

# Greenkeeper education

Changes are about to take place in the format of greenkeeper training. BIGGA's executive director NEIL THOMAS tells David White how the changes came about and what's going on



**Neil Thomas:**  
*'Developments now taking place will prove of major significance in advancing the cause of greenkeeper education and training'*

■ DW: There has been much talk throughout the past year of the establishment of an education unit for advancing greenkeeper education and training. I understand that agreement has now been reached to enable this unit to proceed. Will you confirm this and explain the background which led to its establishment?

■ NT: I can indeed confirm that agreement has been reached for the education unit, which will be the responsibility of the Greenkeepers Training Committee (GTC) to go ahead with immediate effect. I welcome this opportunity to explain the significant developments of recent months, which will have far reaching and beneficial consequences for greenkeeper education and training.

The starting point was a paper which I prepared for the May '92 meeting of the GTC under the heading 'The Future Funding of Greenkeeper Education'. In it I pointed out that the last few years had seen very significant progress in the development of greenkeeper education in

which the GTC, in conjunction with BIGGA and the Approved Training Colleges, had played a key role. However, a critical phase in funding had been reached and with the establishing of the Joint Golf Course Committee (JGCC) it was to be hoped that more substantial funding would become available in the near future. The immediate concern related to the Greenkeeper Training Manual - a major development - and I felt that the significance of this manual, its implementation and on-going reappraisal and development, was not to be underestimated.

Greenkeeping qualifications would in future receive due recognition within educational circles on a national basis, and I pointed out that we were on the verge of a major move forward in the committee's endeavours to enhance the education and training available to greenkeepers.

Time was short, as the introduction of the manual and establishment of the necessary administrative procedures needed to coincide with the start of the academic year in September 1992. It was my view that this could only be achieved by establishing an Educational Unit to oversee the future of greenkeeper education, which would be funded by the JGCC. Its initial task would be to oversee the implementation of the Training Manual with all its ramifications, and it would then move on to encompass further educational developments as recommended by the GTC and approved by the JGCC.

It was felt that the unit should be headed by BIGGA's education officer, who already → 22

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## **'BIGGA views the new situation in a positive light and welcomes the assurances that there will now at last be a substantial increase in the funding of greenkeeper training'**

21 → held dual responsibilities in relation to BIGGA and the GTC. These dual responsibilities would continue as BIGGA itself would continue with greenkeeper education as its priority. BIGGA's current educational programmes in relation to conferences, seminars, management courses and the development of the Master Greenkeeper Certificate are on-going and would be developed within its own budget assisted by contributions from other bodies and companies as appropriate.

BIGGA was willing and able to offer the GTC facilities through which its programmes could be carried out, as a lease on additional accommodation at BIGGA's headquarters was being negotiated to take effect from 1 June 1992. However the board of management of BIGGA, whilst recognising the importance of the GTC's grants for the benefit of greenkeeper education over the last few years, felt it essential that the GTC now appreciated that the Association was unable, however willing, to accept any further workload in relation to greenkeeper education from the GTC without the provision of adequate resources, of which staffing represented a prime requirement.

There were two points to be made – the first was that the GTC could not continue to develop educational and training provisions for greenkeepers without a wider administrative base than that currently enjoyed under the auspices of BIGGA. Second, such a base could be developed cost effectively in conjunction with BIGGA's existing expertise and resources and without the GTC having to assume an 'employer' role.

■ DW: What was the GTC's response to this paper?

■ NT: The GTC was sympathetic to the proposals but felt unable to accept the financial commitment without a pledge to further funding.

■ DW: What subsequently transpired?

■ NT: Immediately following the GTC meeting in May I was contacted by the EGU's golf course committee and a meeting was set up involving myself and David Golding, along with the deputy secretary of the EGU and the chairman of the EGU's golf course committee. At the beginning of June the deputy secretary of the EGU submitted draft proposals to BIGGA for the establishment of a greenkeeper training education unit, and we responded accordingly. A final draft was forwarded to the chairman of the GTC at the beginning of July, indicating that the finance committee of the EGU had given outline approval for financial support for the setting up of the unit. Essentially the EGU was prepared to support BIGGA's initiative to the GTC in an attempt to finally get the education unit moving.

