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BIGGA

Greenkeeper International

Steve Hardy

Why the Kenilworth course manager insists on being at the heart of his club's strategic plans

Practical Greenkeeping
Germany-based Andrew Kelly on dealing with extremes of climate

From Your Association
Have you seen the educational opportunities at Continue to Learn?

Obituary
Stephen Bernhard was a titan of our industry and a true ally of greenkeepers

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BIGGA

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

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

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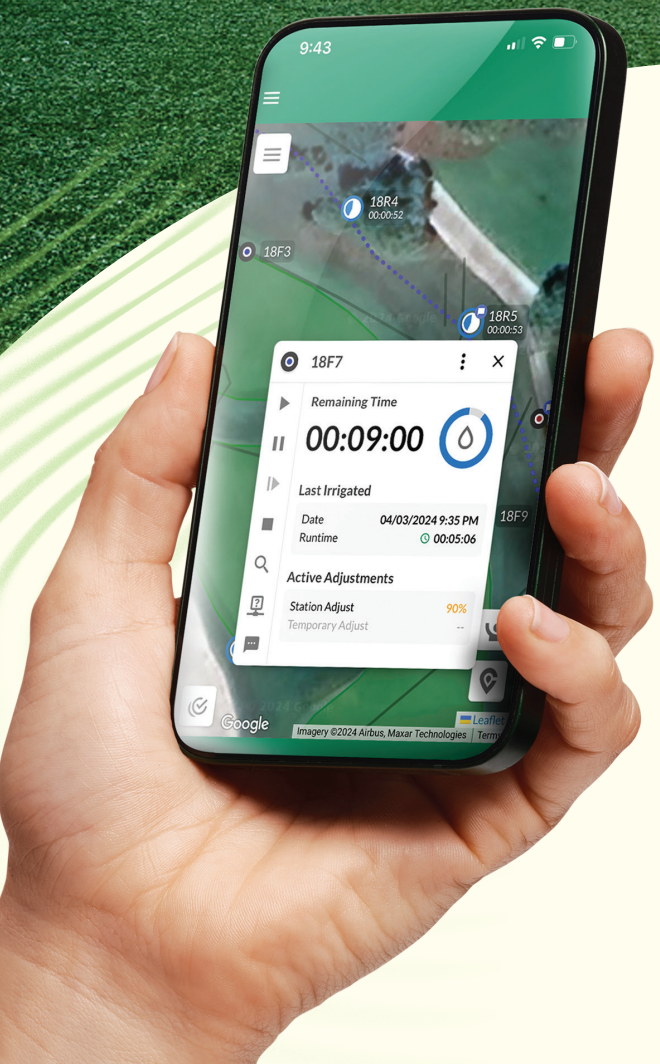

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BIGGA Partner

First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- Entries now open for the Syngenta Operation Pollinator Award 2026
- A greenkeeper's best friend: meet Reggie, the sausage-loving Lhasapoo

Lucy Rogers on her 'surreal' Rugby World Cup final experience

King's Lynn greenkeeper Lucy Rogers described her experience as part of the historic all-female grounds team at the Women's Rugby World Cup Final as "surreal".

Lucy was one of 15 women selected by the Grounds Management Association (GMA) to prepare the surface at Twickenham for the showpiece match – the first time in rugby history that an all-female team had overseen a global final.

"It was surreal, just hearing the crowd and working with such great women," she said. "Being part of an all-female ground staff team was amazing. It's not every day I get to do that, so it was a really great experience."

She heard about the opportunity after following Lord's groundswoman Meg Lay and the GMA on social media.

"They posted about it and I thought, 'well, that's definitely something I want to be a part of'," Lucy said. "So I applied and I'm so glad I was accepted."

The team gathered a few days before the final to meet each other, familiarise themselves with the stadium and undergo machinery training.

"We had a practice run on the Thursday night, Friday was set up with marking out and cutting and then Saturday was the same," she said.

The group were then given tickets to view the final from a box, with hosts England running out 33-13 winners.

"We were all really grateful for that," she said. "We thought we'd just have to watch it on TV, so for them to get us seats in a box was really appreciated."

The team included staff from venues such as Lord's and Wimbledon and fellow greenkeeper Anna Nilsson, from The Belfry.

"Me and Anna were the only golf greenkeepers there, so it was great to hear about the other side of things and those who work in rugby, cricket, tennis and football," Lucy said.

She now hopes more women will consider careers in turf management.

"I think people misunderstand and think it's just cutting grass. There's so much more to it. The opportunities to learn and progress are amazing. I think many would be surprised at what a great industry it is," she said. **GI**

The BIGGA Calendar

Luke Fitzpatrick, The Buckinghamshire

Entries open for Operation Pollinator Award

The Syngenta Operation Pollinator Award, which seeks to reward golf clubs and other sports facilities proactively creating areas for all pollinator insects and managing other ecology initiatives that enhance biodiversity, is inviting entries for its 2026 awards.

The Award, open for UK golf clubs and sport facilities, is being managed by the STRI and judged by an independent industry panel, including the Wildlife Trust, BIGGA and last year's Operation Pollinator Award winner, Melissa Winkworth of Goring & Streatley Golf Club.

Entry is a simple online questionnaire detailing what you do, what has been seen and how it is communicated with players and the public, along with how ecology initiatives fit with the overall turf management.

The closing date for entries is 21 November and the shortlist of finalists will be contacted for a discussion with leading STRI ecologist Stella Rixon, with the overall winner being announced at the BIGGA Awards Evening held at BTME, Harrogate in January.

Syngenta Turf Business Manager, Sarah Hughes, highlights that with all the golf clubs actively signed-up and engaged in the initiative, Operation Pollinator has been shown to have a place on every course.

"Together, the clubs involved with Operation Pollinator have created a vast network of habitats for pollinating insects and wider biodiversity in well managed habitats, alongside managing turf for golf and sport," she said. "Using Operation Pollinator to learn from each other's experiences and share best practices for both habitat management and communicating with clubs and players is a huge benefit. It's also a great way for the industry to demonstrate the value of golf as a positive ecological resource. We urge all clubs to get involved; sign-up now and enter for the Operation Pollinator Award."

Operation Pollinator aims to support golf clubs and sports facilities to establish and manage areas that will provide essential food resources and nesting habitat for pollinators, including native bees, butterflies and other insects.

The initiative brings together a community of turf managers to help each other and share their successes and experience, along with demonstrating the immense ecological value of managed amenity turf areas. GI

Scan Me to find out more

What's on this month

Dates for your diary

4 November
BIGGA East of Scotland Annual Gathering of Members – Easter Road Stadium, Edinburgh

5 November
Turf Matters 2025 – CAFRE Greenmount Campus

6 November
BIGGA Sheffield Section Xmas Golf Day – Doncaster

11 November
BIGGA West of Scotland Annual Gathering of Members - Erskine
Fundamentals of turfcare mechanics, Level 1 – Gleneagles
How to delegate with confidence – online

13 November
Leadership and management summit – Auchterarder

17 November
Basic machinery maintenance – Gleneagles

18 November
BIGGA Northern & Scotland seminar day – Carlisle

20 November
BIGGA Yorkshire Section Xmas Golf Day – Bradford
BIGGA Highlands & Islands Round Tables – Royal Dornoch

25 November
BIGGA Central Conference – Kings Norton

26 November
BIGGA London Section Turkey Trot – South Herts
BIGGA South West Scotland Annual Gathering of Members – Trump Turnberry

A greenkeeper's best friend – Reggie

Owner: Jason Brooks (course manager)
Course: Stover
Dog's name: Reggie
Age: Four
Breed: Lhasapoo
Favourite treat: Sausages
Naughtiest moment: Disappearing to the clubhouse looking for a treat
My dog is happiest when: Chasing a squirrel or just sitting on someone's lap

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

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> **John Quinn**

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“I love them. I think they’re great. This is something I definitely would recommend.” says John.

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From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- Bernhard Academy selects 10 BIGGA members for learning opportunity
- How last year's membership survey is driving change in the association

FTMI class of 2025

- Callum Atkinson, First Assistant Greenkeeper, The Wilmslow
- Tod Bannerman, Senior Greenkeeper, Taymouth Castle
- Patrick Brown, Senior Greenkeeper & Spray Technician, Fulwell
- George Edwards, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Walton Heath
- Alistair Hogg, Senior Greenkeeper, A&M Fife
- Alex Hudson, Assistant Greenkeeper, Sharpley
- Chris Keeler, Deputy Course Manager, Prestbury
- Ronan Latham, Senior Greenkeeper, JCB G&CC
- Toby Long, First Assistant, Broadstone
- Carl Moore, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Kings Norton
- William Moore, Deputy Course Manager, Kilworth Springs
- Euan Polson, First Assistant, Royal Aberdeen
- Phillip Shields, First Assistant Greenkeeper, The Blackwood
- Greg Smith, First Assistant, The Berkshire
- John Thornton, Irrigation Technician, Copt Heath

FTMI's class of 2025 gather at Ransomes Jacobsen Factory for launch event

The latest crop of FTMI delegates gathered for a fantastic launch event at the Ransomes Jacobsen factory in September.

Each year, Jacobsen and BIGGA invite a group of up-and-coming association members to participate in the training programme, which is credited with developing some of the most influential course managers and head greenkeepers.

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

The class of 2025 came together in Ipswich for a welcome meeting, a tour of the factory and an afternoon of education with leadership trainer Vicky Elliott-Potter.

After returning to the hotel for some food and networking, the group enjoyed an evening with the mentors, asking all their burning questions.

"It was a great chance for all of us to get acquainted and to chat with like-minded people making their way in the industry was really motivating," said John Thornton, irrigation technician at Copt Heath. "The classes were top-drawer and really pushed us to exercise the skills we perhaps don't always have the opportunity to flex.

"The main highlight over the two days for me was networking with the other delegates and the mentors. I felt like although as delegates we are all in similar positions in our careers, we all brought differing and useful insights in discussions, something we can all take away and utilise in the future." **GI**

The BIGGA National Board comprises the following members who volunteer their time to support the association:
Kevin Fish, Antony Kirwan, Gordon McKie, Peter Moore, Jonny Roberts, Lucy Sellick and Andy Smith
BIGGA President Ronnie Myles **BIGGA Chairperson** Steven Lloyd

Your future starts here

The Continue to Learn education programme at BTME is recognised as the largest event of its kind in Europe

There is no event in the turfcare calendar that carries the same sense of anticipation as BTME, where thousands of greenkeepers and industry professionals come together to learn, share and reconnect.

Central to its enduring appeal is the Continue to Learn education programme, which delivers a packed schedule of seminars, workshops and networking sessions designed to inspire and develop every level of the profession.

From technical training and leadership development to personal wellbeing and business management, the programme offers an unrivalled opportunity to expand knowledge and exchange ideas with peers from across the industry.

It's a chance to step away from the daily routine and invest in the skills that make a lasting difference on and off the course.

For attendees, BTME and Continue to Learn represent a vital source of motivation, perspective and community. It's where challenges are met with solutions and where shared experiences remind delegates why they love the profession in the first place.

Conference speaker Kevin Fish, who will also be delivering a class on avoiding the banana skins of leadership, always leaves Harrogate with a revitalised sense of optimism.

"There's something great about looking at your notes at the end of a conference and realising how much you didn't know when you arrived a few days earlier," he said.

"I like it even more when it's an area of the golf business that I know less about as the gains are so great – and that's why I love BTME and the Continue to Learn programme.

"I find greenkeepers are very willing to share their knowledge – they are as open and generous with their insight as any industry professionals I know.

"Our industry can beat good people up, but BTME has a great way of cleansing the soul, charging the batteries and sending you back to work with a renewed attitude. I love it."

Renowned ecologist Bob Taylor has been contributing his expertise to the event for many years and its value remains undiminished in his eyes.

"The biggest thing about BTME is the way it provides a platform for

Dr Thom Nikolai, Michigan State University
Thom is known worldwide as the Doctor of Green Speed due to his research focussing on golf course putting green mechanical and cultural practices that increase turfgrass health and customer satisfaction.

Kevin Fish, CCL
A former club manager at the Glen Golf Club in North Berwick, Kevin was named the UK Golf Club Manager of the Year in 2004 and was in the first group of Europeans to be awarded the CCM (Certified Club Manager) qualification in 2008. Now a BIGGA board member, he delivers training, consultancy and global education in governance, planning and leadership.

Bob Taylor
Bob founded Bob Taylor Ecology Ltd and is a consulting ecologist with vast experience in habitat and species management within golf. Working closely with The R&A, the GEO Foundation and leading architects, he has helped embed ecological thinking into modern course design, proving that great golf and thriving wildlife can go together.

> BTME has a great way of cleansing the soul"

General Manager and Course Manager Symposium

A strong working relationship between general manager and course manager is crucial to the success of any golf club. In that spirit, BIGGA and the GCMA will join forces at BTME 2026 for a two-day symposium, taking place on Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 January. Designed to strengthen understanding between managers and greenkeeping teams, the event will bring together leaders from both disciplines to share knowledge, foster collaboration and explore key topics affecting golf facilities. Themes for discussion will include sustainability, financial performance, membership engagement and future challenges for clubs.

Continue to Learn: a five-day extravaganza

Running from Sunday 18 to Thursday 22 January, the industry's leading professional development event will, for the first time, feature seminars on the Thursday – extending the programme to a full five days of learning and networking.

Delegates can look forward to an outstanding line-up of expert-led conferences, classes and seminars, alongside key events such as The R&A Clubhouse, the General Manager and Course Manager Symposium and the Turf Equipment Technicians' Conference.

BTME itself runs from Tuesday to Thursday, combining exhibition, education and social opportunities. The BIGGA Awards 2026 will also be unveiled during the week, celebrating excellence across the greenkeeping profession.

greenkeepers to talk to each other," he said. "Greenkeepers listen to other greenkeepers. Being able to talk to like-minded colleagues is vital, and that's one of the biggest positives of the event.

"It's a place for sharing thoughts and opinions, listening to other people speak, hearing a different point of view – that's how we learn."

Many in attendance travel from far and wide, descending on North Yorkshire from all corners of the globe, and the world-class venue provides a fitting stage, as well as a welcome shelter from the British winter.

"I have given presentations in over 30 countries and I can say with all honesty that Harrogate in January provides the perfect weather to stay indoors and attend sessions," joked Thom Nikolai. "The trade show is also the most unique in that it is expansive yet has a feeling of intimacy."

Thom will be speaking at the Conference and delivering a class on 'The ABCs of golf course management'.

"The session could equally be called 'Show me the data', as it intertwines the science along with research results regarding both cultural and mechanical practices," he explained. "If you want the facts regarding putting green maintenance, you should enjoy the discussions that will ensue." **GI**

First Green puts youngsters on the path to a career in greenkeeping

A group of students from Hilbre High School enjoyed their First Green experience so much they have taken their first steps towards a potential career in greenkeeping

Royal Liverpool played host to a First Green event last October and five of the boys who attended were soon asking Course Manager James Bledge about opportunities at the renowned links venue.

"I was at Liverpool's Champions League match with Real Madrid when my phone started buzzing – they'd all sent their CVs at the same time," said James. "I explained there were no apprenticeship places then but offered weekend bunker-raking opportunities instead. That's how it started."

The boys have since joined a roster that rotates as older students move on. Training began in September for the latest recruits, all three of whom happen to be called Charlie and all are keen golfers. Prior to the First Green visit, however, they had little knowledge of what greenkeeping involved.

