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Greenkeeper International



■ Practical Greenkeeping

How to set meaningful yet achievable goals in 2025

■ From Your Association

Introducing the nominees for this year's BIGGA Awards

■ Member Interest

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

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Welcome

A very Happy New Year to you all. I began this introduction last year by hoping 2024 would give us better weather than 2023, I'm not sure that worked out very well so I'm not even going to mention it this time!

What I absolutely do hope is that in 2025 we continue a lot of the excellent progress we made through the last few years in supporting our members and building greater respect and appreciation for the highly professional and crucial role you play in the sport of golf.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the 1,100+ respondents to our survey late last year. A flavour of the extensive results are contained within this magazine and the findings are really helping us shape what the association needs to focus on most as we look to evolve.

With BTME looming we have another, more face-to-face, opportunity to engage directly with you so please, if you are coming to Harrogate, take the chance to drop by our stand in Hall 3 and talk to me, my colleagues and our board about your priorities for BIGGA.

The exhibition was on the cusp of selling out as this magazine went to print and I'm delighted that the number of exhibitors attending

“We have our annual opportunity to highlight so many of your incredible achievements”

continues to grow. A lot of this buoyancy is, I believe, down to the growth in our Continue to Learn education programme which is set to be our biggest yet with numbers even outstripping our bumper turnout in 2024.

A highlight of BTME is undoubtedly the BIGGA Celebration with Kress where we have our annual opportunity to highlight so many of the incredible achievements of our members and friends. It will be a great thrill for me to see Stephen Bernhard receive our Outstanding Contribution award for a lifetime of support to our industry.



Jim Croxton
BIGGA Chief Executive

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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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TM



First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- Winners of the BIGGA 2025 calendar competition announced
- Golf Environment Awards 2025 finalists revealed



Adrian and the Butanese Himalayas

Adrian Mortram goes trekking in the Land of the Thunder Dragon

Adrian Mortram completed one of the toughest treks in the world after he conquered the Snowman Trek in Bhutan.

The managing director of irrigation designers and consultants Adrian Mortram Associates is a keen outdoor enthusiast always on the lookout for a new challenge. And the one he and wife Sarah undertook in the small Himalayan kingdom in October might be his greatest yet, with a 24-day adventure taking them over high-altitude passes, through lush forests and around the edge of crystal-clear lakes.

The failure rate of the Snowman Trek is 50%, with more people said to have climbed Everest than completed the

arduous 216-mile route.

"The window for trekking in Bhutan is very small – post-monsoon and pre-winter before the risk of snow making the passes impassable arises – so in early October we headed out to start our attempt," said Adrian, a regular speaker at Continue to Learn.

"After a puja (good luck) ceremony carried out by a local lama (Buddhist monk), we started our adventure.

"We initially walked through beautiful forests of oak, juniper, spruce, pine, rhododendron, azalea and old man's beard as we climbed out of the valley.

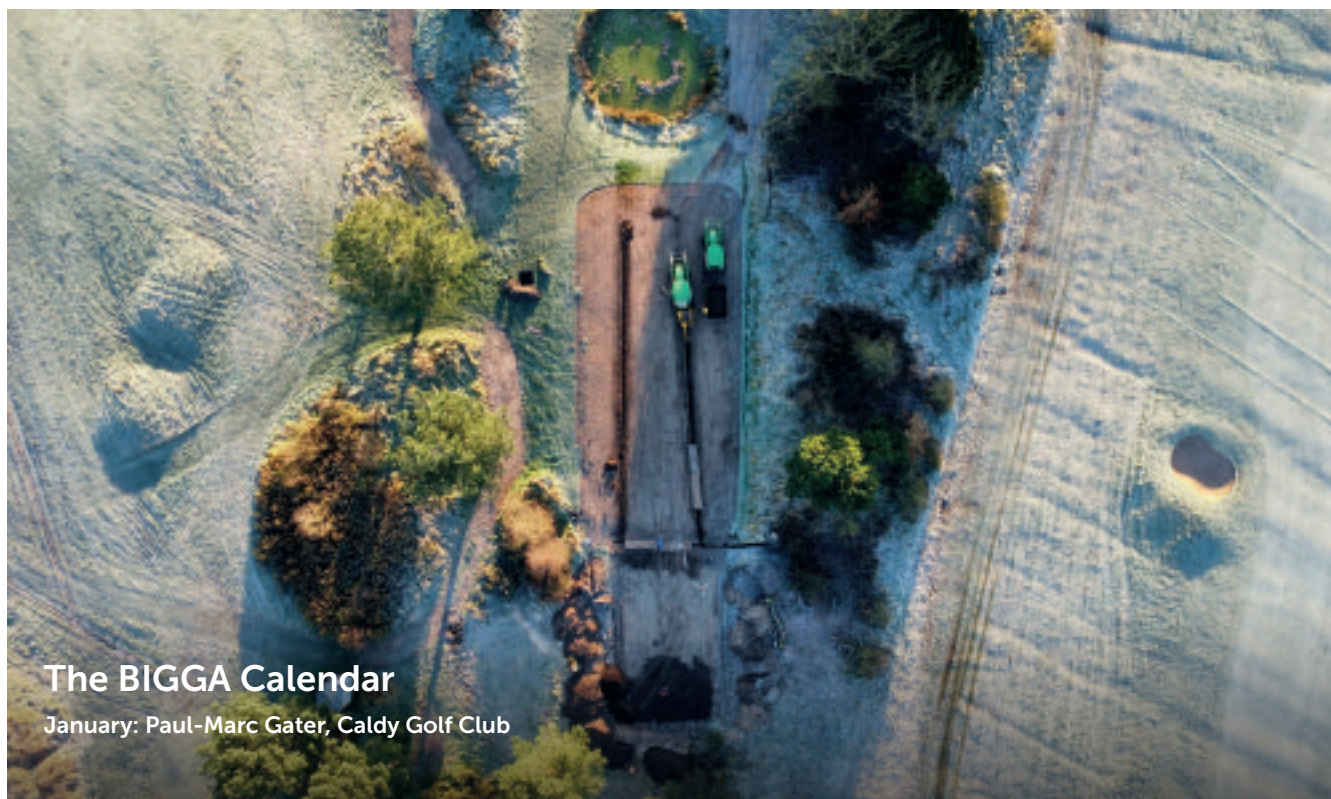
"Over the next few days, we climbed slowly until we reached Jhomolhari Base Camp where we spent two days to acclimatise. We then trekked for a

further 19 days over mountain passes which were all over 4600 metres.

"We were surrounded by magnificent snow-covered mountains, we passed beautiful glacial lakes and visited isolated villages only accessible by multi-day walks on foot or by helicopter.

"Some of these villages are completely cut off during winter. The terrain underfoot was difficult and we had to concentrate to avoid slipping."

At one point the group saw snow leopard prints, though the animal itself was elusive. Summing up the experience, Adrian added: "A challenging trek in an interesting and beautiful country, but certainly not for the fainthearted!" **GI**



The BIGGA Calendar

January: Paul-Marc Gater, Caldys Golf Club

Dr Simon Watson joins ICL as senior scientist



Dr Simon Watson has joined ICL as senior scientist within its AmegA Sciences business unit.

He brings extensive experience from his previous role as senior agronomist at The R&A, where he was part of the Sustainable Agronomy team, leading the sustainable certification programme and working closely with golf courses across the UK.

Simon's career in the turf industry began as an agronomist at the STRI, with a broad portfolio that includes roles at Syngenta in technical services for the turf, landscape and ornamental sectors. His time at Syngenta saw him

rise to head of technical services for the Asia Pacific region, based in Singapore, and he also has experience as an independent arable agronomist.

He is now looking forward to his new role within AmegA Sciences. He said: "The opportunity to contribute to the development of biostimulants and technologies for water and nutrient use efficiency is something I find truly exciting."

"I look forward to working with the teams at AmegA Sciences and across the broader ICL business to develop innovative solutions that meet the needs of our industry."

Mike Finney, business manager at AmegA Sciences, added: "We are delighted to welcome Simon to our R&D team. His extensive technical

expertise will be invaluable as we continue to lead the way in developing innovative solutions for the turf and ornamental markets.

"With an exciting pipeline of technologies in the works, Simon will play a key role in ensuring that our products deliver on performance, with claims backed by rigorous research."

In his position, Simon will collaborate with global ICL technical teams, independent research stations and universities to drive innovation and product development.

Outside of his professional life, Simon enjoys spending time outdoors with his family. He is an avid football fan and supporter of Aston Villa, often attending matches with his son. **GI**

A greenkeeper's best friend – Fergus

Owner: Jim Gilchrist
Course: Harborne
Breed: Cavapoo



Age: Five years

Favourite treat: Gravy bones

Favourite spot on the course:

Anywhere on a buggy

Naughtiest moment: *(Ed. None given – he must be good!)*

My dog is happiest: When chasing squirrels and magpies away from our greens



What's on this month

Dates for your diary

7 January

Irrigation Turfgrass Technician (Lantra approved) –
Leicester City training ground



First Green

14 January

First Green STEM Field Trip – North Hants Golf Club

15 January

BIGGA AGM 2025 – Online

19-22 January

Continue to Learn – Harrogate Convention Centre,
North Yorkshire



BTME

21-23 January

BTME – Harrogate Convention Centre, North
Yorkshire

28 January

First Green STEM Field Trip – North Hants Golf Club



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Award-winning Anna Nilsson shares glory with all women in turfcare



Anna Nilsson expressed her gratitude to the team at The Belfry after winning the Women in Turfcare category at the 2024 Women in Golf Awards.

The deputy head greenkeeper of the renowned Brabazon Course picked up the BIGGA-sponsored award at a glittering ceremony at Foxhills.

Anna was quick to credit Director of Golf Courses and Estates Angus Macleod, and Golf Courses Manager Jamie Wade for their role in her success.

"I adore my job and am extremely proud of the knowledge, experience and innovative ideas I bring to it," she said. "As a passionate advocate for the incredible impact women can have on this industry, it is both humbling and empowering to be recognised for the contribution I make.

"Women are an invaluable asset to the turfcare industry and I want to

share this award with all women in turf — you are all worthy winners.

"I also want to express my deepest gratitude to Angus, Jamie and The Belfry. Your support and guidance have been instrumental in my growth, both personally and professionally, and I'm truly honoured to be part of such a great team."

As well as being a talented greenkeeper herself, Anna is passionate about inspiring the next generation of turfcare professionals, coaching students and visiting schools to talk to children about working in the industry she loves.

She added: "I'm determined to inspire even more people into this fantastic job – while it can, of course, be tough at times, it is also so rewarding, and there is no doubt that it has given me many wonderful friendships and many happy memories.

"We have the best office in the world and I can't wait for the day when people aren't shocked that I'm a greenkeeper and we break down the stereotypical view of what a greenkeeper looks like. We are chemists, scientists, bookkeepers and data analysts – and we also happen to be grass cutters some days, regardless of gender."

Now in its third year, the Women in Golf Awards showcases the work of women from across all sectors of the industry and provides an important platform that inspires more women to consider a career in golf.

In a new collaboration with Colt McKenzie McNair and Bernhard Academy, all the finalists and sponsors will come together in spring 2025 for a networking and educational day hosted at PING HQ that will elevate and inspire their continued progress in the industry. **GI**



'An absolute nightmare' – West Lothian fire a shock for Iain Marshall

West Lothian's Iain Marshall was left "gobsmacked" after a fire broke out in a shed, destroying up to £750,000 worth of equipment.

The blaze occurred in the early hours of November 3, triggered by a faulty mower stored in the facility.

Course Manager Iain, who has never experienced an incident like it in his three decades at the club, initially suspected arson but was stunned to see the camera footage tell a different story.

Describing how it all unfolded, Iain said: "We washed all the machines as usual on the Friday, filled them up with diesel, and parked them in the shed at 11am.

"At 5.22am on the Sunday morning one machine started to smoulder near where the battery is, and within 10

minutes it ignited. Within another 10 minutes the whole thing was up in flames. "It's all on camera. Even though it was badly smoke damaged where the hard drive was, they managed to get it out and we watched it back at the clubhouse.

"I was gobsmacked that a machine that's been parked up for 40 hours could go up in flames without being touched"

The flames spread, fuelled by the hydraulic oil tank and diesel tank, engulfing the contents of the shed, though the structure itself appeared relatively unscathed on first inspection.

"It's surprising because you look at the shed from a distance and it looks fine, but because it's this big metal structure it was effectively like a huge oven," he said. "Everything just melted

– the control panels, the bonnets on the machines, the lot.

"We had someone come from the insurance company to see if anything was fixable, but there isn't really – it's just an absolute nightmare."

The resulting damage had numerous knock-on effects, including leaving the clubhouse without water, while Iain and his team had to make do with "pretty much no equipment" for around three weeks before some hire kit arrived.

"The greens have been impacted and it does make disease pressure a bigger worry," he admitted. "A local golf club loaned us a greens mower to cut them, but it's been hellish."

Iain's hope is to have a shed back in operation by March as he looks to put the incident behind him. **GI**





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From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- BTME 2025 preview with all of this year's key events
- All the shortlisted nominees for the BIGGA Awards 2025



A 'truly amazing opportunity' – ICL Scholarship applications open now

Applications for the 10th ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship 2026 are open now.

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

ICL and BIGGA appreciate that the career-development opportunities provided by Continue to Learn are not available to every greenkeeper due to the cost of education, travel and accommodation. The scholarship

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

The scholarship is worth around £500 and comprises three nights' hotel accommodation and a comprehensive education package.

Jamie Caswell, Blue Course supervisor at Frilford Heath, was one of the scholars in 2024 and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"The scholarship gave me the opportunity to learn from some brilliant people," he said.

"Anyone interested in further learning who has a passion for greenkeeping should definitely apply. It truly is an amazing opportunity."

To apply for the ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship you must be a BIGGA member in one of the following categories:

- Full Member (categories 1A or 1B)
- Assistant Greenkeeper (in training) (categories 2A or 2B)



Scan Me to find out more

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

Five reasons to host a First Green field trip at your club in 2025

If your club hasn't hosted a First Green field trip yet, 2025 is the perfect time to get involved!

Here are the top five reasons why your club should consider hosting one this year..

1. Promote greenkeeping to the next generation

Hosting a First Green field trip allows you to showcase the incredible work of greenkeepers and introduce young minds to the exciting opportunities within the golf industry. By demonstrating the skills and science behind maintaining a course, you can inspire the next generation of greenkeepers and turf professionals.

2. Build positive community engagement

A First Green event is an excellent opportunity to strengthen ties with your local community. Inviting schools to your course creates a positive, educational experience that positions your club as a welcoming, environmentally conscious organisation. It's a great way to give back and highlight the club's role as a valuable community asset.

3. Showcase environmental best practices

A First Green field trip provides the perfect platform to educate students, teachers and parents about your club's environmental stewardship – from water conservation and soil science to wildlife habitat management.

4. Support STEM education

First Green field trips align with all four UK & Ireland school curriculums in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM). By hosting a trip, your club supports local schools and helps connect classroom learning to real-world applications.

5. Raise the profile of your club

Being a host club for First Green is not only a rewarding experience but also a fantastic way to boost your club's visibility as a local employer. Sharing the success of the field trip on social media, in newsletters and through local press demonstrates your club's commitment to education and sustainability, setting it apart as a forward-thinking venue. **GI**

“When the event finished, we had a lot of interest from the students which is the exact reason why we do this. We now have five potential employees” – **James Bledge, Links Manager, Royal Liverpool Golf Club**

“Great support from BIGGA from day one. The resources available are superb, make planning for the day easy and great for those on each station” – **Gavin Sowden, Environment and H&S Officer, Woburn Golf Club**

“The most enjoyable part of the day was the way the children engaged with the team as the lessons progressed” – **John Gubb, Course Manager, Bedfordshire Golf Club**

“Young people are the future of our industry and we need to find more clever ways to enthuse them and entice them to consider a career within our multi-faceted and underrated industry” – **Dean Butterworth, Deputy Course Manager, Bedfordshire Golf Club**

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



BIGGA Scotland awards winners

'The highlight of my year' – winners honoured at BIGGA Scotland awards lunch



Gordon McKie and Joe Robertson



Ronnie Myles, John Philp, Helen Philp

The BIGGA Scotland awards lunch saw greenkeepers past and present honoured in the surroundings of Dunblane's Doubletree by Hilton.

