordingly.

"We've mechanised a lot of tasks that

we weren't doing previously, we've bought some modern equipment and lent on some contractors to do timber removal.

"In the early days there were quite a few Mersey Forest schemes where the government were giving out grants to get biomass from various places, so we did a bit of that and that helped.

"But it's largely just been done in-house as a labour of love from the team with the wholehearted support of the club." **GI**



The world of greenkeeping

From Italy to India and America to Australia, there are BIGGA members working all over the world

© Gary Lisbon





Martin Nilsson
Royal Copenhagen, Denmark



Martin Nilsson has spent almost 20 years as course manager at Royal Copenhagen delivering on a brief made clear from day one.

We spoke to Martin about how he and his team maintain the course at Scandinavia's oldest golf club, which turns 127 this year, and about the herd of deer they share it with.

What was your remit when you took this job?

The brief from my board of directors when I got the job was to prepare the golf club to be pesticide-free. It is on public land and there are strict regulations in Denmark, so they wanted to phase out the use of pesticides on government-owned land. That has been the main task for me from the beginning – trying to maintain the golf course to the best possible standard without the use of any fungicides, herbicides or insecticides.

How successful have you been in that endeavour?

We managed without insecticides and herbicides from the very beginning, and since 2011 we haven't applied any fungicide to our greens, so we've been pesticide-free for well over a decade now.

Did you face any challenges along the way?

There was a period of turnaround management where you're dealing with poor playing conditions and complaints from members and guests, so you're not very popular. It was difficult, particularly in the first five years, but I was lucky enough to survive and now it has stabilised. We've enjoyed longer and longer periods of good performance to the point now where it's more or less year-round high performance. We have firm, healthy greens with a decent pace. We sit on quite a free-draining site and it's windy as well, which helps. Without pesticides, you need to get the fundamentals right.

Do you have any concerns about maintaining those standards going forward?

I'm still quite anxious when winter starts, wondering how much disease we might have, but over the past few years we have seen very little of it. Apart from a few greens that are just in a poor spot, most of them are really healthy. Weeds are more of an issue, particularly clover and plantain – the dandelions and daisies are eaten by the deer – and we

have seen more chafer grubs on the fairways.

One thing we are concerned about is dollar spot coming into Denmark. That's something we are trying to prepare ourselves for in the same manner that we prepared ourselves for fighting snow mold in the earlier days, and we were pretty successful at that.

Do you think more golf courses will be managed in the same way as yours in the future?

I think I'm ahead of the game, but I hope that not all of my colleagues will end up in a situation where they have to take a pesticide-free approach. I hope we can find a balanced approach where you still have access to pesticides, especially fungicides and herbicides, and we simply get better at applying it in a more efficient way.

What is your ultimate ambition at Royal Copenhagen?

Of course we want to keep producing higher standards, but one thing I would like is to be the highest-rated non-pesticidal golf course in the world. That would be cool if we could achieve that. I'm not advocating for no pesticides in golf, I think that would be bad for our business, I just think we need to find a new equilibrium based on a really optimised approach. **GI**

Martin's course in his own words

Royal Copenhagen a very British-looking golf course. It's located in a huge public park just north of Copenhagen, covering more than 1,000 hectares of mature woodland and open pastures. The course has been here nearly 100 years and the original layout remained almost unchanged since 1928 until an overhaul by Tom Mackenzie of Mackenzie & Ebert in 2008/09.

Excuse me dear...

We share the park together with more than 2,000 deer who roam freely around the golf course, which does add to the challenge of maintaining it.

Hollinwell's sward transition – a triumph of patience and persistence





Phil Stain's unwavering commitment to sustainable golf course management has delivered exceptional results at the Nottinghamshire heathland

If you're looking for an overnight success story, Hollinwell's sward transition isn't it. This is a tale of patience and persistence, of painstakingly changing perceptions and winning over the doubters. It is the story of triumph in the face of adversity and how it's never too late to start doing things the right way.

With his four decades at Notts Golf Club having recently come to an end, Course Manager Phil Stain can reflect with pride on his impact there, though he is quick to credit those who helped him along the way.

Having been instilled with the Jim Arthur-inspired beliefs of minimal inputs and the pursuit of bents and fescues, his starting point at Hollinwell initially seemed a good match, but things soon began to change.

"When I joined Notts, there were quite a lot of fine grasses in our greens and inputs were minimal," he explained. "We dried up in summer. It was your old-fashioned, traditional heathland golf course.

"However, as I served my apprenticeship here, in the mid 1980s, it was around the time courses were installing irrigation systems. There was a lot of pressure because golfers were looking for more pace and greens that were a little bit more receptive.

"They didn't just want performance, they also wanted presentation – they were really bothered about what it looked like."

Management practices started to warp to meet the demands of the golfers, setting the club on a slippery slope and even with his limited experience, Phil knew it would end badly.

"In my early days as a greenkeeper we were increasing the amount of fertiliser, increasing the amount of water, dropping the height of cut to 3mm," he said. "There were times when the corners of the blades would dig into the slopes. It was just horrendous."