"First Green introduces them to everything about the role," James added. "It shows how much detail goes into maintaining a course: machines, fertilisers, construction, irrigation, wildlife, all of it. The biggest point is exposing them to jobs they'd never considered before."

For James, the initiative offers a valuable way to highlight career pathways while tackling staff shortages. Apprenticeships are central to that vision, and he is committed to giving responsibility early.

"I loved my apprenticeship, and I give the same opportunities to my apprentice Finn," he explained. "He does almost everything, gaining real responsibility. Kids are the future – you can take them on, train them properly and mould them."

Looking ahead, he is convinced that the scheme will have a long-term impact on the industry.

"Potentially in two years, some of these boys could start as apprentices," he said. "By the end of the decade it will be common to have people starting out in the industry who had their first taste of it at First Green.

"What we need to do, especially as course managers, is provide that platform to involve as many young people as possible, so I would encourage anyone who can host an event to do so."

- *Get involved by scanning the QR code*

Scan Me to find out more

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.

BIGGA Delegation 2026 announced

BIGGA and Premium Partner Bernhard Academy have selected 10 association members to engage in one of the sports turf industry's most prestigious learning opportunities.

Every two years, Bernhard Academy invites 10 BIGGA members to attend the Golf Course Superintendent Association of America's (GCSAA) Conference and Trade Show, with the 2026 edition taking place in Orlando, Florida.

A spot on the delegation marks out a candidate as among the most dedicated and talented ambassadors for the golf greenkeeping sector. In the intervening years, a delegation from the USA visits BTME.

With experiences designed to elevate the careers of those in attendance, the delegation is a week-long educational trip that features site visits as well as seminars, networking events and educational demonstrations.

The successful delegates will also be invited to convene at BTME in January, where they will meet former participants in the programme, many of whom have gone on to great success in their careers.

Michael Sage, head greenkeeper at Knowle Golf Club, said: "I'm really grateful to have been chosen for the BIGGA Delegation to the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show.

"It's a fantastic opportunity to learn from industry leaders, see how things are done on an international stage, and bring back new ideas that can help us at Knowle to keep improving.

"My goal is to gain fresh perspectives, especially around sustainability and course presentation, and share anything useful with my team."

Ryan Gall, a greenkeeper at Loch Lomond Golf Club, expressed his pride at being chosen to represent UK greenkeeping on the global stage.

"I'm absolutely delighted to have been selected," he said. "To be chosen is a massive career achievement for me and I feel incredibly proud to be part of such a prestigious group.

"I'm really looking forward to experiencing the event first-hand, meeting greenkeepers and industry leaders from around the world and seeing the very latest innovations in turf management.

"I've no doubt it will be a hugely valuable learning experience, and I'm excited to bring back new knowledge and ideas. Huge thanks to BIGGA and Bernhard for making this possible."

The GCSAA Conference and Trade Show runs from 2–5 February 2026. As part of their duties, the delegates will attend the BIGGA stand during the conference, speaking to visitors about the association and UK greenkeeping. **GI**

> "It's a fantastic opportunity to learn from industry leaders"

SELECTED CANDIDATES

BIGGA DELEGATION
SPONSORED BY BERNHARD | ACADEMY
ORLANDO 26
JAN 31 – FEB 05

Andrew Gibbs
Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Sunningdale Golf Club

John Stewart
Course Manager, Minchinhampton Golf Club

Ruth Etches
First Assistant, Trentham Golf Club

Ian Kirwan
Course Manager, Bramhall Golf Club

Ryan Gall
Greenkeeper, Loch Lomond Golf Club

Michael Sage
Head Greenkeeper, Knowle Golf Club

Dan Kendle
Head Greenkeeper, Newquay Golf Club

Jack Wellings
Deputy Course Manager, JCB Golf and Country Club

Michael Gibbons
Greenkeeper, The Wilmslow Golf Club

Stuart Fergusson
Deputy Course Manager, Trump Turnberry

The BIGGA Picture

With Scott Reeves, Head of Membership

Your feedback is shaping the future

A year on from the membership survey, Head of Membership Scott Reeves reflects on how its findings are driving change

When we launched our membership survey last year, our goal was to take a thorough look at what BIGGA offers and how we are perceived.

We wanted to understand why people choose to join – or not join – the association, explore opportunities to grow membership, and road-test new ideas.

More than 1,100 people took part, including around a third who weren't members, giving us an honest and detailed view of who our current and potential members are, what we're doing well, and where we can do things differently.

The findings painted a broadly positive picture. Two-thirds of respondents said BIGGA has contributed positively to their career, 73% believe our services are relevant to them, and 63% said membership boosts credibility as a turfcare professional. The words most often used to describe us were helpful, supportive, educational, useful and professional – exactly the kind of feedback any membership association would hope to receive.

That said, a key message from the survey was that we can be better at communicating the breadth of what we do. Many respondents admitted they hadn't realised the extent to which BIGGA advocates for greenkeepers behind the scenes – in industry forums, at national level, and with key stakeholders within the world of golf and beyond.

> "It is a challenge we readily embrace"

Representation is an ongoing commitment and we'll continue to strengthen those relationships to improve working conditions and recognition across the profession.

The survey's findings are something we often refer to in conversation, informing our thinking and broader strategic approach. We are working on a number of initiatives inspired directly by the findings, so watch this space.

We also learned more about how needs differ at each career stage. Early-career greenkeepers are the most engaged with BIGGA's education and development opportunities, while those later in their careers often want to "give back" by supporting others. That's something we are keen to enable.

While there are some hurdles to overcome to meet expectations across the board, it is a challenge we readily embrace.

The survey reminded us that BIGGA is already doing many things well, but it also provided the data to guide how we modernise and evolve.

Some of the changes inspired by your feedback are already under way; others will take shape in the months and years ahead. Most importantly, the survey wasn't a one-off exercise – it's become a foundation for how we plan and prioritise our work going forward. **GI**

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‘Nature calls the shots’

Antony Kirwan,
South East

As we head towards the end of another year, it’s fair to say 2025 has been one of the toughest I can remember

I have been in this industry for 36 years, spending 18 of those as a course manager, and each one has brought its challenges – but this one has been something else.

The prolonged dry spells through spring and summer made water management a delicate balancing act, and while we’ve been blessed with some fine golfing weather, it’s left many of us wondering how our water resources will hold up in 2026 if the trend continues.

That said, it’s always worth remembering that, as greenkeepers, there are things beyond our control. Nature calls the shots, and all we can do is adapt, plan ahead and be transparent with our clubs and members about the realities of the conditions we face.

> “Many of us got into greenkeeping because we love golf”

One thing that never changes is the sense of community within greenkeeping, and nowhere is that better seen than at BTME and Continue to Learn. For me, it’s the most important week of the year – not just for BIGGA, but for everyone involved in our profession.

It’s a chance to reconnect with colleagues, share stories, swap ideas and, quite simply, enjoy the company of people who understand the job like no one else can. The educational side continues to set the standard across the industry. Credit to the Continue to Learn team, who somehow raise the bar every year. Whether you’re new to the industry, a long-serving course manager looking to sharpen your skills, or just in need of a refresher on a topic you’ve become a little rusty on, there’s always something to take away. The growing collaboration with partners such as the GCMA and The R&A only adds to the strength of that programme.

On a personal note, I was disappointed not to be able to take part in this year’s BIGGA National Championship at Royal Liverpool and Wallasey. It’s always a fantastic event, but what really struck me this time was the sheer quality of the field. Among the 80-plus competitors, the majority were off single figures, with several plus-handicappers and even county champions in the mix. It’s something we should be proud of as an industry.

Many of us got into greenkeeping because we love golf and wanted to stay close to it. Events like the National, along with the many volunteering and career opportunities that can take you far and wide, remind us that, while not everyone can make a living as a pro, greenkeeping offers the next best thing – a job that keeps you connected to the sport you love. **GI**

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Steven Peffers (GK)
Connor Clarkson (GK)
Montrose Golf Links

Andrew Renton (GK)
Jake MacMillan (AGK)
Machrihanish Golf

William Mckenzie (AGK)
Royal Aberdeen

George McGeechan (AGK)
Broomieknowe

Rhuraidh Blair (APP)
Machrie Bay

Zachary Bell (APP)
Dumbarnie Golf Links

International

Mitchell Eickhoff (I)
Otter Creek Golf Course, USA

Christopher Sendao (I)
Cedar Hill Golf Course, Canada

Martin Slater (I)
Fontana Golf & Sports Club, Austria

Roberto Nardari (I)
Bernardus Golf, Netherlands

Brien Gaffney (I)
County Cavan, Ireland

Michael Robson (I)
Kyle Darren Hair (I)
Engelmann Turfcare GmbH, Germany

Northern

Nigel Wild (HG)
Coniston Shooting Ground

Stephen Arnott (GK)
Warkworth

Jack Stevenson (GK)
Dore & Totley

Sean Law (GK)
St Andrews Links Trust

Lee Scott (GK)
Kieran Sandilands (AGK)
Pike Hills

Louis Ruddock (AGK)
Childwall

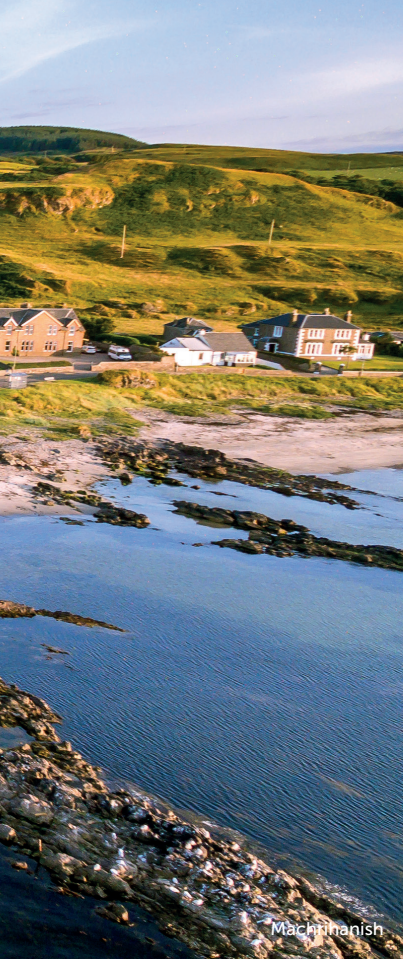
Andrew Morrow-Coates (AGK)
Robert Moore (AGK)
The Oaks

Liam Jackson (APP)
Heysham

Kyle Smith (APP)
Roundhay

Key

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



Eddie Murray (APP)
Wetherby

Thomas Hill (APP)
Middlesbrough Brass Castle

Nick Smith (APP)
Leeds

Christopher Hayes (A)
iDig

Central

Roland Moore (GK)
Foxhills

Michael Richmond (GK)
Thorpe Wood Golf Course

Christopher Stetch (AGK)
Market Drayton

Jack Panter (APP)
Jaydn Kettle (APP)
Leicester City FC

South East

Gareth Hier (GK)
North Hants

Mark Hutchins (GK)
Westerham

Piotr Pedziwiatr (M)
The Wentworth Club

Robert Widdows (AGK)
Ashley Field (AGK)
Adam Pooley (AGK)
Stockley Park

Mariusz Buino (AGK)
St George's Hill

Jonathan Rogers (APP)
Cherry Lodge

Jack Danton (APP)
Farleigh

Christopher Potter (APP)
Slinfold G&CC

Evan Griffiths (APP)
Risebridge

South West & South Wales

Harry Critchley (GK)
Axe Cliff

Nick Hollier (GK)
Lyme Regis

Harvey Rosselli (AGK)
Minchinhampton

Max Bates (AGK)
Cottrell Resort

Jason Fullard (AGK)
The Warren G&CC

Jack Warren (AGK)
Hockley

Craig Adams (AGK)
Weymouth

Ben Crispin (AGK)
Thurlestone

Daniel Collins (APP)
The Mendip

Owen Unsworth (APP)
Whitsand Bay

Tom Hunt (APP)
Tiverton

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Continuing Professional Development

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

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Mark Rollason, Tehidy Park

Danny Gallagher, Tydd St Giles Golf

James Hook, Stoke Rochford

Dan Freeborough, Ganton

Ruth Etches, Trentham

Adam Mitchell, Tehidy Park

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

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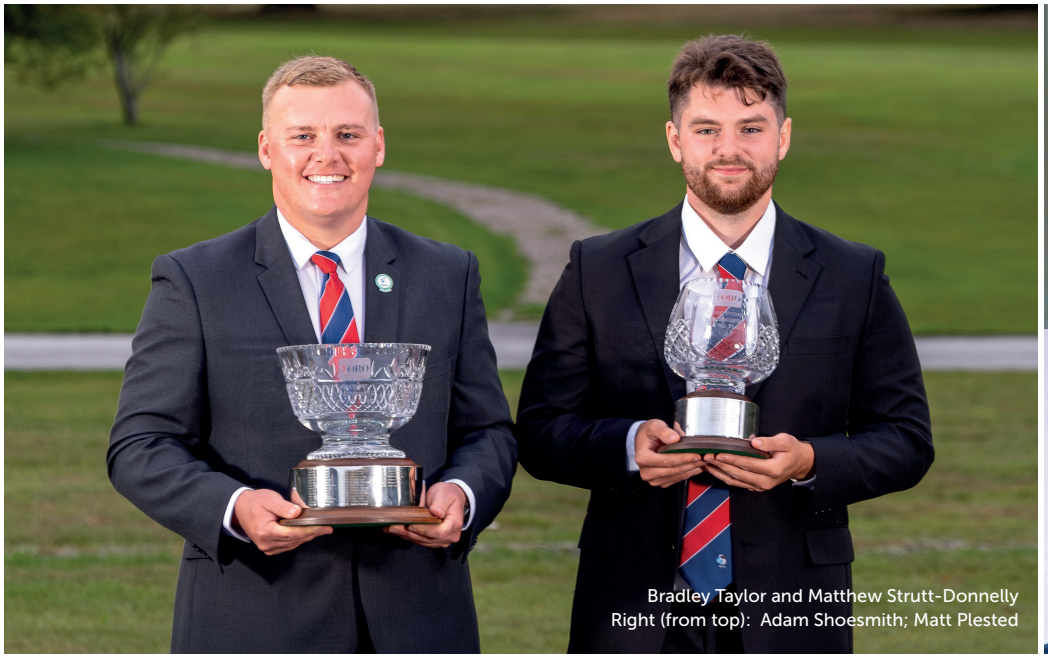
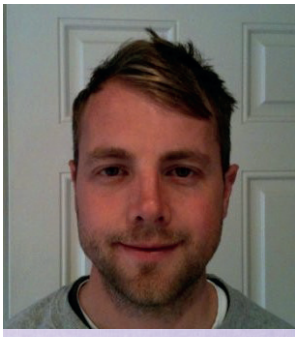
Members & Careers

Where we meet your fellow turf professionals and share their stories

- Obituary: Stephen Bernhard, visionary founder of Bernhard and Company
- Kenilworth Course Manager Steve Hardy on his career progression so far





Bradley Taylor and Matthew Strutt-Donnelly
Right (from top): Adam Shoesmith; Matt Plested

Endorsers praise two award-winning greenkeepers destined for big things

Two young greenkeepers hailed as future stars of the profession have earned glowing praise from the mentors who endorsed them for this year's Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards.

Bradley Taylor, first assistant at Beau Desert, was named Student Greenkeeper of the Year, while Stoneham apprentice Matthew Strutt Donnelly claimed the Young Student title. Both were put forward by industry figures who have seen their talent and commitment first-hand.