A total of 63 invited guests were in attendance, representing all six sections of Scotland, along with the likes of Scottish Golf CEO Robbie Clyde, chairperson of the SGCMA David Addison, The R&A's John Kemp, and PGA General Manager of Scotland David Longmuir.

The Walter Woods Award – the highest individual honour in Scotland

given for a lifetime of achievement in the industry and outstanding contribution to the association – went to Iain Macleod.

John Philp took home the Legacy Award for his significant contribution to the greenkeeping industry throughout his illustrious career, delivering an emotional acceptance speech.

Meanwhile, the Harry Diamond award, which is unique to Scotland and recognises the achievements of apprentices, went to Joe Robertson from Renaissance Club.

Individual awards

- Legacy Award – John Philp
- Harry Diamond Award – Joe Robertson (Renaissance Club)
- Walter Woods Award – Iain Macleod

Section awards

- Gordon Moir Award (Central Section) – Alan Green (Auchterarder)
- Steve Dixon Award (East Section) – Leo McCulloch (Goswick)
- Iain Macleod Award (Highlands Section) – Alistair Morrison (Durness)
- John Geddes Award (North Section) – Marc Lawrence (Deeside)
- Jim Paton Award (South West Section) – Neil Erskine (Kilmarnock Barassie)
- Stuart Taylor Award (West Section) – Andrew McIntee (Pollok)

Golf awards

- Jimmy Neilson Trophy – David McBride (Bearsden) as 2024 Legacy Champion (Stableford)
- Cecil George Trophy – Darren Shaw (Auchmill) as 2024 Legacy Champion (Strokeplay)
- Elliott Small Trophy – Caroline Munro (Bonar Bridge) as 2024 Champion of Champions (Stableford)
- George Brown Trophy – Craig Davidson (Mortonhall) as 2024 Champion of Champions (Strokeplay)

"The awards lunch is the highlight of my year and really makes my job feel worthwhile," said Membership Services Manager John Young.

"Each winner fully deserves the recognition and they are incredibly thankful and humble when their name is called out.

"It was especially gratifying to watch the young member receive the Harry Diamond award to then be followed by Iain Macleod receiving the Walter Woods award for his lifetime service to the industry. " **GI**

Happy new year – let's make it a good one



Steve Lloyd
Chairperson

The start of a new year is a time for optimism and there is a lot to be positive about as we prepare for whatever 2025 may bring

Let me start by wishing you all a happy new year, and I hope you had a wonderful Christmas.

I feel we can start 2025 with a spring in our step, and it was brilliant to see the fantastic response to the recent membership survey, which saw 1,141 people submit their feedback.

This is vital information for us and a great opportunity to get a better understanding of how we can best serve our existing members, as well as welcome new ones.

Your input will help to guide the strategy of the association going forward as we seek to deliver the best membership experience we can provide.

The survey's findings will be subject to further discussion at BTME, when the BIGGA team will be on hand to discuss the survey's findings.

On the subject of the upcoming show in Harrogate, it's looking set to be another bumper event packed with education and networking opportunities. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

One of the things we're looking to encourage this



The future of greenkeeping depends on nurturing the next generation

year is welcoming more general managers along. The relationship between a general manager and those working on the greenkeeping side is one of the most important at any golf club, but they aren't always necessarily on the same page.

BTME and Continue to Learn provide a great showcase for the expertise so prevalent throughout our industry and represent an excellent opportunity to educate general managers

on the invaluable role greenkeepers play.

Shining a light on the brilliant work of our members is central to what we do as an association, and it's not just those within the golf industry who we want to get that message across to.

The future of greenkeeping depends on nurturing the next generation and, to that end, the First Green initiative is helping to put our profession firmly on

the radar. Since its launch, events have been held at venues up and down the land, from St Andrews to Dudley.

With over 300 pupils and students having been engaged by the programme, the aim is to reach many more in the year ahead and we encourage you to get involved.

You might just provide the spark that ignites a young person's passion for this wonderful profession. **GI**



Richard Tyrell, Alan Prickett and David Withers (ISEKI UK & Ireland)

ISEKI and Huxley Golf to support BIGGA



Daniel Holden - Huxley Golf Sales Manager - West of England and South Wales (Left)
Will Alsop - Huxley Golf Sales Manager & PGA Professional- East of England (Right)



ISEKI UK & Ireland and Huxley Golf have announced they will be BIGGA Supporters and Regional Patrons.

ISEKI UK & Ireland is delighted to renew its support of the team at BIGGA, who it appreciates as having driven up both working conditions and standards for greenkeepers over the years.

A spokesperson said: "Now more than ever, the industry needs to come together to support the profession and to ensure that the valuable role greenkeepers play in the golf industry

continues to be properly recognised."

ISEKI was founded 100 years ago in Japan and has been represented in Europe for over 50 years. It was the first company to introduce compact tractors to the UK market in the mid-seventies.

The extensive range of compact tractors, collecting ride-on mowers and ride-on brush cutters typify Japanese engineering quality and design.

ISEKI products are distributed and supported by ISEKI UK & Ireland through dealers in the UK, Ireland, Iceland, the Middle East and Africa.

Huxley Golf is also proud to become a BIGGA business affiliate. Its innovative, all-weather surfaces are designed to give BIGGA members solutions to maintain exceptional course standards throughout the year.

Based in Hampshire, Huxley Golf has been at the heart of golf innovation since 1946. Starting out with high-quality turf machinery, the company moved over the years to focus on creating premium synthetic golf surfaces.

Whether it is putting greens, practice tees, winter tees, cage nets, or practice mats, Huxley Golf's all-weather products make life easier for golfers and course managers alike.

A spokesperson said: "Huxley Golf is committed to sharing our expertise and collaborating with members to tackle challenges head-on, ensuring that every course is prepared to perform its best in any season.

"We look forward to supporting BIGGA members and contributing to the continued excellence of the game." **GI**

Welcome to our new members

Central England

Oakley Cuthbertson (APP)

Winter Hill

Owen Davies (AGK)

Wycombe Heights

James Day (GK)

Woburn

Matt Gray (A)

Royston

Sam Hubbard (APP)

Sand Martins

Daniel Langhorn (APP)

Stonebridge Golf Centre

Kyle Laskey (APP)

Ravenmeadow

Thomas Lennon (APP)

Hagley G&CC

Senne Rozycki (APP)

East Berkshire

Kai Wheeler (APP)

Leamington & County

International

Robin Eriksson (SUP)

Forsgarden, Sweden

Alin Radu (I)

Aphrodite Hills Resort,
Cyprus

Key

A	Affiliate Member
AGK	Assistant Greenkeeper
APP	Apprentice
ATP	Approved Training Provider
CA	College Assessor
CM	Course Manager
DCM	Deputy Course Manager
DH GK	Deputy Head Greenkeeper
FA	First Assistant
GK	Greenkeeper
G	Groundsperson

HGK	Head Greenkeeper
HG	Head Groundsperson
I	International Member
L	Life Member
M	Mechanic
P	Partner
R	Retired Member
RP	Regional Patron
S	Supporter
ST	Student Member
SUP	Superintendent



Fairmont St Andrews

Northern

Mark Ashworth (FA)
Preston

Jack Blower (GK)
Joshua Halliwell (GK)
Deane

Peter Elliott (AGK)
Bowring

Oliver Gloster (AGK)
The Manchester

Paul Henry (AGK)
Ganton

Brandon Swords (AGK)
Chesterfield

John Winnard (AGK)
Leyland

Archie Wootton (APP)
Newbiggin

Scotland

Fraser Chisholm (FA)
Pollok

Jamie Fenton (APP)
Alister Taylor (GK)
The Duke's Course

David Gibson (AGK)
Loch Lomond

Stuart McLaren (GK)
Fairmont St Andrews

South East

Jake Challenor (GK)
Mill Hill School

Cortney Cummins (GK)
Benjamin Hibbins (AGK)
The Buckinghamshire

Harry Eden (GK)
Mitcham

Mark Fewtrell (HGK)
Leeds Castle Golf Course

Tom Hayday (FA)
The London

William Hudson (AGK)
Tandridge

Taylor James (APP)
Royal Cromer

Craig Martin (APP)
Connor Silvey (APP)
Crowborough Beacon

Tom Osborne (APP)
Bishop's Stortford

Andrew Pearson (FA)
Limpsfield Chart

Steven Proudfoot (APP)
Clandon Regis

Nic Seaman (APP)
Cambridge CC

Isaac Taylor (GK)
Links (Newmarket)

Reece Tierney (AGK)
Clandon

Ross Vincent (GK)
The Wisley

South West & South Wales

Joshua Allen (HG)
Blundells School

Toby Clarke (AGK)
Portmore Golf Park

Jamie Costello (G)
Isle of Purbeck

Henry Garlick (AGK)
Meyrick Park

Alan Hall (GK)
Montgomery Williams (AGK)
Rowlands Castle

Cody Hurlburt (AGK)
University of Guelph

Tom Kollberg (AGK)
Marcus Lovesey (AGK)
Charlie Wooding (AGK)
Ferndown

Alan Russell (HG)
Shipton



BIGGA

CPD

Continuing Professional Development

Congratulations to the following members who have achieved
CPD Approved status

Sam Barton, Tylney Park

Scott Forrester, Sandy Hills

Jack Chapman, The Grove

Shaun Cunningham, Prestonfield

Steven Henderson, Kingsknowe

Jonathan Wood, St Andrews Links Trust

David Edmondson, Prestwick

Derek Grendowicz, Private Residence

Daniel Kendle, Newquay

Bradley Taylor, Beau Desert



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

Daniel Kendle, Newquay

Marcus Davies, Royal Golf Club, Bahrain

Tom Smart, Bury St Edmunds

Paul Fowkes, Kilworth Springs



Introduction

From Scott Reeves, BIGGA Head of Membership

Since I joined BIGGA, I have been working on a comprehensive review of our membership offering, looking hard at what we do for our members and how we deliver. Very early on, it became apparent that a survey would be useful as part of the process of getting a clear understanding of how our members really felt. All views, supportive and critical, were welcomed so we got a comprehensive picture of how people perceive BIGGA.

Over 1,100 people completed the survey and around a third were not BIGGA members, so I think we now have some honest and robust views to work with. Broadly speaking, the results have been positive about the association and the work we do, but they also highlight some areas where we can improve with some fresh ideas and approaches.

It was interesting to see how many people were unaware of how much time BIGGA spends advocating for greenkeepers and their wellbeing. We are a part of the Golf Forum, with the various other leading bodies in golf, and workforce issues are a frequent topic of discussion. BIGGA is also part of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Golf, so we have a role in informing political discussions around the game.

BIGGA also works on an individual basis with the PGA, the GCMA and the home golf unions on many different fronts, so greenkeepers are represented almost anywhere the game is discussed.

Another aspect of this was that the survey showed a great number of respondents felt that BIGGA did not do enough to talk about its successes and how it helped members. It may be that this mirrors how so many of our members dislike blowing their own trumpet!

Two areas that came through strongly as being worthy of further consideration are further support in employment issues and the potential for some kind of healthcare scheme. Both are complicated areas but we are keen to explore them and see if there are achievable, beneficial solutions for our members.

There are several steps we will be taking over the course of the next year to improve, modernise and evolve membership of BIGGA. We have already set in motion some improvements, such as updating our renewals process. Digesting and properly understanding what we have been told through our survey – and in our daily conversations with members – will take some time and that work has already begun and is ongoing.

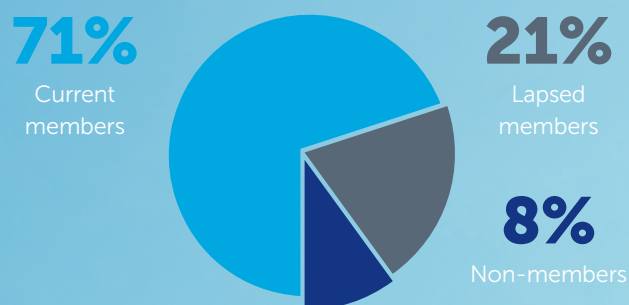
The goal is to fulfil the promise of the association and deliver a quality service to members, and so my thanks once again go to all those who took part in our survey.

We'll be providing more information and updates in due course. **GI**

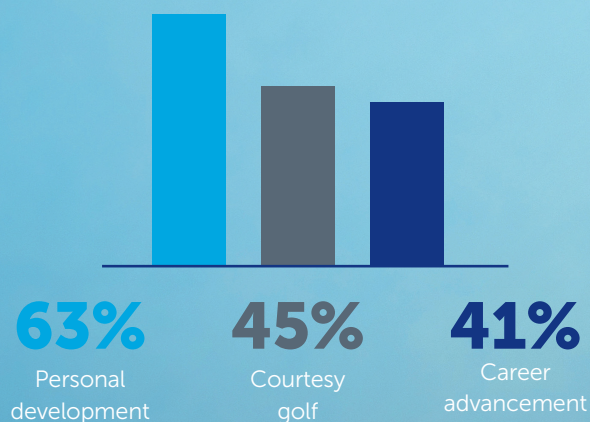
The BIGGA membership survey 2024

The key early findings from what 1,100 BIGGA members and industry professionals have told us about how our association is perceived

Profile of respondents



What are the main benefits of membership?



About the survey

BIGGA aims to ensure that the membership it offers is fit for purpose and provides real and relevant benefits for people working in the turfcare industry.

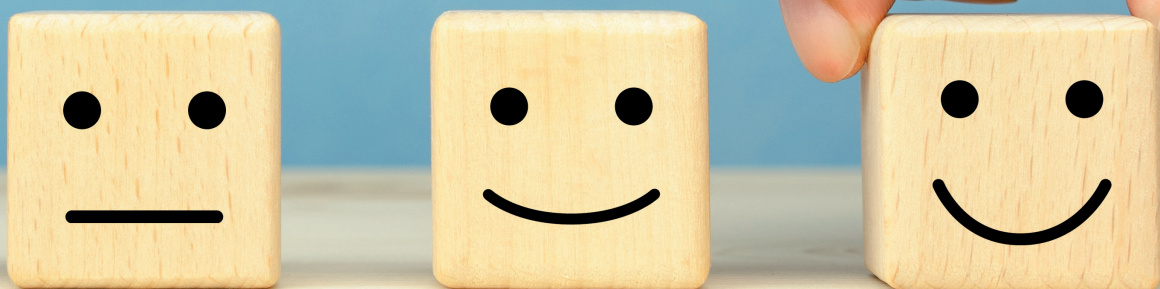
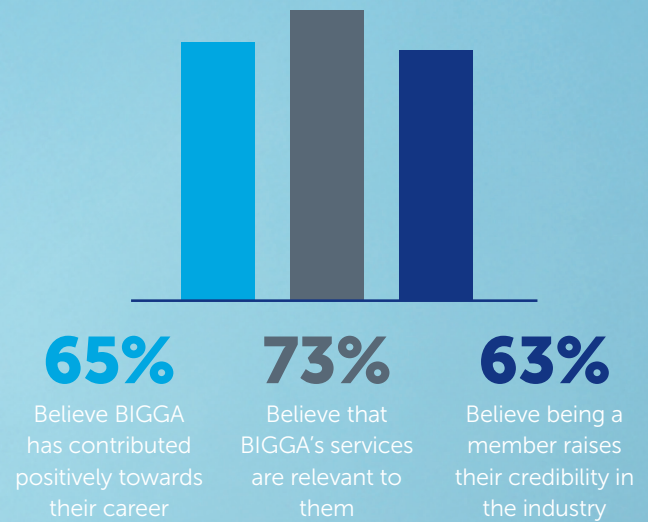
In 2024, BIGGA commissioned Sporting Insights to undertake a programme of research to understand how the organisation is currently viewed by members and non-members. The survey was intended to provide a greater understanding of what services and benefits are of the greatest interest to those working in the structure. It also explored the possibility of revising the membership structure to boost engagement and participation across the industry.

The survey received 1,141 responses, including 811 from current members and 326 from non-members.

Those who completed the survey were invited to enter a prize draw to win a £500 Amazon voucher, with Craig Denton of Lindrick the winner.

How is BIGGA perceived?

