

PITCHCARE

ISSUE 107

MARCH/APRIL 2023



THE SHOW MUST GO ON?

PLUS

● MARK HUNT
WEATHER CORNER

● TOP TIPS - PREVENTING THEFT
& MANAGING FOOTFALL

● WEED CONTROL
CONCERNS



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Editor Kerry Haywood

BACK WITH A BANG



After a void couple of years, due to the 'C' word that we won't mention, we've finally been able to come together over the past few months at both Saltex and BTME to do business, network and celebrate all things turf... it felt good, didn't it!

Jim Croxton, CEO of BIGGA couldn't have said it better when he commented: "It felt like old times which is a good thing and

we've certainly enjoyed people being happy. All of the exhibitors seem to have really enjoyed being back and it's been really encouraging."

So, everything has been reset? Or maybe not? With companies finding different ways of trading throughout the hiatus, I still regularly hear the questions 'why do we even need trade shows or, are there are too many in the calendar?'

With this in mind, in our main feature article this issue (page 26), we asked those all important questions to address whether exhibitors and visitors have the budget and time for four events per year? We have interviews with representatives from all four events including BTME, Saltex, SAGE and of course the team behind the new GroundsFest event. Plus, we also have the results from the recent Twitter polls.

This issue also sees the start of our new 'Weather Corner' with industry expert and highly respected Mark Hunt (page 54). The regular column will see Mark look at all things weather-related and how they impact on turfgrass management, and he welcomes your questions for future review.

Chemical use in groundcare remains in the spotlight and Jane Carley addresses concerns and issues surrounding weed control on page 64.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for your wonderful comments and feedback regarding the new look and format of the magazine. We have been overwhelmed with the response and I'm looking forward to continuing the development of content to bring you an informative and interesting read.

Enjoy!

Kerry

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FOREWORD



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HOT TOPIC

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The Show Must Go On?

We asked important questions to address the current number of industry trade shows. Have exhibitors and visitors got the budget and time for four events per year?

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Data crucial at Harlequins

Head Groundsman Adam Witchell has made a quick start to his first job in rugby using data systems.

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Communication is key

Adam Lawrence, Head Groundsman at Altrincham FC discusses stress and anxiety.



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Left 287 attended the first Scots Turf Show

SCOTSTURF A SUCCESS

It may be the start of something great

● **The first Scottish turf event for almost fifteen years opened its doors at Hamilton Park Racecourse on 1st March, and the visitors began to pour in an hour before official registration had even opened.**

The trial show was devised by seventeen of the industry's most influential companies, to give something back to the Scottish turf community and to connect with the Industry, by providing a local turf event, accessible to a vast swathe of groundsmen and greenkeepers from all areas of sport, that had never had the opportunity to attend a local industry event.

David Roxburgh - Head Groundsman - Rangers Football Club said: "Something needed to happen here in Scotland. The fantastic turnout here hasn't surprised me because I think Scotland has been desperate for something like this. It needs a big show, and I think this could possibly be the forerunner of something great."

The number of registered visitors had risen above the target of 200, with 287 attending on the day.

The show started with an introduction to the idea behind the show with Alan Thomson of AllGrass and Richard Heywood of Campey Turf Care Systems. The guests were immediately engaged with two 20 minute speakers, Gary Smith, senior agronomist from the STRI, quickly followed by Joe Shaw from SIS Pitches, before heading out into the spring sunshine for the outdoor exhibition area.

Jim Dawson - Head Groundsman - BT Murrayfield commented: "We would usually have to travel to events down south to see machinery or even have a chat with other groundsmen. So, today has been good for networking. I like having the option to attend the seminars, then getting to see some of the machinery in action and meeting the reps as well."

It is important for the companies behind this event to gauge the response of the visitors going forward, with a view to expanding the event significantly next year.

So, The Scots Turf Show appears to have been an overwhelming success and looks like it may be here to stay.
Save the date - 6th March 2024

TURFGRASS RESEARCH

● **The Toro company contributes \$50,000 to continue support of Rounds 4 Research.**

The GCSAA Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has again received a \$50,000 grant from The Toro Company Foundation for continued support of the Rounds 4 Research programme in 2023. With this contribution, Toro has donated \$550,000 to the programme over the past eleven years.

Rounds 4 Research is designed to address a critical shortage in turfgrass research funding by auctioning donated rounds of golf online.

The programme allows GCSAA chapters and turfgrass foundations to participate as fundraising partners and direct the proceeds from auctioned rounds to specific projects that will have the most significant impact in their local areas.

For more information visit gcsaa.org



We are proud to see the impact Rounds 4 Research has had on the industry.

**Judson McNeil, president,
The Toro Company Foundation**

BIGGEST LEVEL OF SUPPORT

from The Premier League, The FA and the Football Foundation.

● This year will see the biggest ever level of support for sports clubs and organisations across the country from The Premier League, The FA and Government's Football Foundation.

2022 was a big year for the Football Foundation, with the country's biggest sports charity delivering over £68m of funding to a range of projects, transforming lives and communities where it is needed most. A massive 1,940 grants were awarded including 49 3G football turf pitches, 68 changing rooms and 1,754 goal posts. As well as these, 1,700 grass pitches have been transformed thanks to funding available to clubs and organisations.



Robert Sullivan, CEO of the Football Foundation said: "We will be supporting grassroots clubs and organisations in a bigger way than ever before - whether you are looking for new goalposts or floodlights to shine a light on your brilliant players, a grass pitch that can be used all year round, or a community space that will be welcoming to all, the Football Foundation is here to support you."

For more information visit footballfoundation.org.uk

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PROUDLY BRITISH



Royal Liverpool - 18th Hole

UK GREENKEEPERS SELECTED

FOR THE 151ST OPEN AT ROYAL LIVERPOOL

● Royal Liverpool Golf Club will host The Open for the 13th time in July and the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) has revealed the team of almost 50 greenkeepers, gathered from all over the United Kingdom, who will be on hand to support the home greenkeeping team for the duration of the championship.

Each year, The R&A requests the assistance of BIGGA members in the staging of the event. Every full BIGGA member who has been with the association for at least two years is eligible to apply for a place on the Volunteer Open Support Team and those who are selected are given incredible access to golf's oldest major, supporting every match with bunker raking duties.

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton said: "The team at Royal Liverpool has the unenviable task of following in the footsteps of St Andrews,

who last year created a truly historic championship."

Rory McIlroy was victorious the last time Royal Liverpool hosted The Open, in 2014, when BIGGA members raked the course's 82 bunkers a total of 945 times. BIGGA members were even busier in 2006, when Tiger Woods claimed the Claret Jug and the team raked 1,092 bunkers across the four days of the championship.

The 151st Open takes place from 20 to 23 July 2023. Applications for the BIGGA Volunteer Open Support Team for The 152nd Open at Royal Troon will open later this year.

For a full list of BIGGA members who will be assisting the home greenkeepers for the duration of The 151st Open visit: bigga.org.uk

#GroundsWeek 20TH - 26TH MARCH 2023

● The campaign, now in its third year, recognises the work of turf care volunteers and professionals in the UK, with a focus on inspiring new recruits to consider a career in the industry.

Geoff Webb, CEO of the GMA, says: "Our job is to look out for the interests of our members and the wider industry. Part of that means ensuring new talent is entering the industry. Connecting with new recruits is what #GroundsWeek is all about."

Neil Stubble, Head of Courts and Horticulture at Wimbledon, commented: "To help the campaign make as big an impact as possible, I urge grounds people across the country to keep an eye out for #GroundsWeek content and share it online. Make sure you and your colleagues are celebrated far and wide."

Take part across all social media platforms. Find out how by visiting thegma.org.uk

PROTECT GREEN SPACES

● A recent reception at the Scottish Parliament focused on the need to protect more of Edinburgh's green spaces and asked local businesses and communities across the capital to get involved to help this happen.

The Council already protects 36 parks across the city and have committed to securing another 19 parks, meaning that 84% of the city's residents will be within a ten-minute walk of a permanently protected green space.

"Green spaces are breathing spaces and should be accessible to everyone, regardless of the area they live, their income or background. That's why I'm proud to host the Fields in Trust reception at the Scottish Parliament."

For more information visit fieldsintrust.org



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Paul White, Head Groundsman, Bloxham School

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Andy Brown
Course Manager

Located in the beautiful county of West Sussex, **Chichester Golf Club** is located just two miles south of the City. The venue is well established in the area as the premier public, parkland golf venue designed by Philip Saunders back in 1990.