Adam Shoesmith, formerly a tutor at Myerscough College and now operations manager at Elite Sports Turf, first taught Bradley as a Level 2 student four years ago.

"He was an excellent greenkeeping student and achieved a distinction in his end-point assessment," he said. "From day one he's been professional, articulate, and consistent. Some find presenting in front of greenkeepers and industry people daunting, but Brad's communication skills gave him an edge."

Adam said he had "no hesitation" in endorsing Brad, adding: "He's driven, he presents himself superbly, and he has the temperament for it. He's destined to be a course manager."

Matt Plested, course manager at Stoneham, was not at all surprised by Matthew's success.

"He was impressive from day one – knowledgeable, clever, and likes a bit of banter as well," he said. "We could see the potential straight away."

Matthew's willingness to embrace opportunities has been a key factor in his rapid early development.

"He's not afraid to step out of his comfort zone and that's the best way to grow," said Matt.

"I'm not expecting to keep him forever; there are so many amazing opportunities to travel and experience things in this industry, and I want to help my team achieve whatever goals they have."

Beyond Matthew's work ethic and technical knowledge, he shares other traits with fellow winner Bradley that will stand both in good stead.

"He's a clever guy, but more than that, he's just great to be around," Matt said. "Personality and enthusiasm take you a long way in this industry." GI

‘A true giant of our industry’

Stephen Bernhard, the visionary founder of Bernhard and Company, passed away in October, leaving an indelible mark on greenkeeping

The turf care industry mourned the loss of one of its most influential figures following the passing of Stephen Bernhard, founder of Bernhard and Company, at the age of 79.

A visionary whose ideas and energy helped shape the modern profession, Stephen's impact has been felt across generations of greenkeepers and turf managers around the world.

From his early work in his family's horticultural business through to building a globally respected engineering and education enterprise, Stephen dedicated his life to advancing turf maintenance standards and professional development.

His belief that learning and collaboration underpin excellence became the guiding principle of Bernhard and Company and continues to influence its work today.

Stephen's long association with BIGGA is among the most enduring aspects of his legacy. For more than 25 years, he was a driving force behind the BIGGA Delegation to the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show, giving our members invaluable international exposure and experience. His establishment of the Bernhard Academy further reflected his lifelong commitment to education and the sharing of knowledge.

"Stephen was a true giant of our industry whose influence reached far beyond his own company," said BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton. "His passion for education, innovation and the advancement of greenkeeping has left an indelible mark on countless careers and lives.

"Through his support of the BIGGA Delegation and the creation of the Bernhard Academy, he championed opportunity and professional growth for all. Stephen will be sorely missed, but his legacy will endure for generations."

Stephen founded Bernhard and Company in the early 1980s and, over several decades, guided the business from its roots in precision engineering and horticulture to become a world-renowned leader in turf technology.

Driven by his belief in lifelong education, Stephen established the Bernhard Academy in 2019, designed to provide outstanding opportunities for professional growth and knowledge sharing within the turf industry.

His commitment to nurturing talent and supporting others has touched an immeasurable number of lives and careers, and his legacy will continue to inspire the next generations of turf professionals for years to come.

Stephen's achievements were recognised with the Queen's Award for Enterprise in International Trade 2008 – an honour of which he was immensely proud. Most recently, at this year's BTME, Stephen was also awarded BIGGA's Outstanding Contribution Award, recognising his lifelong dedication to supporting the industry that he so much loved.

Steven Nixon, Managing Director of Bernhard and Company, said: "Stephen's passing is an immense loss to the global turf industry and to all of us at Bernhard and Company. His influence is felt in every part of our business – in the way we innovate, the way we work and the way we support each other and our customers.

"Over his many years of involvement with the BIGGA Delegation and beyond, he touched so many lives with his generosity, wisdom and passion. His legacy will continue for years to come, inspiring us to uphold the values he lived by every day."

Stephen is survived by his wife Jenny, children Alex and James and two grandchildren and will be remembered as a pioneer, mentor, friend and a man whose vision and compassion transformed an industry and built a company that continues to thrive on the foundations he laid. **GI**

> "His legacy will endure for generations"

The origins of Bernhard and Company

Stephen Bernhard worked in his father Jeffrey's turf nursery and landscaping business from a young age. He expanded the export division of his father's business and created several other companies before purchasing Atterton and Ellis in Suffolk and renaming it Bernhard and Company. Throughout its history, Bernhard and Company has built a reputation for providing a range of innovative sharpening tools alongside educational support for greenkeepers and groundspeople. Working alongside Jacobsen, they developed a non-contact blade-sharpening programme and became a leading name in spin grinding in the United States in the 1980s with its renowned Anglemaster and Express Dual machines. This culminated in Bernhard and Company becoming the first UK company to exhibit at the GCSAA's annual trade show.

Greenkeeper Files

Steve Hardy

A thirst for knowledge and a willingness to invest in his own development are qualities that have seen the Kenilworth course manager establish a glowing reputation

Steve Hardy's career journey has been driven by healthy ambition and an undimmed curiosity. From volunteering as a teenager at a local nine-hole course to becoming course manager at the highly regarded Kenilworth, he has invested heavily in his own development along the way. With several self-funded qualifications under his belt and a first-class honours degree to his name, the results have been impressive.

That dedication has also translated into results for the clubs he has worked for, and the impact he is having at Kenilworth extends well beyond the playing surfaces.

We caught up with Steve to find out what motivates him and how he has established himself as a key part of his club's strategic vision.

How and why did you get into greenkeeping?

Like many in the industry, I fell into it. I'd played competitive golf since I was six or seven, but by 15 or 16 I wasn't sure what I wanted to do - only that I liked golf and sport.

My local course was Copsewood Grange, a nine-hole club. One summer holiday, when I was 16, I went down there. A school friend, Ashley Bulpitt - now the head greenkeeper - was working at the club. I got talking to him and liked the look of the work: the kit, the tractors and the changes being made after the previous greenkeeper retired.

I asked if they needed an extra pair of hands. I didn't want paying, I just wanted to help with strimming, bunkers, things like that. My grandad was a member and had been president, so I already had a connection.

I spent three months volunteering while working evenings at Tesco. By September's Club Championship, I was both setting up the course and playing in it. Soon after, a position came up and, because of my experience with greens mowers and tractors, I got the job.

Did you have any sense at that early stage of how much science and technical know-how was required to excel in the industry?

Absolutely not. I asked a lot of questions, my head greenkeeper at the time would say that about me, but it was all about machinery, visuals and presentation. I'd ask, 'Why can't we do this? Why can't we do that?'. There was always a reason, but I was curious.

As the year went on, I realised there was much more to it: disease cycles, the need to spray greens regularly. As a player, I'd had no idea how often they were sprayed or fertilised. At 17 I said, 'How do I get on that sprayer?'. I was told I'd need a licence, so I asked the club to put me through it. Spraying was my first qualification. I passed, enjoyed it and did a lot of spraying with the head greenkeeper, Gary Compton. He'd take me along, show me how to mix, then hand it over: 'You've got your licence now, it's up to you.'

Within months, my next question was: 'How do you make a career out of this? How do you progress or earn more?' The answer was: get your Level 2. That way, the club could offer me a better salary.

You started off in a small team – how did that inform your development?

There were only three of us for the nine holes, so I was exposed to everything – verti-draining, small irrigation repairs, fertilising greens, every mower they had. With a small team, you had to use everything because there was no alternative. We also dealt with tree work and flood management. The site used to flood in winter, sometimes up to five feet, so dealing with the aftermath and debris clearance was an eye-opener.

After five years there, I kind of outgrew the role. I'd completed my Level 2 and was itching to do Level 3. I knew that was the only way to improve my salary and position. I was looking at adverts for senior greenkeepers, deputies, even assistants with decent salaries, and they all required Level 3. That became my goal: finish Level 3 as soon as I could.

Halfway through my Level 3, a position came up at The Warwickshire Golf Club, which was a completely different venue – a 45-hole facility, and although the hotel wasn't built yet, it was still a very big operation, and it appealed to me.

How did you go about moving on from the place that had offered you your start in the industry?

I approached Gary and said I'd been offered this job. It wasn't a huge increase in money, but I thought I'd learn more there. As it happened, Gary had worked at The Warwickshire 10 or 15 years earlier when it was being constructed. He said he'd be sad to see me go, because in a small team my skills were hard to replace, but he encouraged me. He told me, 'If it doesn't work out, you know where we are'. That was really nice to hear.

Was it difficult to adapt to a new facility and being part of a bigger team?

Surprisingly, when I arrived, I was one of the more qualified members of the team, even though I was only in my early 20s with five years' experience. Because of my skill set, I could step straight in and do a lot of the tasks.

About six months in, I finished my Level 3 and also did my chainsaw certificate. I actually self-funded that. I approached the course manager, Daniel Rowe, and said I wanted to do the course. With over 10,000 trees on site, I felt it was important. Daniel agreed but said the training budget was limited and others had been waiting. So I said, 'No problem, I'll pay the £500 myself'. They were over the moon with that. A couple of months later, someone told me about BIGGA's Refund of Fees Scheme, so I claimed a good chunk of it back anyway.

You sound very driven – self-funding courses, pushing for qualifications. Did you at that stage already have an eye on becoming a course manager one day?

Looking back now, definitely. At the time, it was more about doing the job really well. I've always liked to be prepared and understand my subject. I absorb information quickly, whether from courses, verbal instruction or hands-on practice. But I did know early on that to build a career, you have to make yourself more valuable, and you do that by being more qualified, more knowledgeable and versatile. That was instilled in me by my first course manager.

Do you remember an early moment where that really hit home?

Back at Copsewood when I was 18, we had a superb agronomist, Peter Jones, who came out each year to walk the course. Gary would bring everyone along. Peter is this very experienced and knowledgeable person, and I didn't make the most of being in his company back then. I remember walking to one of the greens with him and he suddenly asked me, 'How much nitrogen have you put on this year?' – I had no idea what he was talking about. I said I didn't know, and I could see the disappointment in his face. I went home that night determined never to be in that position again. That stuck with me.

You've got a degree – why did you take that step and how did you find time for it?

I was an assistant at The Warwickshire for two years, spending eight or nine years there in total. When my

> "To build a career, you have to make yourself more valuable"

deputy was promoted within the company, which owned The Warwickshire and 15 other sites, I stepped into the deputy role after a successful interview. The general manager was impressed with my self-funding initiatives and drive. One interview question was: 'Where do you see yourself in five years?'. Naively, I said I wanted to be in the course manager's chair, while he was sitting opposite. He challenged me, asking how I'd do that if he was still there. I realised I needed to make myself more valuable, so I focussed on excelling in the deputy role, managing 18 holes and becoming the main spray technician.

When it came to further education, I chose the foundation degree over the HNC because it was more science-based, covering the chemical, biological and soil aspects I was keen on. Funding was a challenge at £1,500 per year, but I took out a student loan, supported by my wife's advice. The R&A scholarship in year two eased the burden and boosted my CV.

I then moved straight on to a BSc, adding 10–15 hours a week on top of work. The final year coincided with lockdown, but I was delighted to graduate with a first-class honours degree.

You first stepped into a course manager role at The Leicestershire – how did that come about?

I knew I had this degree I needed to use, and at the time my

FTMI: Shaping course managers of the future

FTMI was a real turning point for me. I was lucky to be on it alongside others who are now course managers. At the time, we were all deputies or assistants, but from very different clubs. That was eye-opening in itself.

Over four days in Ipswich, we heard from four experienced course managers about their projects, mistakes and lessons learned. My mentor was James Bledge, who is always full of energy and enthusiasm. Lee Strutt also supported and reinforced the view that today's course manager role is less about cutting grass and more about managing assets and shaping the club's future.

We also had inspiring input from Grant Frogley, Matt Plested and David Cole, all at the top of the industry. What struck me most was the generosity of time from mentors, many of whom gave up holiday to be there. The message was clear: communicate well, get budgets right, set priorities and don't try to fix everything at once.

FTMI made me realise agronomy is maybe 30 per cent of the job – the rest is people, assets and management. It shifted my focus towards budgeting, presentations and communication and gave me confidence that there were many different pathways to becoming a course manager.

course manager was hinting at retirement. That left me in limbo. I think a lot of people can relate – staying in a role waiting for someone senior to move on. My mentality was: 'Well, Steve's been here 20 years, Dave's been here 32, surely it'll come to me next.' Looking back, that was naïve and not advice I'd give anyone.

In 2021, a position came up at The Leicestershire as course manager. After Covid, I was frustrated and still wanted to do something with my degree. I knew I was young, had energy and decided to go for it.

I didn't tell anyone I'd applied, but I put everything into it – walking the course several times before interview, speaking to contacts and trying to understand the situation. The club had had the same manager for over 20 years, and parts of it looked tired. There were quick wins to be had but also unknowns, like the machinery fleet and irrigation.

At interview, I found a supportive committee and board. They shared their challenges, I explained my ambitions, and we were aligned. It felt the perfect chance to put my stamp on something and test my knowledge.

What challenges did you face when you first stepped into the role?

Pretty quickly, I realised water security was a huge issue. The club abstracted out of a brook under a licence, but they'd already had warnings from the Environment Agency about the pump set and abstraction method. It was a fragile system, and the risks were obvious.

So, right from the start, I was front and centre with

How to make yourself more valuable – Steve's top tips

Build your toolkit
By that, I mean really know your subject – whether it's agronomy, machinery or budgets. When you speak to board members or volunteers, know what you're talking about. And if you don't know, admit it and promise to find out.

Conduct yourself well
Manners cost nothing, and even when people criticise, listen and explain your reasoning calmly. You will gain support and influence people if you can present yourself this way.

Pick your conversations carefully
Sometimes, it's better to have a quiet word with an individual than to argue in a full committee meeting. Find out their objectives, align them with yours and look for compromise.

Be realistic
Understand the business you're in. Don't ask for a million-pound irrigation system if the club can't afford it. Focus on projects that make sense and that members will see value in.

And remember – it's not your golf course!
This was a hard one for me to accept but an important one for us all to grasp. You're a steward for a period of time. Decisions won't always go your way, and that's fine. Pick your battles and move on when necessary.

the committee and GM Simon Collingwood, presenting to members in forums about water security and what needed to be done. I also found myself dealing with a lot of external stakeholders – the Environment Agency, Severn Trent, England Golf – all within my first few weeks. I remember having this moment about three or four weeks in, thinking, 'Oh, this is fully on me now'. It was a steep learning curve, but it forced me to step up straight away.

How do you communicate fresh ideas to a team who have been doing things a certain way for many years?
I like to think I'm a people person, so I didn't go in criticising everything. At The Leicestershire, I started with the basics — good housekeeping. The sheds were a mess, cluttered with broken machinery, and there was no system for storing equipment. I spent the first week just observing, understanding how the team worked.

Then we tackled order: marking parking spots for machines, getting rid of what we didn't need and creating simple routines for washing and maintenance. Small changes like these saved time and made daily operations smoother. Explaining the reasoning, demonstrating the benefits and taking things slowly were key, making sure never to overwhelm the team with too much at once. The team was fantastic with me, I'm very grateful for their support during that time.

Was it just about routines, or were there bigger challenges?
The machinery was very old and unreliable, so once the basics were in place, we met with the finance committee and general manager to plan a fleet upgrade. We worked with John Deere to replace core machines, bought grinders to keep blades sharp and introduced basic mechanics training for the team. These changes were game-changing for efficiency and quality.