As an organisation, BIGGA is described as:
Helpful, Educational, Supportive, Informative,
Good, Useful and Professional



What should BIGGA do in the future?

71%

Believe that BIGGA should do more to promote itself

81%

Think BIGGA is important for turfcare professionals

58%

Have some favourability to BIGGA changing its membership structure in the future

48%

Members who believe that introducing a club-level membership would be an improvement on the current individual membership system

61%

Do not feel that turfcare professionals have adequate representation in the industry

9 member benefits you view as crucial...

- Greenkeeper advice line
- Mental Health First Aid Training
- HR advice line
- Personal accident insurance
- Lifestyle support line
- Greenkeeper's Benevolent Fund
- BIGGA recruitment service
- Regional funding opportunities
- ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship

Meanwhile,

70%

of members feel BIGGA should offer a healthcare scheme

...and 10 areas for future consideration and improvement

- Advocacy and representation
- Promoting the industry and profession
- Awareness and take up of key member benefits
- Member engagement
- Representing and understanding smaller clubs
- Overcoming perceptions of exclusivity
- Cost vs value
- Appealing opportunities at all levels
- Including a healthcare offer
- Overcoming perceptions of being outdated and out of touch

Two key factors in how you responded to the survey

CAREER STAGE

- **Early career:** More likely than average to say BIGGA has contributed positively to their career, that BIGGA services are relevant to them and that BIGGA membership boosts credibility as a turfcare professional
- **Mid-career:** More interested in career advancement but also most likely to say that BIGGA should do more to promote itself
- **Later career:** More likely to consider the current BIGGA membership model to be old fashioned or outdated, giving this category the lowest net promoter score for BIGGA

SIZE OF TEAM

- **Small teams** (0-3 members of permanent staff – 12% of respondents): Higher than average proportion of lapsed and non-members from smaller teams. More likely to say membership benefits those at big clubs
- **Medium teams** (4-10 members of permanent staff – 73% of respondents): Make up almost three quarters of members. More likely to say membership is not necessary or their employer won't pay the subs
- **Large teams** (11+ permanent staff members – 16% of respondents): Advocating members are more likely to be from larger teams. More likely to believe BIGGA is important and that membership offers good value

CAN YOU SEE YOUR ASSET?

WE CAN!



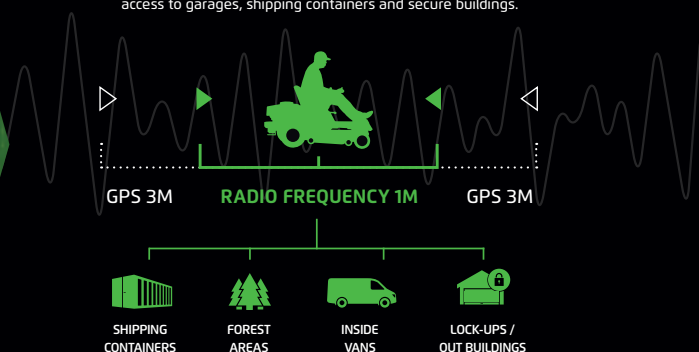
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BTME 2025

We are looking forward to welcoming you to Harrogate later this month – where Sky Sports Golf’s Sarah Stirk will lead the line up for the BIGGA Celebration with Kress

TV presenter and journalist Sarah Stirk will host the BIGGA Celebration with Kress at BTME.

Best known for her work with Sky Sports, where she has been a leading voice in golf coverage since 2012, Sarah will guide the festivities on the opening evening of BTME in January.

The BIGGA Celebration with Kress highlights the incredible achievements of BIGGA members over the previous year, including the unveiling of the prestigious BIGGA Awards winners.

With a career spanning roles at Sky Sports, the BBC, Setanta and Sky News, Sarah has covered DP World Tour and PGA Tour events and interviewed some of the biggest names in golf.

A 7-handicap golfer herself, Sarah also champions women in leadership roles within golf, having launched the Women’s Leadership Summit supported by The R&A.

Sarah said: “I’m delighted to be presenting the BIGGA Celebration with Kress at BTME in January.

“It’s an honour to celebrate the incredible work of BIGGA members and I look forward to a fantastic evening in Harrogate.”

Jim Croxton, BIGGA CEO, said: “Sarah’s experience and passion for the game make her the perfect host for this landmark event. We’re excited to welcome her to BTME and encourage all attendees to join us for an unforgettable evening in Harrogate’s historic Royal Hall.”

BTME is one of the golf industry’s most influential events and runs for three days at the Harrogate Convention Centre, offering unparalleled networking and educational opportunities.

Both BTME and the BIGGA Celebration with Kress are free to attend.

“It’s an honour to celebrate the incredible work of BIGGA members



Scan Me to find out more



Paul Hay
Head greenkeeper
at Craigielaw, East
Lothian

“ I have attended BTME eight or nine times and I look forward to each visit. My main reasons for attending are to see the latest products and machinery on the market. In addition, I like to attend some of the education seminars to brush up on my knowledge. I enjoy seeing people within the industry, especially as in many cases you might not have seen them since the last BTME. It's also a chance for me to bring along staff members so they can also benefit from the networking opportunities on offer. Having good contacts within greenkeeping and the companies who service the industry is really important.



Paul Tracey
Course manager at
Three Rivers Golf
and Country Club,
Essex

“ The thing I like most is that there is so much information on any topic. If you have any questions or concerns, there will always be someone to ask for advice. And, of course, we all love the toys! I'm looking forward to finding out more about the Golf Course 2030 plans, as sustainability and climate change are huge issues facing the industry. I'm also relishing the opportunity to network with other course managers and drop in on some Continue to Learn workshops. As greenkeepers, we love showing off what we can do with the challenges of the job. BTME has helped me realise that we are all striving to be the best we can be.



What's happening at BTME 2025?

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

Head through the halls of the Harrogate Convention Centre and you'll find something to draw your eye at every turn.

From the dazzling array of exhibitors to the unrivalled networking and education opportunities, BTME is a spectacle like no other.

The world-class North Yorkshire

venue will again open its doors to thousands of visitors, drawing turfcare experts from across the UK and around the world.

It all kicks off with Continue to Learn on 19 January, with BTME running from 21 to 23 January.

Here are a selection of highlights not to be missed at BTME 2025.



Exhibition

With more than 100 exhibitors covering services from advice and consultancy through to architecture and design, and products spanning the range from turf and seed to ride-on machinery, the exhibition truly is a one-stop shop for every need imaginable. There is also the opportunity for attendees to secure special 'show offers'. Scan the QR code for a full directory of exhibitors.





Continue to Learn

Continue to Learn is BIGGA's world-renowned education conference, providing the equivalent of two hours' worth of education for every golf club in the country. That makes it among the most influential and important annual events in the golf and



Scan Me to find out more

greenkeeping calendar – and we hope to see you there. A new addition this year is Continue to Learn Extra, a free education offering.





Mark Fewtrell
Head greenkeeper
at Leeds Castle,
Kent



This will be my first time at BTME and I'm looking forward to it. I believe it will be beneficial to have the experience of meeting and networking with people from across the world of greenkeeping and the wider industry. I'm interested in seeing the latest products available and speaking with other greenkeepers to learn how they go about things. After recently becoming a head greenkeeper, I'm eager to continue my development and I think BTME will provide me with plenty of opportunities to learn more about the industry and advance my own skill set.



Steven Harvey
Course manager at
Royal North Devon,
Devon



My attendance this year will be the first time I've been to BTME for over 15 years and the first time being in a management position. I have recently been appointed course manager at Royal North Devon, a club that supports the team with education and training. I will be attending the full week at Harrogate and have booked in for two days of Conference tickets, which I'm thoroughly looking forward to. I have an agenda to tap into as much knowledge through the week especially with sustainability the key focus. Royal North Devon is a unique plot of land and with the constraints of a full SSSI site, we already have a low carbon footprint, but we are always striving to improve on this and I'm intrigued to hear the latest advice from the experts.



Seminar Theatre

All visitors to BTME are welcome to attend these free seminars and gain an insight into the latest technology and research. Seminars are also a great introduction to the Continue to Learn programme and there's no need to book in advance.





The BIGGA Stand

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



Support and Welfare Hub

During BTME we will be joined by representatives from a number of BIGGA's wellbeing partners, including Andy's Man Club, HR Services Scotland and Perennial. Each is equipped to support BIGGA members through many of the challenges we all face on a daily basis.



Craig Drummond Course manager at Ranfurly Castle, Renfrewshire



BTME gives me the opportunity to visit many exhibitors to find out more in-depth information about the latest products. It also offers great educational classes and seminars, helping me further my knowledge in specific subjects within the industry. I always look forward to networking, having discussions and debating about the weather! I like finding out what different practices and products work for some and not others, depending on what kind of course they work on. I also enjoy meeting new people while catching up with former colleagues from around the UK. At BTME 2025, I'm looking forward to seeing what new golf course equipment is available and what else is on the horizon, as well as listening to industry-leading experts on various different issues and legislation relevant to my work.





Callum White
Head greenkeeper
at Kirkcaldy,
Fife



I'm excited for my sixth visit to BTME. I enjoy the social aspect, meeting up with friends from all over the globe, and it's also great to see the new advances in technology every year. I find it interesting to have a look at the new product ranges everyone is bringing out and it's a lot easier to do business when everything is in one place. I am particularly looking forward to the new robotic mower range – seeing this stuff makes me excited for the future of the industry. BTME has helped me with my career by enabling me to meet some very talented people and maintaining that relationship long after we've left Harrogate.



Sustainability Hub

The Sustainability Hub will bring awareness of the important role sustainable and ecologically-sound practices play in the operation of a successful golf club. The hub is intended to be a solution-focussed area where attendees can get answers to sustainability-related questions and acknowledged experts will be available to discuss a range of solutions.



Education Hub

Visit the Education Hub and meet representatives of the Greenkeepers Training Committee, who will be accompanied throughout the show by representatives from GTC-BIGGA Approved Training Providers (ATPs). They will be happy to discuss education opportunities ranging from apprenticeships to degrees, short courses, part-time and full-time learning and everything in between.



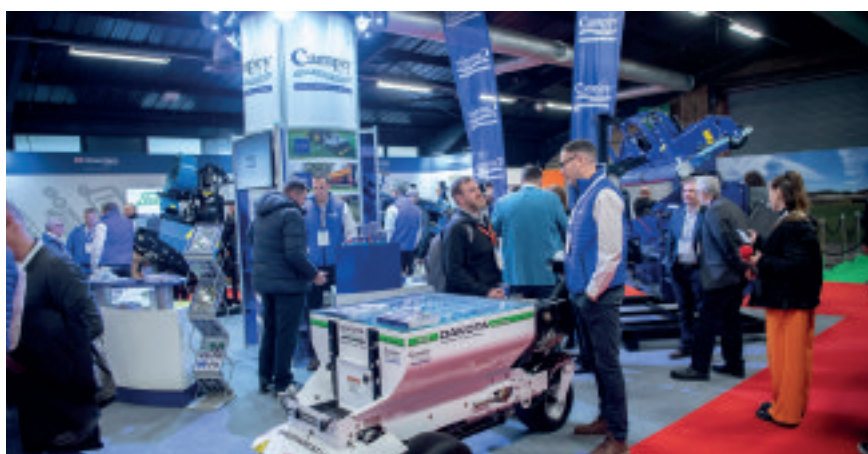
Monster Putt

Supported by Huxley Golf, take our Monster Putt challenge and help raise funds for the BIGGA Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund.



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find out more

It costs just £1 to play and there are great prizes to be won. Scan the QR code to find out more about the benevolent fund. **GI**





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The BIGGA Awards 2025



Turn the page
to meet this
year's finalists
and the
winner of the
Outstanding
Contribution
Award

The BIGGA Awards recognise the exceptionally high standards and unwavering dedication of greenkeepers.

Such qualities, so common among BIGGA members, are vital to the success of any golf course or championship. The awards honour the innovation delivered by those who are at the cutting-edge of their profession.

This year's ceremony will take place during the BIGGA Celebration in Harrogate Convention Centre's Royal Hall on January 21. Prizes will be awarded across three categories.

Greenkeeping Project of the Year with Price Turfcare

This award recognises greenkeeping teams who have undertaken a specific project, completed within the past year. However, projects can be long term and may include course construction, renovation or rebuild. They particularly award innovative thinking and commitment to the project.

Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year with Bernhard and Company

This award recognises that the success of any tournament depends upon the expertise and dedication of the greenkeeping team.

From the lowliest club championship through to golf's professional tours – all are only made possible due to the work of greenkeepers who go above and beyond to present the finest playing surfaces possible.

Outstanding Contribution of the Year with Kress

This award is presented to a BIGGA member or members who have made an outstanding contribution above and beyond their normal working life. This can be for charity, for the betterment of the greenkeeping profession or association or generally for society. **GI**



Cowdray Golf Club

Cowdray completed the largest project in the club's history in 2024 when the Sussex venue opened the doors to its renovated course and new five-hole par-3 layout.

The £1million improvement plan, which included new practice facilities, has, in the words of Director of Golf Tim Allen, "future-proofed the course for generations to come".

All bunkers have been reconstructed, reshaped and integrated into the downland landscape through the use of native grass borders. A new 9th tee has been constructed and new sensitive EcoPath recycled rubber pathways have been installed throughout.

Elsewhere, Swan Golf Designs created a new 'heart of the course' by restoring the famed double green for holes 7 and 14, creating a new seating area at the halfway hut and overseeing landscape management throughout the course.

In keeping with a venue within the South Downs National Park, the landscape management work included the

introduction of more native grassland areas and the removal of non-indigenous species to highlight historic oaks and traditional downland specimens.

All greens on the par-3 track were built to USGA specifications, designed to mimic those on a main course kept in impeccable condition by Course Manager Jonathan Smith and his team.

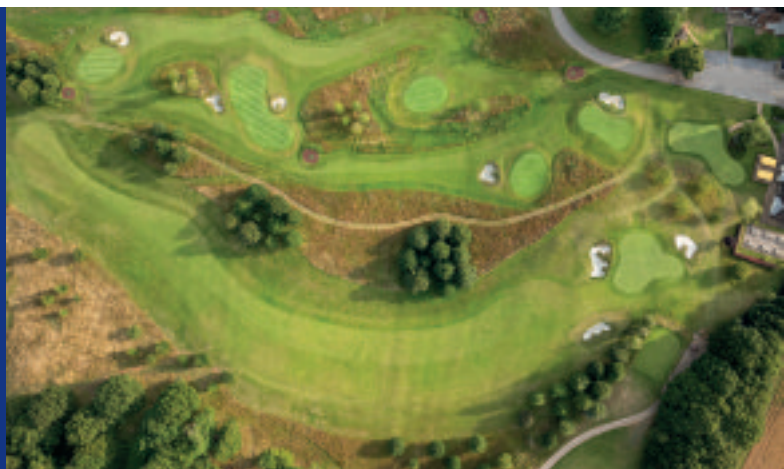
The whole project was underpinned by Jonathan's excellent planning, having produced a native turf nursery in preparation a year in advance before the work had been approved.

Despite the weather causing some delays, the team remained flexible throughout, adapting to the conditions to ensure timely delivery of the project.

"My guys are very proud of what we've done," said Jonathan. "You can feel it within the team, they're happy with what has been achieved." **GI**

Cowdray's bunker renovation in numbers

- 320 tonnes of type 1 subbase stone for bunker construction
- 39 bunkers overhauled, 1 new bunker created
- 46 tonnes of bunker blinder rubber liner
- 2,706m² total area built
- 60 pallets of imported revetted turf
- 3,600 revet slabs
- 4,320 linear meters of revets
- 290 tonnes China clay bunker sand
- 7,000m² of harvested local native rough turf
- 9,600 total man hours





Parkstone Golf Club

Parkstone's Course Manager Grant Peters loves it when a plan comes together, especially one that's been on the agenda for several years.

He and his team had the green light to proceed with a 1st tee and putting green project in 2019, but the rising cost of building materials set the work back as the construction of a new greenkeeping facility was prioritised.

Covid delayed things another three years, meaning plans had to be resubmitted to a new management committee for approval, and Grant still had to win over the members to vote in favour of funding the project. His presentation secured unanimous backing.