It all resulted in a "downward spiral", in



which the desire for ever-increasing pace, and an aesthetic that had more to do with members' expectations than what was healthy, caused untold damage.

The greens became softer, the fescues and already low levels of bent diminished further, while the poa was allowed to run wild, and yet costs were rising. Something had to change.

"We were trying to force something in an environment where it didn't belong," Phil conceded. "The more pressure we put on, the worse the conditions got."

Things came to a head in 2010 and master greenkeeper Gordon Irvine was brought in as a consultant to help instigate a new regime and cultivate a sward transition back to fine grasses.

Adhering to a non-chemical methodology that prioritised aeration, over-seeding fine grasses and

“The more pressure we put on, the worse the conditions got”

topdressing 80/20 sand/Fendress, along with replacing salt-based fertilisers with slow-release organic products such as hoof and horn, it was a complete reversal of the way things had been done to that point.

But while the approach had proven its merits elsewhere, there would

need to be a reckoning with the naysayers as some short-term pain was inevitable when instituting such wholesale changes in course management practices.

The transition would be far from smooth. It required significant cultural change within the club, challenging golfer expectations, and a willingness to accept aesthetic compromises for long-term ecological health.

"We needed somebody strong, independent and credible to convince the committee," Phil said. "Gordon was that person. He told everyone involved, in no uncertain terms: 'We do this my way, or I walk away'. It needed someone old-school to make it clear that the road we were on wasn't sustainable and there was



About Hollinwell

From the moment you turn the final bend on the long driveway to the club and see a magnificent view of the course and imposing clubhouse ahead, you know Hollinwell is a special place. Set in the rolling hills of North Nottinghamshire in the heart of Robin Hood county, it offers one of the finest examples of traditional heathland golf in Great Britain, rivalling many of the more famous Surrey courses of this style. The club has hosted many top amateur events, including the Brabazon Trophy on six occasions.

another way to go. It would be painful – and I can't stress how painful it was at times – but we would get to a better place in the end."

Not everyone was entirely convinced but they were at least willing to accept the current state of affairs could not continue. A new direction was needed and Hollinwell could at last begin to take those first tentative steps towards a brighter future. From now on, nature would become the most important member of the team.

"We went on to a programme of traditional heathland management on greens," Phil explained. "We slowly started to reduce the amount of water and fertiliser and we utilised every kind of aeration imaginable.

"One of the biggest changes for us

was timing. All maintenance practices need to be timed to get the most from them, not dictated by fixtures. Badly timed maintenance is a waste of time and money and there's also a good chance we end up doing more harm than good.

"Because previously we'd been using a topdressing with a lot of fines in, we started off with a drill and fill to get through a layer that had formed on the greens that was impacting drainage. We were trying to do the bare minimum but encouraging nature to do it for us."

That is encapsulated in their approach to topdressing now, with the Fendress element representing the greenkeeping team's input but the rest of the process being left to nature.

"There's a small organic component in that Fen, it's only tiny but everything that we want to live in those greens, all the flora and fauna, can't live in sand – that's where the Fen comes in," Phil explained.

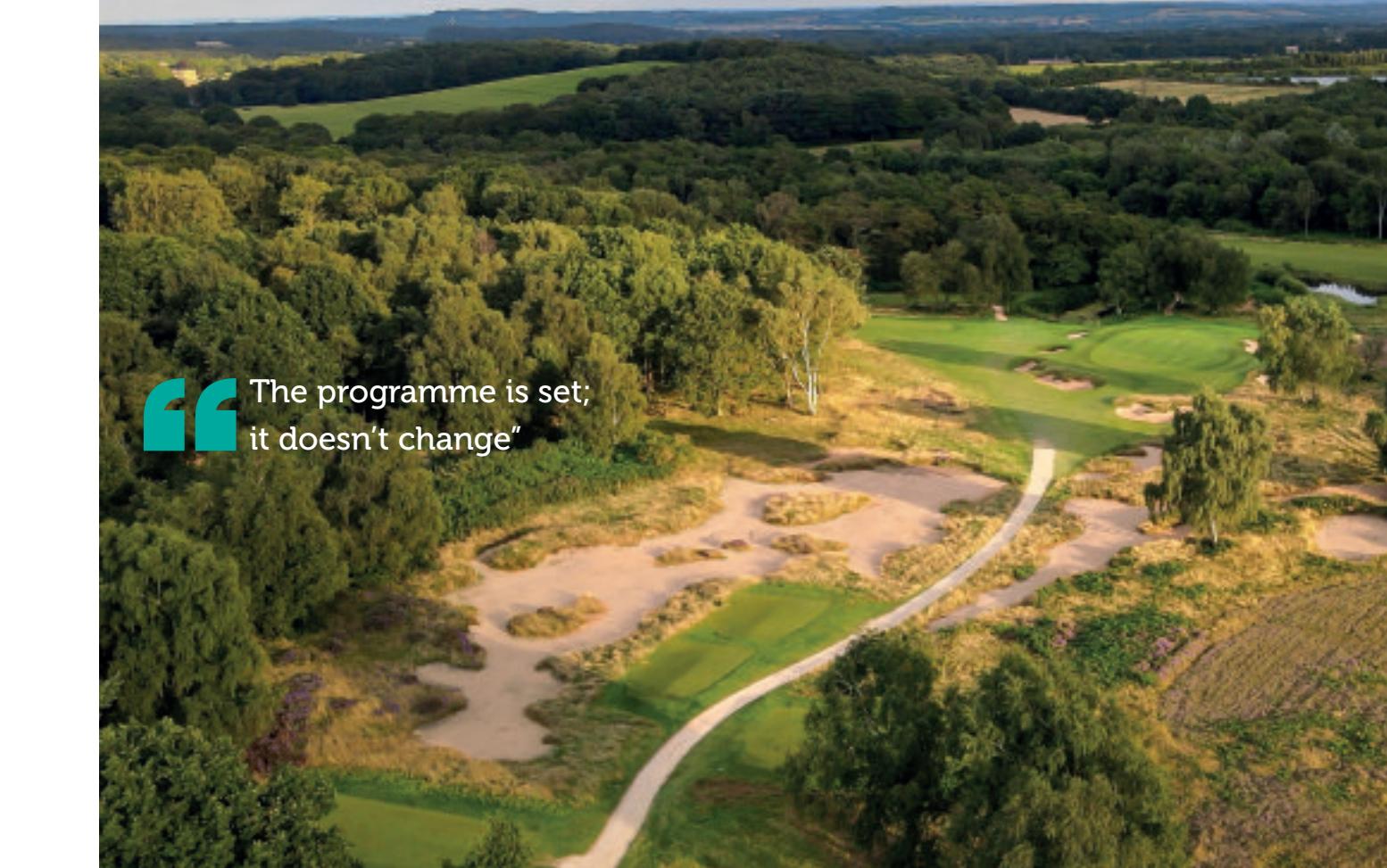
"If we feed our greens now we'll use organic fertilisers, with a little bit of lawn sand in spring just to kick them off. We'll ameliorate a little bit of hoof and horn into our Fen every spring, and that's 13% nitrogen, but it's not available until nature says it's warm enough.