At this stage, therefore, both BIGGA and the EGU were in broad agreement on the proposals.

■ DW: Good, it seems as though rapid progress was being made. I wonder, were matters going too well?

■ NT: My understanding is that the papers were then submitted to a meeting of the JGCC by the

EGU's representative in July and at this meeting a decision was taken that the new unit must be administered separately from BIGGA and key amendments were made to the EGU's draft proposals. The next communication was a letter received at the end of August from the EGU enclosing the EGU's document for the setting up of the proposed unit and advising us that a meeting had been called for early September at the EGU offices. This was attended by the chairman and myself and it became clear to us that the document now contained significant amendments to the draft proposals from July. At the September meeting there was clarification of certain BIGGA reservations and general agreement on the need to proceed with the unit, whilst recognising that the proposals needed the formal consideration of both BIGGA and the GTC as well as the approval of the four home unions through the JGCC.

■ DW: I presume that you then reported to BIGGA's board of management and the GTC. What was the outcome?

■ NT: During October both BIGGA and the GTC responded formally to the proposals and whilst both bodies supported a proposed reduction in the size of the GTC, concerns were expressed in relation to the proposal that the administration of the GTC's accounts would pass from Aldwark Manor to the EGU's offices in Leicester, thereby separating general and financial administration, as well as in relation to BIGGA's representation on the restructured committee. Additionally, concerns were expressed about the future relationship of the GTC and the JGCC, which seemed far from clear. However, at the end of December the chairman and myself attended a meeting with the chairman of the GTC and the executive consultant to the JGCC where we were advised that the JGCC was determined to implement its proposals as they stood – irrespective of the representations from BIGGA and the GTC. Furthermore, in a new development, it was now envisaged that the staff employed within the new unit would be employed directly by the GTC and not by BIGGA. Irrespective of this, the GTC still wished to administer its affairs from within BIGGA's offices. Having originally requested a meeting with the JGCC as early as last July, the board's response was to again request a meeting with the JGCC to try and resolve the divergence of views on key points. The meeting never took place, though a subsequent meeting was held on 17 February with the chairman of the GTC and the chairman of the EGU's executive committee attending.

At this meeting BIGGA made it clear that the preferred solution was for the education unit to function within BIGGA's offices under the overall control of BIGGA's executive director, albeit with a clear separation of the functions of BIGGA and the GTC, given that there would be close co-operation on educational programmes. David Golding, as education officer, would head the education unit working through myself. Under this arrangement the staff of the unit would remain BIGGA employees, their costs being met by the GTC. In essence, the

work of the GTC would continue as it had done for the last five years under BIGGA's auspices.

However, it was again repeated that the JGCC wished to establish a separate employer role. This being the case, BIGGA's board of management determined that initially the GTC should seek separate accommodation with the two bodies continuing to work closely. To this end, BIGGA's enquiries indicated that accommodation could be made available in the near future within Aldwark Manor in the South Lodge building. BIGGA considered it crucial that the GTC remain at Aldwark Manor, as this was now viewed within the game of golf as the 'home' of greenkeeper training. By being located in near proximity the closest of co-operation would be possible.

■ DW: Did the meeting reach final agreement on the way forward?

■ NT: Yes indeed, it has finally been agreed that the GTC will function as an autonomous body – with its own employees – located within Aldwark Manor. I must make it clear that this is not what I see as the preferred solution. However, BIGGA views the new situation in a positive light and welcomes the assurances that there will now at last be a substantial increase in the funding of greenkeeper training.

BIGGA will continue with education as its foremost priority and its programmes for its members, for example the BTME, the National Education Conference, the Toro/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper award, the ICI Premier Greenkeeper award and our own management courses will continue to be administered from within BIGGA, liaising with the GTC as necessary.