The Leicestershire is a much quieter and more private property than The Warwickshire. The focus was on members rather than visitors or corporate days. It was a completely different dynamic, but I enjoyed the challenge and bringing some structured processes from my previous experience.

Did you also make changes to the course itself?
Yes. We worked hard to introduce sustainable practices, refining the grass species by reducing organic matter in the upper profile combined with lower inputs. It was great to work with Paul Woodham from the beginning of the process to implement all the positive agronomic changes. I engaged with the course architect, Jonathan Gaunt, on a demonstration bunker project. It was eye-opening compared to The Warwickshire, where we handled everything ourselves. While finances didn't allow a full rebuild, it showed members the potential ambition for the course.

You were making good progress at The Leicestershire and had a long-term plan. What was the catalyst for leaving?
The short answer is family. I was commuting 40 minutes in the morning and often over an hour home. Fuel costs were rising, and with a young family – our first child had arrived and my wife was pregnant with our second – the commute became unsustainable.

The Kenilworth role came up out of the blue. At first, I wasn't interested. I was very committed to The Leicestershire – it's a great club that backed me fully. We'd

Steve's CV

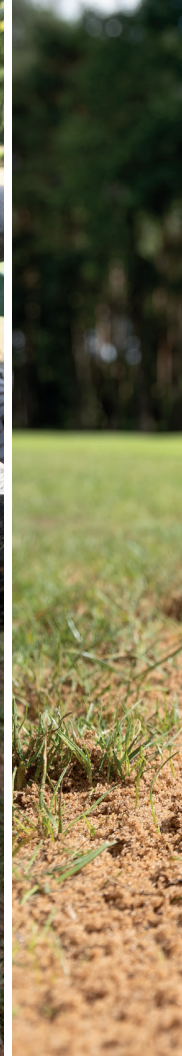
2008-2013:
Assistant greenkeeper at Copsewood Grange

2013-2017:
Assistant greenkeeper at The Warwickshire

2017-2021:
Assistant course manager at The Warwickshire

2021-2023:
Course manager at The Leicestershire

2023-present:
Course manager at Kenilworth



Adding value with in-house projects

At Kenilworth, we've been fortunate to take on a number of projects in-house. After the very wet winter 18 months ago, we suffered badly, like many clubs. Being a wet site anyway, it really highlighted how vulnerable we were to weather. Drainage became a priority.

We had quotes for contractors to drain just one fairway, and the cost was £60–80k. That would have been our entire CapEx for the year, with no plan for the rest of the course.

After speaking to colleagues like Dave Stewart at Great Barr, who loves in-house projects, I realised we could buy our own trencher, backfiller, tractors and equipment for less than the cost of that one fairway. The board was bold enough to back the idea, and I set a target of 10,000 metres of primary drainage over three years. We're now halfway through, with 6,000 metres installed.

TURFCO
FARGO
CR-8

Turning a generous donation into a lasting legacy

Our greens director, Paul Hone, approached me about making a donation. His family had been at the club for generations, and he wanted to make a financial contribution. At first he suggested buying a greens mower. I was flabbergasted, but it didn't sit right with me – it wasn't a legacy, and the machine would depreciate to nothing in five years.

So I suggested using the money for something longer lasting: new practice nets. We designed a three-bay structure with a roof, pathways and planting. It still didn't spend the whole donation, so we added a simulator, something new to me, but a real potential revenue stream.

We ended up with unique, fully weatherproof nets with lighting, a simulator members can book and plans to rebuild and double the size of the chipping green alongside it. The whole aim was to improve our practice facilities, create a potential new membership category.

reduced organic matter on the greens from 9% to within range, carried out heavy renovations, worked with STRI and had glowing reports from Paul Woodham, who was astonished at the speed of progress. We'd also started tree management planning and other projects. I loved it there.

But when my wife saw the Kenilworth advert, she asked the obvious question: 'Do you really want to keep driving over an hour each way when there's a very good club 10 minutes from home?' That made me think.

I knew Kenilworth well, having played there in junior opens. When I walked the course, I recognised many of the same issues I'd encountered at The Leicestershire – too many trees, neglected greens, lack of direction. In some ways, it felt like Groundhog Day. I'd hoped my next move would be less about starting from scratch, but with my wife's encouragement I applied – literally the day before the deadline.

What was the interview process like?

They asked candidates to present a plan for three holes. The panel consisted of the GM Paul Taylor, club captain, chair of management and support agronomist Andy Cole. Instead of focussing on presentation or short-term agronomy, I took a strategic approach: water security, drainage, sustainable management. I told them plainly – if they wanted greens shaved to two millimetres and lightning fast year-round, I wasn't their man. But if they wanted resilient, sustainable turf that performs consistently, then I could deliver. I explained how I would achieve it and what had been achieved at The Leicestershire.

The conversation shifted from me presenting slides to me questioning them about long-term planning. I asked, 'What's your 30-year water security plan?', and explained that my role was to ensure the club thrived in 50 years, not just next season. That struck a chord.

I wasn't desperate to leave The Leicestershire, and I knew good people would apply. In fact, my old school friend Ashley, who I knew from Copsewood, was also going for the job. We even walked the course together beforehand, comparing notes. He was disappointed not to reach the second interview, but we had different experiences and qualifications by that stage.

How do you reflect on the transition from The Leicestershire to Kenilworth?

I went into Kenilworth far more relaxed and confident. At The Leicestershire, I'd felt that 'this is all on me' pressure. At Kenilworth, I knew I could do it, and I'd learned a lot about patience and working with boards and the wider membership.

Two-and-a-half years in at Kenilworth, we've already brought the greens back within range, and they're performing well. We've smartened up the sheds and facilities, just as we did at The Leicestershire. The irrigation system here is decent but ageing, so we're beginning the process of planning upgrades. It's a bigger site with more trees and machinery, but we've made strong progress.

We've got eight full-time members of staff in terms of weekly man hours, which includes three casuals, so on some days we have up to 10 staff, which is fantastic for course set-up. It allows me and my deputy to step back from day-to-day jobs and focus on the bigger picture or project work.

What does that bigger picture look like?

Like most clubs, we have a variety of challenges. The in-house drainage programme is our primary focus, alongside irrigation upgrades. Water harvesting is a high priority – we want to capture and reuse the water we're draining. We're working with consultants, Dr Tom Young (TEP) and Jonathan Gaunt, who was commissioned to draw up a concept masterplan for Kenilworth. My role is to keep delivering that strategic plan and make the budget go as far as possible.

On top of that, because of our investment in equipment and staff, we're now able to offer services externally – such as primary drainage installation, project work, labour support and consultancy for other clubs. I think there's a market for that, especially for newer course managers who might need the support. For us, it's a way of reinvesting income back into our projects at Kenilworth.

'The boy was a machine!'

Back in 2008, Ashley Bulpitt offered Steve a first foray into the world of greenkeeping with the suggestion of some volunteer work at Copsewood. He didn't take long to make an impression, and when the opportunity of a full-time role came up, Steve jumped at the chance.

"What struck me straight away was that Steve wasn't content with routine jobs, he wanted to understand the 'why' behind everything we did," said Ashley. "He was so eager to learn and take on more responsibility.

"He used to maintain the crown bowls green we have on our site and I vividly recall the hours he would put into it after a full shift on the golf course.

"He would be brewing compost teas in the sheds, taking soil samples and collecting his own data, it was like a mini laboratory – all of this while producing the biggest NVQ2 portfolio folder I've ever seen. The boy was a machine!"

It has come as no surprise to Ashley to see Steve climb the career ladder and build a reputation for excellence, with the two still in regular contact.

"Steve was a pleasure to work with and was always chomping at the bit to not only better himself but others around him," he said. "While we were sad to lose him, myself and Gary had no doubt Steve would enjoy huge success. His role at Kenilworth is hard-earned and richly deserved.

"Steve has turned a lot of heads in the industry, and many clubs have seen or heard of his work and taken lots of his ideas on board. It shows what can be achieved when clubs give their backing to someone who is as skilled, driven and dedicated as Steve."

What about yourself? Do you have a dream job in mind further down the line?

Not really, to be honest. I buck the trend there. A lot of my peers talk about wanting to be at an Open venue or to host a championship, but I'm not looking that far ahead right now. I enjoy helping others and think I would definitely like to support the industry and up-and-coming greenkeepers navigate the challenges.

I've got a young family, and I'm blessed with an excellent role at a club that fully supports my vision. So for the moment, it's about keeping things moving here. If something came up in five or 10 years that caught my eye, maybe I'd look at it, but right now, it's not even on my radar. GI

From agronomy to management

Greenkeeping careers can follow many paths but few illustrate the broad possibilities of the profession as clearly as Jordan Fairweather's.

From his beginnings in Scotland to a role overseeing six courses across Dubai, India and Morocco, he has combined expertise in agronomy, construction and leadership to build an impressive and varied career.

We caught up with Jordan to discuss how his time at Troon Golf has equipped him with a broad skillset and opened up new opportunities.

How much did moving abroad shape your ideas about agronomy?

Being at Loch Lomond set me up well. At some clubs, it's a case of, 'We've always done it this way', so they stick to the same approach. Loch Lomond worked with data – soil tests, water tests, organic matter analysis – and based decisions on facts.

That approach transfers anywhere. For example, water quality is a huge challenge in the Middle East. When I'm dealing with a course, whether in Dubai, Morocco or India,

> "It's a challenge to balance my time"

I always start with soil and water tests. Only then can you build the right programme. The grass type or climate may differ, but the principle of starting with accurate data is universal.

What does overseeing six courses across three countries look like day to day?

I have eight direct reports: a course manager at each site, an administrator and a cluster workshop manager. One week each month I travel, alternating between India and Morocco, and the rest of the time I'm in Dubai, where we have four properties.

We hold regular senior management meetings every 14 days. Each course manager submits weekly spreadsheets, which I review for calibration and programme adjustments. I see my role as risk management, supporting them and questioning where needed.

Jordan Fairweather discusses his role overseeing six courses across three countries, combining agronomic skills with leadership expertise

Only about 40 per cent of my time is pure agronomy. The rest is long-term planning, capital projects and business management.

We run a flat system without general managers on each site, so between myself (back of house) and a colleague (front of house), we oversee all six properties.

It's a challenge to balance my time, but I aim to spend at least a day every 10 days at one of the facilities in Dubai.

How did you acquire the skills to take on those managerial responsibilities?

I think mentors have an important role to play, even if you don't always appreciate when you're younger who those mentors are or when they're mentoring you.

Since 2012, I've worked with Troon Golf, who operate over 650 courses worldwide. That gave me exposure to strong general managers, and I learned a lot from them. That's not an opportunity always afforded to course managers, and they don't get the same insight and understanding of how the wider business works.

Troon also ran a leadership programme where I worked

About Jordan

Growing up in Scotland, golf was naturally part of Jordan's life and, although many expected him to join his father in the motor trade, he was drawn instead to the outdoors. A formative spell at Loch Lomond, where he started as a seasonal worker and ended up staying seven years, opened his eyes to the breadth of opportunities within greenkeeping, with specialisations in construction, irrigation, mechanics and many more besides putting paid to the 'glorified grass-cutter' stereotype. Frustrated by limited opportunities to progress in the UK, Jordan accepted an offer from Ken Siems to move to Dubai in 2008. What began as a leap of faith has since become a career abroad that now outweighs his time in the UK. Over the years, he has combined construction, grow-ins and operational agronomy, building a broad skillset. He is a strong advocate for young greenkeepers to gain diverse experience, particularly in construction, to strengthen their future careers.

If you want to follow Jordan's day-to-day golf and agronomy schedule, check him out on Instagram ***golf_agronomy*** and on X ***@golfagronomy***

across different departments – food and beverage, sales, marketing, operations – to understand that wider business. Agronomy is usually the biggest cost centre in a club, so course managers are well placed to discuss costs, but they also need to understand revenue.

If you're an assistant or deputy, don't just ask for chainsaw or sprayer training – ask for budgeting or business exposure. That's what prepares you for management.

Loch Lomond gave me my agronomy foundation; Troon gave me my management foundation.

How much insight do your course managers get into the bigger picture?

We try to expose them as much as possible.

Every 14 days, all senior managers at each club meet – operations, F&B, security, engineering, agronomy. It gives everyone a chance to hear each other's challenges and share ideas.

When we set agronomy programmes and budgets, I involve the course managers directly, and I also run training seminars on budgeting. Not everyone wants to move beyond course manager, but at least they get the opportunity to see the wider picture.

What are the demographics of your teams?

In Morocco and India, 99 per cent of the teams are local, with only the course managers being from overseas – for example, a French manager in Morocco, due to the language. In the Middle East, it's different – teams are mainly Indian, Filipino and Pakistani, around 75 per cent Muslim, with course managers from Western countries.

Across all six courses, we probably have 12–14 nationalities. We respect cultural and religious holidays, which actually works out well – Muslim staff want Eid off, while Western staff want Christmas and Easter, so it balances.

What's the next step in your career?

Things change with family and circumstances. I've always been interested in construction and renovation, but also in future opportunities, and have always taken a risk with having worked now in eight countries. At this time in my career, it is not just about me, and I have to consider not just my future but my children's stability. Travel while single! My current role has given me such varied experience that I am no longer always looking for dedicated agronomy roles. I don't see myself returning to the UK, but I will be back in Europe, and maybe the Middle East again, in future. GI

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Course Manager Paul Tracey admits things will be a little different at Three Rivers this month at the end of a year like no other

What we do in... November

Club: Three Rivers, Essex

This November feels very different to any I've known in my 10 years in the job.

Usually by now we'd be shutting the irrigation down, carrying out a few repairs and moving into the winter programme, but after the year we've had, that's not possible.

It's been exceptionally dry across Essex, and we're still trickling water onto tees and greens just to hold some colour. Rainfall is around 60% down on last year, and while we're used to dry spells, this one's dragged on since March. The question now is whether this is becoming the new normal.

We're already looking at future-proofing the site – we've applied for a borehole, and we're investigating reservoir and water-harvesting options. Running two courses, the Kings and the Jubilee, off the mains risks becoming unsustainable, both financially and practically.

Our irrigation system is an older Rain Bird Nimbus 2, so we've been selective this season, hand watering between full runs every couple of nights. The challenge is balancing two very different sites: the Jubilee's sand-based greens dry out in a flash, while the Kings' old clay push-ups can hold too much water once it does arrive. It's been a year of spinning plates and making constant adjustments.

November normally brings tree work, ditch clearing and pathway reinstatement, but the ground is still too hard for the diggers, especially on clay. So the focus now is on leaf clearance and managing the thousands of acorns dropped by our oaks – we've got two holes with around 400 of them. Once the rain finally arrives, we'll get back to the heavier work.

Through it all, our members have been brilliant. We've kept communication open, explained why things look as they do, and most have been really supportive. A few still expect Wentworth for their membership fee, but on the whole they've appreciated how well the greens have come through.

It's been stressful, no doubt, but I've got a fantastic team – eight full-timers, two part-timers and a gardener – with more than 150 years of greenkeeping experience between them. You rely on that depth of knowledge in years like this. It's been a year of challenges, but I'm proud of how we've managed it. GI

> "It's been a year of spinning plates"

Moisture key to turf cover survival

For many, extensive thinning of grass cover has now occurred three to four times in the past decade. With predictions that it is likely to be more frequent in the future

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Author: Sean Loakes, Syngenta Technical Manager UK & Ireland

Moisture management is key to recovery from turf cover loss over the summer, and protecting vulnerable surfaces from further damaging effects in the following season.