"There's no big flushes of growth; our greens slowly come to life over a few weeks. They're often behind other courses because they will only grow when it's the correct time."

With inputs vastly reduced, costs



The programme is set;
it doesn't change"



An ecological paradise

Hollinwell now supports a rich ecosystem, including ground-nesting birds, common lizards, grass snakes and numerous insect species. Barn owls hunt over rough grasslands, there are vast areas for grazing, while scrub and bracken has been cleared to allow for heather regeneration.

The club, which is participating in a five-year R&A ecology survey, has achieved GEO Certification, with independent verifier Matt Johns lauding its efforts.

"Hollinwell represents a superb example of sustainable golf," he said. "It has aligned its golfing experience to get the very best from the sport by being challenged and rewarded by a high-quality naturalised course that supports a wide range of key habitats, species and landscape features. The quality and operation of the facilities and its expert course management team mirror this. I look forward to seeing the evolution of its ongoing plans for further sustainability measures and conservation success."





Phil Stain: Nature is the expert

"Look around your golf course and you'll see grass growing in all sorts of places – it's absolutely amazing. But then you look at the managed areas and you think, 'Well, why is it not growing as well?'. It's not growing as well because we're managing it – but we're not nature and we're not as good as nature.

"Yes, you get grass growing in bunkers, but that's dirty sand with bits of organic material and so on. Our thoughts down here have always been that if you get your grass growing in something it likes growing in, then it will do well. If you've got to try to manage it artificially through chemicals, fertilisers, fungicides and even irrigation water, you're never going to do it as well as nature can."

went the same way, winning over any remaining doubters – although the exceptional playing conditions were already doing that. The height of cut now doesn't drop below 4mm, with the compromise on pace more than compensated for by the overall quality, consistency and sustainability. Hollinwell's greens now boast over 50% fine grass, with some 80% bent-fescue, and it's still improving under a maintenance regime that is here to stay.

"The programme is set; it doesn't change," Phil said.

"We use the same products. I got a new greens chairman last year and he

was looking at the budget that we've got for fertiliser and so on. He could not believe how little we spend. We use 600 cubic meters of water compared to thousands used by other courses. One fungicide in the last 18 months and very little fertiliser. It's a fraction of what people think they need."

As Phil settles into his retirement, his parting message to the industry is clear: work with nature, not against it.

He said: "Greenkeepers are battling unrealistic expectations. We need to educate people about the sustainable way of doing things, show them the benefits and that it is achievable." **GI**



Amid the many demands of golf course management and family life, Chris Tritabaugh has developed a winning formula to achieve professional and personal fulfillment.

As superintendent of the world-renowned Hazeltine National, he has prepared courses for multiple headline events, including the Ryder Cup.

As a married father of three, Chris also has a busy schedule away from work, but he has found a way to strike a healthy equilibrium between his career and his home life.

Chris' 10 rules for leadership and balance emerged from years of practical experience and provide a holistic strategy for navigating workplace challenges while maintaining personal wellbeing.