Performance
consistency

The club boasts a vast array of golfing facilities; the testing 18-hole Cathedral course, a wonderful par 72 (6,442 yards), the 18-hole beginners Tower course, measuring 6,109 yards with a par of 71 and a well maintained 9-hole short course for the starter (or for those of us who find less time on their hands).

The club also boasts a 16-bay floodlit driving range complete with video teaching academy. For a little fun, also available is a specially designed footgolf course, and if that isn't enough, there is also a fantastic 18-hole jungle paradise adventure golf course complete with crashed aeroplane which you actually play under!

Getting Down to Business

Phil Helmn caught up with Andy Brown, celebrating his third anniversary as Course Manager at the club, where we had the opportunity to discuss the improvements he

has made - not only out on the golf course, but behind the scenes. Plus, more importantly, how his appreciation for the business element of his role has aided his personal development as a course manager.

Andy knew that Chichester was a very busy facility with rounds of golf on the Tower course averaging 35,000 per annum and the Cathedral 25,000; large numbers. This, coupled with the other areas he had the responsibility of maintaining, he very quickly realised he had a big job on his hands!

Andy explained, "The Greens are thirty-year-old USGA specification so they drain well and hold nutrients, but after such a long time they need a little more attention with regard to aeration. The fairways and rough are pretty good, but can become wet very quickly if I am not on top of slitting and verti-draining."

Andy's focus was on consistency of performance and he knew the overall success would hinge on careful planning of their maintenance programmes. Luckily (of course





it's not luck), Andy is excellent at analysing Standard Operating Procedures (S.O.P.'s).

With only nine staff (including himself), he is constantly thinking of the most efficient way of carrying out all tasks; from the best route for raking bunkers to transport issues when machinery has to travel great distances around his domain. This level of thought has helped Andy make every operation much more efficient, not only for man-hours, but also for machinery usage. Now, I know not everyone thinks of the machinery aspect, but Andy explained that it is vital to maximise machinery usage so that the mechanic has the opportunity to service equipment in a timely manner, reset heights of cut, sharpen blades etc - all of which help to reduce unnecessary faults and breakdowns.

When Andy first started, he soon realised that

he didn't have the right equipment in the shed to optimise all the tasks at hand. With such a large area under his stewardship, he understood that his fleet needed improvement and so he set about changing his machinery gradually. This also helped keep his budget costs manageable and enabling the finances to be spread.

It's important to mention that Andy has had to be clever with his purchases, as he hasn't had the luxury to buy new. As all turf managers in this position know, it's not always easy finding the right equipment at the right cost and right quality. However, with the help of Reesink Turfcare he has been very successful in purchasing second hand or ex-demo equipment of very good quality and at the right price for his budget.

Andy explained, "I've had to be extremely mindful of my fertiliser inputs - especially on greens. As I've mentioned, consistency is key to success and our playing surfaces need to perform at the highest level with the minimum of nutritional input and disruption to play."

"It's very much a little and often regime (with a lot of fine tuning) to ensure we don't get flushes of growth which slows greens speed and results in excessive and unnecessary cutting."

“

I've started to overseed my greens with dwarf ryegrass





Andy uses Agronomic Services and David Snowden for his Premier course (Cathedral) and ICL for the Tower course.

Ongoing Mission

Greens maintenance

Scarifying and hollow coring twice a year (spring and late summer). 30-40 tonnes sand applied during each of the two maintenance days per course.

Light dressing/dustings (5-7 tonne) applied monthly around events, competitions, society days etc. All greens verti-drained once a year with 10mm tines to a depth of 200-250mm.

Above
Left to right:
 Anthony Misselbrook
 Nick Malby
 Chris Plum
 Clive Haimes
 James Jackson
 Ian Ginn
 Charlie Bloem
 Andy Brown
 Paul Williams

NUTRIENT PROGRAMME

Cathedral
 Agronomic Services liquid feed and granular range.

Spring
 Early granular feed: 10-4-4+fe,

Autumn/early Winter 10-0-15 +Mg

Liquid feed range of 18-18-18, Iron Man, Defender Plus, Multi Micro.

Primo Maxx every 3-4 weeks depending on weather and competitions.

Tower
 ICL programme.

Winter/Spring
 Greenmaster Invigorator, cold start granular.

Summer
 CalMag, Double K CalMag (Minimise Anthracnose)

Autumn/winter
 Invigorator plus Pro Iron.

Liquid feed range of Stressbuster, CalMag, Seamax, Ryder, Primo Maxx and Tri Smart wetting agent. Applied from April-September every 2 weeks at half rate.

+

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Woodland management

With 20% of the site covered in trees, the team have a constant tree removal programme in place. Mostly removing dead, damaged or diseased trees to allow the golf courses to 'breathe'.

Irrigation upgrades

Andy inherited an old system and has systematically (as budgets allow) modified or changed heads and pipework to allow for better coverage of all his fine turf surfaces.

"It's obviously a long process," Andy explained, "But, with water becoming such a valuable commodity, we have to endeavour to use it as wisely as possible." To that end, Andy instigated a modest 'holding' reservoir so that his metered stream inlet could be utilised in a far more sustainable manner.

Greens species change

"Slightly controversial I know," Andy smiled, "but I've started to overseed my greens with Barenbrug ultrafine100 dwarf ryegrass. For me, it makes perfect sense! It's extremely hard wearing, it has amazing recovery properties, doesn't require excessive nutrient inputs. has great drought and disease tolerance and maintains a beautiful dark green colour all year round. The leaf is so fine I defy any non-professional to distinguish it from a fine leaved bent grass!" We discussed the merits of the dwarf rye and could only find one drawback, its limited reproduction and therefore the constant need to overseed. Overall, in Andy's circumstances it seems an ideal 'fit'.

It was fantastic to catch up with Andy and chat through his business style approach to turf management and his ability to convert this into managing an extremely busy venue with limited resources at his disposal.

I know there are many turf managers out there with similar challenges and it was fascinating to understand how these issues can be overcome if the right approach is adopted. It was particularly rewarding to see Andy and his team producing excellent results and the praise they are receiving from their customers is credit to all their hard work and insight into operating in such an efficient way. Well done guys and thank you Andy for your time!

Article by Phil Helmn.

ANDY'S JOURNEY

Andy's greenkeeping journey started out in October 2000, where he began working at his home club of Bognor Regis in West Sussex.

Incidentally, Andy still holds his golfing membership at the club and, being an exceptionally good golfer (yes, he plays off scratch, well -0.5 to be exact), he usually holds the enviable title of 'club champion'!

After a five year apprenticeship, he moved and took a role as an assistant at the prestigious Goodwood Club where he progressed quickly through the ranks; from assistant to deputy,

then becoming the head greenkeeper of the Downs course in 2012.

With the wealth of experience of managing a premium course, Andy accepted the role of course manager at the newly formed Boundary Lakes Golf Club in Southampton, overseeing the grow-in of their new golf course. Establishing a golf course is a tough job at the best of times and Andy had to call on all his experience and drive to withstand the challenging very dry summer of 2016.


In 2019, Andy then moved a little nearer to home to the very popular Chichester Golf Club.

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Innovative management

at Burton-On-Trent

With project development constantly advancing, Burton-On-Trent Golf Club looks to **technology** in order to improve the course.

This picturesque Derbyshire course was founded in 1894 and is set in 150 acres of woodland in a tranquil setting near Bretby, on the outskirts of Burton-on-Trent.

The mature course was redesigned and improved by the famous Harry Colt in 1914, with immaculate fairways, fast multi-tiered greens and an 'Augusta Style' 18th hole. It offers a serious but pleasing challenge to all.

Course manager Leon Dalton has been at



QUICK FIRE Q&A

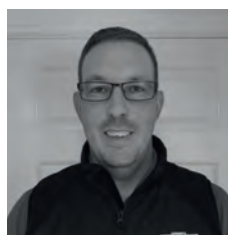
How did you get into the industry?

I got into greenkeeping purely by accident. I left secondary school not knowing what I wanted to do. All I knew was that I wanted to work outside. So, I enrolled on a BTEC First Diploma in Horticulture at Broomfield College.

During this time, I had to do three placements all of which I did here at Burton Golf Club. In just two weeks, I fell in love with the job.

What happened after the placements finished, did you go into full-time work?

When I had finished, unfortunately Burton didn't have any jobs going. I had a few months out to think and then a job at a local course (Willesley Park Golf Club) came up and I took it. Whilst there, I completed my NVQ level 3, before a deputy position came up at Burton. I got that job, and I was in the position for ten years.