The project brief was to flatten out the putting green to offer more level putts for warm-up and practicing. The old putting green only had 85m² of usable putting area in a green which measured over 600m². The green and surroundings also failed to match the rugged and beautiful

heathland environment which blesses the rest of the course.

"We wanted to offer a wow factor as soon as people arrived in the car park," said Grant. "This could only be achieved by seamlessly blending the new green, surrounds and 1st tee with the rest of the course."

They broke ground on October 31, 2023, and the project was completed in-house with the help of course shaper Shane Ringwood. The work was carried out through one of the south coast's wettest winters, with Jonathan keeping members updated on progress via weekly videos.

John Warner, chairman of the Parkstone Management Committee, said: "Despite the obstacles that had to be overcome, the project was completed on time, to budget and to a very high standard. The quality of the greenkeeping work was such that there have not been any teething troubles with the green, tee or extensive heather banks that add to the appearance of the 1st hole." **GI**



Project outline

- Strip and store putting green turf
- Remove rhododendron and scrub to the right of the tee
- Level putting green, grade banks, raise tee
- Build tee and green to usage spec
- Relay existing putting green turf for fast establishment and continuity to all 18 greens
- Lay 700m² of heather transplanted from Arne nature reserve
- Construction of new bespoke in-house practice nets



Long Ashton Golf Club

Course Manager James Braithwaite found himself spinning plates as Long Ashton underwent a rebuild of the putting green to USGA specifications while simultaneously undertaking a major drainage renovation.

Fortunately, the skill and dedication of James and his team ensured their ambition did not outstrip their capacity.

It has been a consistent theme of James' 28-year tenure at the Bristol venue to outperform the confines of limited resources.

This latest undertaking was a prime example, as James oversaw the full rebuild of the 560m² putting green entirely in-house. The project required meticulous planning to utilise the existing infrastructure while enhancing the green's size, shape and drainage capabilities.

The greenkeeping team undertook everything from excavation to final grow-in. On top of this, they implemented drainage improvements on holes 6 and 7, balancing two major undertakings, members' expectations and day-to-day course preparation all at once.

The project faced significant challenges, particularly due to weather patterns that exacerbated the already poor drainage on the soil-based greens.

With the putting green having been out of action for 132 days between October 2022 and 2023, the dire need for the work was evident, but fate conspired to make it an even tougher job than it first appeared.

Unexpected complications arose, as old, brittle irrigation pipes broke while the infrastructure was being mapped.

The wet ground also posed a challenge, with heavy rain making material transportation difficult without causing further compaction and damage.

Through perseverance, James found innovative solutions, such as adjusting the construction schedule and

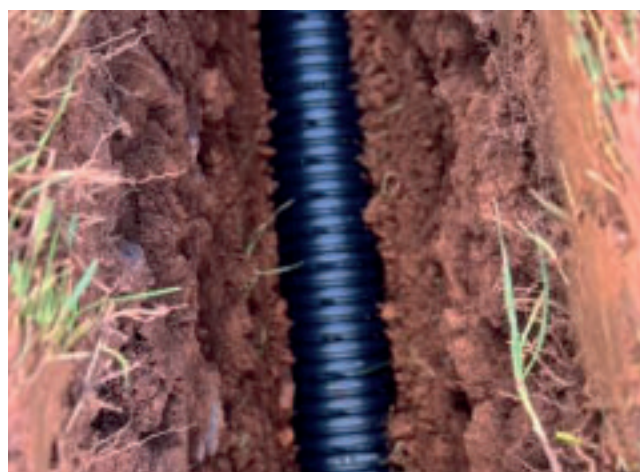
implementing frost sheets to protect the seedlings during germination.

Rather than completely replacing the existing green, cores from the course's other established greens were utilised for overseeding, aiming to create a bent-dominant putting surface.

This not only reduced costs but also aligned the putting green's playing characteristics with the rest of the course.

Additionally, James introduced techniques in drainage design, incorporating subtle contours to optimise surface water movement and prevent future pooling.

Whilst juggling the workload of two ongoing projects, James ensured both progressed without major disruption, and his efforts extended beyond just the physical aspects as he kept Long Ashton members informed throughout the process with a website providing frequent updates on the works. **GI**





Morlais Castle Golf Club

When the opportunity came to host the Welsh Club Team Championships, Morlais Castle seized upon it with vigour.

Having implemented significant improvements to the course and club infrastructure over the preceding years, the Merthyr Tydfil venue was more than ready.

With 32 qualifying teams competing from across Wales, the pressure was on to deliver – and Morlais Castle stepped up to the mark.

Describing the work that went into preparing the course for the event, Stewart Freeman – who moved to the club in 2018 and became head greenkeeper in 2020 – said: “Preparation specifically targeted at the Welsh Team Championships started in January 2024.

“We had new paths built by a contractor, though much of this work was delayed from 2023 due to bad weather and

not restarted until May 2024.

“This was ongoing until the week before the competition. As a result, we were taking down soil stones and seeding right up until week before. This meant some of the area was inevitably GUR.

“We also built new tees specifically for the championships, which then had to be turfed and cut by hand regularly.

“General maintenance continued as usual, but we were also faced with damage to greens which we had to repair shortly before the tournament. Course signage was cleaned and replaced where necessary.”

With only a small team to call upon, Stewart was able to count on a dedicated group of volunteers, who included in their number his wife Tessa.

He added: “In the final weeks leading to the

“ We also built new tees specifically for the championships

championships, we divoted tees and removed unsafe trees in between keeping on top of cutting the course.

“This was challenging with only three greenkeepers and we were grateful that my wife came in to help divot, move markers, edge bunkers and change holes.

“We also co-ordinated club volunteers in repairing divots on fairways, planting and maintaining flower beds.

“During the championships, we returned in the evenings to cut tees, fairways and some rough and generally tidy up the course and check for litter to free up time for the next day.

“We were in early to change holes for that day and prepare the course for the day’s play. All in all, a very busy period for our small team of greens staff.” **GI**





Burnham & Berrow Golf Club

Burnham and Berrow's greenkeeping team demonstrated remarkable resilience and skill to revive the club's Championship Course after drought struck in 2022.

Final Open Qualifying was scheduled to be hosted there in 2023 but had to be pushed back a year as the parched fairways had lost any hint of green.

The team of 11, supported by the course director and R&A agronomists, produced an inspirational comeback to have the course in stunning condition to welcome some of the world's best golfers, including Justin Rose, in July 2024.

At one point that reality seemed little more than a distant dream. Despite the club installing a 24,000 cubic meter irrigation lake back in 2011, the winter of 2021-2022 brought exceptionally dry conditions, followed by an extremely hot and arid summer in 2022. The severe weather conditions put unprecedented strain on the facility's water resources, threatening the quality and playability of the fairways.

In response, the club, in collaboration with The R&A's agronomy team, implemented a comprehensive water management and recovery strategy. This included exploring alternative water sources, expanding storage capacity, optimising water use and establishing a contingency plan for purchasing additional water.

Yet, none of this could have been accomplished without the tireless efforts of the greenkeeping team. Their dedication and hard work were instrumental in executing the recovery programme. From routine maintenance to advanced turf management, their expertise was crucial in preparing the course for this major event.

Seven dedicated volunteers from across the industry lent their expertise in the final days leading up to the event, ensuring that the course was in pristine condition and ready to meet the highest standards of play. **GI**

Action Plan 2022/23/24

- Wetting agent monthly application March-October
- Seaweed regular applications
- Fertilise late summer and early spring – review each year
- Overseed late summer and early spring – review each year
- Aerate
- Topdress late summer and early spring with indigenous dirty sand
- Course protection winter months – compulsory use of fairway mats (2022); preferred lies must be on mat or play ball as it lies (2023 onwards)





Woburn Golf Club

Woburn has flown the flag for inclusivity in golf as the host venue for the G4D Open in the past two years.

Having held the inaugural event in 2023, the Bedfordshire venue reprised its role in 2024, providing a fitting stage for the biggest date on the G4D Tour calendar.

Staged in partnership with The R&A and DP World Tour, with support from EDGA, the G4D Open is a truly inclusive event, featuring nine sport classes across multiple impairment groups and a field consisting of men and women, professionals and amateurs.

A total of 19 different nations were represented at this year's event, with Woburn's greenkeeping team providing exceptional playing conditions and seamless accessibility via a series of adaptations to the course.

"Hosting a tournament of this scale is tough at any time of year, but to host in May does come with considerable challenges," said Woburn's Tom Moore. "Coming out of a tough autumn/winter period and preparing the golf course to tournament standard is quite the challenge, particularly when we've had significant rainfall, very low growth and the continued increase to participation levels since Covid.

"From an agronomic perspective, our challenges revolve around sustaining and conditioning grass cover throughout the winter period."

Additional considerations need to be made for hosting the G4D Open, with Woburn having pulled out all the stops to ensure accessibility for players with a variety of needs.

"One of our biggest challenges was access across the course, with a majority of players in the 80-strong field requiring a buggy to play their round and the seated players needing to access bunkers and drive on the greens to take their putts," said Tom. "Works undertaken over many years to protect the golf course from players in golf buggies, such as

sleeper edges and steps, had to be re-designed to facilitate access to players using single seat buggies or ParaMotion vehicles."

Greens also had to be firm enough to take seated players driving and turning on them without being too punishing for those trying to make an approach stick, and an access ramp was installed in each bunker to ensure a safe and manageable entrance and exit for players.

Tom added: "This meant a thorough process of design and testing was required to invent a construction process which could be adapted to any bunker size or shape, be contained within the hazard, be soft enough to prevent the bounce out of golf balls but safe enough for players, with the minimum impact on play. This was no mean feat!" **GI**

“One of our biggest challenges was access across the course





Stephen Bernhard

Stephen Bernhard's contribution to the industry is on a scale few could hope to match. As the founder of Bernhard and Company, leaders in sports turf technologies, his impact has been felt across the UK and far beyond.

With an unwavering commitment to education and professional development, the organisation has helped to propel greenkeeping to a new level.

Through initiatives such as the BIGGA Delegation sponsored by Bernhard, the company continues to underline its desire to give back to the industry so loved by its founder.

Managing Director Steven Nixon was enjoying life as a greenkeeper when Stephen persuaded him to join Bernhard and Company, and he has come to know him well in the 24 years since.

Steven said: "I've never met anybody who has worked as hard as he has. He would work – and I say this without fear of exaggeration – 18 hours a day, every day, if he wasn't travelling.

"His drive, his passion and the way he led from the front was what drove us to success and to where we are today."

Steven paints a picture of a man inspired by the goal of building a better industry for the benefit of all those in it.

"He's always said, 'Let's be successful so we can invest more back into the business and the industry,'" he said. "His focus has been 100 per cent on giving back and he always put the customer before profit.

"He has been one of the most pivotal people in the industry for driving positive change."

Stephen's accomplishments have been widely recognised, earning him more than one trip to Buckingham Palace, but his professional legacy will be the indelible mark he leaves on an industry that simply would not be where it is today without his efforts. **GI**

'An inspirational character' – Jim Croxton, BIGGA CEO

Stephen Bernhard has been an inspirational character in our industry for decades and, via his generous support, in particular of the BIGGA Delegation to the United States but also many other supportive acts, he has made positive contributions to countless careers in greenkeeping. His enthusiasm for greenkeeping and the wider sports turf and horticultural sectors have been undimmed with the passing of time and he has always sought to innovate and challenge where appropriate. Time spent with Stephen is always thought-provoking and valuable and I'm thrilled that we are able to recognise his outstanding contribution to our industry in this way.



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Win a ClearWater System worth £9,000 at BTME 2025

ClearWater Washpad Water Recycling Systems will be returning to BTME in 2025. We have attended the show for the last 29 years and see it as the ideal platform to build on last year's success.

The stand will feature a mini ClearWater display unit to demonstrate new features and, yes, there will be the chance to "Win a ClearWater system" in the ClearWater Prize Draw, with a prize valuation of £9,000!

If you are interested in bringing your wash pad up to legal requirements, saving precious and increasingly expensive water, do make sure you visit Stand 612 in hall number 6 (opposite

Baroness). It may not be as expensive as you thought, and you could be a winner!

While you are at the stand please feel free to talk to a member of the team about our other services; fuel tank sales and inspections, uniform and PPE enquires, our bespoke silt trap solutions and various groundworks projects like installation of sand and compost bays with other rainwater harvesting and leachate tank installs.

Acumen has attractive waste management packages available too as well as dealing with all manner of waste streams, ideal for all workshop waste.



Member Interest

Where we meet your fellow turf professionals and share their stories

- Meet Chris Lamb, the course manager who also plays on the Tartan Pro Tour
- See the latest industry job vacancies both in the UK and further afield



Mark Mennell

Fulford's Mark Mennell bids a fond farewell

A true one-club man, Mark Mennell completed his final shift at Fulford Golf Club at Christmas.

Mark joined the club aged 16 and spent his entire working life at the York course, with over 30 years as head greenkeeper.

In recognition of almost 50 years of dedicated service, Fulford hosted a golf day in his honour and presented Mark with honorary membership.

"I was over the moon," said Mark. "For a 'grass cutter' to be recognised in that way, it shows how far the industry has come."

During the event there were messages of support from famous faces in the club's past, including course record holder Ian Woosnam.

While accepting the role has

become more data focused, Mark said, "Greenkeeping will always be 90% what you can see with your own eyes," and recalls one visit from then-STRI agronomist Henry Bechelet, now of ICL. Mark was asked what height he was cutting the greens and he indicated a small amount with his thumb and finger and said, "about that high".

Mark takes with him an astonishing record of greenkeeping life at Fulford. The first entry relating to the club, in a diary his mother bought him for his 16th birthday, states simply, "Started at Fulford Golf Club. £16 a week wage. Loving it so far".

Mark added: "There's never been a day when I've not wanted to come to work, I have loved it." **GI**

Mark's tips for a happy career

1. Speak to Members. Work out your routes in advance to avoid getting in their way
2. If you do get caught up among them, step aside or even offer to rake a bunker, and don't follow the same group as it can be annoying
3. If you see where a golfer's ball goes, show them or put down a marker
4. Organise divot poses as a way of engaging members
5. Be involved with discussions around fixtures to make sure the course gets the protection it needs

A man with short blonde hair, wearing a grey zip-up jacket and dark trousers, is sitting on a lush green golf course. He is smiling and holding a large, ornate silver trophy with both hands. In the background, there is a brick clubhouse with large windows and a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Chris Lamb: Course manager, pro golfer, family man

Meet the course manager who also plays on a professional tour



Chris Lamb is juggling course manager duties at Newmachar with playing on the Tartan Pro Tour, and as if that wasn't enough, he and his wife recently welcomed their first child.

If there's one thing the 30-year-old has no time for, it's complaining.

We caught up with Chris to find out how he fits everything in and what his ambitions are.

How do you keep all those plates spinning?

I just do my best to do all three things: family life, greenkeeping and playing golf. It's quite a bit of multitasking, but we manage it and I love it – I wouldn't change it for anything. I fit the tour events in where I can around my day job. There's usually around 13-14 events every year and I try to get to six or seven of those at times when it's a bit quieter at the club. I'm just trying to compete and make cuts.

Does the tour feel like a break from work or just a different type of work?

It's no break, unfortunately! It's just switching to a different way of working I suppose. You're still up early getting some practice in and then you've got the competition, and after that you're maybe hitting the range before getting some rest back at the hotel and doing it all again the next day. If you make the cut you play the final round, and if not it's back to work the following day.

“Respecting your staff is essential”

Any highlights from your pro career?

I haven't had much success in terms of winning, but I really enjoy it so there's lots of highlights just from that point of view. I've had a couple of top 10s here and there. Probably one of my biggest achievements was shooting 7-under at Ladybank when I was playing with Graeme Robertson, one of the up-and-coming professionals who has just got onto the Challenge Tour.

Do you have any grand ambitions?

I want to just keep going for as long as I can. It'll depend how things go sponsorship-wise, but I'll keep plugging away and doing little bits here and there. I play a couple of Pro-Ams, the

New in the shed

We have to work as efficiently as possible, which is why we've brought in a huge new fleet of 24 Toro machines to ensure we're covering each course's unique maintenance needs. We've got two fairway mowers, two rough mowers, three sidewinders, four handmowers, four triples for tees, approaches and greens, and our favourite is the ProCore, which is one of the best aerators on the market. The 4000-D rough mower is also phenomenal. We had a problem with the rough matting down with the roller, so our mechanic suggested we move to using this new machine because it doesn't have rollers in and it has made such a huge difference to how the course is presented.