By addressing chronic stress and redefining professional excellence, these principles challenge leaders to think differently about success. More than theoretical concepts, these rules

are hard-earned insights that invite professionals to embrace a more balanced, intentional approach to their careers and lives.

1. Know the puzzle you're putting together

Have a clear vision and guiding principles for your project. Like assembling a puzzle, start with understanding the end goal, find the edge pieces and work systematically. Don't get overwhelmed by the middle stages; focus on a strong beginning and end. Develop a strategic approach that allows flexibility while maintaining a consistent overall objective.

2. Clean up the kitchen (don't forget about your other team)

Prioritise your home team as much as your work team. Be present and reliable for your family by completing small but meaningful tasks. Maintain a non-negotiable relationship with time,

ensuring you're home when promised. Take responsibility for household chores, be a supportive partner and parent, and demonstrate commitment to your family's wellbeing.

3. Getting it right rather than being right

Prioritise solving problems over defending your initial position. Be open to feedback and willing to adapt your approach. Listen to constructive criticism and view challenges as opportunities for improvement. Focus on achieving the best possible outcome rather than proving your original method was correct, and remain flexible in your problem-solving strategy.

4. A pizza party does not a culture make

Creating a positive workplace culture requires more than superficial perks. Develop meaningful experiences that



Chris Tritabaugh's 10 rules for leadership and balance

Hazeltine National's superintendent shares the guiding principles he uses to lead his team and strike a harmonious balance between work and life.

engage employees and make them feel valued. Provide opportunities for involvement, innovation and decision-making. Foster an environment where team members are excited to contribute and feel they have a genuine stake in the organisation's success.

5. Beware the circle

Avoid continuous work cycles that lead to burnout. Create reference points and breaks to help employees rest and recharge. Recognise the dangers of constant work without pause. Implement strategies that allow for mental and physical recovery, such as clear work-rest boundaries and opportunities to step back and reset.

6. Strive to develop character and ability, not status and power

Focus on personal and professional growth over climbing the career ladder. Develop a mastery mindset by

being passionate about foundational skills, embracing continuous learning and being patient with your career progression. Prioritise becoming excellent in your current role rather than obsessing about future positions.

7. Be a leader

Empower your team by listening more and speaking less. Create an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing ideas and contributing to problem-solving. Trust your team's capabilities and encourage innovation. Lead by enabling others to think critically and take ownership of their work, rather than micromanaging.

8. Give yourself a break

Recognise the importance of rest and self-care. Take regular breaks, whether it's a short nap, a weekend off or a vacation. No one will mandate your downtime, so proactively schedule

About Chris Tritabaugh

Since 2013 Chris has been the golf course superintendent at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minnesota. In 2016 Hazeltine played host to the 41st Ryder Cup matches, and in 2019 Hazeltine hosted the KPMG Women's PGA Championship. Having also provided the stage for the 2024 US Amateur Championship, in 2029 it will become the first American club to host a second Ryder Cup. In 16 years as a Golf Course Superintendent, Chris has worked hard to develop and fine-tune a simplistic method of greenkeeping, predominantly aimed at promoting and managing bentgrass playing surfaces. These simple and economical methods were on display to the world during the 2016 Ryder Cup. Chris also has a passion for leadership and leads a work-place culture focused on providing multi-generational employees with an enjoyable, stimulating and inspirational experience.

moments of recovery. Understand that periodic rest enhances productivity and prevents chronic stress.

9. Practical action over organisation

Embrace flexibility and adaptability instead of rigid planning. Recognise that detailed plans often fail when confronted with real-world complexities. Focus on taking practical actions that move you toward your goal. Be willing to adjust strategies quickly and maintain momentum, even when circumstances change unexpectedly.

10. Walk

Incorporate walking into your daily routine for physical and mental benefits. Use walking as an opportunity to gain perspective, reduce stress and engage with your environment. Take time to move slowly, observe your surroundings and create mental space for creativity and problem-solving. **GI**



GEOLINK REVOLUTION

**The latest technology driving
Toro's next evolution**

It's not often a technology comes along that is so big and influential that roles are specifically created for it and the products they power revolutionise an industry, but that's exactly what's happened with GeoLink.

Previously GeoLink was largely only familiar to those using Toro's turf-based precision spray system. Now however this technology has been catapulted into the turfcare stratosphere with the arrival of Toro's autonomous range of mowers.

So, what is this technology, what does it do, how does it work and how will it affect your role in the turfcare industry?

Here we talk to Lee Rowbotham, who has recently accepted the role of GeoLink and Digital Specialist at Reesink Turfcare, a new role reflecting the importance Reesink places on the advanced technology expected, including GPS and digital, to oversee product delivery and support customers now and in the future.

What is GeoLink technology?

GeoLink technology generally refers to a system or platform that integrates geographic location data with communication and networking capabilities. It works hand-in-hand with Real Time Kinematic positioning to enhance a standard GPS signal and transform its resolution from a few metres to a few centimetres.

This works by having a fixed base station (RTK mast) of known position. It calculates correction data from the carrier signals sent from the satellites. Then, the base station sends these real-time correction signals to the rover, enhancing the precision of the machine's position.

What is its purpose?