Leon Dalton
Course Manager

the course for over eighteen years and talked us through how drones have recently helped map, develop and improve the course and suggests this could be something used by all courses in the future.

Leon was keen to explain how drones had been used so far: "Over the last two years, Frazer Harrison from Vantage Imagery has taken drone footage and thousands of photographs of the course. He creates an orthomosaic (large image) of the golf course, similar to Google Earth but much higher resolution and the image depicts all the different features around the course."

"During my vast years at the club, one of the main changes is the technology. The drone images and footage give us an insight into where we need to be looking. It just gives a better understanding of what's going on around the course and what problems we might need to solve."

Leon addressed the use of being able to have these images and notes at his fingertips: "Keeping these records allows us to mark down what has been done. I use the Vantage Imagery pix4D system. Utilising that, Frazer can undertake all the mappings and I can use the images to mark the findings.



“

Drone footage give an insight into potential problems

QUICK FIRE Q&A

Do you have advice for anyone coming into the industry?

I don't often talk about it, but I'm dyslexic. I've never let this be a barrier for me and it's never stopped me from having ambitions to achieve what I wanted. I think it's important for youngsters to understand that it doesn't matter what disabilities or things you might struggle with. The important thing is you can achieve anything. If you're passionate about something then there shouldn't be any barriers.

Do the rules and regulations within golf need to evolve?

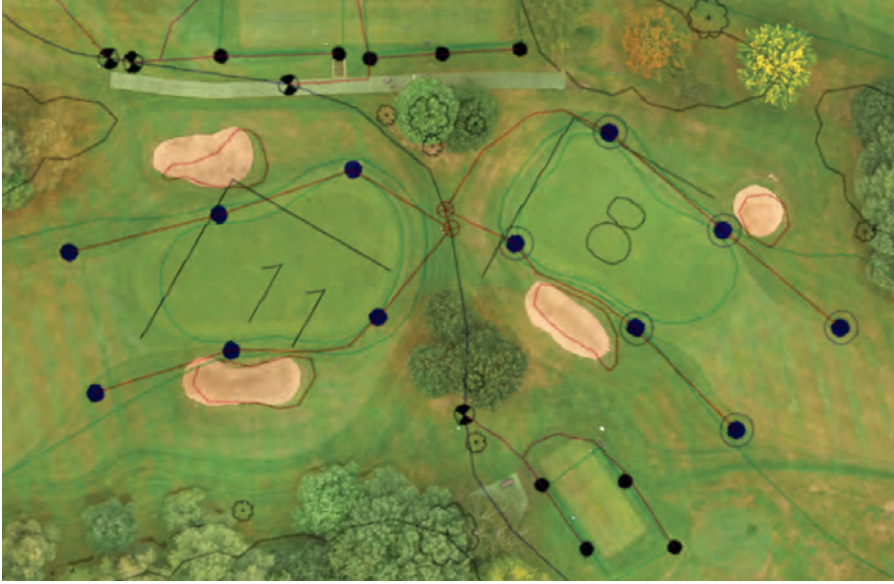
As the new generation of people come through, it's important for clubs to also adapt and change to what their members require. For instance, on the Pro Tour, you've got golfers wearing hoodies, but, if he looks smart, then why not? Golf clubs will need to accommodate people who might not want to wear that traditional attire. Years ago, you'd point blank be told you weren't allowed to play if you were wearing a certain attire. This is what we need to get away from. We've got to try and make clubs more welcoming for everybody.

I can then also use the tools on the system to plan for future projects.”

He highlighted the enhancement drone imagery gives for project development: “If I'm constructing a new tee, I can mark out the boundaries, work out the area and the cubic metres if I want to look at the depth. Before I even go out onto the course, I've been able to map out all the details on the images, as well as figure out a rough cost. One of the most useful things for us as greenkeepers is that you can layer over the images. For instance, I have been able to layer irrigation lines onto the image taken by the drone. This then allows me to match up the drainage lines with the irrigation channels. There is so much you can do with this innovative technology.”

Leon explained exactly what the drone footage offered when it came to a recent irrigation project: “We already had a map of the irrigation





from when it was installed, so Frazer was then able to overlay that map with his drone footage to allow us to see the course in real-time. It then gave us an updated version of whereabouts everything is, allowing us to identify any problems.”

Leon continued: “While we were installing a new control system for the irrigation, we also evaluated all the cabling to ensure there were no breaks or faults along the line. We also found that we had some anomalies which we were able to trace them out. We also found a lot of junction

boxes that we did not know were on the course. Frazer’s system allowed us to track the exact location of the boxes and make notes for future reference.”

“We are currently undertaking multiple winter projects which consist of drainage improvements, installing and repairing equipment and irrigation upgrades. In terms of drainage, Frazer had the drone footage of the course to hand. We also had him do specific areas where we have had drainage problems.”

“Last summer, I got Frazer to do a whole

Above Irrigation lines identified using drone technology



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02/23

VANTAGE IMAGERY

Frazer has worked in the golf industry for the past 28 years.

“I was amazed by the endless possibilities of a drone. Having an aerial view gave me the ability to look at a golf course from a unique perspective.

Alongside being able to obtain fantastic motion and still photography, it helped me plan projects as well as keep an eye on potential problem areas with the use of vegetation indices.”

“I can now survey an entire golf course in a day, overlaying irrigation systems or drainage plans.

Using my web based platform you can now add in your own plans directly on the map”.



course survey. Whilst the turf was burnt off, the footage would highlight any visible drain lines; and it turned out there were quite a number of them. This winter, we have been able to use this information to pinpoint problems and repair and rectify them. We have also been able to mark them on the map so that future teams will know what work has been done on the course - at an exact location.”

Leon used an example of project development: “The other thing that Frazer’s programme has been helpful for is future planning for construction work. Using the map, you can use a polygon function to measure areas and you

can also measure depth. This means you can work out how much soil you might need for the project. I sometimes print off the map of a green and use that to get an estimate of how I want the shape to be.”

He added: “The architect report is quite old, so I use Frazer’s imagery as a modern-day tool for where we want to go with things. For example, with two of the bunkers on hole six, I have mapped out on the pictures from Frazer and how I want these to look before any work starts. I can then propose these ideas to the Board and the images make the plan clear to see - rather than trying to explain a bunker and reshape in my head.”

Article by James Kimmings.

“ Before I even go out onto the course, I’ve been able to map out all the details





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Andrew Kerr
Course Manager and
Master Greenkeeper

Working with **NATURE**

Not far from the roar of the M25 and the bustle of the commuter belt, **Surbiton Golf Club** is a verdant idyll, bounded on three sides by its own woodland.

Above
View from the
18th hole

Established in 1895 and designed by Tom Dunn, the par 70 6075yd course attracts competitive, dedicated members, but as Course Manager Andrew Kerr explains, the focus is now on ecology as well as golf.

“With the challenges presented by extremes of weather and the loss of chemicals for pest control, we’re aiming to manage the course to meet the high standards demanded by our members, but with respect for our environment. We’re lucky that our committee is highly supportive of these aims and provides me with the resources to use measures such as

cultural controls. We also want to take a more ecologically-focused approach to course improvements which will benefit the landscape as well as the golf.”

An example of this was in evidence at the time of Pitchcare’s visit, with a 22 tonne truck-mounted tree spade manoeuvring carefully around the course to transplant oaks alongside the 12th fairway.

“We’re replacing conifers planted in the 1980s with native trees, which will come from donor sites around the course,” Andrew explains. “We were keen to remove a mound on the 12th fairway, but retain the challenge of this hole;



CLUB HERITAGE

The club's heritage also presents maintenance posers: "With our very active membership, plant health has to be high to withstand the wear; yet that's difficult on the small and potentially weak greens of the Tom Dunn design. Regular soil sampling and making small tweaks to nutrition are key, rather than relying on a few blanket granular applications a year."

Andrew has also taken a FACTS qualification to help with nutrition decisions.

planting nine oaks to one side will require members to play straight!"

At the bottom of the seventh fairway, newly planted trees and a hedge will be joined by more transplanted oaks to screen development on adjacent land, again replacing conifers.

Working with nature will become increasingly important for golf courses as chemical options become fewer, Andrew suggests.

"Turf needs to be more resilient, which can come from using different grass species, but also from increased maintenance. We now cut and collect on the fairways as well as greens and tees; we still cut and drop on the rough, but this may change in the future, as a way to tackle thatch and organic matter that can lead to disease."