Career Timeline

2014

Apprentice at
Newmachar

2017

Greenkeeper at
Trump International

2018

Turns pro



Newmachar in Chris' words

We have two courses – Hawkshill and Swailend, and they're quite different. Hawkshill is our Championship course and it's heathland/parkland, though I would say more heathland. The fairways are lined with tall Scots pine trees, there is heather, some birch trees and a couple of ponds. It requires strategic play and is more of a challenge. Swailend is more of a members' course; it's parkland with some small pines and birch trees, but it's a lot more open and forgiving from a playing point of view.

Swailend is built on more agricultural land, so the soil is better. It's got clay push-up greens, which aren't up to the same standard as the USGA-spec ones we have on the Hawkshill course.

Hawkshill's fairways were built to the best standard they could be back in 1990, but there's a lot of blue clay with some peat through it. In some areas the drainage isn't as good as we would like, but we do a lot of aeration and topdressing. It's a process of improving things that will just take time.

Highland Links and the Aberdeen Links, and they're among the bigger events outside of the tour. But I'm happy if I can do that and play five or six events on the tour each year. I'd happily keep doing that until I'm an old man.

Does being a pro golfer impact how you would set up the course as a greenkeeper?

I'm quite lucky as in our team we've got people with different perspectives on it and it all comes together. One of our head greenkeepers doesn't play golf at all and he's quite good at set-up, and then another plays off single figures and he has a slightly different eye. To me, playing golf helps because you can see the course from a golfer's point of view and what you think they might want. I know there are a lot of good greenkeepers out there who don't play golf, but I find it definitely helps me get a better understanding of what a course should look like and perform like.

When you're playing golf at other courses, do you find yourself taking notes from a greenkeeper's perspective?

I'm lucky to get to play on some outstanding golf courses, so when you go to the likes of Gleneagles or Renaissance,

2018

Assistant at
Newmachar

2019

Head greenkeeper
at Newmachar

2021

Joins Tartan Pro
Tour

2023

Course manager
at Newmachar

“If you make the cut you play the final round, and if not it's back to work”



you see the levels that can be achieved and it gives you motivation to strive for better in your own career. Obviously, you need the manpower or the budget to deliver the very best, but it's still something to aim for.

You've had a year as course manager – what's the biggest thing you've learned?

The most important thing I've found is that respecting your staff is essential – if you respect them, they will respect you. When you have that mutual respect it's a much more productive working environment for everyone. Ultimately, we just want to get both courses in the best possible condition. I'm fortunate to have inherited a team that's been together for 5-6 years or more, so it's a really good group and everyone gets on with each other.

There are 11 of us on the greenkeeping team in total. I've got two good head greenkeepers below me looking after each course, and they've got strong teams under them who work across both courses. We've also got an excellent mechanic who looks after all our machinery as well as being out on the course helping the guys with day-to-day jobs like cutting fairways and greens. **GI**

“Playing golf helps because you can see the course from a golfer's point of view”

About the Tartan Pro Tour

The Tartan Pro Tour is a Scottish-based development tour for male and female golfers.

Owned by 1999 Open champion Paul Lawrie, the tour provides tournament playing opportunities to challenge golfers over some of the country's best courses. Its objective is to provide a stepping-stone for aspiring tournament professionals to reach the highest levels of competition. Events, of which there were 15 on the 2024 schedule, are played over 54 holes across three days.

Latest job vacancies

Assistant Greenkeeper

The Richmond Golf Club, London



The Richmond Golf Club is a prestigious parkland golf course situated next to the beautiful Richmond Park in South-West London located on a sand deposit, making it one of the driest courses inside the M25

The successful candidate will have an opportunity to become part of a progressive team, that strives to produce great playing surfaces. Working a 39hour week all year round. Weekends on a 1 in 3 basis paid as overtime.

Candidate specification

- You will be efficient, organised, professional and reliable with a positive, flexible approach to work
- Able to build and maintain professional relationships with staff and members
- An ambitious approach towards developing your career within the sports turf industry

Remuneration and benefits

- Basic salary £31,000 OTE including O/T & Annual Bonus £36-38K and paid overtime. Time and a half / Double time (Sundays)
- Numerous opportunities to continue training and relevant education
- BIGGA membership
- Consistent support to further develop your career in the greenkeeping industry
- Staff meals on duty
- 28 days holiday
- Pension contributions
- Full uniform, waterproofs and PPE provided

To apply, please send a maximum two-page CV and one page covering letter to:

Leslie C Howkins MG
coursemanager@richmondgolfclub.co.uk

Closing date for applications 31st January 2025. Expected Start date 1st April 2025

Deputy Course Superintendent

Ardfin, Scotland



Ardfin is located on the beautiful Isle of Jura off the west coast of Scotland.

We are looking for someone with passion, drive and commitment to join our team.

Duties include:

Working closely with the Superintendent you will motivate, direct, and train all staff ensuring the highest possible standards are achieved.

Responsible for our championship course, two 9-hole Par 3 courses, practice range, and Jura house lawns in the absence of the Superintendent.

Qualifications and experience:

Minimum 3 years in a managerial position.
Minimum Level 3 in sports turf management.
Pa1, Pa2 and Pa6 spraying certificates.
Proficient in irrigation maintenance.

Package on offer:

3 bedroomed family accommodation.
Salary £40K+ based on a 40-hour week.
Annual work-related bonus
BIGGA membership
Golfing privileges

Other benefits:

Start times 7am summer 8am winter.
Weekend work – 1 in 3 from May to October.
Living on an island has a great work life balance.

This is a key role on a spectacular golf course where you will be part of the Ardfin Estate management team.

To apply, email your current CV along with cover letter to Neil Ballingall, Director of Golf/Course Superintendent

neil.ballingall@ardfin.com

Closing date January 2025

Greenkeeper

Castletown Golf Links, Isle of Man



Castletown Golf Links is a private, family-owned links designed by Old Tom Morris in 1892 and one of the top 10 most spectacular courses in the British Isles and in the UK & Ireland's Top 100 courses.

The course programme includes revetted bunker renovation and re-design; ongoing course and practice facility design improvements; implementation of a full course irrigation system and development of processes to maximise the ecological benefit within an "Area of Special Scientific Interest"

Experience is preferable with NVQ level 2-3 qualification or equivalent, experience in a links environment and PA 1,2 & 6 certified

Full-time, weekends on a rota basis.

Salary: Skills and experience dependent: £26 600 - £29 000.

Submit your CV confirming why you would be suitable to:

GREENS@CASTLETOWN.GOLF

CLOSING: 20/01/2025

Technical Sales Executive (Amenity)

Southern Scotland/Northern England



GBR Technology Limited are a leading supplier of high-quality products into the sports amenity turf sector.

A vacancy is arising for a highly motivated individual to join our field sales team and develop their skills and career in a technical sales setting.

You will have a sales patch in South and Western Scotland and Northern England and will need to reside within this area.

Please apply with CV and covering letter to paulmorris@gbrtech.co.uk if you want to join our knowledgeable, professional and ethical team

Pay: £35,000.00-£50,000.00 per year with additional commission

Benefits include a company car, pension and 25 days holiday (in addition to public holidays)

Application deadline 8th January 2025

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

Greenkeeper

Les Bordes, France



Les Bordes is a private members' golf club located south of Paris in the picturesque Loire Valley. It features two championship courses: the New Course, designed by Gil Hanse and ranked among the World Top 100 in 2021, and the Old Course, designed by Robert Von Hagge in 1987. Additionally, we have a 10-hole par-three course, the Wild Piglet, also constructed by Gil Hanse. We take pride in offering an exceptional golf experience for our members and their guests during their time on the estate.

We are seeking enthusiastic individuals who are passionate about delivering world-class golfing conditions in a dynamic environment.

The ability to work in Europe is essential.

If you are interested, please contact us at careers@lesbordes.com

Assistant Greenkeeper

Sunningdale, Berkshire



Sunningdale Golf Club are recruiting for an Assistant Greenkeeper.

The successful candidate will be working as part of a world class team benefiting from ongoing training and support. On a day-to-day basis you will contribute to the maintenance and development of the golf course, its practice facilities and the surrounding estate and be part of our Tournament teams.

Sunningdale Golf Club is widely regarded as having two of the best and most beautiful courses in the British Isles, both ranked in the world top 100. The Club has a proud history of hosting tournament golf, having recently held the Curtis Cup in 2024 and with several major events scheduled including the Sunningdale Foursomes and The Senior Open in 2025.

Email jobs@sunningdale.com or visit www.sunningdale.com/careers

Course Manager

Teignmouth Golf Club, Devon



Teignmouth Golf Club is an 18-hole moorland course located in South Devon. The course was designed by Alister Mackenzie and we are currently in our centenary year. The club is situated 800 metres above sea level and has an almost 360 degree panoramic view over some of South Devon. We are a busy members club and very proud of our heritage.

We are looking to recruit a Course Manager to lead our team of greenkeepers and develop our already reputable golf course within the Southwest.

Applications are sought for an ambitious and dedicated Course Manager who has a proven track record.

Salary is in line with 2024 CGCS guidelines for our course.

To apply for this role, please send a CV and covering letter to General Manager Martin Hucklesby gm@teignmouthgolfclub.co.uk by Monday 3rd February 2025.



Recruitment

www.bigga.org.uk/careers

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

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

Visit www.bigga.org.uk to see our latest opportunities and find out more about advertising your position.

For more information call 01347 833 800 or email info@bigga.co.uk

Events and Initiatives Co-ordinator

BIGGA, Yorkshire

BIGGA is seeking to appoint an individual to coordinate the delivery of BIGGA's national initiatives and events.

Reporting to the Head of Membership, the role will be based at the head office in North Yorkshire, although some travel for meetings and events will be necessary.

The events and initiatives coordinator will:

- Facilitate the delivery of national events and initiatives
- Work with the BIGGA team to coordinate and manage calendars
- Promote the full range of services and benefits to all members of BIGGA
- Promote BIGGA in a positive manner to members, supporters and the wider golf industry

If you are interested in this role, please send your CV and a covering letter to Scott Reeves, BIGGA Head of Membership, at scott@bigga.co.uk

The closing date for applications is 31 January 2025 and interviews are scheduled for the week commencing 10 February 2025.



BIGGA

British and International
Golf Greenkeepers Association

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Superintendent Alec MacIndoe's team at West Surrey will be ready and raring to go after a well-earned rest



What we do in... January

Club: West Surrey, Surrey

I like my team to start the year feeling refreshed and in a positive frame of mind, which is why I make sure they all have an extended amount of time off work over the festive period.

It's crucial for us all to enjoy a break from the cold, dark mornings and have the chance to spend more time with our families and doing those other things that recharge our batteries.

Ensuring morale stays high is a key part of my job, as important as any greenkeeping duties, and it'll be nice to start 2025 in the right way, with a happy and motivated group.

This is actually a period of the year I really enjoy because it's when we can get everything in order and prepped for the season, so I see it as quite an exciting time.

In early November we started bunker reconstruction work, lining them with CapillaryFlow, and this month we'll be finishing off that project. It's a big one because there are 62 bunkers involved, and now the lining is done we'll be sanding and getting them in play.

We also have about 500 metres of new pathway to put in. We'll be doing

the prep work and putting in the curb edges, ready for Redlynch to come and lay a TigerTrak path.

This will allow us to move traffic around the course a lot more efficiently and alleviate the issues around certain pinch points.

On top of that we have a fair amount of tree work to do, and as part of our maintenance programme

we'll be sand-injecting the greens and approaches with the VGR machine.

We'll do as much as we can now to ensure we have the course in the best possible condition when the playing season resumes.

Delivering optimal playing surfaces for as much of the year as possible without compromising on long-term turf health requires a combination of knowledge and skill, and that's what good greenkeepers pride themselves on.

I'm proud to say that is something we have demonstrated consistently during my 10 years at West Surrey and I'm sure my team, fresh from their well-earned Christmas breaks, will be looking forward to delivering once again in the year ahead. [GI](#)



Ensuring morale stays high is a key part of my job"



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Sustainable strategies for future golf growth

Greenkeepers hold the key to delivering sustainability solutions that are increasingly important for the management of golf clubs



Author: Sarah Hughes,
Syngenta Business Manager

Sustainability and resilience are no longer buzz words. They are already critically important in day-to-day management of high-quality turf surfaces, and will be increasingly relevant in planning and decision making into the future.

Climatic changes are creating conditions that are more challenging than ever for turf management. Addressing these increasing issues requires new techniques and strategies, many of which are entirely compatible with more sustainable Integrated Turf Management (ITM) practices.

Sustainability drivers, including for

Read this for:

- Sustainable ITM strategies
- Optimising resource use
- Increasing biodiversity

resource use and ecology, are recognised as a primary challenge for golf club management and the future of the industry. Policies that had once seemed ethereal or abstract now have real practical implications. And it is the greenkeeping teams that will have to implement many of the measures if they are to succeed.

Greenkeeping skills

Putting together a sustainable ITM programme may feel daunting, but in many instances the techniques are already being employed. Pulling them into a format that fits with the club's

sustainability objectives develops a coherent strategy and helps ensure club management and players buy-in to the greenkeeping plans for in-play turf areas and positive ecology work in out-of-play areas.

ITM certainly entails drawing on historic greenkeeping skills and experience, but that doesn't mean going backwards. Successful strategies will add in appropriate new techniques and technologies to further strengthen established cultural practices.

More options and innovations in turf agronomy continue to be needed to better cope with greater climatic challenges, including more resistant or resilient turf varieties, new mechanical tools, further improved fungicides and proven biostimulants or bioproducts. There is now the benefit of greater science and research with product developments, that will better understand how and where to get the best

Innovative ITM strategies can deliver economically and environmentally sustainable golf courses, that are more attractive to players and biodiversity.



© Jake Austin

out of new technologies in an ITM programme.

In the case of fungicides - which are still the essential top tier of the ITM decision tree, to support cultural controls when the pressure gets too high - that means a legislative system that recognises their value in developing new products, along with greenkeepers' skills to ensure they are used correctly and appropriately to prevent losses and resistance.

ITM measures do bring a greater buffer of resilience to counter climatic conditions. Turf that is naturally stronger, through strategies to

“More innovations continue to be needed to better cope with climatic challenges”

Environmental sustainability

With the public and political drive for environmental sustainability, golf courses can prove to be a valuable restorative industry, with the capability to increase biodiversity net gain, protect natural resources and mitigate climate impact.

Ecology initiatives such as Syngenta Operation Pollinator present a huge win for greenkeeping teams and the golf club. Ongoing practices to manage areas of pollen and nectar rich habitat will provide essential food resources and nesting habitat for pollinators, including native bees, butterflies and other insects, along with the natural ecosystem they support.

The successes of golf clubs over years of the Syngenta Operation Pollinator Awards have highlighted how, working with specialists including local wildlife trusts, gives the chance for golf clubs to join up an extended network of habitats with immense ecological value.

Championing ecology enhancements, through engagement with club members and the local community, gives the chance to demonstrate the positive approach to sustainable management of the whole golf course, alongside presenting quality turf surfaces where golfers are proud to play.



Operation Pollinator

enhance rooting and photosynthetic activity, for example, is better able to withstand periods of drought or hot weather. And will be better able to recover from the stress effects.

Resource use

Syngenta R&D and trials for new product introductions increasingly assess their interactions within ITM programmes. Some of the new biological products can give significant gains in turf quality and consistency in the programme. Improved rooting is also associated with more efficient uptake and utilisation of nutrients and water, to make better use of resources.

Each component of the ITM strategy has its role, but it is still up to the skills and experience of the greenkeeping team to select the right product at the right time to get the best results. However, we do now have the advantage of Turf Advisor digital decision support tools to increase awareness of risks

and bring far greater level of precision to ITM actions.

Possibly the greatest challenge, however, will be for golf club management, members and players to understand some of the measures necessary in implementing an effective ITM strategy will have implications for playability, and appreciate their surfaces are likely to change more during the season.