Representing years of research and development including significant customer input, Toro's GeoLink solutions integrate geospatial data with communication technologies to enable location-based services, real-time tracking, and geographic information analysis.

They combine GPS, GIS and automated control systems to enhance efficiency in turf maintenance and was seen first in

The Range Pro ball picker is the solution to a labour-intensive and time-consuming job.

“There’s a changing mindset about what is needed regarding labour support and how to approach mowing grass. These mowers dramatically increase productivity and get even more consistent results, freeing up time to focus on other areas where more specialised skill is needed” Lee Rowbotham, GeoLink and Digital Specialist, Reesink Turfcare

combination with Toro’s GeoLink spraying solutions. That delivered autonomous spray applications, with pinpoint accuracy and avoiding overlaps, saving time and solution waste. It basically means you get the best accuracy for your machinery’s GPS guidance, essential in precision-based maintenance applications.

Now with the launch of its autonomous mowing options: the Toro GeoLink Solutions Autonomous Fairway Mower, three fully robotic Turf Pro mowers and Range Pro ball picker, there is a complete suite of turf maintenance equipment with various levels of autonomous functionality which Toro says leads to dependable and repeatable course operations that result in consistent playing conditions.

How does it work?

In the case of the Toro GeoLink Solutions Autonomous Fairway Mower, sensors work off ultra-precise information providing accuracy to two centimetres to map out the area, setting specific boundaries in which the machine can operate autonomously and without wired-off fencing.

When in autonomous mode, a combination of technologies works together to provide peace of mind. The first applies to the local area, immediately surrounding the unit. LiDAR, radar, and sonar all work together to make sure the unit always knows what is going on around it.

When the mower reaches the edge of the predefined work zone based on satellite positioning, it intelligently keeps within it. All the operator needs to do is customise the settings according to working perimeters, no-go zones, mowing patterns, cutting height and transport paths.

How will it affect your role?

Achieving the quality that top-tier golf courses require is anything but simple. Tasks such as creating

flawless, uniform patterns have traditionally required hours of skilled labour from experienced operators.

The labour-intensive nature of this work, coupled with the challenges of maintaining a skilled workforce, has driven the search for more efficient solutions. Toro’s ongoing development in autonomous technology is part of this broader effort to enhance precision and productivity on the golf course, reducing the load where greenkeeping teams are stretched.

Rather than replacing skilled workers, autonomous technology is a tool that promises to enhance the efficiency and productivity of the existing team, freeing them up for other tasks while still being able to remotely monitor autonomous equipment.

These innovations offer more than just efficiency gains. They provide opportunities to reallocate labour, enhance course aesthetics and expand the use of advanced technology across various maintenance areas.

- [To find out more, visit Reesink Turfcare at \[reesinkturfcare.co.uk\]\(http://reesinkturfcare.co.uk\)](http://reesinkturfcare.co.uk)



Showcasing just how far technology has come, Toro’s autonomous GeoLink Solutions Autonomous Fairway Mower.

Toro GeoLink Solutions Autonomous Fairway Mower

The way in which turfcare professionals care for fairways is evolving. The Toro GeoLink Solutions Autonomous Fairway Mower is smart and precise and delivers the high cut quality and after-cut appearance the Toro name is known for.

It can be used as a manual mower as well as autonomous which is why it still has a seat and steering wheel – so the operator can take control and move the machine to other areas outside of the mapped zones if needed.

Highlights:

- Autonomous path planning
- Automatic turns
- Obstacle detection
- Optimal overlap
- Straight lines
- Fitted with a fairway bedknife as standard with a HOC range of 9.5–25.4mm
- Eight blade cutting units designed for fairways
- Comes as standard with fairway EdgeMax bedknife, rear roller brush, high height-of-cut kit, wide front roller and front roller scraper
- Includes off-greens kit to ensure smooth after-cut appearance in higher heights of cut



Breakthrough in turf nutrition

Origin Amenity Solutions launches Xtend CRF, a dual-technology controlled release fertiliser

Origin Amenity Solutions (OAS), a leading provider of innovative turf solutions for golf courses, sports settings and amenity green spaces, has announced the launch of its latest breakthrough in turf nutrition – Xtend CRF. This advanced controlled-release fertiliser range combines two cutting-edge fertiliser technologies to ensure precise nutrient delivery, maximising turf health and performance throughout the seasons.

Revolutionary nutrient efficiency and environmental sustainability

Xtend CRF is designed to offer superior nutrient efficiency, enhanced environmental sustainability and consistent turf performance. It stands apart from conventional fertilisers by delivering nutrients in a more controlled manner, improving efficiency and minimising leaching. This ensures that turf managers achieve optimal results while supporting sustainable turf care practices.

At the heart of the Xtend CRF range is ProTect, a proprietary temperature-release coating technology produced within the Origin Group. Unlike other controlled-release technologies that primarily rely on moisture for nutrient release, ProTect is engineered to respond to temperature fluctuations, mirroring the plant's natural nitrogen demand. This results in a more consistent and predictable nutrient release, reducing the risk of nutrient loss and improving overall turf resilience.