Starlings offer natural control of leatherjackets with their fine beaks more turf-friendly than those of crows or blackbirds; as sociable birds the best way to encourage them is to offer nest boxes close together, hence the Surbiton Starling Hotel!

Long grass which grew during Covid restrictions attracted owls and other wildlife so has been retained where possible; badgers are gently encouraged to favour the woodland rather

than damage the turf.

The hard buggy path (installed in 2022) runs around the fairways rather than through them, offering better access for machinery and preserving those sweeping views.

Ecological improvements are taking place alongside golf's 'silly season' – spring renovations on tees, greens and approaches.

"We renovate in March, August and October, but will push the spring programme earlier if the weather allows," he explains. "Although the course is still plenty busy enough, members are more accepting of the work before spring arrives."

Due to the hectic schedule, contractor SJK comes in with his tractor and Weidenmann Terraspikes for the spring work, while Andrew and his team spread sand, brush in and then hollow tine with a pair of Toro Pro Cores.

The greens team does the lion's share of renovation and construction work in-house, and Andrew's canny purchase of an ex-demo Blec Sandmaster means that low lying areas can be sand banded in optimum conditions. This has significantly improved the predominantly clay fairways.

After 40deg heat in July, 2022 offered one



Above
The seventh tee has been renovated with SIS grass as part of a pilot project on par 3 tees receiving heavy wear.

final twist with a wet and mild November, the trees hanging onto their leaves until the end of the year, which delayed the labour intensive process of leaf clearing and put paid to some of the planned development works.

However, a project to upgrade the seventh tee did go ahead (pictured above), replacing the worn turf with SIS grass as

part of a pilot scheme.

“The par 3 tees get heavy wear, and we believe that using SIS grass will stabilise the surface. It’s still possible to make a divot, but the fibres protect the crown of the plant. Rather than using mats, we get the best of both worlds as it offers a firm and flat surface for teeing off. It’s been very well received already, and the grass will mature and grow through in the spring.”

Requiring less vertidrainage than a natural turf tee due to the open structure of the strands, the SIS grass surface is maintained in a similar way to a stadium pitch.

“We will need to koro off less often, maybe every two to three years which will prolong the life of the fibre,” Andrew explains. “We’ll mow a little tighter than the rest of the tees, to 11mm rather than 12mm. If this one is successful, we’ll add more SIS grass tees in subsequent years.”

As he points out, the intensive greenkeeping programme requires plenty of labour, and a recruitment drive has seen the team boosted to ten greenkeepers and a part time gardener this spring.

“One of the new starters has greenkeeping

The professional's choice



- Mow**
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- Collect**
- Mulch**
- Roll**



Salt spreader



12020

Groundkeeper



HorseHopper



Profihopper 1250



Profihopper 1500



experience and the other worked in grounds maintenance and has transferable skills that we can add to with training. Recruitment is still very much an issue in this industry and we would have struggled to get two trained greenkeepers.”

The club invests significantly in training, with two members of staff taking chainsaw qualifications and two more chemical application certificates this spring.

“It’s the strong team that we need to look after this course to the standards required; the costs

are high but the committee understands that.”

Andrew has been at the club for six years, and has a background in agriculture which shapes some of his views on machinery and techniques. Hailing from County Antrim, he began his golf career in Northern Ireland and was awarded the title of Master Greenkeeper by BIGGA in 2018.

Potential plans for the future include reducing Surbiton’s reliance on mains water by harvesting rainwater to use for irrigation, he explains.

Above
After decompaction, sand is brushed in and then the greens are microtined, putting them quickly back into play. Where weather permits, spring work takes place in late February when the course is (slightly!) quieter.

- Profihopper



The two augers provide blockage-free collection and maximum compaction

Wet or dry grass, long or short, collect or mulch, the PH 1250 and PH 1500 models take it all in their stride.

And it’s that flexibility that sets the Profihopper apart from the crowd.

The sharpened wing blades on the horizontal SmartCut rotor cleanly cut and shred the grass before conveying it via the cross auger on to that unique second vertical auger to be packed into the collection hopper - meaning less time emptying and more time mowing. To add to that versatility, the sward is rolled after cutting and scarifying comes as standard.

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Contact the Amazone Team on: **01302 755 725.**



AMAZONE

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Above
Course improvements aim to offer ecological benefits while satisfying a competitive, committed membership.

Right
Course manager Andrew Kerr checks in with one of the greenkeeping team – boosted to ten this spring.

“We are considering options such as collecting drainage water from two outlets from the land drains, as well as from building roofs and store it in a pre-cast tank which will be located under the car park. We may also be able to take water from the car park itself, although it will need treating. Phase one is to quantify the amount of water that can be obtained and the savings it will make.”

The club is also exploring power generation: “We are considering the installation of solar panels that will go to battery storage, and as we are in the unusual position of having the clubhouse and workshop in close proximity, it will be relatively easy to share the power between the two. We’re also looking to the future and the need to charge electrically-powered course maintenance machinery – we’ve just had some battery mowers on trial.”

Another project is to build aggregate bays to store sand and other materials away from the car park, which was bursting at the seams with golfers even on a chilly February weekday.

The club has taken the slightly unusual step of developing a private driving range for its members and academy.

“Phase one is complete and it’s been warmly welcomed; there’s one concrete pad in place and a second pad with grass tee is phase two.”

“We have installed a 100m long, short game practice area in 2021 and we have upgraded the driving range in 2022. Pro Peter Roberts has plenty of facilities to help develop golf at the club, with enthusiastic and successful Junior section offering bright prospects for the future. They also hope to have a swing studio in the future.”

“It’s hectic – there’s lots going on, but we just want to keep moving forwards,” says Andrew.

Article by Jane Carley.

“

We’re lucky that our committee is highly supportive





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The show must go on?

We asked important questions to address the current number of **industry trade shows**. Have exhibitors and visitors got the budget and time for four events per year?



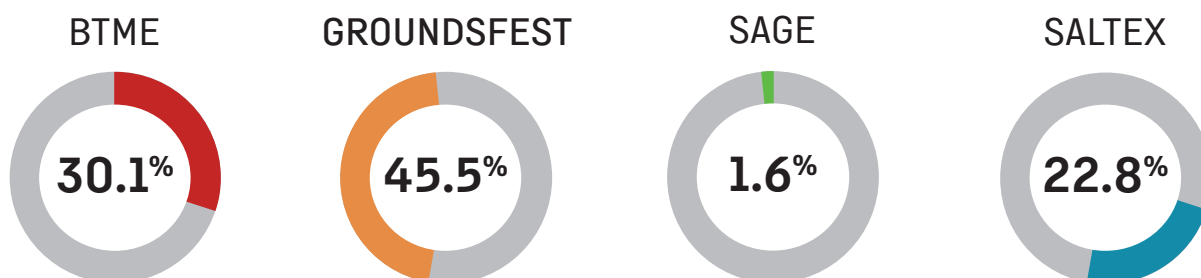


Twitter Polls

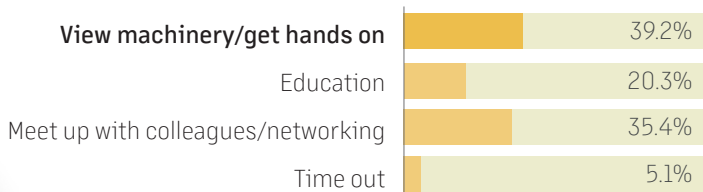
We asked you a few questions on Twitter to gain insight into industry trade shows and what visitors want.

#haveyoursay

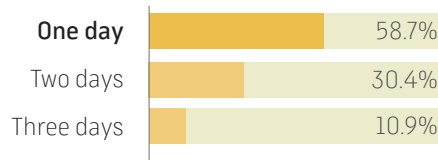
Which event are you most likely to attend?



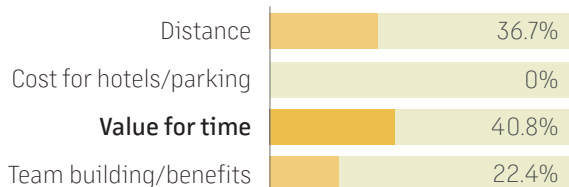
What is the main factor for attending a show?



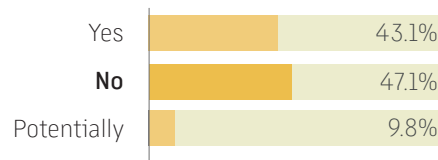
How many days do you typically visit a show for?