There are now initiatives to work with industry stakeholders and supporters, including The R&A, England Golf, BIGGA and Syngenta, to develop sustainable best practice plans and communicate them effectively to clubs and players.

Find out more about sustainable ITM strategies on Syngenta stand B22 at BTME.





The world of greenkeeping

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



About Brickyard Crossing

Designed by long-time Indiana resident Pete Dye, the par-72 layout measures approximately 7,200 yards and hosts around 15,000 rounds a year during a playing season that runs from April to October. Holes 7-10 sit inside the track, next to an infield lake.





Ryan Franklin, Brickyard Crossing Golf Course, USA



Brickyard Crossing is not your average golf course. The 18-hole championship track sits next to – and, in the case of four of its holes, inside – the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, home of the world-famous Indianapolis 500.

Over Memorial Day weekend in May, the Indy 500 rolls into town – attracting more than 300,000 fans – and that's just one of the many events hosted at the venue each year.

We caught up with Grounds Manager/Golf Course Superintendent Ryan Franklin, who recently became a BIGGA member, to discuss what it is like managing such a distinctive golf course.

How did you come to find yourself in this role?

I got a master's in technology, which I worked in for a few years and hated. I'd worked summer jobs in the golf industry through high school and college. I did a couple of years on the maintenance side and really enjoyed it. I quit my job and enrolled in turf management through Penn State.

Which courses have you worked at?

I was at Westwood CC in Vienna, Virginia, and then Trump National, DC, before I moved down to Florida to St Petersburg CC, then Fossil Island in Kemmerer, Wyoming.

What compelled you to move around like that?

Curiosity. I wanted to go out to the mid-Atlantic in the transition zone. I wanted to grow cool-season grass where cool-season grass should not be grown. I wanted to learn about and understand the warm season better. Then I went out west with the high altitude and another different way of growing grass. A lot of my choices were based on the types of turf and the knowledge I could gain from working there.

What's the scope of your current role?

The whole site is just shy of 700 acres and our department manages everything from the golf course to the campus, the grounds, the racetrack, all the turf, trees, gravel. There is also a dirt track, which we maintain and get ready for races. The Indy 500 has been here for 109 years, but we're always learning and looking at how we can improve things.

What are the turf conditions like there?

We have cool-season grass, with Pencross and PennLinks

bentgrass on the fairways, tees and greens, and a bluegrass/tall fescue blend for the rough – nothing too crazy. We do quite a bit of data collection, keeping on top of our clipping yields, doing our stimp meters, measuring moisture content and getting all the information we need to make the most informed decisions on a day-to-day basis.

How big is your team?

We have 15 full-time staff, but at the peak of summer we'll hit 60-70 employees. On days when we have a group coming, we'll throw just about everyone on the golf course – it looks like we're preparing for the US Open! You go down hole one and you'll see fairway mowers, green mowers, hand mowers, people mowing the tees, raking bunkers – everything is getting done.

Does the course suffer during the big motorsport events?

I will say that people are very respectful of the property. Do kids sometimes go playing in the bunkers? Absolutely. Are they rolling down the hills? Yes, I have seen that. But people are out here having a good time and nobody is being destructive or malicious. We have a great fan base.

Have you ever had a car crash on the course?

With all the safety measures in place, we have not had a car crash onto the golf course. While working at St. Petersburg, I experienced a few police chases through the course, one of which resulted in a crash into our irrigation pond.

Do you get to play any rounds with the drivers?

Unfortunately, when they have the chance to play golf, that's our opportunity to get on track and prepare it for our race events. I did get to play with Sebastian Bourdais, a former IndyCar and current IMSA driver, and our course pro, Terry Decker, at St Petersburg though.

How did your trip to the UK for BTME come about?

I was selected by Bernhard Academy as part of their programme to send superintendents to the UK. I've always been curious about how things are done there. I assume they face a lot of the same issues and I want to learn how they approach them. I'm looking forward to networking and learning about another area of turf management. **GI**

2024: The Year in R&A Agronomy

The R&A Sustainable Agronomy Service has achieved significant growth in 2024, explains Paul Woodham, Head of Sustainable Agronomy – Europe at The R&A



Our Sustainable Agronomy service expanded its operations across Europe and through Asia-Pacific regions in 2024, in addition to increasing its engagement with golf clubs in Great Britain and Ireland, with over 400 course visits carried out servicing agronomy, drainage and course development project work.

As we expand into new regions, we continue to build the support and understanding that will work towards one of our key goals – ensuring that golf is thriving in 50 years' time.

Our Sustainable Championship Agronomy work has seen another busy and successful year, helping to deliver professional and amateur championships, international matches and professional qualifying hosted at

36 venues across Great Britain and Ireland. Over 165 course visits were completed to championship venues, along with the team providing onsite agronomy support during The Open, AIG Women's Open, Men's, Women's, Girls' and Boys' Amateur championships, the Curtis Cup and The G4D Open.

R&A agronomy work supported over 350 venues in 2024, and we anticipate another year of growth with exciting new initiatives and continued work. In addition to this is the continued work undertaken with The R&A Golf Course 2030 research programme sharing the outcomes of several projects with a growing portfolio of research, case studies and support freely available and accessible to support the industry.

The R&A is collectively working to deliver practical advice, solutions and strategies, which continue to build golf's reputation as a force for good in terms of sustainable management and agronomy.

Our Golf Course 2030 research programme is at the heart of innovation and insight in Sustainable Golf, which will help greenkeepers adapt and shape their agronomy practices in a changing environment, often in regions with sometimes similar challenges but also very different climates and regulation.

This year has certainly been a further year of positive engagement with stakeholders as we increase the global impact, influence and reputation in the areas where we work. [GI](#)



work supported over 350 venues in 2024, and we anticipate another year of growth with exciting new initiatives and continued work”

Great Britain and Ireland



With Alistair Beggs, Head of Sustainable Agronomy Services at The R&A

The year has been dominated by prevailing wet conditions, with most regions seeing above-average rainfall and extreme weather events. Often unseasonably warm temperatures led to strong growth potential.

For the golfer, the most notable impact saw periods of course closure as the year started with a continuation of the exceptionally wet conditions seen during the autumn and winter of 2023. Irrigation was rarely needed until July and August, but September saw a return of localised flooding in many regions leading to further restrictions with course closure or conditions where green speeds were often slower and surfaces softer than usual. The growth and density of rough has been a challenge for much of the year as a second successive year of wet conditions influenced the playability and texture of the rough.

For the greenkeeper, the challenge has been in striving to maintain the agreed maintenance schedules required to manage soil organic matter levels and alleviate compaction. While we only saw a fleeting glimpse of drought and heat stress pressure, the autumn disease pressure in November was severe for many.

This review contains many continuing themes. Golf clubs are still concerned about the future of irrigation and ever-ageing systems despite two years of wet conditions. We continue to encourage clubs to engage in strategic conversations about subjects such as water security, drainage, promotion of biodiversity, controlled use of pesticides and chemicals and – probably most important of all – vegetation and tree management to optimise natural drying and sunlight penetration to the turf.

“Golf clubs are still concerned about the future of irrigation and ever-ageing systems despite two years of wet conditions”

A note on pesticide use

The threat of changes in pesticide regulation was, and still is, a concern for all areas. The year started with the non-adoption of the SUR 2024 regulation, with the European Commission announcing the withdrawal of the proposal as it did not proceed to statute and implementation.

However, this doesn't mean that a future revision of regulation won't return. This provided the industry with a reprieve and created some time for action to be taken and changes to be made so we are

better prepared for the future. This is the message communicated by R&A agronomists when discussing the potential implementation of SUR 2024.

Several regions in Europe are already subject to tightened legislation to a point where damage caused by disease, environmental stress, pest and weed invasion is affecting turf standards. Greenkeeping and course management strategies continue to evolve at pace in these regions but not yet to a point

where the course can be maintained to appropriate standards without significant risk due to the lack of effective control offered from the responsible use of pesticides as part of ITM practices.

Media reports suggest that the vote on SUR 2024 failed and that's it, but this is unlikely to be the case as we can expect legislation to be redrafted after further periods of consultation. How long this will take, and whether or not legislation will be passed in the future, cannot be confirmed at this time.



Switzerland



Hector Forcen, R&A Agronomist at The R&A

This year will see the formal extension of The

R&A Sustainable Agronomy Service in central Europe. Our GB&I work has already crossed over into the Netherlands, Denmark, France and Estonia, working with clubs on their agronomic strategies and design projects.

Golf course management in Switzerland and Central European countries continues to face significant challenges related to sustainability, turfgrass diseases and manpower. Weather-wise, it was a wet summer, with a series of heavy rains at the end of June causing damage to several golf courses. July and August were warmer and with rainfall that kept the golf courses greener than the last summers. Despite the wet weather, Central European regions are seeing that increasingly dry summers are driving golf courses to adopt smart irrigation technologies, such as systems based on moisture meters and weather stations. The work being done by numerous clubs to optimise the irrigation system is noteworthy.

Environmental regulations in many regions of Central Europe require greater efficiency in the use of water and chemicals, promoting the use of more resistant turfgrass species such as fescues and Bermuda grass (already being tested in southern Switzerland), which require less irrigation and treatments. The access to pesticides and range of authorised active ingredients available for use on turfgrass is decreasing and the conditions for use are becoming more stringent, increasing the risk of resistance developing and some diseases no longer being satisfactorily controlled. To date, biological alternatives are only partially available, require legal registration and their effectiveness on turfgrass is relatively limited.

The most prominent diseases are once again Fusarium, in the early season, and Dollar Spot, which is a

“Sustainable agronomy, when faced with extreme climates on golf courses with intensive play, aims to be precise with the critical but minimal use of precious resources”



Spain and Southern Europe



With Luis Cornejo, Agronomist at The R&A

The weather on the Iberian Peninsula in 2024 clearly illustrated the trend towards extreme climates and conditions that will shape the future of Southern Europe. In this challenging scenario for maintaining top-quality playing surfaces, much of Spain experienced the warmest August on record and the rainiest October, with unfortunate extreme consequences in some areas along the Mediterranean coast.

A growing challenge is the quality of reclaimed water used to irrigate most golf courses. This summer, in many areas, water salinity reached peaks of over 10 dS/m, causing soil salinisation and significant damage to various courses that were not designed to withstand such water conditions. In this context, agronomic knowledge on managing soil salinity is critical for maintaining courses in optimal conditions and preventing degradation that would be costly to reverse.

Moreover, 2024 was a pivotal year for our work collecting and analysing data related to putting green playing performance. One of the main objectives is to balance maintenance operation demands with maximising course revenue. In this regard, the traditional aeration programme, which impacts revenue due to recovery time for the greens, represents an area for improvement.

Sustainable agronomy, when faced with extreme climates on golf courses with intensive play, aims to be precise with the critical but minimal use of precious resources. For instance, periodically analysing soil nutrients allows for informed decisions about fertilisation, determining which nutrients are worth investing in and which are not. Likewise, measuring soil moisture levels helps determine whether the soil is drying out or becoming saturated, enabling precise irrigation adjustments in each area using precision irrigation systems.

In summary, accurate collection and interpretation of data allows for achieving optimal playing conditions using only the necessary resources. This year has been a landmark year for progress in this direction in our work to address the challenges that Southern Europe is facing.

and Central Europe

growing concern during the summer months due to the disease's resistance to the few fungicides available on the market.

The use of biological products, together with integrated approaches and mechanical operations, is gaining acceptance to limit the environmental impact of chemical treatments. There is a continued effort in research and education across European regions with initiatives, such as Swiss Golf, organising a series of training workshops to help greenkeepers cope with the changes and gradually reach zero Phyto.

Golf courses in Central Europe are stepping up their efforts to preserve biodiversity with different actions such as: no-mow zones to encourage native flora and fauna; installation of insect hotels and areas for pollinators; and the creation of ponds and wet areas that act as habitats for birds and amphibians.

These are important initiatives which aim to improve the habitat and promote the environmental image of the clubs which are working to comply with stricter European regulations on nature conservation.

The lack of qualified seasonal greenkeepers in Central Europe is another problem that many clubs must face. To address this problem, clubs are investing in advanced mechanisation, such as autonomous mowers and other semi-automated machinery for maintenance. Clubs are turning to in-house training and partnerships with educational institutions to create a new generation of skilled greenkeepers. Golf course management in 2024 reflects a balanced effort between technological innovation, sustainability and adaptation to climate and labour changes, with an increasing focus on resilience in the face of environmental and economic challenges.

Asia-Pacific



With Chris Gray, Head of Sustainable Golf & Agronomy Asia-Pacific at The R&A

The Asia-Pacific Sustainable Agronomy Service, based out of The R&A regional Asia-Pacific office in Singapore, has supported golf courses and golf developments in multiple countries across the region including Japan, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan and the Philippines, as well as providing Championship Agronomy support to the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship held in Japan at Taiheiyo Club Gotemba, which we run in partnership with the Masters Tournament and the Women's Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship held in Thailand at Siam Country Club.

We are currently working with the 2025 Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship venues in Dubai and Vietnam to prepare the courses to host these fantastic amateur championships.

We provided support to golf courses across a variety of climatic locations featuring warm season and cool season turfgrass sites to provide solutions to agronomic challenges and ensure the golf courses are maintained in the best possible year-round condition and maintained in the most sustainable manner.

The summer of 2024 was particularly tough for our clients in Japan, who faced extremely tough conditions for bentgrass greens, with average temperatures in the mid 30°C, combined with very humid conditions from mid-June through the end of September. We have used this experience to plan maintenance activities for our client course to promote maximum plant health and root growth in preparation for the 2025 summer season.

Keeping in mind that many countries in South-East Asia are still at the early stages of golf development, with staff having limited knowledge on maintaining golf courses, our Sustainable Agronomy Service works to transfer technical knowledge and best practice guidelines to the golf course maintenance staff at the clubs we work with in these regions.

Alongside our work with existing golf clubs, we have also supported golf course design firms to provide turfgrass and material specifications for new golf developments in the Philippines for Nicklaus Design and Pakistan for Faldo Design.

Along with our dedicated service to client facilities and golf design firms, a key focus has also been to present on best practice for Sustainable Agronomy to the golf industry across the region, by means of presenting at a range of golf conferences and educational seminars in Australia, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines this year.

A silhouette of a golfer in mid-swing on a golf green, set against a bright, hazy background.

“A key focus has also been to present on best practice for Sustainable Agronomy to the golf industry across the region”

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New year, new you



Setting goals is one thing – but achieving them requires proper planning. As 2025 begins, Master Greenkeeper

Greg Fitzmaurice describes how he goes about making sure those resolutions stick

Planning is essential if we are to achieve our goals, whether on the golf course or in our own lives.

On the course, we need to set goals to provide consistency, be efficient, manage resources and grow as individuals or as a team.

I believe that our work lives and personal lives are interconnected, and that to be content in work, you need to also be content at home and vice versa. Therefore, it is important to plan and set professional and personal goals.

Here are some areas of goal setting you might want to consider:

Turf condition and maintenance goal

These are foundational goals, focusing on areas like cultural practices, nutritional inputs and pest management. You should draw on information from:

- Performance data
- Auditing
- Customer feedback
- Your own judgement

This helps to produce a plan for maintenance with set goals in mind, providing both an objective and a roadmap to achieving it.

Financial goals

We all understand the importance of a budget to meet financial goals, but it's important not to focus too much on just the cost. Consider the value of each decision. How much 'bang for your buck' do you get?

For example, it's easy to spend £1,000 on one application of products in your greens programme, but the benefit may be relatively small in relation to your goals. Alternatively, you may choose to invest £1,000 in staff training, which not only has benefits in the short-term, but continues to be of benefit year on year. A planning process where you consider the likely outcomes of any course of action can help you to make these considerations.

Staff development goals

Your team's growth is integral to continued success. You might set goals for:

- Staff training
- Improving working conditions

While pay is vitally important, on its own it won't maintain a content workforce. Continually working with your team on their specific needs is vital for goals to be achieved.

How Many Goals?

I'm not an advocate for setting a limit, but it is important to make sure the number makes success realistic – do not spread yourself, or your team, too thinly. More importantly, we need to be super flexible in golf course management because the nature of our working environment often puts a spanner in the works! This means having a variety of goals that can allow for constant progress. An example could be:

- Construction of five new tees
- Rewrite risk assessments
- Overhaul fleet of machinery
- Staff training

This variety would mean that when the weather stops construction work, there are other goals you can work towards.