Jamie Lees, nutrition and specialities product manager at OAS, highlights the innovation behind Xtend CRF: "Xtend CRF is a fantastic example of developing new and existing technologies into innovative formulations to provide turf managers with market-leading products. Our expertise in controlled-release fertilisers has enabled us to launch advanced technologies such as ProTect, which is produced here in the UK, while also ensuring a reduced environmental impact and carbon footprint."



Tailored solutions for different turf requirements

The Xtend CRF range includes four specialised formulations designed to meet varying turf nutrition needs across different seasons and conditions:

- **Xtend CRF 20-5-10** – Ideal for spring and summer applications, providing a quick turf response and steady nutrient release.
- **Xtend CRF 12-20-12** – Formulated for seeding or established turf, incorporating Crystal Green and Phosphoactive for improved phosphate availability and root development.
- **Xtend CRF 15-2-20** – Designed for autumn use, promoting turf strength and density throughout winter and into spring.
- **Xtend CRF 25-0-0** – A high-nitrogen formulation suited for summer stress periods, offering flexible application rates and a strong colour response without excessive growth.



A commitment to innovation in turf management

Origin Amenity Solutions strives to be at the forefront of sustainable and science-driven advancements in turf care. As a trusted supplier to turf professionals, OAS continually invests in research and development to create high-performance products that align with modern environmental and agronomic best practices. The introduction of the Xtend CRF range reinforces OAS's dedication to providing solutions that balance turf excellence with environmental responsibility.

Availability

The Xtend CRF range is available to order now. For more information, contact Origin Amenity Solutions at 0800 38 7222 or visit www.originamenity.com.

Pushing the boundaries of turf performance

Fiata Stressgard is much more than just pigment...

Turf managers have long sought products that enhance turf colour and performance while also improving plant health beyond nutritional inputs. One such product that has seen a rise in recent years is pigment. Most pigments deliver on the promise of immediate turf colour and protection from UV light, and that is where the story ends.

Fiata Stressgard, the first bio-stimulant from Envu, is proven to deliver on much more! Offering tangible agronomic benefits that go beyond surface-level aesthetics, turf managers now have unrestricted access to a technology that offers a proven bio-stimulant alongside Stressgard Formulation Technology, a proprietary formulation containing turf pigment, plant health-promoting compounds and other co-formulants.

True plant health benefits

Unlike traditional turf pigments that primarily mask deficiencies and enhance visual appeal, Fiata Stressgard delivers true plant health benefits. Independent trials have demonstrated increased chlorophyll, photosynthesis, improved drought survival and recovery, and stronger overall turf health and performance. The unique Stressgard formulation enhances and protects chlorophyll, leading to deeper, more sustainable turf colour, performance and resilience.

New independent trial data supports the benefits

Recent trials with STRI confirm the ability of Fiata Stressgard to improve turf health beyond just colour enhancement.

STRI (2024) Summer Stress Trial: Data from an independent STRI trial showed that Fiata Stressgard significantly increased chlorophyll index compared to untreated turf and turf treated with pigment alone. Applications at both 15 and 20 L/ha resulted in measurable improvements in photosynthetic capacity and overall turf quality in both drought and irrigated conditions (Figure 1). This directly translated into turf better managing stress from drought, heat and traffic, also resulting in greater recovery from stress.

Interestingly, research conducted at Rutgers University

in 2003 already demonstrated the long-term benefits of Stressgard technology (Figure 2). Turf treated with Stressgard showed higher chlorophyll content under heat stress, maintaining better plant health over time. This reinforces the concept that Stressgard actively enhances photosynthesis and stress tolerance.

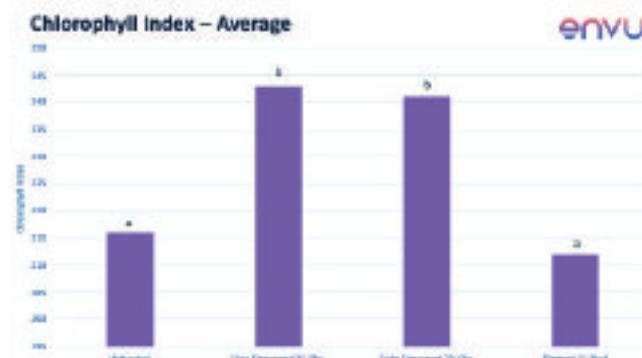


Figure 1: Average Chlorophyll Index throughout the 14-week trial. Fiata Stressgard significantly increased chlorophyll index compared to untreated and pigment alone. Different letters denote significant differences between treatments ($p < 0.05$).

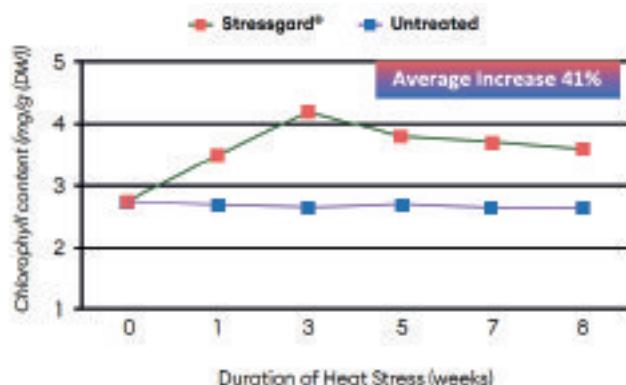


Figure 2: Early research shows the effects of Stressgard Formulation Technology on Chlorophyll content during heat stress in controlled conditions.