Initial results of new Syngenta turf health strategy trials at STRI in Yorkshire this season showed that, even with a level of irrigation, untreated clean cut turf surfaces suffered up to 35% loss of turf cover through hot, dry summer periods of June and July. Even into September turf cover on the untreated plots was still 30% less, compared to early June.

For areas treated with Qualibra wetting agent, however, turf cover was retained within less than 5% loss through the same June to July period, and never more than 5.5% loss right through the prolonged stressful periods into September.

It also demonstrated the essential role of effective wetting agent strategies to maximise utilisation of available soil moisture and give turf plants greater resilience to withstand weather extremes.

While most turf can withstand some periods of drought, when that is combined with high light intensity the cumulative stress can be overwhelming. That has particularly been the issue over the past summer. Furthermore, where dry patch develops in hydrophobic soils, - which effectively repel water droplets and lose the ability to hold soil moisture – then rainfall or irrigation

runs thorough without benefit to revive turf.

Restoring soils' moisture holding capacity and limiting the effects of dry patch build-up after prolonged drying out will be hugely important for successful overseeding to recover lost turf cover, along with giving greater survival of plants against future drought periods next season.

Seed germination

STRI trials have also shown the beneficial effect of Qualibra wetting agent applications for overseeding success, through a combination of improved germination and stronger establishment.

The application at 20 l/ha five days before sowing provided a 200% increase in bentgrass germination assessed 18 days after sowing, with a 250% increase in germination with ryegrass turf species.

That led to significantly stronger growth within a month and, assessed 49 days after sowing, over 50% turf cover in Qualibra treated fescue areas compared to just 17% in untreated. In the ryegrass there was a 100% increase in cover over the same period.

It is a difficult balance to manage the appropriate amount of moisture to enable germination and seed establishment, along with quick recovery, but not keeping the surface damp for long periods of the day which could create conditions for disease to establish, as well as affecting playability.

Holding moisture lower in the soil profile with Qualibra encourages rapid root growth to reach moisture, whilst surfaces can still be effectively held drier and faster – which is also less conducive to seedling diseases.

Furthermore, once seedlings are established, moisture management will be key to assuring survival during more frequent prolonged dry periods, especially on unirrigated areas and fairways.

Cost savings

Significant cost and time savings can be made where reseeding and recovery actions can be avoided, along with developing more sustainable strategies that use less carbon-cost resources. That includes wetting agent strategies across fairways, along with improved turf rooting to increase utilisation of available water and nutrition.

More efficient use of available water resources is clearly desirable, with significant investment being made in more controllable irrigation systems on many courses to cut wastage.

To get the most out of irrigation systems, it is essential to balance available soil moisture as a factor of rainfall and irrigation water applied, vs any evapotranspiration losses. That can be calculated on an individual golf course scale with the Turf Advisor App weather data and irrigation records.

Summer stress

It's not just moisture stress that impacts on turf health and survival over the summer. Multiple stress factors can interact, with the cumulative effect far more severe than the individual parts.

There is good evidence that when a plant is naturally responding to a primary stress through gene regulation at a molecular level, such as heat, if another stress from mowing damage or light, for example, impacts it then it takes longer to adapt, and more damage is done.

While Qualibra gave the strongest beneficial responses of cover retention, the Syngenta turf health research at STRI also showed that Ryder pigment alone provided 20% better results compared to untreated. Other new development biostimulants targeting specific summer stresses and overall turf health also consistently retained improved turf performance and cover at similar levels.

Integrating all the technologies into turf health strategies will not only help retain in season playability but will also reduce the costly and time-consuming practice of repeatedly reseeding.

Follow the conversation

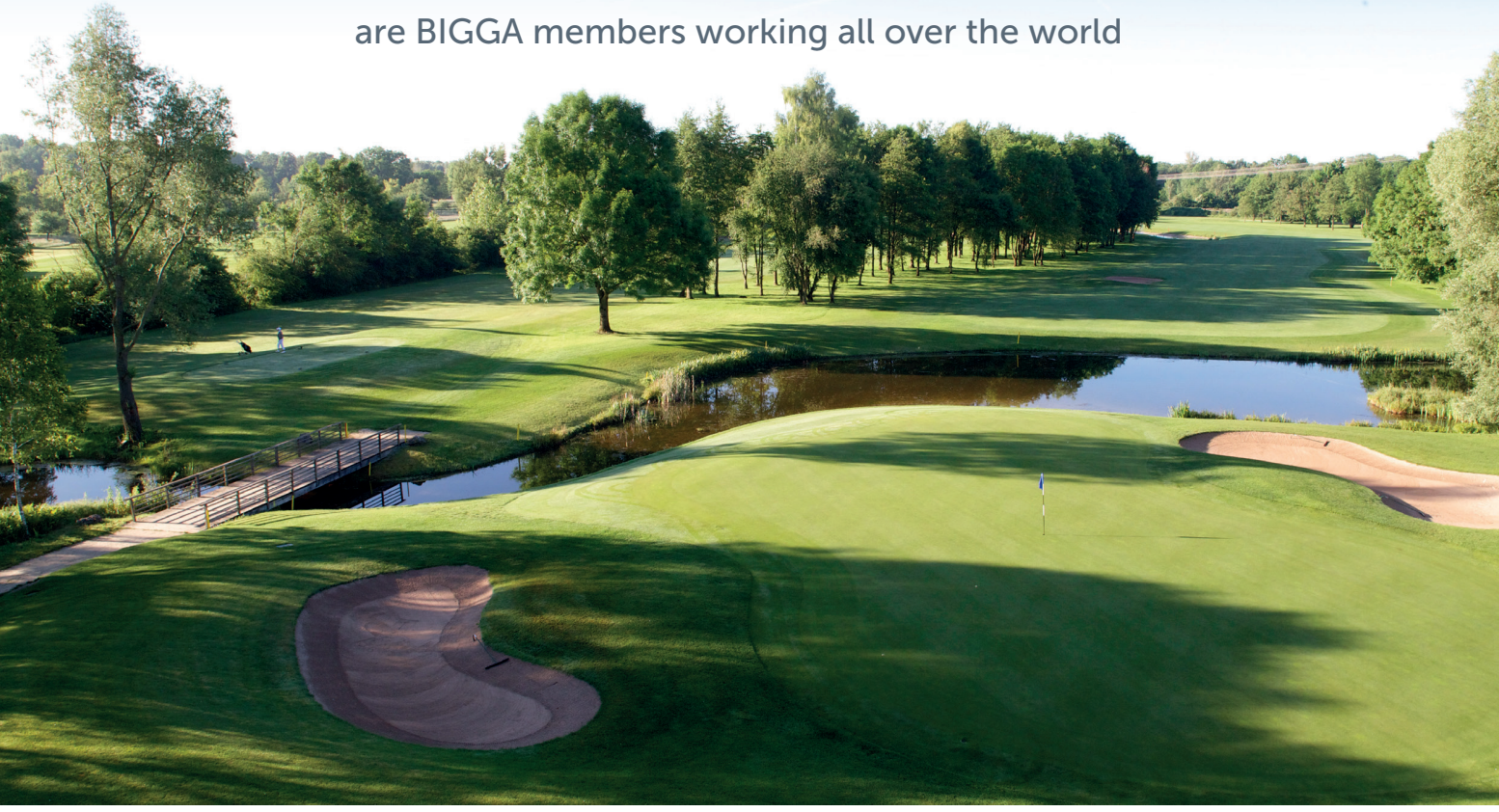
Action checklist for summer survival

- Manage height of cut to balance playability with root growth
- Use Qualibra wetting agent to optimise water use efficiency
- Apply biostimulants during stress periods
- Primo Maxx II growth regulator will promote root mass
- Monitor soil moisture and temperature with remote probes

> "More frequent prolonged dry periods will cause greater issues"

The world of greenkeeping

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



A chance meeting with an old college friend took Andrew Kelly to Germany, where he now manages the host venue of the BMW International Open.

It was back in 1990 that an acquaintance from his days at Myerscough told him about a new project he was working on near Munich, which needed a few extra pairs of hands.

What began as a short-term adventure has since turned into a lifelong career in Bavaria at one of Germany's leading courses.

How prepared were you when you arrived in Germany?

Honestly, not very. I'd done college and placements, but I was still green. Looking back, I probably went to college too early to really take it all in. When I came to Germany, I learned a huge amount from Peter Shaw, who brought a lot of Brits over at that time. It was really working under him that shaped how I do things.

Can you describe the course and facilities?

It's a 27-hole complex. The original 18 were built in 1988 and they form the championship course. During the rest of the year, the members play a composite of those 18 and an additional nine built in 2002. It's a big parkland course – lots of water, trees, bunkers and lots of space between holes. We run with about 11–12 full-time staff, plus seasonal help that takes us up to 13–14. We also maintain a neighbouring nine-hole course.

What's the reality of preparing for a European Tour event?

The course has a reputation to uphold year-round, but Tour standards are on another level. We can't maintain that all season with our resources. About two to three weeks before the tournament, we start lowering heights, letting roughs grow, tidying edges and bringing in extra hands. The membership benefits from those standards for a while afterwards too.

After so many years, does that preparation run smoothly?

More so now, yes. Many of the same staff and contractors return each year, so we know each other well. The first couple of years were nerve-wracking, but now it's more routine. My tour agronomist, Graeme MacNiven, helps in achieving that. Still, challenges crop up – this year it was hot, dry, windy weather right up to the week before, and we struggled. Then rain arrived at the right time, and the course came together just before the tournament.

A risk that paid off

From my early years in greenkeeping, I'd often thought about managing a course with a real name to it – ideally somewhere on the European Tour. When this opportunity came up, I couldn't turn it down, even though it had a reputation as an 'ejector-seat' job. I decided to take the risk, and I'm glad I did.

Andrew Kelly
München Eichenried, Germany

The extremes of the Bavarian climate

We've always had more extremes – hotter summers, colder winters, snow cover at times. We're close enough to the Alps for that to be a factor. Recently we've seen prolonged dry spells of two to three months, which I never remember when I first came. Heavy rain events are more common too. Dollar spot is becoming a bigger issue, starting earlier and lasting longer. Our grasses cope with extremes better than in the UK, but courses without fairway irrigation have really struggled.

> "Tour standards are on another level"

Some might assume a European Tour venue has huge resources. Is that true?

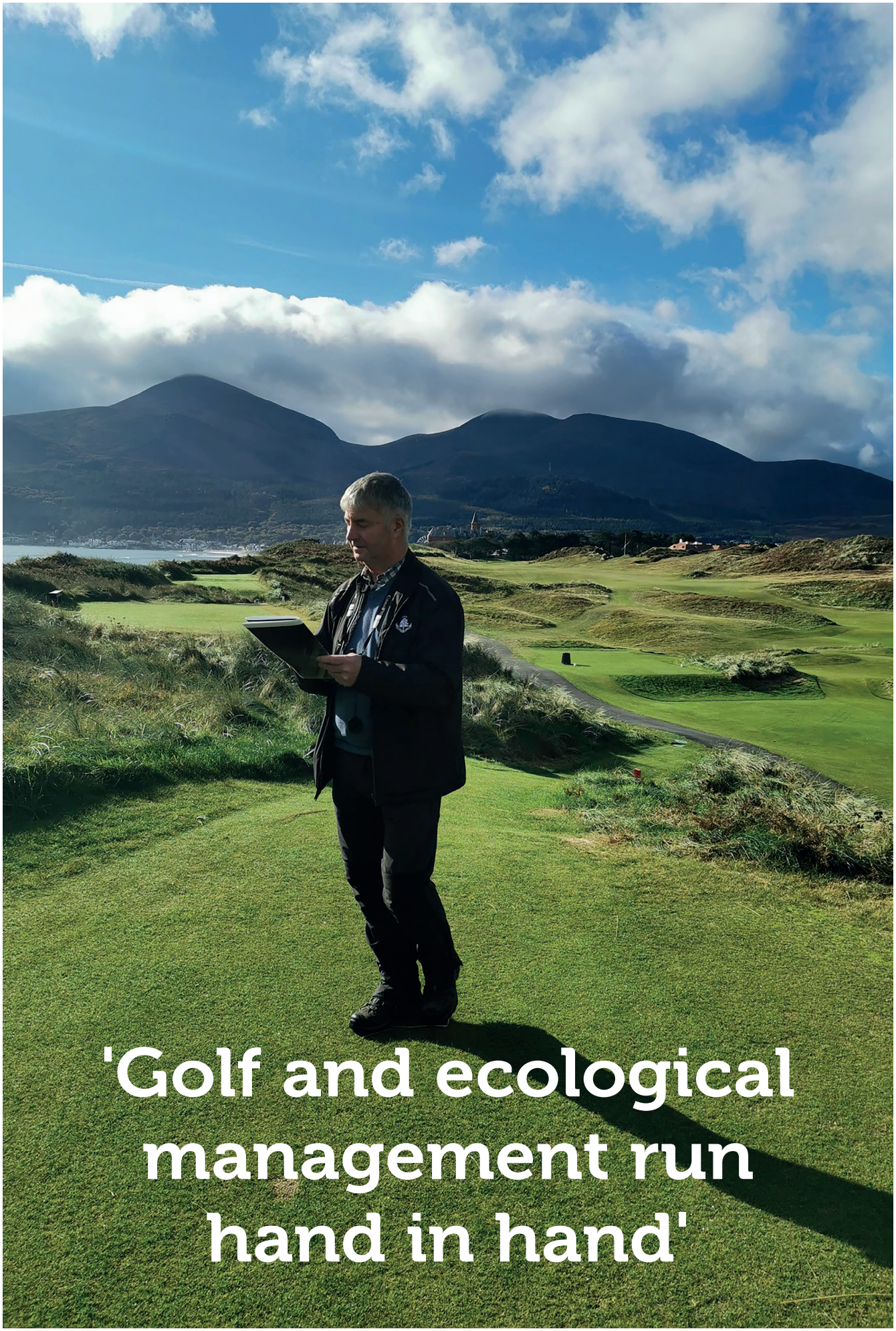
Not really. Compared to other leading German clubs, we're middle of the road for budget and staff. Our machinery fleet is fairly old; we've held off big investments while seeing how robotic mowing develops. We do as much in-house as possible. We resurfaced greens and tees ourselves. People are often surprised at how normal our setup is.

Any major projects ahead?

We've just finished a big seven-year cycle of resurfacing greens and tees. For the next couple of years, it's more about fine-tuning – smaller drainage and irrigation upgrades. There may be a need to reroute holes if new power cables go through the course, but otherwise no huge projects are planned immediately.

What advice would you give young UK greenkeepers considering a move abroad?

Volunteering at tournaments is a great first step, it gives you experience abroad and contacts. If you make the move, embrace the culture. Learn the language, get involved, fit in with local life. That's as important as the greenkeeping side. **GI**



'Golf and ecological management run hand in hand'

Renowned ecologist Bob Taylor returns to the Continue to Learn programme in 2026, sharing practical strategies to manage and conserve heathlands while enhancing golf course quality

Few people have done more to advance the understanding of golf's relationship with nature than Bob Taylor.

For more than 35 years, the consulting ecologist has been at the forefront of integrating sound ecological practice with high-quality course management, reshaping perceptions of what golf landscapes can, and should, contribute to the natural environment.