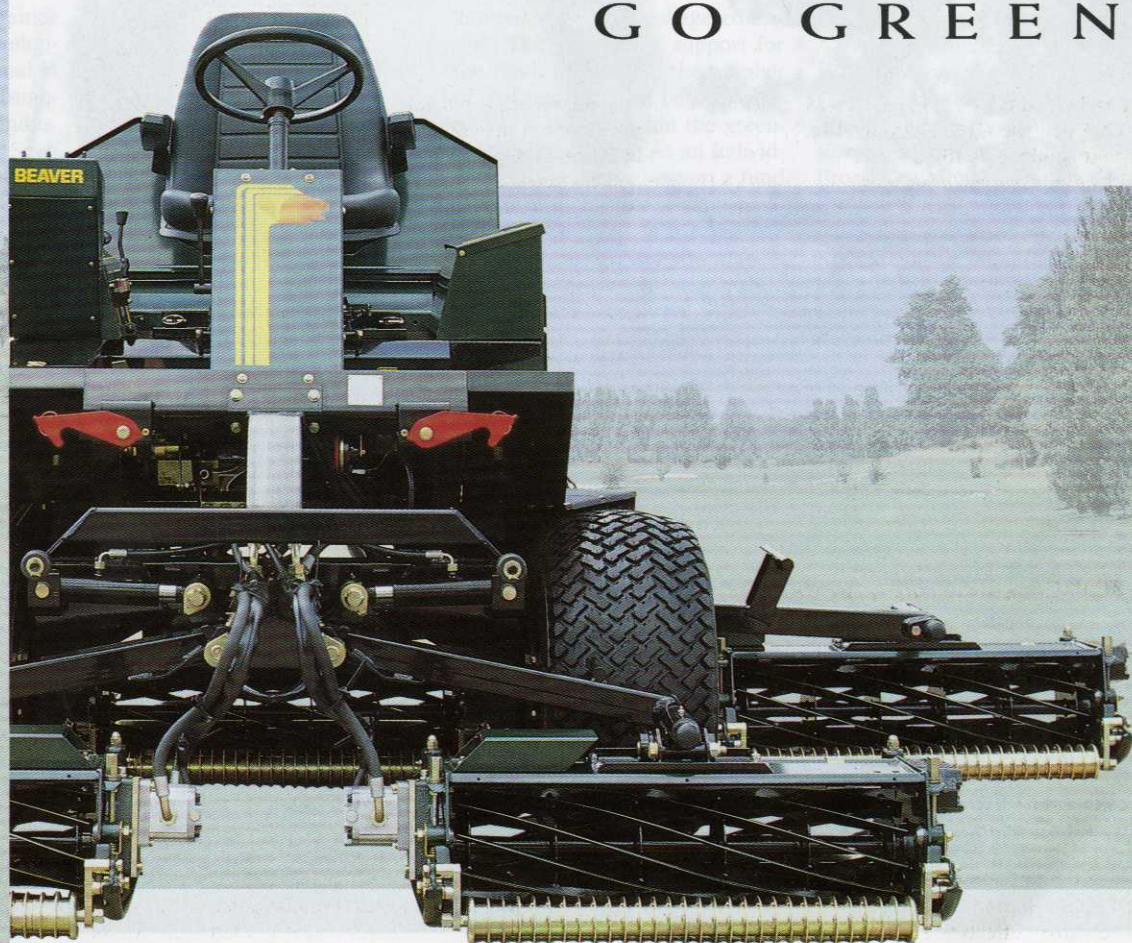
It is anticipated that David Golding will accept an offer to head the new unit and whilst the two of us will continue to work closely on all greenkeeper training matters, sadly he will be leaving the employ of BIGGA. This applies also to Sue Gudgeon, who is likely to be going with David to carry out administrative duties with the GTC.

■ DW: What of the future?

■ NT: It is certainly a period of change. The four Home Unions – as the 'employers' – have at last accepted responsibility for funding the education and training of the 'employees'. In reaching this stage BIGGA has undoubtedly taken the initiative and after five years of striving, through the GTC, the Association can at last see a light at the end of the tunnel. I am optimistic for the future. I feel that the R&A will remain supportive and they have already agreed to match the four Home Union's contribution at a rate of 6.25p per registered golfer during 1993/94. The GTC will need time to settle down, whilst reorganisation within BIGGA will be necessary. In the medium term I am confident that the developments now taking place will prove of major significance in advancing the cause of greenkeeper education and training. BIGGA will continue to be at the forefront of these developments, ensuring that its members interests are best served.