Performance under drought and heat stress

Fiata Stressgard was shown to help turf not only survive but also maintain playability and aesthetics under drought and heat stress (Figure 3). During the trials with STRI, turf treated with Fiata Stressgard outperformed untreated plots and those maintained with a surfactant programme alone. The best approach was to use surfactants before and after drought conditions while applying Fiata Stressgard before and during the drought period itself. This strategic approach helped sustain turf quality and facilitated faster, healthier recovery.



Figure 3: Shows the effect of drought stress at the STRI, 2024. Fiata Stressgard 20 l/ha, 14-day intervals on the left, untreated on the right after 4 weeks of drought stress)

Synergy with growth regulators

Another key finding from the trial is the synergy between Fiata Stressgard and the plant growth regulator (PGR), Trinexapac-ethyl. While some PGR alone can cause temporary reductions in turf colour and quality, combining PGR in the tank with Fiata Stressgard was shown to mitigate these negative effects and enhance overall plant health. This combination ensures stress reduction and improved chlorophyll protection under both challenging and good turf conditions.

Trial summary

The STRI summarised "The standout treatment in this trial was Fiata Stressgard + Trinexapac-ethyl with turf health improving quicker and to a higher level in these plots. Fiata Stressgard alone also performed well with strong improvements during the recovery phase of the trial. Other treatments performed well but did not achieve the same level as these two treatments."

Considerations for application

The trials show that both 15 and 20 L/ha application rates have their place, depending on turf management goals. Lower rates provide strong agronomic benefits with a natural colour enhancement, while higher rates deliver a deeper colour alongside enhanced stress tolerance. Turf managers can adjust rates based on seasonal conditions and stress severity. Interestingly, the trials showed that when combined with Trinexapac-ethyl, Fiata Stressgard was as effective at 15 l/ha than applied alone at 20 l/ha despite the PGR alone having no effect on average turf quality, further evidence of their synergy when used together.

Stressgard products enhance physiological plant health, ensuring stronger, healthier turf"

More than a pigment, much more than a bio-stimulant!

While traditional pigments and plant health products may provide a visual boost, they do not necessarily improve underlying turf health. For many years, our trials confirm that standard pigments can mask deficiencies without increasing true plant health, chlorophyll or photosynthesis. By contrast, Stressgard products, including new Fiata Stressgard, enhance physiological plant health, ensuring stronger, healthier turf under all conditions.

With a full launch planned for 2025, including regional seminars, webinars and dedicated support from Origin Amenity Solutions, Fiata Stressgard is set to become an essential tool for UK turf managers.

This summer presents the perfect opportunity to incorporate Fiata Stressgard into your turf management programme and experience firsthand how it goes beyond colour to deliver genuine plant health benefits, proven and backed up by 20 years of research.

Upping their game

Rain Bird helps Richmond Master Greenkeeper deliver for double the demand



Bordering London's largest Royal Park, The Richmond Golf Club's beautiful parkland course affords golfers the opportunity to escape the rat race and enjoy a tranquil oasis. The 18-hole, par-70 course's narrow tree-lined fairways and bunkers test golfers of all abilities.

Members and visitors alike praise the quality of the club's playing surfaces, thanks to the expertise and dedication of the greenkeeping staff, led by Les Howkins MG.

The Master Greenkeeper joined the club in April 2008 and oversees a team of 10. What makes the quality of the surfaces at The Richmond even more impressive is the demand. Pre-pandemic, some 18-20,000 rounds of golf were played on the course each

year, but since May 2020, usage has doubled. To ensure golfers playing those 40,000 rounds per year have an outstanding experience, the club invested in technology that enables them to manage conditions in the best possible way.

Challenge

In 1998 the club installed one of the first Rain Bird FREEDOM™ Systems in the UK.

Ten years ago, Les began to experience 2-3 decoder failures per year. "Fault finding was difficult", he explains, "and in the following years more faults occurred. Our spend on electrical faults topped £10,000 annually, so I began to speak to experts to see what was out there.

Solution

"The Rain Bird IC System™ was new, and it had many advantages for us. The fact that it could be retrofitted easily was a big plus, and fortunately we didn't need any new wiring. It would give us greater functionality as the fault finding is fast and simple. We didn't need any special tools or skills."

The club considered phasing the project in three individual loops, but the ease and speed of conversion meant they opted to complete the entire course. Contractor John Kidson of JK Irrigation completed the work in just four weeks before Christmas 2023 – two to three weeks for the hardware installation and a week for system set-up and testing.

"The IC System made a big



Main: Credit: The Richmond Golf Club **Above:** Credit: John Kidson

difference," Howkins enthuses. "The adaptability means we can be much more area specific. We can do what we want with a single area without irrigating a whole fairway, and it has made a marked difference. We have better coverage, which is beneficial when working with different soil types.