At Continue to Learn 2026, Bob will again share his expertise alongside Sophie Olejnik in the class 'Heather and Heathland Management', part of the comprehensive BTME education programme that continues to set the benchmark for professional learning in greenkeeping and course management.

The session promises to explore the complexity and value of heathland environments – habitats that have declined dramatically across the UK but remain integral to the character of many cherished golf courses.

For Bob, it is a subject that goes far beyond aesthetics. Heathlands, he argues, are living systems whose protection and restoration sit at the intersection of ecology, sustainability and the playing experience itself.

"A major element of this talk will be on the management and conservation of our heathlands, which are declining for a number of reasons – habitat loss, fragmentation and even nitrogen pollution," he said. "Greenkeepers are increasingly recognising the importance of these areas and are facing real challenges in this modern era, particularly with climate change and atmospheric pollution as significant factors."

Beyond the heather

The class will first address a fundamental question: what actually constitutes heathland?

"In golf, we often think of heather, but that's just one element of the heathland mosaic," he said. "Heathlands are much more rich and diverse. The types of plants that can be found within them depend on geography – coastal heathlands, for example, are concentrated around certain sections of our coastline and can be among our rarest habitats within golf."

He will contrast lowland heaths, such as those in Berkshire, Dorset and across southern England, with upland heaths that occur above 250 metres in the Pennines and other northern regions. Each, he explained, supports its own distinctive communities of plants and animals, shaped by soil, stress and competition.

"Generally, heathland species depend upon very stressed or nutrient-poor soil conditions," he said. "That's part of their character. Some species are highly competitive, others can only live in disturbed sites, but those in heathlands need that weak, poor, stressed environment."

For many greenkeepers, the attraction of heathland management lies not only in its ecological merit but also in the contribution it makes to golf's visual and strategic qualities. Well-managed heather banks and roughs can sharpen definition, influence strategy and add texture to a course – benefits that complement rather than compromise playability.

Bob is clear that ecological work and course presentation are not mutually exclusive.

"Golf and ecological management are not in competition," he insisted. "They run hand in hand."

> "Ecological management is now considered much more seriously, and that's a huge positive"

Management, cost & commitment

Despite the challenges, Bob is adamant that good heathland management does not have to carry an excessive price tag.

"The costs don't need to be significant," he said. "Clubs certainly need appropriate equipment, but most already

About Bob

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

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

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

Heather and Heathland Management

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

Heathland habitats have been in acute decline in the UK. Golf courses are one of the few land uses where this valuable habitat can be maintained and promoted with appropriate management. This class will look at what constitutes heathland and its principle components. Renowned ecologists Bob Taylor and Sophie Olejnik will contrast lowland coastal and upland heath, as well as determine management requirements for conservation, while not losing sight of the playing of the game. The class will look at various management techniques for establishing, maintaining and managing heathland, highlighting cost-effective methods and promoting heathlands as areas not only beneficial to wildlife but also to enhancing the prestige of the golf club.

have what would suffice, and there's always the option to hire machinery when cutting, scarifying and collecting. The crucial thing is understanding – knowing how and when to manage. Timing is everything."

He believes too many clubs still regard ecological areas as peripheral, something to be tended only when routine maintenance is quiet.

"That shouldn't be the case," he said. "Management must be undertaken at the most appropriate times to ensure that habitat and species interests are conserved."

What is required, in his view, is commitment and knowledge – both of which BTME's education programme seeks to strengthen. The 'Heather and Heathland Management' class is designed to provide practical, actionable insight: not abstract ecology but achievable methods that superintendents and greenkeepers can implement on their own courses.

"There's no point talking about the niceties of what could be an ideal situation," he said. "It has to be practical, and it has to be at greenkeeper level. Everything we discuss should be given in a pragmatic sense and be doable. I always think in terms of things that are winnable – O level, A level and degree-level projects – so that people can build experience and see results when they go back to their clubs."

Changing climates, shifting challenges

Bob's career has spanned an era of profound change in attitudes toward ecology and sustainability. When he joined STRI in 1989, the concept of an 'ecological service' for golf courses was still novel.

Today, environmental management is recognised as a central pillar of course maintenance, though new pressures continue to emerge.

"Heathlands are like cold-climate habitats, and with warming, they're under stress," he said. "We're also seeing atmospheric nitrogen falling from the sky at a rate that's thickening the rough and leading to more lost golf balls. Greenkeepers are being faced with difficult challenges and having to adapt, but they're taking on that challenge."

He points to invasive species, such as the South African grass Sporobolus seen in Jersey, and the broader issue of resource scarcity, from water to sand, as indicators of how much the sustainability conversation has evolved.

"We have to look at how we manage sustainably in all aspects, and that includes understanding that golf courses form part of a wider landscape," he said. "They provide patch habitats, connectivity through the countryside and real ecological value, but they can only do that through appropriate management."

Consistency is critical, but is sometimes hampered by changes to a club's personnel.

"You can go to a club for years and see real progress, then the management changes, and everything comes to a halt. Wildlife needs consistency. Overall, though, the direction of travel from where we were 30 years ago has been massive. Ecological management is now considered much more seriously, and that's a huge positive," explained Bob.

The value of awareness

While golf's internal understanding of its ecological role has advanced enormously, Bob feels there is still work to do in communicating that message more broadly.

"Some clubs do it well, others not so much," he said. "I've spent over 35 years trying to get that message across. Golf courses can only be good with management – you can't just leave them alone and hope for the best. Some clubs manage extremely well, others still see ecological work as an aside. We need to change that perception."

He believes part of the answer lies in visibility and education. Golf's positive environmental stories are too often hidden from public view, despite the sport's contribution to biodiversity and habitat conservation.

"Golf clubs are still seen as another selfish land use for a few people who can afford it," he said. "Yet they're functioning so importantly, not only bringing in economy and tourism, but also from an ecological point of view providing habitat and connectivity. We have to do a better job of getting that message across."

A platform for learning

BTME and the Continue to Learn programme, he believes, play a vital role in that process – not only as a forum for formal education but as a meeting point for the exchange of experience and ideas.

His own sessions are intentionally conversational, designed to encourage discussion rather than deliver a lecture.

"Workshops like mine are about sharing," he said. "I like to be as practical as possible, and I think everyone who attends goes away feeling they've got something that will benefit them and their clubs."

That emphasis on practicality, on achievable progress rather than theory, reflects Bob's lifetime approach to ecological management. For him, the measure of success is not the beauty of a slide deck or the sophistication of a plan but the visible, lasting results on the ground.

"Management is key," he said. "If you're good with management, you can bring areas into play and use them right up to the line of play so they're still playable. The quality of the course depends on the management you provide. If you neglect it, the nature of the course – and the business – suffers."

Looking ahead

For those attending BTME and engaging with the exceptional Continue to Learn offering, the Heather and Heathland Management class will offer a deep dive into the science, the practicalities and the opportunities of working with one of Britain's most distinctive habitats. But it will also, inevitably, reflect the philosophy that has guided Bob's career: that ecological care and the pursuit of great golf are complementary ambitions.

As he put it, the goal is simple but enduring – to learn, to share and to manage better.

"BTME and Continue to Learn are vital because they provide a platform for sharing knowledge and ideas," he said. "That's how we progress – by listening, discussing and then putting those lessons into practice on the ground." **GI**

Scan Me to find out more

Continue to Learn 2026
BIGGA's world-renowned education conference at BTME

Getting feedback right – insights from an expert

Giving effective feedback is one of the toughest parts of leadership, but without clear, constructive communication, no team can perform at its best.

Amid the many pressures of managing a golf course, ensuring that staff are supported, motivated and clear about expectations is vital. From experienced deputies to seasonal recruits, everyone benefits when feedback is handled well.

Annette Andrews knows this better than most. A former chief people officer and now founder and director of Acaria Coaching & Consulting, she has spent her career helping leaders across a wide range of industries to develop their people and build stronger, more resilient organisations. She is also a qualified executive and life coach, bringing both practical and personal insight into the challenges of managing performance and nurturing team culture.

Here, she brings her expertise to the fore to explain how even simple, day-to-day interactions can help course managers build a consistent, constructive approach to feedback that supports development and performance across the board.

Some managers avoid feedback because they fear difficult conversations, but if you embed it into everyday interactions, those conversations become less daunting. And like anything, practice makes perfect. The more you engage with your team in constructive, balanced and regular discussions, the more your course, and your people, will thrive.

Why feedback matters

Feedback is one of the most important ways to optimise the performance of any business or organisation. It ensures you get the best out of your people.

Even your star performers need it. Everyone benefits from knowing how they're doing, and even diamonds can be polished a little more. And beyond the performance benefits, there are legal and governance reasons to give feedback consistently and equitably.

Treating staff fairly is vital, but fairness doesn't mean treating everyone identically. The principles should be the same, but the messaging and delivery need to adapt to the individual and their needs.

Make it ongoing, not once a year

One of the biggest mistakes managers make is saving feedback for the annual review. If new issues are raised at that point, it will feel like an ambush. Nobody should walk into a performance discussion and be surprised by what they hear.

The best approach is to see every interaction as a coaching opportunity. Think of it like fine-tuning the presentation of a course – small, consistent adjustments that gradually add up to a noticeable improvement. This might be a quick word after a morning set-up, a positive comment when a task is done particularly well, or a gentle steer if you notice a detail that could be improved. By the time you sit down for a formal review, both parties should already know what the discussion will cover.

Balancing positive and constructive feedback

Managers often find it easier to share positives than negatives – or worse, they fall into the trap of only delivering criticism. That's not fair, and it's not motivating.

A simple structure is to start with what's going well, and then use the language of 'what I need more of' and 'what I need less of'. This avoids labelling feedback as criticism and keeps it future-focussed. Don't overload people with a long list – stick to the game-changers, the two or three things that will make the biggest difference.

THREE GOLDEN FEEDBACK RULES

1. **Make it ongoing**. Feedback should be part of the day-to-day, not saved for the annual review
2. **Take a coaching style**. Focus on development and fine-tuning, not blame
3. **Keep it balanced**. Recognise successes as well as addressing areas for improvement

Providing practical direction

Constructive feedback only works if it's clear and actionable. 'You need to manage your time better', isn't enough. Instead, provide an example of how tasks can be ordered according to priority.

Show them what 'good' looks like. That might mean shadowing another staff member, providing a template, or pointing out a live example and saying, 'That's exactly what I'd like to see more of'. If something goes wrong, address it privately and link it back to earlier discussions. And always follow up. Telling someone to change and then never revisiting the issue isn't feedback, it's neglect.

Encouraging employee input

Feedback should be a two-way process, but opening with, 'How do you think you're doing?' can feel intimidating or even like a trap. A better approach is to ask people to reflect on what's gone well, where they think they could improve and what they need more or less of from you as their manager.

This creates a constructive conversation rather than a cold, procedural exercise. It also shows that you're listening and willing to adapt your own leadership style to help them succeed. GI

> "Constructive feedback only works if it's clear and actionable"

Annette Andrews is founder and director of Acaria Coaching & Consulting

Latest job vacancies

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

Course Manager

County Sligo Golf Club, Ireland

County Sligo Golf Club is one of Ireland's premier Championship Links venues, set against the stunning backdrop of Benbulben and the Atlantic Ocean. With a reputation for excellence, we are seeking a dynamic and motivated Course Manager to lead all aspects of course presentation, maintenance, and development, ensuring the venue continues to perform at the highest possible standard.

The Championship Links course is currently undergoing an exciting renovation programme by world-renowned architects Mackenzie & Ebert, further enhancing its international standing and golfing experience.

This role offers a highly attractive salary package commensurate with experience and designed to attract the best in the industry.

Applications: Please send your application and CV to rachel@turfgrass.golf
Closing Date: Friday, 14th November 2025

Qualified Greenkeepers

Trump International Doonbeg, Ireland

Trump International Doonbeg, proud host of the Amgen Irish Open 2026, invites applications from qualified greenkeepers to join its renowned turf management team. Applicants should have a minimum of two years' experience, relevant qualifications and a strong understanding of turf maintenance, course set-up and equipment operation.

The role offers excellent pay and benefits, training and development opportunities, and the chance to work with a new John Deere fleet on one of Ireland's premier links courses. Accommodation can be arranged.

Join a team recognised as a Great Place to Work 2025®, committed to excellence, innovation and professional growth.

To apply, please send a one page CV, references and a cover letter to: scott.marr@trumphotels.com
Start date: 5th January 2026.

Course Manager

Thorndon Park Golf Club, Essex

Thorndon Park Golf Club in Brentwood is seeking an experienced **Course Manager** to lead the continued excellence of its **Harry Colt-designed championship course**, proudly ranked among **England's Top 100**.

This is a superb opportunity for a proven leader in turf management to maintain and elevate course conditioning, inspire a talented greens team, and champion sustainable practices across a stunning parkland estate.

Apply by emailing a covering letter and CV to Iain Evans, General Manager, Thorndon Park Golf Club at: gm@thorndonpark.com
For more information, visit: www.thorndonpark.com
Closing Date: Friday, 14th November 2025

Recruitment

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

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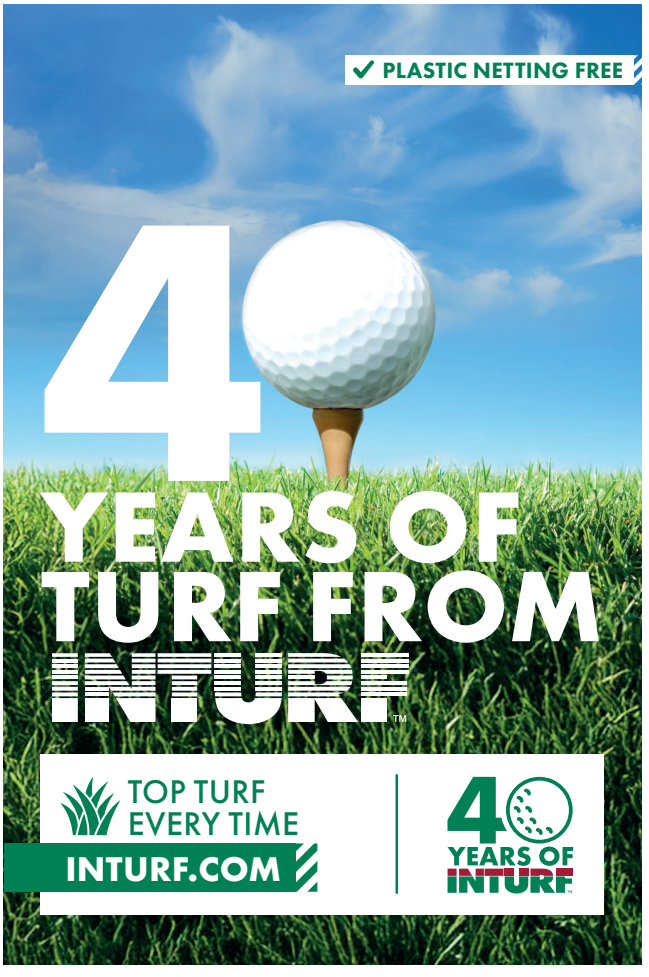
THE BIGGA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2026

1pm on Wednesday 14 January 2026

Held virtually using an online meeting system, further details will be distributed to members in due course.

All BIGGA members are invited to attend and gain an understanding of the behind-the-scenes work of the association and its members.