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# Education and Development Fund pays for career and training videos

It is now just over a year since the Education and Development Fund was established and in that time it has received substantial backing from both the industry and BIGGA's members. Such has been the support that the Association will this year be producing its long awaited career video as well as the first of what is hoped will be a series of training videos. This first training video will feature pesticide spraying and the application of fertilisers.

Both these projects have only been made possible through the support of BIGGA's members and those companies within the fine turf industry who recognise the value of BIGGA's educational programmes and the need to ensure first class training for those entering the greenkeeping profession if the desired standards of golf course management and maintenance are to be achieved,



maintained and improved upon in the future.

Financial contributions will channel the resources of the game and the industry into one central fund from which specific spending programmes can be determined. BIGGA is greatly appreciative of the support it receives from its Golden and Silver Key members and hopes that many more companies and individuals will take out these categories of membership.

BIGGA's board of management has signified its intention to implement at an early date a scholarship awards scheme to enable selected students to be

assisted with their college education. The greater the support for the fund, the greater the number of students who can be helped to pursue a career within the greenkeeping profession. As an individual member please support a fund from which one day you may well be a beneficiary. As a region or section of BIGGA can you make a contribution to this worthwhile fund? As a company working within the fine turf industry please consider whether the fund does indeed represent the ideal opportunity to offer a financial commitment which will advance both the status of the greenkeeping profession and standards of golf course maintenance.

Since the last listing of members in the February issue of Greenkeeper International, the following members have committed themselves to the fund for 1993:

Golden Key Circle: Howard

Evans (associate), Richard Green.

Silver Key Circle: Barry Heaney, Huw Parry, Douglas Smith, George Malcolm, Roger Willars, Tim Banks (company), Barry Cooper (associate), John Millen, Bruce Cruikshank, Joseph Woolley, Ivor Scoones, Peter Brooks, Graham Winckless (associate), Kerran Daly, J Slessor (company) William Montague, John Wilson (associate) Adrian Archer, David Harrison (associate), Wayne Heathcote.

In addition both Central section in Scotland and Cleveland section have made donations for 1993 and it is hoped that this year will see BIGGA regions and sections generally giving a major boost to the fund.

Education continues to hold the key to professionalism and the further advance of golf course management.

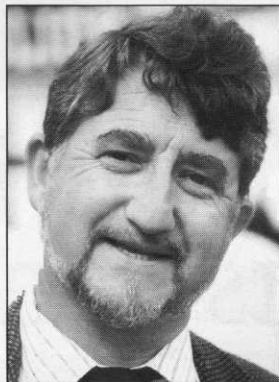
NEIL THOMAS

## Spraying seminar makes sense of new Health and Safety legislation

In the magnificent setting of the new oak barn at Wildwood GC, Hardi and Scats sponsored a one-day seminar on 'Spraying in the Nineties'.

Jon Allbutt gave an up to date picture of the legislative framework for those buying and using sprayers, making the point that new legislation does not necessarily mean we are doing anything wrong that needed correcting by introducing new regulations; and to emphasise the point Jon reminded more than a 100 greenkeepers and local authority managers of how it was 30 years ago. Drawing on personal experiences, he recounted how mowrah meal and the old powdered mercury fungicides were used before the word coverall was invented!

The Pesticides Safety Precautions Scheme and later the Health and Safety at Work Act made a change for the better. In 1986 the Control of Pesticides Regulations introduced statutory controls for the storage and use of all pesticides. Jon reminded the audience of the second organisation that approved non-agricultural pesticides: the Health and Safety Executive. Old containers of wood preservative without HSE



Jon Allbutt: Spraying seminar

numbers would need to be disposed of and this fact had not received the same publicity as the more readily recognisable weedkillers and fungicides.

The HSE, we learned, will also be introducing new specifications for sprayers in 1993 which will affect the equipment on golf courses. Existing sprayers may be able to be updated if they not too old, though Jon warned against updated tired machines that have weathered pipework and tanks – far better to buy a new unit that complies with the new specification.