Break down projects into smaller goals to monitor progress. Hold regular check-ins, evaluate both quantitative (e.g. costs) and qualitative (e.g. golfer satisfaction) results to refine your approach for the future.

Personal improvement

Greg finds personal improvement both motivating and rewarding. Here are some of his thoughts to help when considering setting yourself personal goals

🔑 Take control

Don't look to external factors for your shortcomings. You are the ultimate architect of your reality. Taking control means recognising that your actions, choices and mindset shape your life. With this approach I believe you will not only succeed but reveal to yourself your true capabilities.

🔑 Establish what you want?

Without a clear direction, you will be lost and time will pass by. Identify your core values, and set specific, measurable goals that reflect them. This is true with work and personal life.

🔑 Step out of your comfort zone

Fear is a huge barrier to growth. Avoiding doing things we don't like is normal, but you grow by facing your fears and pushing through the discomfort. It also gives you enormous confidence when you succeed and the feeling is a powerful motivator.

🔑 Develop Discipline

Discipline is the bedrock of success. Motivation is unreliable, but consistent habits are not. Build routines that prioritise your health, goals, and self-care, and stick to them regardless of how you feel.

🔑 Remember that life is tough

Prepare for the worst and hope for the best is a good motto. Things won't always go for you and although life

can, and often does, throw numerous difficulties our way, we always have the choice of deciding how to respond. I'm not being flippant here, things can get so bad it feels impossible, but whatever we're faced with, our response either makes it better or worse. Sometimes we can only make things less bad, but at least with this mindset we can be encouraged by what we are still able to control.

🔑 Be honest

Truth aligns with reality. Lies distort your perception and sabotage progress. Speak truthfully, even when it's uncomfortable. Honesty builds integrity and self-respect.

Think of a time when you did something wrong and were afraid to say. Hiding it can cause anxiety and stress. It might be difficult to admit a mistake, but it immediately relieves the tension. It's rare for people to lack understanding and sympathy when someone is honest with them.

🔑 Commit to continual improvement

Self-improvement is an ongoing journey. Small, consistent progress adds up over time. Don't expect perfection — seek improvement. Read and write as much as you can. This is the best way to help your communication skills and I believe is one of, if not the, most important part in helping us become capable individuals. **GI**



“Self-improvement is an ongoing journey. Small, consistent progress adds up over time. Don't expect perfection - seek improvement”



Summary

As a young man, I turned myself around by embracing responsibility. As I've grown older, setting clear goals, confronting fear and committing to growth has helped me enormously.

The success of Hunley Golf Club is centred around planning and goal setting. We won't be the best there is, but there is great value to be found in striving to be the best you can be.

Using plant growth regulators to help preserve heathland



Plant growth regulators are useful tools for turf managers to control the top growth of turfgrass, but could they also be used to prevent the succession of heathlands into grasslands? Wentworth's Deputy Courses Manager Stefan Carter aimed to find out in this research project



This research project set out to determine if the active ingredient Trinexapac-ethyl (TE) in the plant growth regulator Primo Maxx II could be used by golf course managers as part of an integrated pest management (IPM) programme to reduce succession of heathland into grassland by controlling Gramineae (grasses) growing among Erica plants (heaths and heathers).

The primary research was to assess if TE was safe to use on Erica in respect to any phytotoxicity caused by applications. Further research into whether TE increased shoot density

(g/m²) or the number of new shoots recorded was also analysed to determine if TE applications could produce a more dense, compact Erica plant.

Heathlands and project justification

Heathland golf courses are characteristically situated on low-nutrient soils, therefore regulating and reducing the number of grass clippings removed from mowing lowers the amount of nutrients, such as nitrogen, that are recycled back into the soil.

Heathland and acid grassland are classified as priority habitats in the UK

and a proportion of what remains of these habitats is found on golf courses. A study from the Sports Turf Research Institute and The Royal and Ancient in 2002 recorded that out of the 742 courses from the UK, Ireland and the Isle of Man that participated, 241 clubs maintained heather within their property (32.5%), meaning golf courses play a vital role in maintaining heathland habitats in the UK.

Heathlands are ecologically important for creating habitats for species of rare flora and fauna such as Erica. As Erica are relatively slow-growing species, if management



“Golf courses play a vital role in maintaining heathland habitats in the UK”

practices such as mowing invasive grasses by strimmer or rotary mower are undertaken, damage can occur which may result in loss of plant material and an overall reduction of desirable species within the sward.

Chemical treatment may be used as an effective control method to remove or reduce Gramineae within an Erica sward, without the need for damaging cultural practices.

With post-emergent graminicides such as Syngenta's Rescue being removed for use on golf courses in the UK in 2019, controlling invasive grass species on heathland sites to reduce succession into grassland has become increasingly challenging for golf course managers.

The question being asked is: Could TE be used as part of an integrated pest management programme as a tool to regulate the invasive Gramineae while allowing the Erica to remain the dominant species within the sward?

Current literature

There is currently little research into the effects of TE applications on Erica, providing a good starting point for the research. However, this was problematic in terms of finding evidence that TE would affect Erica in

the same way it did with sports turf and other dicotyledonous plants. The use of other gibberellic acid inhibitors such as paclobutrazol and daminozide are used to produce compact, dense ornamental shrubs such as ornamental pepper.

Applications of paclobutrazol caused phytotoxicity in ornamental shrubs, where TE did not. This previous research gave enough backing to justify that there may be similar results found when TE is applied to Erica.

Methods and materials

This trial took place between July and October 2023. The methods and materials used for this trial consisted of 30 2m² plots of Erica in a heathland site at The Wentworth Club in Surrey.

Each plot was initially assessed for percentage cover of Erica and marked out.

Each plot was then mown to a height of 75mm and a randomised block design marked out to be treated with TE at either 1.6l/ha, 3.2l/ha or to be left as a control plot. A Growing Degree Days (GDD) model with a base figure of 6°C and 200 GDD intervals was selected for this trial as this application interval has been previously researched for use on sports turf.

After the initial application of TE, a

period of 200 GDD was left before the assessment of any phytotoxicity recorded (1 = none, 2 = minor and 3 = major) in the treated Erica. The second application of TE was applied after the initial assessment and a further 200 GDD were waited before assessing again. The Erica was assessed for a final time 200 GDD after the second application of TE for any phytotoxicity recorded.

Once all assessments for phytotoxicity were completed, the plants were mown again at 75mm with the clippings collected, dried and weighed to determine if there was a reduction in shoot density (g/m²) in the Erica plants.

Thirty days after the second mowing of the Erica plants, the number of new shoots per plant was counted and recorded.

Results

TE was reported to cause no phytotoxicity in Erica for either application treatment rates (two x 1.6l/ha and two x 3.2l/ha).

The data recorded did not show any differences in letters of heterogeneity. There were statistical differences shown in plants for shoot density, where the highest application rates of TE (two x 3.2l/ha) provided the



greatest shoot density (g/m^2).

There were also statistical differences showing that *Erica* plants applied with TE at the highest application rate of TE (two x $3.2\text{l}/\text{ha}$) produced the highest number of new shoots per plant.

Conclusion and future research


The results found in this research project have started to identify alternative solutions to preventing succession in heathlands using TE applications compared to mechanical practices.

There is the need for further research to identify if increased rates (l/ha), increased number of applications of TE or a reduction in GDD between applications would produce statistical differences in phytotoxicity recorded, shoot density (g/m^2) and number of new shoots in *Erica* plants.

The GDD model used for this trial was based on cool season sports turf, therefore more accurate results may be recorded if a GDD model for *Erica* plants were to be calculated and used to analyse any effects on *Erica* rather than sports turf.

Further trials for ethical consideration could also be undertaken to identify if applications of TE applications would affect the flowering process of *Erica* in any way. **GI**





Combine online learning with your job

The flexibility offered by online studying enables busy greenkeepers to access learning opportunities at times that are convenient to you



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 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.

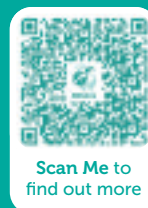
The delivery of our HNC/D Golf Course Management courses using Moodle, our online learning platform, is unrecognisable compared with such a conventional model. Candidates from across the golfing world can now access electronic teaching materials and contact tutors instantly.

Studying online does, of course, have its challenges. Our candidates, almost without exception, are working full-time in the golf industry. Many are married with young families and have other responsibilities to meet. All our students will have spent many years in traditional classroom-based learning environments and virtual learning is new for many.

Regular and timely responses from tutors as well as IT and pastoral support are designed to make the move to virtual learning as smooth as possible. Student feedback has

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consistently shown that learners find Moodle intuitive and easy to use, even those who may have struggled with IT in the past.

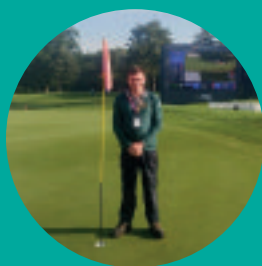
The flexibility offered by online studying enables busy greenkeepers to access learning opportunities at times that are convenient to them. Candidates can, for example, choose to engage with learning materials, quizzes, video content, recorded classes and discussion forums on a 24/7 basis.

Moodle 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.

As most of our students are working in the golf industry, we encourage them to bring their professional experiences to discussions, activities and assessments. It is essential to recognise learning that has already taken place, and our course provides the opportunity for reflection and further development. **GI**

Case studies

We meet three students who are successfully learning online



Adam Wilson
HND graduate, Golf Course
Management, SRUC

My journey towards completing the Advanced Diploma in Greenkeeping at SRUC Elmwood 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 program have been directly applicable to my work, allowing me to implement best practices and innovative solutions in my role.



Tizayi Tundu Sithole
HND graduate, Golf Course
Management, SRUC

I am from Zimbabwe but am now working in the USA as an assistant superintendent and I am a proud greenkeeping professional. I have been

studying with SRUC Elmwood Campus for my online HNC and HND studies in Golf Course Management under the R&A Greenkeepers scholarship program.

I am now an assistant superintendent in the USA, and because of the academic qualifications I got from SRUC, 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 programme in turfgrass management.

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



Stephen Lawlor
HND graduate, Golf Course
Management, SRUC

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 as I 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 it 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 hanging 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'd go and check it for feedback and it was all smooth sailing. If you have opportunities that are right there in front of you, take advantage of them because they might make the difference when a new opportunity comes along further down the line.

**Increased membership,
increased income and
increased ranking**





Toro irrigation system brings almost immediate changes and noticeable results



Royal St David's is a traditional links course on the west coast of North Wales. It has hosted nearly eighty championships of national or international status and is ranked second in the top 50 golf courses in Wales. The location of its 79-hectare site requires careful management of the local ecology, with the conservation and preservation of the sandy links course high on Links Manager Rhys Butler's list of priorities.

Following on from a five-year Environmental Management plan put together by Natural Resources Wales and the STRI to improve the ecology of the site, the next step for the ultimate in site protection, water sustainability and efficiency, sustainable turf management, conserving the traditional sandy links feel of the course and improving all the playing surfaces was a state-of-the-art irrigation system.

This was the starting point in a project which saw Toro, Reesink Hydro-Scapes, Adrian Mortram Associates and Green Irrigation work together to install an irrigation system that brought almost immediate changes and noticeable results.

Rhys says: "The goal was to irrigate just the right amount just to keep the grass alive, we want to promote the fast-running links game, without overwatering and having soft surfaces."

"We suffered with a series of dry springs and droughts and the fairways especially were struggling to recover.

We wanted a system that could give us control of moisture on all areas to keep good grass coverage and consistency of playing surfaces, even in times of drought."

What was needed, and why?

With an incredible 46 years of service from the club's previous Toro system, the new irrigation installation was long-awaited. The club had drilled a borehole and installed a water storage tank with Grundfos pump system in 2018 and while the system had undergone ad-hoc upgrades over the years mainly to the cable network, with the most recent upgrade using Toro to the greens in the mid 2000s, ultimately Rhys could no longer rely on the functionality of the system's hydraulics (pipe work) and electrical operation (cabling) – there were too many leaks, and the coverage was poor.

Rhys had been impressed with Toro's performance and longevity over the years and how it had met the course's needs, as well as the service from Reesink Hydro-Scapes, which meant he didn't look anywhere else when the time came to proceed with the full upgrade.

What were the challenges?

The project commenced in the spring of 2022 and was completed in early November and involved the installation of new Polyethylene mainline and lateral pipework

“It was incredibly rewarding to see and hear the members' reactions to the almost immediate changes the new system brought as we turned each newly renovated hole on”

Rob Green, Green Irrigation



“Lynx LSM gave us the opportunity to provide the club with +/- 1 second run time technology. Precise and efficient application was exactly what the design brief demanded in order to provide the key deliverable in preventing overwatering”

Simon Squires, Senior Manager - Golf Irrigation,
The Toro Company

supplying efficient water to all playing surfaces while the course was open.

The fact that installation had to take place while the course was open for play was due to the composition of the course with natural dune slacks and a high-water table in winter. There was no choice but for installation to take place throughout high season, providing one of the biggest challenges of the project for Adrian Mortram from Adrian Mortram Associates as he explains: “There are very few irrigation systems in my career that have been installed in high season, on an existing course that is being played on throughout the summer and having to work

around the players. But there was no alternative, it would not have been possible to joint the pipe work or cables in trenches under water.”

The fact that the club still needed to be able to irrigate efficiently to prevent damage to the sward, and that it was a very dry summer and the water had to be supplied and applied manually, provided yet another challenge.

However, it was a situation adeptly managed by contractor Green Irrigation who according to Rhys “prioritised getting water available as soon as possible which really helped us to produce and maintain good surfaces for our members through installation.”

“The Toro range of products chosen exceeded our expectations and the installation couldn’t have gone any better”

Rhys Butler, Links Manager, Royal St David’s

A further challenge for Green Irrigation came about when Rob Green, Technical Director, and the team started procuring the materials needed for the project in 2019, once awarded the project in a tender process. Soon after, the country headed into the pandemic related lockdown with Rob recalling how this effected the price of pipework: “The prices were going up daily and went up by nearly 80 percent in total. It was becoming impossible for us to hold the prices that we’d quoted.”

What was the solution?

The advice from Green Irrigation was buy now and store the equipment on site, which the club agreed with. Rob says: “We essentially had the entire irrigation system in storage but if we’d have waited until the project started in 2022, we’d have had to pay significantly more. Ultimately, this decision saved the club £30,000.”

While the club had long recognised



“It was a real pleasure to work with Royal St David’s, Adrian Mortram Associates and Green Irrigation on this prestigious project. Everyone pulled together to make sure the project was installed with little disruption in the middle of the summer and with all the challenges that time of year can bring”

Robert Jackson, Division Manager, Reesink Hydro-Scapes

the need for a new system, the project was finance critical – there hadn’t been the financial reserves to do a large infrastructure investment until now and to have incurred such a huge, unexpected cost would have put the project in jeopardy. It was a plan which saved the project.

The club chose the Flex series of sprinklers on greens and fairways, T5 Rapidsets sprinklers on all tee surfaces and 590GF sprinklers for newly installed walkways. All new mains and controls were required, as was full fairway irrigation for the first time. The entire system is controlled using Toro’s Lynx Control System with LSM technology.

What was the result?

At conception of the installation the grass was visibly starting to strain and there were signs of disease. As each hole was turned on the difference was almost immediately noticeable to members thanks to the irrigation

automation Rhys and the team had never had before.

The new irrigation system has successfully decreased the significant amount of water that was previously lost due to leaking pipes. LSM technology has given much greater accuracy of water application and run times.

Greens, surrounds and tees are much stronger and more complete than before due to better irrigation coverage and consistency in application.

The sprinklers now deliver water accurately and efficiently to playing surfaces, reducing wastage.

Adding irrigation to fairways and walkways has maintained healthy grass, reducing the need for fertiliser inputs to recover drought-stressed areas.

For optimal irrigation, the club uses a TDR soil moisture sensor, irrigation software and hardware, along with weather station information. This allows for accurate monitoring of soil moisture and weather conditions,

enabling precise and timely irrigation. The result is healthy turfgrasses and maximised efficiency of resources.