"We are also saving 10% of the water we were applying. That's a lot. In a dry year there will be greater benefit." Water costs at the club are negligible as an abstraction licence enables it to draw from three boreholes during the summer, however Les believes that the golf industry must demonstrate efficient water use as greater pressure is put on resources. "From irrigation systems to soil moisture devices, we need to show the Environment

Agency and water companies that we use water responsibly."

Kidson adds: "Their current installation had fairway sprinklers paired. Converting to IC means each sprinkler becomes its own station, which allows for more targeted watering. Cycle + Soak™ is also more manager friendly. It allows for single station Cycle + Soak for irrigating areas on gradients, for example, with the ability to irrigate per sprinkler when required. This leads to reduced run-off and less water usage."

Next level water management

The IC System has been a big step forward, and Les is already planning further improvements this year when he upgrades the central control

software to CirrusPRO™. "It will take us to the next level, giving us control down to each individual head, and the user interface is so simple. When we are out on the course, we will be able to control the entire system with a tablet there and then for even greater efficiency.

"Rain Bird has always tried to evolve its products rather than completely change them. That shows it has really thought about its customers and end-users. We have been able to add on to our system and upgrade it, and it all works together. Older rotors out on the course are still working well, so we'll only replace them when necessary. Longevity and upgradability mean less disruption, less cost and less waste."

Don't succumb to Augusta Syndrome yourself

Be realistic about the condition of your playing surfaces as the first men's major gets underway and share that message to manage expectations

Last month's article discussed the need for patience in the transition of the course from winter into spring. We discussed how temperature – especially overnight minimum temperatures – will have the dominant influence on the rate of recovery, especially when it comes to the germination and establishment of seed and restoration of playing surfaces following pre-season repair and renovation work.

While there are some tweaks we can apply to the application of nutrition – generally with the source of nitrogen

“ Augusta Syndrome is nothing more than an expression of the expectations which heralds the start of the golfing majors and the anticipation of a new main season”

used – the period of differential growth rates between competing grass species always presents some challenges which are commonly not appreciated by the golfer.

This is my first article since joining The R&A Sustainable Agronomy team and I look forward to the challenge of the job. Like some of my colleagues, I am now working in agronomy and bringing practical experience from many years of greenkeeping and course management in addition to academic studies, which led to my masters degree qualification.

I am fortunate to have a well-rounded view of the industry and all too well know the common frustrations of the greenkeeper, manager and golfer at a crucial time of the year when Augusta Syndrome

is an annual topic for clubhouse discussion.

While it sounds like a scientific reference to a turfgrass disease or disorder, Augusta Syndrome is nothing more than an expression of the expectations which heralds the start of the golfing majors and the anticipation of a new main season in albeit cooler climate conditions, at less protected and lower resourced courses than Augusta National.

This is no criticism at all for one of the greatest championships and courses in golf, but recognition is

needed in the differences we will be seeing in April at the first men's major of the year compared to our courses.

Nevertheless, golfers will be looking at the pristine surfaces – as they do for nearly 12 months of the year now with global tours streamed direct to our devices – and wondering why their greenkeeper cannot do better.

The condition of our playing surfaces is certainly advancing though, even at a time when course usage and weather and ground conditions are seemingly sliding into a vicious circle of extremes which test even the best of courses and most skilful greenkeepers.

There may well be the remnants of disease scarring or pitting caused by pest activity, but the playing surfaces can still perform well.

Some of you will have started pre-season renovation work as early as February, but each course is different and the work applied will vary. Some will be scheduling renovations during March or April, depending on the programme of work applied.

Communication is the most important tool in our armoury, especially when managing expectations and delivering sustainable and appropriate standards which will not load too much stress on to the turf.

It will be important to be both proactive and reactive to the fluctuating conditions, with accurate mowing being conservative where needed to protect the crown of bent and fescue plants in a blended sward. Maintaining a frequent schedule for mowing will achieve the gradual refinement of surfaces until we have more settled conditions for stable growth potential in May.

Until then, be positive with the messaging and manage your own expectations just as you would for the golfers. **GI**

- When will the disease marks on our greens disappear? Scan the QR code



Jaey Goodchild is an Agronomist at The R&A



Follow the conversation



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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 **Turf**



New Microlite Fertilisers

A premium, micro-granular fertiliser range containing multiple nitrogen sources for a consistent release of nutrients, without any major flushes of growth.

Microlite can be applied at low application rates and offers superior coverage, as the granule disperses quickly into the sward and breaks down rapidly to become available for plant uptake. The inclusion of methylene urea in some grades improves the longevity and slows availability of nitrogen.

- **Microlite Links 4-0-4+4Fe+Seaweed+Naturvigor**
- **Microlite Advance 8-0-16+3.3MgO+4Fe**
- **Microlite Performance 12-0-12+8CaO+3MgO+2Fe**
- **Microlite Complete 10-2-5+15MgO+3CaO+2Fe**
- **Microlite Premier 15-0-10+9CaO+3MgO**
- **Microlite All Round 6-0-20+10CaO+2Fe**



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