Knapsack sprayers also must have a new BSI Standard 7411 –

1991. Sprayers must now meet strict new standards for leaks, durability, impact to hard surfaces, size of filling hole and a total weight not exceeding 20 kilos. We were warned that not all sprayers on sale (even to this day) meet the new standards, so when ordering make sure that it meets the aforementioned BSI 7411.

After lunch Jon spoke about how to arrive at the best specification for a new sprayer: the need to decide the size of tank and the machine that will carry the sprayer, is it compatible, the width of boom with regard to the terrain; should it have electric or manual controls? Jon's advice was to buy the biggest tank that could

be afforded and if necessary have a trailed unit with a walker boom for use on greens and tees.

The final session took part on the course, looking at some of the Hardi range. The new Cushman demountable sprayer was driven by some of the greenkeepers as Jon demonstrated pressure testing, calibration and spraying techniques. There was considerable interest in the new walker boom and this was demonstrated on one of Billy McMillan's new greens.

A very successful day was brought to a close by Colin Gregory and Robert Love who gave a vote of thanks to Graham Aslett and Billy McMillan for the use of the club.

### Date set for Hayter Challenge final

Arrangements for the grand final of the Hayter Challenge Tournament have now been finalised. Commented executive director, Neil Thomas, "I am delighted to announce that the Hayter Challenge Tournament final will be held at the prestigious Sand Moor Golf Club, Alwoodley, Leeds on Wednesday, 15 September with

practice facilities available the previous day.

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# POWER PACKED



## *What to look for in a compact tractor*

1. A high power to weight ratio makes the compact tractor ideal for jobs such as mowing where consistency of performance and low ground pressure are essential.

2. Four wheel drive helps maintain positive traction across slippery surfaces and on jobs where a good 'pull' is needed, such as ground renovation and drainage.

3. The compact tractor can be equipped with attachments which turn it into a mini digger-loader for drainage work and lifting and movement of materials such as soil and top dressings.

4. Wide flotation tyres enable the compact tractor to work on most fine turf surfaces without fear of marking or damage. Care still needs to be taken in soft or wet conditions and when making sharp turns.

5. Specialist attachments have extended the versatility of the compact tractor, enabling it to tackle most tasks around the course throughout the year.

6. A load-carrying, tipping body mounted on the chassis of a specialist turf vehicle helps maintain good balance and weight distribution while keeping the number of wheel marks to a minimum.

7. Most turf vehicles are offered with a range of purpose-built attachments for year-round turf care. British courses will usually respond better to implements designed initially to work under British conditions.

8. Three wheels traditionally give better manoeuvrability than four, although care still needs to be taken when making sharp turns on banks and sloping greens surrounds. Proper user training is vital.

9. Although capable of rapid movement around the course with both a passenger and attachments, most turf vehicles have a reduced ground clearance demanding sensible driving over undulations and peaks.

10. Small diameter wheels of equal size front and rear enhance the turning circle while maintaining a low centre of gravity for good stability.



# POWER PACKED

**MICHAEL BIRD takes a comprehensive look at compact tractors and specialist turf vehicles - and discovers a wealth of choice. On Page 31 Greenkeeper International presents an up to date guide to all that's available. On these pages: what to look for and what you're going to need...**

**T**he expression 'horses for courses' could well have been coined to help unravel the dilemma faced by those who are charged with the selection of a new power unit for their turf maintenance needs.

Never has there been a greater choice available, with a host of compact tractors vying with an increasing number of specialist turf vehicles for a share of a growing, and potentially profitable, market for their various manufacturers and their dealers.

Yet, it is not uncommon to hear a whispered admittance of mistakes being made in the final selection. These can range from incorrect specification to the realisation that the power unit is totally unsuited to the work for which it was bought. Thankfully, the last-mentioned situation is not a frequent occurrence due to the importance now being placed on the comparative demonstration.

However, there are still plenty of

opportunities for errors of judgement to creep in, heightened by the excitement of having a new 'toy' with which to 'play'. Having acted in haste, there will be plenty of time to repent, not in leisure, but far more likely in the grey light of dawn on a cold, wet, wintery morning.