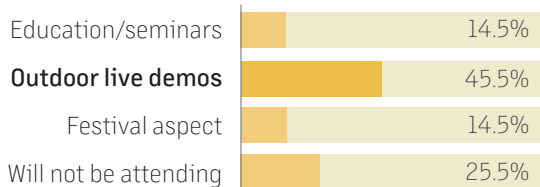
What do you consider most important logistically?



Would the industry benefit from 'one show' per year?



Have you heard of the new GroundsFest event? Why are you most likely to attend?



hope for one show

The cost and debate of industry shows continues...

*Each question was live on @Pitchcare for one day, 14 hours



Vinny Tarbox
Sales Manager, Infinicut

It's a matter of **evolution**

I think the subject of industry events is interesting! An evolution may be needed if the GroundsFest concept takes off and shows will always have to change and evolve to keep fresh.

GroundsFest will offer a different dynamic and many companies will have alternative things they want to try from an outdoor perspective, however, this will also come with challenges. For instance, you won't be able to use an Infinicut on certain types of grass. Therefore, the outdoor area which GroundsFest are proposing then becomes pointless if you cannot showcase the product properly."

Is the festival part of GroundsFest a good way to evolve trade shows?

"I think it's an interesting call to have a festival in this type of environment, but a lot of the people within the industry like to go to places that are quiet to have a chat and connect. I don't know if you can do that in a festival environment?"

With a new show being introduced, could we see changes coming from the likes of Saltex and BTME?

"It's a tricky one; we've always supported BIGGA and the GMA and I recently attended LAMMA. To see that kind of scale makes you think about why we need three or four shows, because it then spreads your budget very thin. We never have small stands; like many exhibitors, we want to be the best!"

"Moving forward, I don't think we will be the only company thinking about picking which event/s to attend and exhibit at. We now have to think which show will be the best return for investment. The shows we have now will need to look at evolving, but have shown they aren't afraid to change. BTME has adapted over the last couple of years with halls for example, whilst Saltex has also seen a huge change moving from Windsor to the NEC and introducing the awards show."



Ed Carter
Sales & Development
Manager, ICL

You have to **try something new!**

As ICL commit to GroundsFest, Ed Carter discusses the importance of supporting industry shows.

Ed commented: "Festival of Turf maybe gives an insight into how GroundsFest might be in terms of concept. However, we're not sure if it will focus on the festival or trade show and that makes us an exhibitor question how we will approach the event."

Ed alludes to the problems that might occur with a largely outdoor trade show; "Perhaps a social coming together might be something beneficial although, from an exhibitor's perspective, I think we need to have balance." He continued; "The weather for an outdoor show is a massive factor. Once signed up, the exhibitor will have to go regardless of weather, but visitors do not!"

When asked if the other trade shows may need to evolve if GroundsFest is a success, Ed isn't sure. "The associations have always provided the best possible event for them and I don't

think they will be changing any time soon for logistical reasons. Trying to bring all the educational aspects of Harrogate to an outdoor exhibition would be impossible."

Ed goes on to emphasise the thinking required from exhibitors; "We didn't want more trade shows, so we will look at GroundsFest and then make some decisions. There is not doubt that shows are costing everyone much more than a few years ago due to inflation and rising costs in general."

Ed summarised by reinforcing the need to support trade shows both old and new; "Trade shows won't get off the ground if people do not support them. If you don't try something new, then you will never know if these things can improve."



“

One show is an option and we've got to explore this

After a successful BTME in Harrogate, Jim Croxton offered a review on this year's show, as well as highlighting how GroundsFest's introduction could change the trade show dynamic.



The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association

Following the changes during Covid, it was a successful and reinvigorated BTME 2023.

BTME 2022 was perhaps too early, but this year has gone well. It felt like old times which is a good thing and we've certainly enjoyed people being happy. All of the exhibitors seem to have really enjoyed being back and it's been really encouraging. There are still plenty of challenges though.

Have BIGGA considered how you might adapt or develop BTME in the future to retain this level of success, amidst a growing show market?

I think about adapting every day. We are trying new things every year; some work and some don't, but it's about continually learning and balance.

Do you think that now we have another event in the calendar, you could see a change in your exhibitor and visitor numbers due to cost and resources overall?

Our exhibitors are the engine and they want visitors who are there with a purpose. Exhibitors, visitors, venue and the media all have different things that they want to gain from these shows and we really want to listen to those views in order to improve. By the end of this year, I'm sure we will know more about what people want.

In terms of cost for stand space, do you know where you sit in relation to the others on offer?

I don't want our exhibitors to be over burdened for the costs of trade shows. If they believe there is a market for more shows, then they will make that decision and this will help us.

BIGGA's opinion on 'one show'

We are in discussion with the GMA about the future of shows because I'm very keen to do our research. One show is certainly an option for us and we've got to explore this. We've had many exhibitors book on for next year and that's good for us, but in another three months, we will see what happens.

Our thinking is that we still want to be around doing shows in five years time. It could be here in Harrogate, or it could be in partnership. We are open to all avenues, but we want to do what's right for everyone and what's needed.

Do you feel the introduction of GroundsFest will affect BTME in the future?

We haven't had a big additional show for quite some time. GroundsFest have big ambitions, so it will be really interesting to see how it develops. Potentially, I think we will have to be ready to adapt however, I think we have tried to stay in front of the curve and we will have to continue to change. I don't mind competition, but we must ultimately concentrate on our own show!



Jim Croxton
CEO, BIGGA



Christopher Bassett

Event Director,
GroundsFest



GroundsFest

The new event on the block

How does GroundsFest differ from other industry trade shows?

We don't want GroundsFest to be seen as just another show. We want it to be an event for the whole industry and there will be something for everyone. There is going to be some great free practical training sessions, carried out by LANTRA approved Grounds Training. There will also be live working stations where visitors can find out the latest trial data on pesticides, fertilisers, bio-stimulants and many more.

We have also just announced two new areas; The first is a retail area, organised by FR Jones and Son - which will be the largest ever seen at a grounds care event. The other is The Landscape Zone. Then, of course, there is the festival with live music and street food.

Tell us about logistics; location, parking, accommodation etc

Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire is located at the heart of the UK between the M6 and M40 motorways. There are hundreds of accommodation options within a 5-mile radius, and we will also be running free shuttle buses to the nearby towns. We have about 11,000 free parking spaces.

In terms of cost for stand space, do you know where you sit in relation to the others on offer?

When we compare the price of stand spaces to the other national grounds care shows, then we are approximately 50% less expensive for indoor space, and over 70% less expensive if exhibitors choose to take outdoor space.

Do you appreciate people are hesitant about the introduction of another show?

We absolutely understand that there is a significant cost associated with exhibiting at an event and we have reflected this in our pricing. We feel that GroundsFest is a totally different experience than the other events on offer.

The obvious USP for the event is the outdoors element. Both SAGE and the Festival of Turf offered this, so how do you think you can learn from those to ensure success.

It is all about creating the right concept, finding the most suitable venue, establishing the right time of year and having the marketing skills and industry connections to get visitors to attend. First and foremost, GroundsFest has been created based on extensive research and independent surveys. Looking at other industry events is essential and the key to delivering a good event is to make sure you have enough people turn up.

We have heard reservations about how the festival aspect will work and whether this will take attention away from being able to conduct business.

The festival is an important part of GroundsFest because our research has revealed just how important networking is at an event. It won't start until 5pm when the event finishes.

How do you intend on keeping visitors at the event to enjoy the social networking and festival aspect?

Where many other industry events tend to wind down after lunchtime, GroundsFest will keep visitors at the event for a longer period due to the free education running throughout the whole day and also the live music and street food stalls. The festival will be kicked off with an exciting Q&A session with leading industry names before the live music begins.

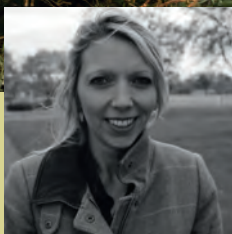
We've been talking about 'the one show' for many years now. Would you consider working in partnership in the future for the overall 'desire and benefit' of the industry?

Of course. We would absolutely work with the two associations. We have held discussions with both about being part of GroundsFest. The door will always be open and we would be happy to discuss options if it benefits the whole industry.



“

Every event has to start somewhere



Vicky Panniers
Exhibition Manager

Sports & Grounds Expo

How does SAGE differ from other industry trade shows?