BIGGA
British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association



Celebrating 40 years of Inturf

Since 1985, the team at Inturf has been proud to produce and supply leading turf products to a vast array of clients

This year marks a special milestone for Inturf - 40 years in business supplying premium turf across the UK. From golf courses and sports grounds to house builders, landscapers, local authorities and homeowners, Inturf is a trusted name, recognised not just for their products but for their values.

Founded in 1985, Inturf began with a vision to grow turf that consistently met the highest standards. A family business starting with Derek Edwards and then passing down to Steve and Alex Edwards, his sons. However, they credit their success to a strong team performance from production staff through to logistics and sales and marketing. It's the team's performance that ensures Inturf's name remains a sign of quality turf.

Four decades of knowledge and experience

With 40 years of experience, they understand the complexities of turf production in ways that only decades in the field can teach. From nurturing turf through harsh droughts to ensuring it thrives through wet and unpredictable seasons, Inturf's expertise allows them to deliver turf that consistently meets the demands of a wide range of environments.

That knowledge has been built into every stage of the growing process, from carefully preparing soil and sowing seed, to maintaining strong, healthy root systems ready for lifting. This experience means customers can trust they are receiving turf that not only looks exceptional but performs to the highest standards.

A commitment to sustainability and quality

Inturf has long been committed to supplying turf that is not only high-quality but also environmentally responsible. One standout example is their decision to provide plastic netting free turf right from day one. A choice that reflects both their values and understanding of the long-term impact turf can have on the environment.

Alongside turf, Inturf have added a range of complementary landscaping products, including topsoil, bark and seed, giving customers a one-stop solution for their projects. Their role as an authorised distributor of Terracottem, a soil conditioner that improves structure, water retention and nutrient supply, further strengthens their reputation as a company that looks beyond turf to the wider project.

Looking back and looking forward

Over the past 40 years, Inturf has supplied turf for projects of every scale, from high-profile golf courses to domestic gardens and has seen the industry change in ways no one could have predicted. What hasn't changed is their commitment to growing and supplying turf that delivers results.

Looking to the future, Inturf continues to invest in innovation and explore new opportunities to support greenkeepers, landscapers, grounds teams and homeowners. With Steve and Alex continuing the legacy, and a strong, dedicated team, the business remains firmly rooted in its founding principles while ready to embrace the next 40 years.

As Inturf celebrates this landmark anniversary, one thing is certain: their passion for turf, dedication to customers, and family values will continue to be at the heart of everything they do.

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Baroness does the triple

It's a mowing clean sweep with top ranked 'Notts Triangle'

BARONESS
Quality on Demand

It's not just an NG postcode that Coxmoor, Hollinwell and Sherwood Forest Golf Clubs share, nor the fact that they all rank in England's Top 100. They also all swear by their respective mower fleets from Baroness!

A range of hand mowers, fairway mowers and greens triples have clocked up almost 20 years of loyal service across the three clubs, with all citing it's the outstanding quality of cut that keeps them among the top golfing destinations in the county.

Aspiring to always improve on the high standard heathland course at Coxmoor Golf Club is Course Manager Ben Cumberland and his team of nine. After initially 'dipping a toe' and purchasing their first Baroness hand mower seven years ago, they now run four LM56 and four LM66 pedestrian mowers, three LM315's and two LM551's for fairways, making Baroness the dominant brand of mowing equipment at the club. "Some clubs will opt for equipment purely based on a badge. For us, we prioritise quality of cut above everything else and with Baroness, it's just exceptional" Ben explains. "The fleet is ensuring our turf is presenting well and is the healthiest it can be - but more than that, the build quality of the mowers themselves and the blades require so little maintenance that any downtime has been significantly reduced."

Baroness has been present at Hollinwell Golf Club since 2018 - the same year Shaun Bullin joined the team before taking over as course manager earlier in 2025. One of the original LM2700 fairway mowers remains in the shed, joined by an LM56 for tees, LM331 for surrounds and approaches, two LM315's and, most recently, two LM551 fairway mowers. "Over the years, the cut quality from model to model has

Left: Coxmoor Golf Club, Top: Sherwood Forest Golf Club, Bottom: Hollinwell Golf Club

remained remarkably consistent. While they've never been uncomfortable, we've noticed our new machines have really stepped up on operator comfort which has scored massive brownie points with the team." Shaun continues, "We're partway through a big sward conversion programme so the finesse of the Baroness cylinders plays a big part in supporting our efforts to promote the finer grass species."

Completing the 'Nott's Triangle', a Baroness LM315 and LM551 fairway mower, four LM56 and two LM66 hand mowers are keeping maintenance on course at Sherwood Forest Golf Club. "It was during the COVID pandemic that we were first introduced to Baroness in our hunt for a new fairway mower" says Deputy Head Greenkeeper Keir Taylor. "Where lead times for other brands were ludicrous, we were able to get our hands on Baroness in good time – and what a decision that turned out to be! The build quality, the cut quality and all-round operator experience is fantastic. The maintenance, in particular the need to grind the blades, is straight forward and is needed much less often than we're used to with other brands" he adds.

Ben, Shaun and Keir also note the fantastic advice and support from James Robson and the wider team at Henton & Chattell. "The back-up with every machine is excellent. If we have a question, you can guarantee it'll be answered quickly and easily either over the phone or in person" Keir says. "The team are always friendly and, alongside Andy Darley from Baroness, they've together been a great help and support in my step up to the head role" Shaun concludes.

Scan Me to find out more

Scan for more information on the full Baroness range of mowers and implements for fine turf

Brushing for performance

James Bledge, Links Manager at Royal Liverpool GC explains the role of the Sports Metals extracut-brush

At Royal Liverpool Golf Club, the pursuit of consistent, high-performance putting surfaces is at the heart of our maintenance philosophy. Working with bent-fescue greens, we're always looking for subtle interventions that improve playability, enhance turf health and extend the long-term surface performance of the surfaces. Any marginal gains that we can obtain through affordable and sustainable solutions are worth serious consideration.

One such intervention has been the use of Sports Metals brushes mounted on our electric Toro greens mowers. While brushing is not a new concept in greenkeeping, our recent shift in brush configuration has had a surprisingly profound effect on clipping yield, surface refinement, green speed, and the growth habit of our turf.

From tees to greens – our evolution of brushing

Our journey began with a brush system inherited from a brush system that Richard Japes, (owner of Sports Metals) designed for us during my time at Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club. We were looking for a medium-flex black bristle Sports Metals brush interspersed with a stiff yellow strip. Initially intended for use on tees to achieve a defined stripe and improved surface uniformity, we noticed that the brush had another important effect: it pulled up decaying organic matter that was beginning to migrate toward the thatch layer.

This low-level organic removal helped us stay ahead of thatch accumulation, acting as a preventative measure. So, when I moved to Royal Liverpool, we trialled the same brush setup on the greens. While the performance was solid, we had concerns about the longer-term effects of daily use. The yellow strip's additional stiffness made it slightly more aggressive, and I felt that over time, this could contribute to abrasion or plant stress, particularly given the finer nature of bent fescue.

A softer approach yields stronger results

As a result, we moved to the full black bristle option, softer, lighter and far better suited to regular use on greens. The difference was immediate and striking, and with daily clip volume readings we could see the data clearly.

Our clipping volume data, which we use to guide nutrition and growth management, showed a near doubling of yield after brushing was introduced. Prior to brushing, average daily removal was around 7ml/m^2; with brushing, this increased significantly, almost doubling! Importantly, this wasn't due to excessive growth, but rather the brush lifting the sward into a more upright position, allowing for a cleaner and more effective cut.

What was equally encouraging was that, even with daily brushing, there was no visible stress on the plant. On the contrary, we observed a gradual improvement in sward density and uniformity, with the turf developing a noticeably more upright growth habit - ideal for fine turf surfaces.

Green speeds: An interesting observation

Green speed is something we aim to manage carefully at Royal Liverpool, typically targeting around 9 feet on the stimpmeter with enough 'wiggle room' to be able to push them to achieve a maximum speed of 10'6" at the drop of a hat. Initially, brushing had a slight slowing effect on the day of use, likely due to increased friction on the surface, but what stood out was the improvement in speed after brushing was paused and rollers lay the sward down again.

We now consistently recorded faster speeds than before, without lowering the height of cut or double cutting. In fact, we've been able to maintain 9-foot speeds at a 4mm height of cut with no additional rolling, which has helped reduce mechanical stress during peak summer months. Some may think after watching the PGA Tour that 9ft is slow, however you will find that for the average golfer 9ft is a very playable speed.

All of this suggests that brushing is acting as a form of surface refinement, delivering tighter, cleaner turf with less lateral growth and a more consistent ball roll.

Data and technology: Making it measurable

Recently, we've also started to incorporate the USGA GS3 ball into our monitoring programme, which has added a completely new dimension to how we evaluate our greens. Alongside traditional stimpmeter readings, the GS3 allows us to measure smoothness and trueness, key performance indicators that are otherwise difficult to quantify, in the past we have used a trusty putter while changing holes!

Interestingly, as we've made soft brushing a more regular part of our routine, we've seen GS3 numbers begin to drop, which, in the context of this technology, indicates an improvement in surface quality. Lower numbers reflect less deviation in the ball's roll, essentially, a smoother and truer green.

We're incredibly fortunate to have access to these tools at Royal Liverpool. They provide valuable, real-time feedback that supports our agronomic decisions and helps us make changes with confidence. Beyond the science, it's also just great fun to use, bringing an extra layer of interest and enthusiasm to daily course set-up and surface management. The team can see the data, recognise and learn the benefits to all of the methods we use and are therefore more invested and interested in their job.

Clipping yield and nutrient efficiency

Clipping volume plays a central role in our fertiliser strategy. At the time of writing (mid-July), we have applied 27kg of nitrogen per hectare, a low figure by most standards. The increased clip yield observed after brushing indicates that we're getting more from the nitrogen applied, likely because the brush enables a greater area of the plant to the mower.

When clip volumes fall below our target range, we use that as an indication that a nutritional input may be needed. With the introduction of daily brushing, our data has become more reliable and consistent, allowing us to make more informed decisions around fertiliser timing and rate. Brushing is introduced around days where the tee sheet is more relaxed and if we feel we need to brush then the roller is introduced after to ensure the drop off in green speed isn't too great.

Date	mls/m²							GS3			Notes
	Green 1	Green 2	Green 3	Green 4	Green 5	Green 6	Average	Speed	Smoothness	Trueness	
7/19/2025	7	5	9	6	4	5	6	9'3"	3.77	0.84	No brush
7/20/2025	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	9'4"	3.65	0.92	No brush
7/21/2025	12	7	12	12	5	4	9	8'7"	3.98	1.04	Brushed
7/22/2025	11	7	12	12	7	7	9	8'5"	3.34	1.01	Brushed
7/23/2025	8	6	7	8	4	5	6	8'4"	3.22	1.10	Brushed
7/24/2025	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	9'2"	2.86	0.80	No brush
7/25/2025	5	3	4	4	2	5	4	9'8"	2.77	0.84	No brush
7/26/2025	4	4	3	5	3	4	4	10'5"	2.62	0.74	No brush /roll

GS3 data indicates how brushing has improved surface quality

Practical integration and ease of use

One of the strengths of the Sports Metals brushes is their simplicity. Each brush takes less than a minute to fit, and we've had no operational issues running them on our electric Toro triples. They're light, robust and unobtrusive, an important consideration when using them as part of the daily set-up.

Crucially, we've not seen any of the drawbacks sometimes associated with grooming units or verticutters, which can be harsher on the sward and more labour-intensive. The brush provides just enough interaction with the surface to lift and clean the sward, without compromising playability or turf condition. I am still a massive fan of verticutting and grooming however it is important to rotate all of these techniques to achieve your goals.

A small change, a big impact

All in all, the introduction of daily brushing using the softer Sports Metals configuration has brought significant agronomic and performance benefits. From improved clipping yield and nutrient efficiency to enhanced surface speed and presentation, it's proven to be a small yet powerful adjustment in our maintenance regime.

At Royal Liverpool, we now view brushing not just as a cosmetic finish or tournament prep tool, but as an integral part of our daily routine, supporting both short-term playability and long-term turf health.

Scan Me to find out more

sports metals
home of the extracut-brush™

Sports Metals would like to say a special thank you to James Bledge, Links Manager at Royal Liverpool, for his independent study of the Sports Metals Extracut-brush®.

How to cold-proof your equipment

Protect your kit and budget with top winter maintenance tips from Kubota

Costs are rising across the board - from grass seed and nutritional products through to tractors and maintenance machinery. With higher initial outlay comes the necessity to look after that investment in an attempt to limit further expenditure. The Kubota UK aftersales team provides some top tips for winter servicing that will help to maximise uptime come the spring.

Equipment such as utility vehicles and tractors will work on, likely put to task differently during the colder and wetter period. Meanwhile, demand for mowers will reduce or even cease - depending on the temperatures - making it an ideal time to factor in some annual machinery maintenance. A combined approach of in-house checks and the expert servicing delivered by your local approved Kubota dealership can help to pre-empt and prevent problems and unexpected downtime when the grass begins to grow once again.

If your tractors and RTV's are utilised for ongoing maintenance and/or construction works over the winter, bear the following in mind:

- Continue standard daily checks – maintain optimum levels of oil, water etc. Check that your radiator is clean and clear any debris from cooling fins.
- Check that anti-freeze is at a suitable level.
- Keep on top of regular greasing – not only does greasing provide all-important lubrication, but it can also prevent/displace any contaminants from places they shouldn't be.
- Monitor tyre pressures to avoid causing unnecessary damage to any softer areas of turf and prevent tyre vulnerability from wear/perish.
- Invest time in thoroughly washing equipment down to prevent accumulations which can cause blockages or sub-standard performance.

Equipment going into an extended period of storage, such as mowers (conditions dependant), require greater consideration. The daily checks and tasks outlined above would remain applicable to ride-on mowers, with a wash and dry down even more important here. Use a blower or airline to remove clippings and give the mower a thorough wash to prevent creating an environment suited to pests. An application of a rust preventative, particularly on mower blades, would also be considered good practice.

Another thing to bear in mind when

placing machinery into storage is the shelf-life of any fuel left in the tank. While quality issues relating to diesel are less common, some larger diesel engine tractors which require a diesel exhaust fluid additive to clean up emissions, can expect a reduction in maximum shelf life. Diesel fuel filters equipped with traps to catch water and sediment should also be emptied/cleaned as part of the maintenance programme.

Ideally, petrol mowers that are to be placed into storage would have fuel tanks drained to limit issues related to ethanol binding which can threaten the health of certain engine components and/or contribute to poor overall engine performance.

Also plan ahead – get in touch with your local Kubota dealership to book your annual servicing and don't get caught up in the springtime rush!

Diesel and petrol equipment will vary in recommended servicing intervals so be sure to ask the dealership and heed the recommended guidance to prevent bigger, more costly issues in the longer-term.

Dealers will conduct a full or interim service depending on hours, which will typically involve changing filters, checking/changing oil and replacing any worn bearings or parts etc. Any parts replaced and fitted by an authorised Kubota dealer come with the peace of mind of their own 18-month parts and labour warranty. Mowers would also benefit from a full dealer service – typically including deck removal for a thorough check and clean and blades sharpened, replaced and balanced as required for optimal performance come the spring.

If, as part of your winter maintenance checks, you identify a part due for replacement, the process of ordering what you need has never been easier with the introduction of Terrako. Terrako is a new digital marketplace which enables customers to place an order for genuine parts from a mobile or desktop device.