So, how do we make sure that the power unit we buy is right for the job and right for the circumstances under which it will be used? The first step is to make a list of the tasks that one expects the new acquisition to undertake. In the case of a course which has been used to a fair amount of foot and hand work, the eventual list could be quite lengthy, encompassing aeration, spraying, top dressing, mowing, loading, lifting, movement of hand tools and materials, brushing and drainage, among others.

Capable of carrying out all these tasks, it is hardly surprising that compact tractors have been described as 'maids of all work'. It would be unfair to complete the adage because they are certainly masters of some jobs. These include those that require a high power to weight ratio, such as mowing; those that demand good traction, such as drainage work; and those where a positive PTO drive is needed to power mounted or trailed attachments such as a Verti-Drain or rotary cultivator.

That said, versatility is seen as the greatest attribute of the compact tractor because it can be used with so many different items of equipment, mounted or trailed, at the front, mid or rear of the power unit. These include a range of cultivators and mowers, front loaders and rear-mounted backhoes, drainage equipment and machines and attachments developed specifically for year-round turf care and maintenance. Indeed, it is not uncommon now to find that attachments designed primarily for use within a specialist turf maintenance system can be used without modification on a compact tractor.

When the Japanese compact tractor first appeared in Britain almost 20 years ago, the fitting of turf tyres was the exception rather than the rule. Over the years the position has reversed, and advances in low ground pressure tyre technology means that these

tractors can be used safely on most fine turf surfaces without fear of marking or damage. There are two provisos to the above statement. Extra care needs to be taken in wet or soft conditions on all parts of the course; while turning too sharply with a compact tractor on fine turf is not recommended, as many users will have discovered to their cost, particularly when using four-wheel drive.

Although four wheels, properly shod, help to spread the weight of the tractor over the greatest surface area to minimise compaction, there are disadvantages, no more so than the one of limited manoeuvrability when compared to a specialist turf maintenance vehicle. The compact tractor needs sufficient ground clearance to carry out the multitude of tasks over all terrains for which it was originally designed, and sold. Good ground clearance demands wheels of adequate diameter, and therein lies the problem: The greater the wheel diameter, the harder it is to provide adequate lock to enable the tractor to 'turn on a sixpence', to coin a phrase.

Recent developments have gone some way to overcoming this shortfall. They include tractors which hinge in the middle and a system which automatically doubles the front axle's speed of rotation when the turning angle exceeds a pre-determined level. The result is said to 'pull' the tractor through its turn, reducing the turning circle and the risk of turf damage.

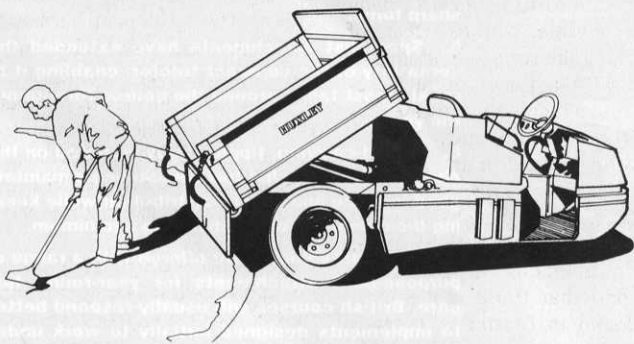
A further disadvantage of the compact tractor is one of lower stability in comparison to a specialist turf vehicle when working across banks or when turning sharply on the sloping approaches to an elevated green. Large diameter wheels raise the centre of gravity of the tractor, reducing its ability to work safely at angles which the ground-hugging turf vehicle can take in its stride.

The relatively high centre of gravity of the compact tractor demands in any case that it should be used with an approved roll-over bar or safety cab. A weather cab is the only option one is likely to need on a turf vehicle, although one manufacturer does fit a roll-over bar as standard.