SAGE is all about seeing the kit in action, with a unique emphasis on ‘try before you buy’. SAGE is based entirely outdoors, with large areas of space available for each exhibitor, at unbeatable prices.

In addition, SAGE is unique due to its unparalleled commitment to sustainability. In fact, SAGE is leading the way in improving sustainability standards. This year, SAGE will also be home to GRASS, the all-new sustainable forum. Built to support the grounds care industry with knowledge and specialist advice.

Tell us about logistics; location, parking, accommodation.

SAGE is conveniently located just off the M5 at The Three Counties Showground in Malvern. A stunning outdoor venue, with a fantastic selection of accommodation just a stone throw's away. Unlike many other trade shows, parking at SAGE is free! Alternatively, there is free transport available from the train station.

Approximately, how many exhibitors do you envisage this year?

We are on target to have 70 exhibitors this year and are looking to surpass this!

In terms of cost for stand space, do you know where you sit in relation to the others on offer?

SAGE is the most affordable event for the industry with prices starting from as little as £12 per sqm and, on top of this, exhibitors get a free demo plot.

Why should visitors choose SAGE?

Many visitors are drawn to SAGE for the huge emphasis on ‘try before you buy’, offering the biggest outdoor space to see grounds equipment in action in the UK. Plus live music, and the ever popular bar.

Why should exhibitors choose SAGE?

Exhibitors choose SAGE for the unbeatable prices, and the substantial amount of space they get on top of their stand free of charge. With zero limitations on site, our exhibitors love that they have the opportunity to demo their kit to a buying audience, not only in their own allocated demo plot but in the central demo arena. SAGE is the driving force behind sustainable solutions in the industry.

There has been criticism in the past that visitor numbers have been low, how do you intend to increase footfall this year?

Launching during Covid was certainly challenging, but being outdoors meant that we had more freedom to launch despite the circumstances. Every event has to start somewhere, and as we grow year-on-year, so does our audience and reputation.

Do you feel the introduction of another outdoor show (GroundsFest) will impact SAGE?

For events to survive they must have strong USPs. The team are confident that SAGE has a huge future going forwards, due to its stunning and convenient location, diverse array of exhibitors, unlimited demo space and focus on sustainability!



“

A show by the industry, for the industry

SALTEX | SPORTS TURF
AMENITIES
LANDSCAPING
TRADE EXHIBITION



Sarah Cunningham
Director of
Commercial & Events

Has the GMA considered how you might adapt or develop Saltex in the future to retain its level of success?

Following SALTEX 2022, comprehensive feedback from both visitors and exhibitors has been gathered to ensure that the show continues to grow. Whilst changes in the industry require the GMA, and SALTEX, to adapt, we know what visitors and exhibitors want to see more of in 2023.

Parking costs at the NEC rise each year. Is this something you can address?

Parking at the NEC is free of charge for GMA members and exhibitors during SALTEX. The GMA is in regular contact with the NEC and negotiates hard to get the best possible rates.

In terms of cost for stand space, do you know where you sit in relation to the others on offer?

We know that, due to the difference in location and format of shows, the cost for stand space does vary. For the 2022 show, we offered exhibitors a 'Show Rate' with a 0% increase, despite inflation nearing 10%. As a not-for-profit organisation, all income gets reinvested back into the sector to ensure its long-term security.

Why should visitors choose Saltex?

It's conveniently in a central region of the UK. Organised by the industry for the industry. Visitors can hear from industry experts, see the latest technologies and product developments from around 400 leading brands over a two-day event.

Grounds Management Association

Why should exhibitors choose Saltex?

SALTEX success record spans over 77 years and it has evolved and adapted over the many decades. 8,300 attendees, across the two days, from over 50+ countries, taking their brand right to customers.

As an association, how do you continually learn and research what the industry and your members want in the events calendar?

Every year, the GMA gathers comprehensive feedback from both visitors and exhibitors following SALTEX. This is combined with numerous workforce development surveys and research papers commissioned by the GMA, to ensure that we better understand the wants and needs of the industry, and our members.

Do you feel the introduction of another show (GroundsFest) will impact Saltex exhibitor and visitor numbers due to costs and resources overall?

Since the 2022 show, uptake in stand space by exhibitors has been hugely positive and 2023 is promising to be a strong show. We anticipate year on year growth for 2023.

We've been talking about 'the one show' for many years now and there was a recent statement which suggested you were in talks with BIGGA. How is this progressing?

Given the challenges the industry faces at this moment in time, the GMA has been working with industry colleagues, BIGGA and the AEA, to work together on a more proactive and collaborative basis on both tradeshow and future endeavours.

AS AN INDUSTRY, WE ALL REALLY WANT ONE SHOW!



Ian 'Poggy' Pogson
Campey Turf Care
Systems Ambassador

I think circumstances have made the GMA and BIGGA express their feelings about working together!

When asked about GroundsFest and having four trade shows in the industry, Ian Pogson from Campey Turf Care Systems commented; "BTME and SALTEX are both established, so they will have visitors who like the shows and will attend each year. The biggest issue for a new show is getting people there."

GroundsFest will look to bring a new look to the trade show sector with live music and food stalls. Do you think this will work?

"I'm not sure about the festival aspect. It could affect the business side of things and therefore socialising could take over from machinery. If there are too many distractions away from the core exhibition, it won't work for exhibitors."

He went on to explain how you can manage the social and business sides of trade shows successfully; "BTME works because you have

the exhibition and then you have the social aspect when you go for meals afterwards."

When asked about what the ideal situation would be for exhibitors, Ian answers concisely; "I think we are moving towards too many events in the calendar, which could mean the number of visitors at each one gets watered down however, we want to support the industry."

Can you see one big show being introduced where several associations work together?

"Each organiser/association will not ever want to give up their show; Harrogate is principally golf and Saltex is mainly grounds/stadiums. I don't think they'll ever make a show together."

Ian concluded with his ideal situation, "We, as an industry, can always hope that we get what we all want - one show!"

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PROUDLY BRITISH

Lateral Show test

As 2023 saw a return to pre-covid 'normal', **Mark Allen** of Agrovista Amenity attended both BTME and the GCSAA to assess how the two events have bounced back post pandemic and what their future may hold.

There are varied opinions about trade shows. For some they are a vital kick-start to the year, whilst for others they are simply a drain on resources. Either standpoint raises the same question, "What value can be gleaned from shows in the post pandemic era?"

In spring 2020, when we were globally confined to barracks, the mere thought of standing on a trade show floor with scores of other people would have been enough to bring me out in a hot flush ... quick, pass the hand sanitiser! However, with those darkest of days now behind us, we have finally been able to come together again and celebrate all that the turf trade has to offer.

For those in the know, January into early February is show season. BTME is a three-day event that stretches

across four halls and attracts over 200 exhibitors. Its permanent home is the spa town of Harrogate – a UK central location with atmosphere, charm and enough bars and restaurants to keep even the most gluttonous of greenkeepers adequately fed and watered.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America host a two-day trade show on a 'tour the country' rotation and this year welcomed 450 exhibitors into the gigantic Orange County Convention Centre in Orlando. Both shows place great emphasis on education, with a comprehensive programme of conferences, workshops and seminars, which begin several days prior to the trade exhibition.

In terms of customer appetite, both associations reported healthy numbers for 2023. So, the shows are back, the trade and end-users have the desire to return and after a couple of anni horribiles, the organisers are once again smiling. That's all fine then? Well, not quite! For, whilst the trade appears to be supporting the shows for now, there is always that nagging question of cost.

For a company to exhibit, the sums can be huge. Calculate the price of obtaining stand architecture, paying for a pitch, populating it with employees and lodging them in hotels, and you are into tens of thousands of pounds. Add to this the fact that organisations haven't attended face to face events during the two years of covid disruption and you soon realise that a discussion about 'return on investment' must surely have taken place between the company bean counters. With 2022 closing as a good year for many businesses, those same people would inevitably have to ask - "Why do we even need a trade show?"

It's a fair question, not least because the trade show itself seems to have lost some of the gravitas it once carried in the conference pecking order. Thirty years ago, punters were content to spend a single day walking



around a modest exhibition, kicking a few tyres before heading home. These days, that simply does not cut it. In 2023, to get the very best from conference week, greenkeepers need to be strategic – with pre-arranged educational symposiums, award dinners, and their name on the guest list of at least one fancy drinks reception.

As the conference has evolved, the trade show element is no longer the biggest attraction. It is, however, the one that foots most of the bill. The big issue for organisers now is that conference week needs the economic crutch that the trade hall provides, yet the trade doesn't need a trade exhibition in order to prosper.