Access to Terrako requires customers to create a free online account, which also highlights the location of their closest Kubota dealers. Doing so gives the customer instant access to dealer stock levels and recommended retail pricing, alongside a whole catalogue of schematic drawings and parts numbers, simplifying parts identification and ensuring you order the correct part for your machine.

Once payment is made, customers can choose to collect parts from their nearest Kubota dealer or request dealer delivery to site bringing further convenience to the process.

At a time when it can appear hard to be in control of costs across the golf course, keeping on top of routine maintenance to ensure your equipment performs when you really need it is one thing that should certainly afford your attention this winter.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Terrako

CirrusPRO delivers next level water management at The Richmond

How Rain Bird's revolutionary central control software is saving time, money and water

When The Richmond Golf Club in South West London converted its irrigation control system to the Rain Bird IC System™ in December 2023, Les Howkins MG and his greenkeeping team immediately benefitted from features that saved time, money and water.

Fault finding became fast and simple, irrigation became much more targeted to specific areas, and exclusive features such as Cycle + Soak™ could be tailored to single stations. They instantly saved 10% of the water they had previously applied.

Embracing new technologies

The IC System was a huge step forward, but Howkins' ambition didn't stop there. With the club's irrigation infrastructure optimised he wanted the latest central control technology in order to continually improve course conditions, conserve water and transform the way his team irrigate. The upgrade was installed by a member of Origin Amenity Solutions' irrigation team in mid-April and the impact was instant.

"Brilliant, is the short answer!" he enthuses. "It is so easy to use, and we can do so much more out in the field. It is just brilliant. Sometimes a product demonstration looks good, then when you have the product in-situ and it's not so simple, but CirrusPRO is intuitive and pretty straightforward. We spent some time with the installer going through the

Photo credit: Kevin Milner

main features. When I needed help with a particular task, the support from Rain Bird GSP was excellent. I called them, then instead of explaining how to complete the task they accessed our PC remotely and showed me, on screen in real time. Adding things into programmes is quick and easy too. When new features become available, you're notified on your dashboard so you can start using them straight away.

"We can turn on a sprinkler and irrigate in three different ways, in time, volume in millimetres or by the number of rotations, which is particularly useful when we're watering in fertiliser or wetting agent. We apply what's needed without any excess, and we don't need to run everything the same. Our greens and fairways are set differently, and we can adjust the percentage of one sprinkler in the field using the tablet. It's that fine tuning – so specific to each individual head, that really saves water.

"One of the features I really like on the tablet is that any of us can tap on a sprinkler and it tells us when it last irrigated. Having that information visible to all users means there's no double or missed watering. We can also see what's active and what's scheduled. It's phenomenal to think about where we've come from to where we are now. In 2018 we were driving round the course with an irrigation key and a screwdriver! Now we're on a buggy making any adjustments with a tablet.

"CirrusPRO helps us get the full benefit of other irrigation management tools, such as our weather station. Our irrigation is ET-led, so we know what we've lost and how much we need to apply to make up that loss. We also use the AT ML3 ThetaKit to monitor soil moisture at times of the year when it's particularly important. Paying particular attention to known dry spots we've worked out, through trial and error, that 1mm of water applied equals 1 per cent of moisture in the soil, so the combination of our ET and soil moisture readings, the IC System and CirrusPRO software helps us apply what's needed, when it's needed, where it's needed."

Knowledge is power

As well as being a powerful tool out on the course, CirrusPRO™ generates valuable data.

"It provides very useful data which I will include in my end of year report to the greens committee. I can compare year-on-year, it tells me how much water I used each month, or the volume applied by green, fairway or by hole. This sort of record keeping is becoming increasingly important. When water abstraction licences are due for renewal the Environment Agency can request daily meter readings, so information needs to be readily available."

Upgrading is "an absolute no-brainer"

"CirrusPRO has massively exceeded my expectations. We're relatively new users, but with the spring and summer we've just experienced the impact has been huge. It's an absolute no-brainer, and the greater your reliance on mains water, the greater the water and money-saving benefits."

Scan Me to find out more

GRUNDFOS

Getting ahead of the game during drain-down

Grundfos explains why maintaining you pumping system is critical

For greenkeepers, navigating the complexities of course management is a year-round challenge. While attention often focuses on the greens, fairways and intricate irrigation networks, one critical component – pumps – often stay out of sight and out of mind. Yet pumping systems are the very heart of irrigation, and their reliability is critical.

During the cooler, wetter months of autumn, many golf courses prepare for the annual drain-down period, when systems are taken offline. The off-season presents a crucial opportunity to get ahead of the game with a managed maintenance service designed to prevent costly downtime and ensure peak performance for the season ahead.

Paul Andrews, Groundwater and Irrigation Key Account Manager from Grundfos, the world's largest pumps manufacturer, has been an irrigation engineer for 20 years.

He explains, "Golf courses will spend millions on a new sprinkler system, but if the pumphouse isn't working, it is all wasted. This highlights why a proactive service during the drain-down period is essential for peace of mind and long-term asset management."

Preventative maintenance

Waiting for a pump to fail is a costly gamble. A proactive maintenance plan which identifies potential weak points before they lead to a breakdown is essential.

The Wisley is a private member's golf club, situated in 224 acres of lush countryside in the historic village of Ripley, Surrey, UK. Close to the River Wey, with three natural lakes, the 27-hole, state-of-the art course was designed to preserve the green beauty of its surroundings.

Most of the pumping for irrigation takes place during the night, between 8pm and 5am, from March to October. Servicing, repair and maintenance usually take place over the wetter, winter period, because irrigation is needed less frequently and parts of the system can be taken offline.

John Lockyer, The Wisley's Director of Greens, said, "The Wisley is regarded as one of the best golf courses in the country, and we pride ourselves on creating an all-season haven for our members.

"A key priority is maintaining our surfaces and our biggest investment, other than course itself, is the pumping station. This has an impact on the health of the course - if we don't have a reliable supply of water, we can't produce a world-class course."

That is why the course has a pump service and maintenance contract with Grundfos, which allows for a proactive approach to maintain this critical asset. This strategy not only prevents unexpected downtime and costly emergency repairs but also guarantees the pump system's reliability for the season ahead, providing the consistent water pressure and flow essential for creating and maintaining a championship-level course.

As part of the proactive maintenance offering, Grundfos engineers conduct comprehensive inspections, checking for wear and tear, and identifying components that are at risk of failure. This prevents potentially catastrophic events as well as optimising performance.

A well-maintained pump operates more efficiently, reducing energy consumption and extending its overall lifespan. This can be compared to a car's MOT and service, where regular checks ensure it is safe and efficient,

preventing a small issue from becoming a major, expensive repair down the line.

In addition, the service comes with a 12-month warranty and compliance with the ISO 9906:2013 standard for hydraulic performance and acceptance tests for rotodynamic pumps.

Nationwide support

The UK has around 3,000 golf courses, making it the second most popular country for golfers in the world, after the US. Grundfos's drain down service is underpinned by a nationwide network of over 40 highly trained engineers, strategically positioned to ensure rapid response times, no matter where a course is located. This geographical spread is supported by a central service hub in Warrington and a dedicated repair centre in Sunderland.

When booking a pump service, the logistics team at Grundfos coordinates collection and delivery, ensuring a seamless process. In an emergency, Grundfos engineers can be onsite quickly, equipped to diagnose and resolve issues. This logistical strength means businesses can avoid the prolonged downtime that often comes with sourcing and waiting for parts or a specialist from a single, distant location.

Refurbish and renew

Beyond the obvious benefit of avoiding costly downtime, using a managed maintenance service is also a green solution. It is a key part of the circular economy - a model focused on refurbishing and renewing assets rather than replacing them.

Manufacture and transport of a brand new pump requires significant raw materials and energy, so by extending the life of existing assets through proactive maintenance, facilities are conserving valuable resources.

From an environmental and financial perspective, a well-maintained, energy-efficient pump system offers tangible benefits. A worn pump uses more energy to achieve the same output, leading to higher electricity bills. By refurbishing and recalibrating pumps, they can be restored to near-new efficiency levels, which translates directly into lower energy costs.

This focus on efficiency aligns with recent UK legislative drivers, particularly the focus on reducing energy consumption and achieving net-zero targets. The overarching legislative push towards energy efficiency and sustainability makes adopting such services a smart and compliant business practice.

Clubs and facilities that invest in modern, efficient water strategies are well-positioned for long-term profitability in a world where water is an increasingly valuable and scrutinised resource.

Investing in proactive pump maintenance during the drain-down period is a strategic decision that safeguards the most valuable assets of courses like The Wisley, ensuring a sustainable operation, and guaranteeing world-class playing conditions.

Scan Me to find out more

Please scan the QR code for more information

Apprentice corner

Real-life situations commonly faced by less experienced members

How to deal with a new problem you encounter

Andy Wight, head of work-based learning at Oaklands College, has this practical guidance to help you make better decisions when you find yourself in an unfamiliar situation

We've all been there – faced with a problem we have not seen before. Maybe it's an unfamiliar disease or an issue with a machine.

When the pressure is on to deliver, our natural response is to be reactive. However, sometimes, the best approach is to pause, take a breath and step back. Approaching the situation with a calm, logical mind can often lead to a more effective and lasting solution. Problems call for a reflective rather than a reactive mindset.

Instead of jumping to conclusions, it's about taking the time to identify the issue, carefully diagnose what's really going on and then resolve it in a systematic way. There are different models you can use to guide this process but most share the same core steps: a thoughtful, structured approach that leads you from problem to solution with confidence. So let's have a look at how we can do this using a machine as an example.

Step 1: Define the problem

A problem occurs with a machine.

Step 2: Gather information

Collect as many details as possible, for example is the machine completely dead, or does it try to start but then stop? Has this problem happened before, or is it new? Were there any warning signs such as strange noises, vibrations, or smells? Find who used it last and talk to them as the operator might recall useful information.

Step 3: Consider possible causes

Make a logical list of potential reasons. Could it be electrical issue (power supply, fuse, or wiring.) A mechanical fault (motor seized, belt broken.) A human factor (safety switch not engaged, operator error) As an example, if the power light isn't turning on, an electrical issue would be a strong suspect.

Step 4: Test systematically

Check each possible cause one at a time in a logical order. Is the machine switched on? (Don't skip the obvious!) Test the power supply with a meter, inspect fuses or circuit breakers. Look for visible mechanical breaks, frayed wires. Check safety switches and emergency stops are working.

Step 5: Establish the root cause

Once you've narrowed it down, focus on the why. For example, if the fuse is blown, was it a one-off surge, or is there an underlying short circuit? Replacing the fuse without finding the real reason (for example, a loose wire touching the frame) may only lead to a repeat of the problem (or worse.)

Step 6: Resolve the issue

Now apply the fix and confirm it solves the problem, for example, repair the loose wire. Then restart the machine and observe.

Step 7: Reflect and prevent

Take a moment to reflect. What can be done to stop this happening again? Perhaps add "check for loose wiring" to the maintenance schedule; train operators to report unusual sounds immediately; check the mowers of the same type to see if its common problem; or introduce a regular weekly inspection to spot small issues before they become big problems. **GI**

Further study

• *This piece links to the Level 3 Advanced Sports Turf Technician Apprenticeship - Skill 13: Apply basic fault-finding techniques in order to identify problems with powered machinery and equipment.*

Key takeaway

Having a structured approach can transform troubleshooting from a stressful guessing game into a calm, confident process that saves time and prevents repeat issues. Instead of jumping to conclusions, be methodical and reflective. Engage the brain before the spanners. Stand back and think critically and test your assumptions. Lastly, never overlook the obvious. I once watched someone clean a spark plug before they realised the fuel was not turned on!

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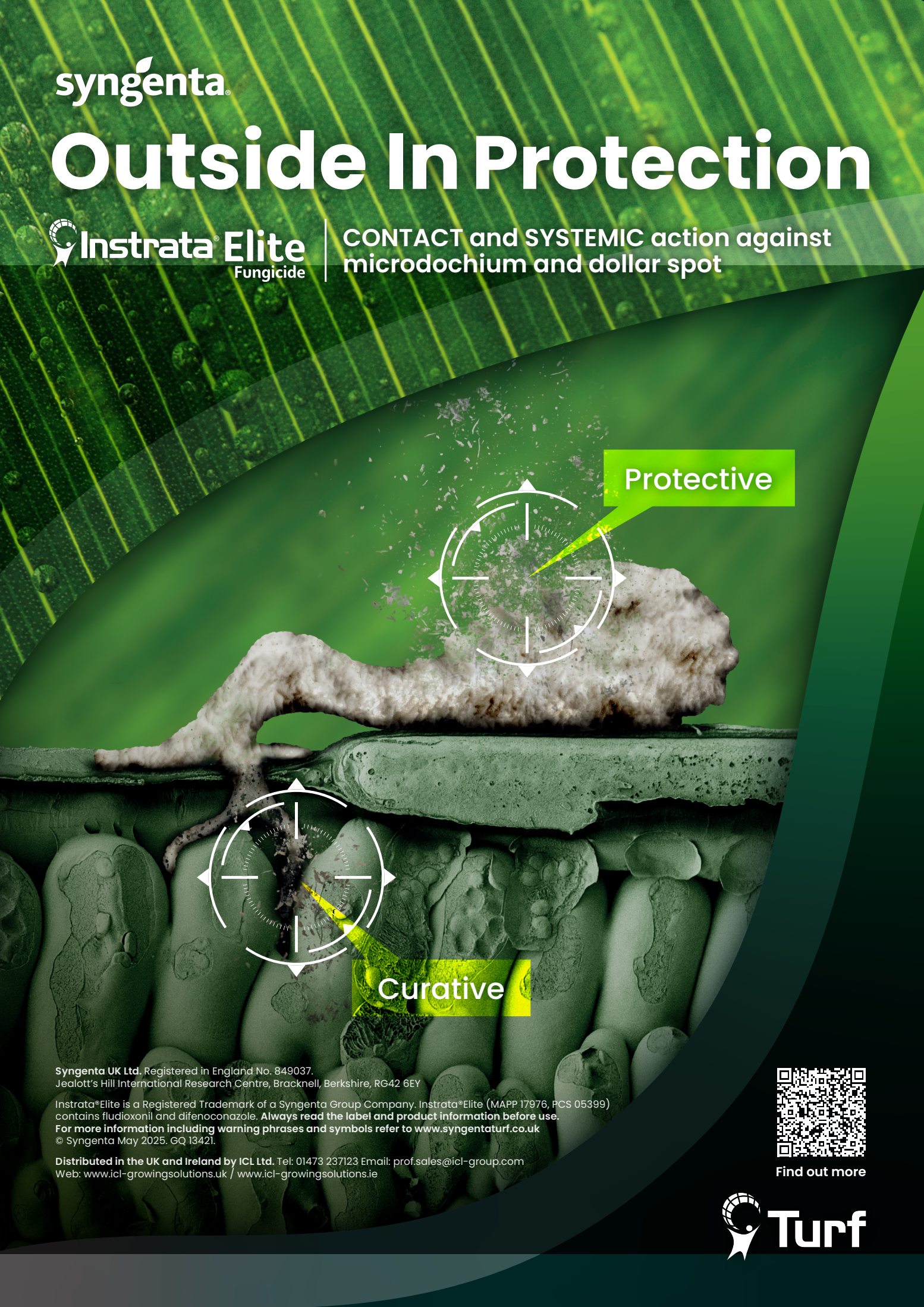

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