On that note, it is worth stating

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**A forward driving position provides an excellent view over the work while enhancing the balance of the machine, especially when using rear-mounted attachments**

here that although a specialist turf vehicle's wide track and low centre of gravity make it inherently more stable than a tractor, accidents can still happen. Three wheeled vehicles, for example, do not have the same level of stability as those with four and the ability to perform tighter turns can lead to potentially unsafe situations when taken to the limit. As a result, it is essential that proper instruction and training in the correct use and handling of the machine is given to all users.

Four wheel drive is regarded as an essential feature for compact tractors carrying out 'draught' work on fine turf, and other smooth surfaces, as wheel slip is a major cause of soil compaction. The grip and pulling power provided by the system can allow operations such as mole draining, ground renovation and soil cultivation to be satisfactorily completed without needing to call in a specialist contractor. Hauling of fully laden trailers also needs the positive traction provided by a 4x4 compact tractor, although the ability to disengage drive to the front axle can be beneficial, especially for tyre-wearing road work.

Most manufacturers offer this option on their tractors.

Other features which help give the compact tractor its all-round versatility include hydrostatic transmission, enabling selection of a forward speed to suit virtually every job; high capacity rear and, in some cases, front hydraulic lift linkages and power take-off shafts; and external hydraulic services for power-operated attachments.

The purpose-built turf maintenance vehicle, on the other hand, should not be regarded as the all-rounder which the compact tractor has to be to fulfil the needs of users ranging from Far Eastern rice growers to North American pig farmers, and from Australian road builders to European landscapers and grounds maintenance professionals. Developed originally as a light-treading, highly manoeuvrable power unit offering speed, low noise and excellent weight distribution, the turf vehicle does exactly what it has been designed to do, and more in a number of cases.

The important point to remember when comparing a turf vehicle with a compact tractor is that the

first-mentioned is a specialist item of equipment, the latter is not. The turf vehicle was introduced as a lightweight unit with a low centre of gravity, exerting minimal pressure on the turf through smooth, wide flotation tyres. It is designed also to be exceptionally manoeuvrable, without fear of damaging the surface, and able to work with a range of purpose-built attachments for the care and maintenance of fine turf.

Although most manufacturers offer their own range of attachments, it is recognised that some perform better than others under certain conditions. As a rule, users will find that those implements developed in Britain with input from UK turf professionals will produce a good result on every job they are pointed at. Development of the turf vehicle over the past 20 years has seen its abilities expand to the point where it can now take virtually all turf maintenance, transport and materials movement operations in its stride.

Load-carrying, tipping bodies positioned above or ahead of the vehicle's rear axle mean that sand, soil, fertiliser and other materials can be moved with min-

imal turf disturbance, leaving only one set of wheel marks. Tractors need either a trailer or transport box to do the same job, with the inherent disadvantage of adding weight where it is not wanted.

Equipment such as a sprayer or top dresser can be mounted direct to the chassis of a turf vehicle, helping maintain the excellent weight distribution which is a principal feature of these machines. Visibility is also of prime importance, and the turf vehicle's forward driving position enhances both the view over the work and the balance of the unit.

Another benefit is the ability to carry loads, and often a passenger, at higher speeds than a tractor, due to the fact that most turf vehicles have all-round automotive-type suspension to iron out humps and bumps. The majority of compact tractors rely solely on their tyres to absorb shock loads and the result can be a bone-jarring ride at anything faster than jogging pace over uneven terrain. The ability to drive fast on turf means, however, that extra care needs to be taken to avoid surface damage, a risk heightened by the turf vehicle's low ground clearance, especially over undulations or crests.

Noise is another factor which has to be considered, especially when working close to an hotel, holiday complex or residential area. The compact tractor's exposed exhaust and often minimal engine sound-proofing make for a noisier working environment than a turf vehicle, where the engine and exhaust are usually located low down beneath the driving position in a padded compartment.

As far as mechanical features are concerned, it is now common to find diesel engines on both compact tractors and specialist turf vehicles. Hydrostatic transmission, rear hydraulic lift and power take-off are also available, and, thanks to advances in hydraulic systems, it is probably only a matter of time before all-wheel drive makes an appearance.

So, as pointed out in the first paragraph, it really is a case of horses for courses. If you want a machine capable of carrying out virtually every job around → 31



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