The system has provided Rhys and his team with to-the-second runtime accuracy across all newly installed stations via either the central controller or remotely using Toro’s smart apps.

Using the app in the field gave a level of flexibility and control to be able to water dry spots, water in wetting agents and be minimalistic with water application as is natural for a links course. Water is now used wisely, as and when it is needed.

Rhys sums up the project: “The project was a resounding success and has transformed Royal St David’s Golf Club: membership has increased, visitor income has doubled, and our rankings have improved. This is because the irrigation system has given us moisture control on the golf course to produce great playing surfaces.”

Versatility is the STrac 720's superpower

Step forward, a pedestrian turf maintenance system that offers EIGHT processes

Greenkeepers are discovering the STrac is a revolutionary new tool that lowers carbon footprints and boosts sustainability credentials.

Choose a 12.5 hp Honda engine to power the STrac's 720 hydraulic hitch or guiding handle. (Choose the 8.5 hp for the STrac 700.) Just connect a dedicated ST task cassette head to the STrac's hydraulic hitch, then the mechanical PTO drive, and you are ready to go.

Cassettes with a working width of 65 cm are available for overseeding, aerating, scarifying, coring, fraise mowing, sand filling, sod cutting and disc and dimple seeding.

The STrac is light, fast and versatile and allows site-wide uniformity of care and presentation. Challenging spots such as collars and transitions, or where a tractor is too big and heavy, suddenly are within reach.

Flexible rear wheel positions mean there are lots of options to manoeuvre close to edges.



The Wiedenmann / Maredo ST Collection

- STrac 700
- STrac 720
- The ST120 SodCutter uses a counterbalanced blade that slices smoothly, ensuring a clean cut
- The ST160 CleanCut-SandFiller creates a healthy top layer without leaving material on the surface
- The ST170 FlexFrase-Mower targets problem areas by stripping off the top turf layer to 20 mm, leaving a smooth surface for overseeding
- The ST200 Flex-Verticutter removes unwanted organic material in a clean way with minimal surface disruption
- The ST210 Vibe-Spike Aerator decompacts the surface profile to 60 mm using vibrating solid tines
- The ST230 HighSpeed-Corer offers solid and hollow tine options, improving aeration and compacted soil
- The ST418 VibeDisc-Seeder head has unique technology to plant the seed in slits and protect it from all kinds of outside influences
- The ST424 VibeSpike-Seeder creates a pattern of dimples where the seeds are placed



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Case Studies

GOGARBURN GOLF CLUB

Gogarburn GC is a progressive 12-hole parkland course close to Edinburgh Airport. Heading a team of three, course manager, Gregor Russell took delivery of his STrac 700 in August 2024, along with two cartridges – the High SpeedCorer and the Flex Verticutter. Here is his verdict:

"For a club like ours it's a very sustainable and cost-effective route. It's one power handle, so just one engine, ideal when you want to manage your carbon footprint. Task-specific machines eat budget quickly and need space to be housed securely. We don't have a huge machinery compound so the fact the STrac takes up little storage was a consideration. Travelling between working areas is literally walking pace which saves so much time and effort. On undulations the STrac is just as consistent as on a flat surface; its stability and robustness fill the operator with confidence. We have scope to add cassettes for other processes; seeding, for instance, will likely be our next one."

The HighSpeed-Corer:

"In September, we hollow cored greens to help rid an historic thatch layer. We got the required 75 mm depth at a quick but manageable pace. Cores came out so perfectly that the surface was left much cleaner than we bargained for. The whole operation was completed faster and to a better standard, getting the greens back in play with little disruption. Recovery was very favourable and member feedback was unanimously positive. Winter is now upon us and comparing our greens to previous years, we are in a good place."



The Flex-Verticutter:

"In September, we scarified tees and approaches. Previous scarifying implements struggled to get down to full depth. Our tees are quite small and prone to compaction. We chose 1.4 mm blades at 30 mm spacing and opted for depth of 25 mm. Again, work was neat and effortless, with vast quantities of unwanted organic matter pulled. Afterwards, we tested the depths on areas of high compaction and low compaction and the depth was exactly the same. We went on to overseed both tees and approaches. Germination of the new seed was impressive, the existing grass alongside thriving, putting us in great shape heading into winter."

THE POINT AT POLZEATH

Tom Collings, head greenkeeper at The Point at Polzeath, a year-round golf and lifestyle resort in North Cornwall, heads a team of six. They took delivery of a STrac 700 with VibeSpike Aerator and VibeDisc Seeder in September.

"Our STrac came on demo and never left, agreed on the spot. Everything is easy with no compromise on quality. The team can just jump on as and when required. It's really comfortable for the operator, even after several hours straight. Transporting it around the course on our small trailer works a treat. It brings versatility now and further down the line, as there's a host of other cassettes available."

The VibeSpike-Aerator:

"This one cassette was enough to convince us of the system. We have a Wiedenmann Terra Spike for deep aeration but needed something pedestrian for surface aeration down to 6 cm. The tines holes are precise, clean and neat. In October, when conditions were much poorer, its lightness and portability was an unexpected bonus, no tractor to consider. We've given it tasks in some critical areas and its speed and width really suit. We do a thorough job, but still complete it faster because of transfer time."

The VibeDisc-Seeder:

"We needed a slit seeder to follow on from surface aeration. Adjusting depth and slit spacing is straight forward. The seeding discs open the slits for the seeds to drop in. Dosing is accurate with nothing wasted."



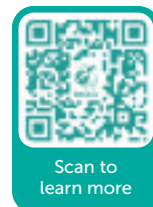
Combining Products



Above: Kit required to do effective jar testing. Please note balance needs to be of the appropriate precision (in this case 0.1 gram interval and a capacity of 1200 grams). **Right:** Boom sprayer



in your Spray Tank



Paul Morris, managing director of GBR Technology, explains the benefits of jar testing

Combining products into tank mixes is the norm – there's no point in spraying everything separately due to the time it takes and the disruption it causes. Some things work even better together than they do alone (but occasionally the reverse is true!). So, what to combine and how do you know which combinations work?

Many modern wetting agents are non-ionic in nature and have widespread mixing compatibility. On the most basic level, we are often concerned with ensuring things can mix and not form a precipitate that will clog your filters and nozzles and necessitate a tank clean out.

At GBR Technology, we are often asked to advise on what you can mix with what. Many weeks we'll be running a test in our lab to see if the suggested mix is suitable. While we have some data on which products can be successfully mixed, it is not possible for us to obtain a complete compatibility test for all of our products.

With at least 70 products on offer through GBR Amenity, that in itself offers a potential 70 x 69 combinations – a whopping 4,830 mixes have to be made if we were to trial each combination. Now, if we want to have three things in the spray tank that's 70 x 69 x 68 = 328,440! Mixing four products would run into the tens of millions of permutations! Of course, certain mixes are common – and people also mix products from different suppliers, which in turn opens up even more possibilities.

When trying a new mix, a 'jar test' makes sense for a number of reasons. It can be simpler than you realise – especially as you are converting litres in the real world to millilitres in your jar test, and kilograms to grams.

You'll need a weighing balance of suitable precision, a jar (or graduated beaker of 800ml to 1 litre is better still), some graduated measuring cylinders (25ml and 50ml are good) and syringes (3ml or 5ml – useful for adding things that are used at addition rates of just a few litres in the real world), and a spatula. Our ready-made kits have been carefully selected to help you complete a successful jar test without breaking the bank.

A good procedure for jar testing is as follows:

- 1) Add water to the jar using the same number of milliliters as you would use litres in your spray tank e.g. 600 litres in your spray tank becomes 600ml in your beaker (this is also 600 grams so you can either weigh it in with the balance or use the 600ml graduation if you have a graduated beaker).
- 2) Now add the first ingredient that you would add when making it at full capacity. Let's say here we are adding a residual wetting agent normally used at 20 litres – for the test, litres becomes milliliters so add 20ml to the water in the beaker.
- 3) Stir in until mixed.
- 4) Now add the next ingredient. Let's say here you were adding 25kg of urea in reality – so weigh in 25 grams of urea and stir in.
- 5) Continue with any other ingredients and stir in one by one, in order.
- 6) At the end of this process leave the mixture for the period of time it would be sitting in the spray tank and observe at the end if there is any precipitate or flocculation.

The above is useful to see what you can combine without blocking your nozzles and, in the majority of cases, this would be the only issue to look out for. However, it's still worth asking for advice from your supplier as some things could have detrimental effects when mixed, despite being clear and homogeneous. For example, most penetrant wetting agents would increase the potential of ammonium sulphate to cause turf scorch if mixed together; and where a tank mix has quite a low pH, certain materials can be hydrolysed (broken down) and may not perform their function as well.

Don't forget to use the right personal protective equipment when handling chemicals even on the relatively small scale of jar testing – suitable gloves and safety spectacles or goggles are always an important precaution.



Sharpest tool in the shed

Why Foley grinders are the equipment manager's choice

Maintaining turf equipment is about achieving precise, consistent cutting performance while maximising longevity and reliability.

Relief & spin grinding: The key differences

Relief Grinding focuses on restoring and sharpening the relief angle on the back of each blade, reducing the contact area between the reel blades and the cutting unit. This decreases friction, improves cutting efficiency and extends the life of the blades. Relief grinding also reduces the power needed to operate the mower, leading to lower energy consumption and operational costs.

Spin Grinding on the other hand, sharpens the entire cylindrical cutting edge of the reel. While spin grinding restores sharpness, combining it with relief grinding enhances efficiency and helps maintain original equipment manufacturer (OEM) specifications for optimal performance.

Foley's grinders excel at both processes, providing equipment managers with the tools to keep reels performing at their best.

Foley grinders: Built for equipment managers

1. Ease of Use

Features like the ACCU-Touch 3 control system, available on the 653 ACCU-Master and 633 ACCU-Pro, guide users step-by-step through both spin and relief grinding. This simplifies the process for new operators and ensures consistent, accurate results.

2. Precision and OEM Compliance

Foley grinders are designed to maintain the precision required to meet OEM specifications. By consistently delivering sharp, accurate results, the grinders help extend the time reels stay on cut, reducing maintenance frequency and improving operational efficiency.

3. Reliability and durability

With features like low-voltage relays

and automatic safety interlocks, Foley grinders provide dependable performance even in demanding workshop environments.

4. High-quality grinding wheels

Foley grinders utilise precision resinoid grinding wheels, specifically engineered for reel grinding tasks. These wheels ensure superior cutting accuracy and are designed to maintain sharpness across multiple grinding sessions.

5. Versatility for diverse needs

The grinders are built to handle a variety of reel configurations, from small units to large, high-blade-count models. Adjustable tooling and intuitive features make it easy to achieve accurate grinding setups, no matter the reel type.

6. Education and support

Features like the Trainer Mode on ACCU-Touch grinders walk operators through the grinding process, ensuring they can confidently manage both spin and relief grinding.



For more information, please visit www.foleyco.com
or www.prosportukltd.com

Contact: Ian Robson UK and Ireland distributor for Foley grinders
Mobile: 07779270501
Email: Prosportukltd@gmail.com

Benefits for greens staff and turf managers

Improved reel performance

- Our grinders ensure that reels are sharpened to the highest standards, maintaining cutting precision and reducing wear.
- This leads to longer intervals between maintenance, saving time and resources.

Healthier turf

- Sharp, properly ground reels provide clean, precise cuts, reducing stress on the grass.
- This promotes healthier, more visually appealing turf.

Autonomy in maintenance

- With Foley grinders, clubs can take full control of their reel maintenance schedules.
- This reduces reliance on external services and ensures that grinding is performed consistently, on time, and to the required standard.

Foley's innovative edge

These grinders set the standard in the industry, offering a blend of precision engineering, ease of use and durability. Models like the **653 ACCU-Master** and the **673 ACCU-Pro Automatic Grinder** are equipped with state-of-the-art features to simplify operation while delivering consistent, high-quality results.

What truly sets Foley apart is its commitment to empowering users. With detailed manuals, innovative automation and ongoing support, Foley ensures that equipment managers and greens staff have everything they need to succeed.

Why choose Foley grinders?

- Precision results: Maintains OEM specifications, ensuring superior sharpness and consistent cutting performance.
- User-friendly design: Intuitive controls and features like Trainer Mode make the grinding process straightforward and efficient.

- Durability and reliability: Built to withstand heavy use, Foley grinders deliver long-term performance, durability and dependability.
- Versatility: Suitable for a wide range of reel configurations, Foley grinders offer flexibility to meet any workshop's needs.

Conclusion

For equipment managers and greens staff, the choice of grinder can determine the quality and efficiency of reel maintenance.

Foley's grinders are purpose-built to handle both spin and relief grinding with precision, reliability and ease.

By investing in Foley's innovative solutions, clubs can ensure their equipment operates at peak performance, keeping turf pristine and maintenance schedules on track. Whether maintaining golf greens or athletic fields, Foley grinders provide the cutting edge needed to achieve superior results.

A year in Golf Course 2030



John Kemp is the Project Manager of Golf Course 2030

Researching sustainable agronomy and adapting to pesticide legislation

The past year has seen us continue our warm-season trials of biological controls, bio-stimulants and microorganisms while on-course trials look at solutions to increased legislation on pesticide use.

A key project began sharing its outcomes in late 2024. Golf Course 2030 has supported Swiss Golf's Golf Course Management without Pesticides, sharing the first of the factsheets on turf disease, weeds and pests, identifying possible avenues for course managers to consider and opportunities for further research and field trials.

Water focus

A changing and unpredictable climate means that course managers are having to focus more than ever on managing water. Whether handling extremes of rainfall or addressing pressures on traditional water sources, there is an urgent need for golf courses to invest in this key area.

There are now more clubs and courses accessing Golf Course 2030's Water Portal (golfcourse2030water.com) than ever. The platform not only contains climate data to help you plan for a future of extremes, but also insight into the various options and solutions, with case studies from clubs to demonstrate them.

At a research level, The R&A was delighted to support the FAIRWATER project in collaboration with STERF, delivered by NIBIO in Norway. This project is focused on exploring drought resistance, reduced water consumption and alternative water sources for golf course fairways.

Biodiversity benefits

As golf courses came to life in the spring, key stakeholders in the industry

gathered to explore one of golf's greatest opportunities – conserving and restoring nature.

Thirty industry bodies including federations and industry associations met in Paris to discuss what is being done across golf and biodiversity. The outcomes were exciting with federation and industry associations agreeing to form European Working Groups for key topics in golf and biodiversity. The working groups will focus on:

Actions and practical measures:

identifying tools and resources that can be produced to help golf course managers to improve biodiversity.

Communication: working with the industry to communicate the importance of, and opportunity presented by nature and biodiversity.

Data: collecting, reviewing and sharing current data, and looking at ways we can better measure the positive nature benefits that golf courses can provide.

Education and engagement:

understanding the current education programmes available to increase skills and knowledge and identifying opportunities for shared education programmes across Europe.

Alongside this strategic project, Golf Course 2030 continues to support the project Biodiversity and Multifunctionality of Golf Landscapes in collaboration with STERF. The R&A's Golf and Nature Study of 28 golf courses across Great Britain and Ireland entered its third year, and the partnership between The R&A and RSPB continued with Dr Marie Athorn supporting the industry through

education, course visits, priority species projects and engaging events.

Climate impact and adaptation

Golf courses, like wider society, are placing an emphasis on adapting to the changing climate. One area the industry is adapting for is coastal courses, which were impacted by the storm events of last winter.

In 2024, The R&A, working alongside England Golf, Golf Ireland, Scottish Golf and Wales Golf, launched three project outcomes focused on understanding and managing golf course coastlines. The central project, delivered by coastal engineering firm Royal Haskoning DHV, has provided tools and templates for golf courses to review and adopt as part of their long-term planning for the future.

Alongside adaption, we see an increased focus on reducing carbon emissions and better understanding the potential for golf courses to sequester atmospheric carbon. This year saw a case study into the carbon balance of two golf courses at Minchinhampton in England. To compliment this, a peer-reviewed scientific protocol was produced to help golf courses make robust direct-measurement calculations.

We already see golf facilities evolving and investing in new technologies to reduce their carbon emissions, and Golf Course 2030 will continue to explore the practical ways this can be achieved in 2025. **GI**



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

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