So, why are companies still interested in being there? Simple. The 'people'. After many months of remote networking, virtual events, and finding new ways to get business done, most of us are heartily sick of Teams meetings.

The physical manifestation of this was clear in the construction and layout of many of the stands at both shows this year. Direct engagement with customers has become a higher priority than ever before and conversation is king - with comfy sofas, intimate breakout areas and complimentary coffee the weapons

of choice in the race to engage end users. It is an interesting paradox that, in the age of hyper technology the key driver for exhibitors is people wanting to spend time with other people.

Whatever your view on the future of the trade show, there is no arguing that we are living in rapidly changing times. Whether from a technological, economical, or environmental perspective, Golf needs its greenkeepers and technical experts like never before. If an annual jamboree can contribute to a successful and vibrant industry, then the indications are that the trade will continue to participate - but it must be able to do so in a format that correlates cost with value.

The day the organisers surely dread is when the bean counters finally decide enough is enough and withdraw the economic foundation on which the whole structure currently sits. That means, whether you love or loath the trade show, you might not have the luxury of a choice in a few years from now.



Mark Allen

Agrovista Amenity -
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TALKING TURF

In this regular column, we talk all things turf along with the projects and challenges you face on a regular basis.

1,2,3 lift-off

at Lincoln Golf Club

The team at **Lincoln Golf Club** are well underway with launching its new look course. We asked Head Greenkeeper Adrian Kitchinson what's next.

How long was the process of completing the redesign work of the 7th and the 14th in 2022?

We initially decided that those holes would have the most impact and showcase to members what could be achieved. Lakeland Earthworks were chosen to do the shaping and construction of the bunkers with Fineturf supplying the turf and materials. The process took around five weeks to complete, which helped to give an idea on timescales and how we would approach the work we have done more recently.

What did you learn from that project?

We tried to use as many of our own materials as possible. We used our own topsoil when reshaping the bunkers and to build up the run-off areas. We have a sandy base and, with the summer that we had, it dried up a lot so we had problems getting the turf to establish. This time we brought in 500 tonnes of topsoil, which should have a better moisture retention and help the new turf establish. We are also going to be using a different lining in the bunkers.

What work have you done to holes 1, 2 and 3?

About three years ago, golf architect Ken Moodie (Creative Golf) visited the course and provided a full plan of each hole, so we are looking at developing the whole course. During 2021, we did seven and fourteen and last year it was one, two and three. We are trying to follow Ken's designs, in particular,

where he thought bunkers would sit well on each fairway. Wayne at Lakeland then does a rough shape before we topsoil it and get turfing. For the first hole, we filled in two bunkers and created two bunkers; the young golfers seem to be hitting the ball a lot further these days and so we thought they needed a change in position. We've pretty much done that for all three of the holes to try and give it a fresh look.

Have you got any other projects planned for the future?

Hopefully, we can do two more this year. We will just have to see how the financial side of things goes in the coming months. Despite everything going on, we hope that we can keep developing the course.

Have you had support from committee members for undertaking the projects?

I must say I am very lucky here, it's a board of directors who all support me very well.

How is the club managing budgets considering the current financial situation in the UK?

We've actually had a separate budget for the course improvements so, this financial year, the money has been available for all the improvements.

Have you got a timescale for the projects?

So, we actually started and then had rain for two weeks, which delayed us slightly. We hope that it will take about four weeks in total.



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Preventing Theft



Martin Darlow

Former Senior Police Officer and Chairman of his local cricket club

After learning of several theft cases in the industry, we wanted to offer some information and advice on how you can **protect your equipment.**

LET'S BE CLEAR:

If someone is determined to steal grounds equipment, they will eventually succeed. We all need to be vigilant.

Encourage club members, players, residents and dog walkers to visit the club regularly so there is no pattern to visitors and a higher chance of being disturbed.

1. What are the basic measures that clubs should do to protect their equipment from theft?

Quite simply, make life difficult for the criminal. Lights, noise, obstructions, alarms, disabling or positioning equipment to slow a burglar down or dissuade from even trying.

2. Have you experienced any theft attempts at your club? How did you prepare for this type of thing? Did the prevention measures work?

My club has been targeted three times over the last five years, but we did not lose any equipment. The grounds container was entered using an angle grinder, but nothing was taken I believe because of the way the equipment was configured and the difficulty and time to move items to get to the roller and fine turf mowers. Security was further enhanced post-incident. The pavilion has been targeted with the loss of some bar stock and lessons learned and a crime reduction strategy has been implemented to prevent further attacks. Interestingly, the damage caused on the three attacks was far more costly than any items stolen.

3. What would be your most important advice for clubs that are trying to improve their security?

As a retired senior police officer, who has investigated thousands of burglaries and interviewed hundreds of offenders, my advice is to put yourself in the mind of the criminal. Keep it simple and think about what would prevent an attack on your club. Start from an access point to slow down or stop an offender even targeting the building; make life difficult, place physical obstacles in the way etc. Then, concentrate on the building or container by making it difficult - firstly to access by placing implements across the entry points (light roller, boxes, bins, etc).

Install passive infrared lighting, but ensure it is fixed at a high level so as not to be disabled. Fit an alarm; either connected to the main building or a stand-alone tremor alarm inside the building or connected to the equipment. Ideally, an alarm system that activates an audible alarm that is also connected to mobile devices notifying club members.

VOLUNTEERS AFFECTED

at Eynsham Cricket Club

Volunteer groundsman, Gary Cook from Eynsham Cricket Club manages the maintenance of the pitch including mowing, rolling, aeration and brushing. He told us about the recent theft of their tractor.

Gary expressed his shock as he thought security at the ground was a high standard; "The tractor was kept in a secure shed well away from the entrance of the club. The impact of the theft is huge, especially when we are all volunteers. The ground is padlocked and gated from any public access, so we could never imagine that this could happen, plus we thought no one would want to steal a tractor as old as ours."

With budgets and finances already being an issue for many, Gary alluded to the financial implications that this incident will have on his

club; "We have started a Crowdfunding page and so far have raised around £5000. However, replacing the tractor and buying new doors, whilst also installing new security measures, will cost in the region of £10,000."

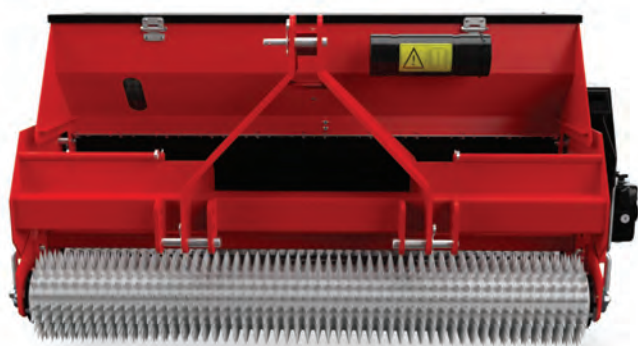
He outlined his initial plans to be able to maintain the surface; "Initially, we will have to get someone else in to at least cut the grass and maintain the field to a desired level for play."

Gary explained the need for awareness to be raised about such thefts, "We didn't expect this to happen to us and I think, if we'd been more aware of the growing issue of thefts, we would have been more prepared and taken appropriate advice. It's about planting the seed to tell people that if it can happen to us, it can happen to anyone. Moving forward, we will want to be more serious about security."

BE VIGILANT

Position your equipment, particularly the most important and expensive, in such a way that it is difficult to move and think about disabling. Ensure you know serial numbers and consider security marking the equipment. The task is to make the reward not worth the effort!

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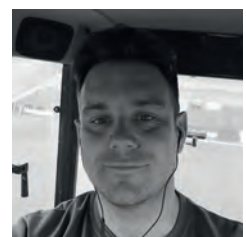
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DATA CRUCIAL

Harlequins Head Groundsman **Adam Witchell** has made a quick start to his first job in rugby using data systems.



Adam Witchell
Head Groundsman

With decades worth of experience in football, Adam brings extensive turf knowledge to the role, but knew there would be a learning curve with changing sports.

Working on behalf of Nurture Landscapes at The Stoop, Adam started in July 2022. With the grow-in complete and no performance data to reference, he started collating information.

“The first thing I wanted was a data recording platform, and GrasPro is always the one I will go

straight to,” he said.

“I’ve always been quite data-driven. If I don’t have the numbers, I can’t just look at the pitch and work it out. Without the numbers, it’s just an opinion.”

“I think it’s beneficial straight away. For example, when recording the moisture levels and water, I could look back and think it seemed to get a bit more growth at these times. Using the weather reports, you can see the difference



“

You've got to get results or explain what you're doing



in temperature between the highs and lows and find out the evening temperatures were slightly colder at that time. So, it's nothing to do with the products you've used. You just didn't have the residual temperature in the evening that will help the grass continue."

"Regardless if there was performance quality data or not, I'd still be doing the same because this was all new to me. Even if there was data, I'd still want to see mine, because what I'm doing in rugby might not have the same outcome as it previously has on a football pitch."

"So, I'll know the products that have and haven't worked during the grow-in. Next year, I can look at what I've done on the GrasPro system and alter and change. Even if it's just the amount of product I put down or the regularity of applying it."

Building trust

For Adam, an early part of the job is gaining the trust of his new employers, Nurture Landscapes and Harlequins, and a large part of that is his monthly reports, which he sees as vital.

"I write a report to Nurture and Harlequins every month, and it details all the information on what I've done, when I've done it and the products and maintenance."

"I take that directly from GrasPro because you can download graphs, works and charts and put them in the report. It makes my monthly report writing much easier and much more in-depth."

"I could write a load down and bore them with war and peace and detail. But if you can see graphs and see what's been done, it makes it easier and quicker for them. I find they are more receptive to visual reports."

DATA BENEFITS

- Maintenance options
- Pitch test results
- Grounds team's work
- Media library
- Pitch usage
- Equipment usage
- Resources used



“What I have found with rugby is the budgets aren’t quite as big as I’ve had with football. So, I have to get the most out of what I use because there isn’t the option of an unlimited budget.”

“There’s always pressure to get it right the first time because I’ve got Nurture Landscapes who have employed me and Harlequins who have taken me on. Their previous groundsman was here for twelve years, and now, this new guy is coming who might do things a bit differently, which people will keep an eye on.”

“You’ve got to get results or explain what you’re doing just to get that trust with Nurture and Harlequins.”

Setting rugby specific KPI’s

Even though he is only six months into the role, Adam is in the early stages of collaboration with the playing and medical staff.

Moisture was one of the most significant learning curves early on, with Adam aiming for the standard 20%-24% used in football. He quickly discovered this caused digging up during scrums and mauls, and by referring back to his data, he was able to see a higher moisture level was required.

Sharing the data to prepare the pitch can also benefit the coaching staff, and eventually, Adam is hoping to benchmark the pitch to reduce injuries.

He explains: “I can look back on what was a good and bad game, then I can start speaking to the coaches about how I’m preparing the pitch.”

“I’ll test it before just to let the coaches know the moisture, this is what it was like at this game, and this is how it held together better.”

“Then they will find out going forward the more I take the data that they can set their players up slightly differently, maybe. So they are starting to engage a little bit more on the playing side with the data that I’m recording to help them set up for a game.”

“Hopefully, moving forward, it will help with player recovery and development. If we find that players are cramping up at a certain time during games, we can start looking at hardness, traction and moisture as well. And, when we start putting them together, I think we’ll start seeing data and values. And then working with the medical department and making it a bit safer, and then hopefully working to have a surface which they can use that does cause less injuries”.

“That’s far off, and I haven’t got there with them, but I am hoping using GrasPro and all the data I record, I can push that forward and work with the sports scientists a little bit more in how we can set the pitch, so there are fewer injuries.”

Article by Blair Ferguson.



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Volunteers are the **BACKBONE** of **GRASSROOTS**

However, sometimes though they are glad of a helping hand from the **grounds professionals** to ensure they can complete their sporting calendars.

Above
Horning Bowls
Club.

Groundscare business owner Will Dunger launched Will's Norfolk Lawns to focus on the gardens sector, but demand for his services from sports clubs means he now has a foot in both camps - professional and domestic.

Delivering high-end maintenance across both sectors is his priority. "I've played cricket and football all my life," says Will, 27, "and I worked in lawncare and grounds maintenance for several years."

"Garden lawncare can be seen as the bottom of the food chain and I aimed to change that when I set up the business in 2018, by bringing the methods and machinery of the professional

sector into the domestic setting. Now, I'm applying turf maintenance programmes in sport as well."

That service includes the type of scarifiers, aerators and sprayers his dad Paul employs at Fakenham Cricket Club, where he and fellow local residents help maintain the square and outfield.

"The group of volunteers has been shrinking for some time," Will explains, "so I help out preparing the ground for the new season, renovating the square in autumn and providing winter maintenance."

The same is true at Horning Bowls Club. "I lived there and helped maintain the green for them when they were short of volunteers. They



Far left Horning Bowls Club

Middle Fakenham Cricket Club

Above Will Dunger (top) and his dad Paul (bottom) enjoying their work

liked what I did and they've grown into one of my sportsground customers."

Although Horning's member numbers are dwindling, the playing surface is in use two or three times weekly, so Will's maintenance programme is critical to the match calendar.

Mid-February saw Will applying the first granular fertiliser of the year to the green, with verticutting following soon after, then regular mowing to gradually reduce cut height to 6 or 7mm. "Monthly application of liquid feed and wetting agents is the next stage in my programme," says Will.

"Club volunteers tend to focus on mowing, usually two or three times a week - I'm on site about once a fortnight for brushing off dew and

moisture control."

Will introduced a new regime this winter - application of Headland 20:20:30 under a fresh disease management programme that is working well, he reports. He's applying the treatment at Fakenham too - it's designed to aid the grass plant in warding off disease more effectively, with dew control a key element of that process.

"I apply it monthly on the square to limit disease outbreaks," he continues, along with regular drag matting over winter. The 13-strip square - all natural - "we removed the only artificial pitch as it wasn't popular" - received its first powered brush in February, using the club's Dennis pedestrian mowers to remove

NEWLY QUALIFIED

with a distinction in the Grounds Management Association's Level 2 Technical Certificate in Turf Surface Maintenance, Will is climbing the ladder of achievement in both professional and domestic turfcare.



dead grass and other organic matter. “The first verticut followed a couple of weeks later.”

Fakenham is a club “very much on the up,” Will states. A thriving youth section of around 100 members fields teams from 5s to U15s, with three adult teams competing on Saturdays and an over-40s team striding out midweek. “We’re planning to reintroduce a women’s team soon,” he adds.

“Dad and I played here regularly. I was a bowler but have switched to batting, while dad, now in his 60s, used to open, but the social side of things is what he enjoys most. He puts in around twenty hours per week volunteering and handles much of the maintenance of the square with me. The club president usually mows the outfield on the John Deere five-cylinder fairway mower.”

Sport is not the only upside for Will. “A lot of my time is taken on driving to and from clients

across the county, so the club community feel is important for me,” he reveals.

Common to both his domestic and professional service delivery are the Berthoud Vermorel 2000 knapsack sprayers Will and assistant Alex Wigney rely on to apply turf treatment liquids, whatever the surface.

“Alex started with me in July 2021 and handles lots of treatments. He had no background in turfcare, so I’ve trained him up from scratch. Because I run my own company, I can offer Alex a very competitive wage, as well as his own van, which saves him the insurance on his car, which he sold.”

Will’s not greenwashing when he explains: “The whole industry is moving to an environmentally more sensitive stance and I fully support the change. We strive to avoid spraying chemicals such as herbicides and fungicides and now use more organic nutrients.”

Spraying efficiency forms part of delivering the circular economy, he maintains. “I’ve used Berthoud 16l Vermorel 2000s since I started the business and cannot remember having any issues with them at all. Straightforward to maintain, they are sturdy, convenient to calibrate and use, easy to fill and clean, and deliver a high level of consistency of spray.”

“When you can spend much of your time with a knapsack on your back, it’s important the kit is comfortable. The Vermorels’ cushioned straps help minimise body stresses and strains so that you can spray in optimum safety.”

Article by Greg Rhodes.

“

Groups of volunteers have been shrinking for some time



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The heat is on

as summer sports looms

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Tim Humpage
Head Groundsman

Its four sections - cricket, rugby, tennis and lacrosse - offer professional facilities, including high-end floodlighting, and rely on quality turfcare to deliver the spread and depth of fixtures the club stages year-round.

Sale of land in the late 1990s helped fund construction of an imposing brick clubhouse and conference venue, opened in 2008, that splits the two rugby pitches from the square, practice nets and two lacrosse pitches, with four sand-filled synthetic tennis courts sited alongside.

Head groundsman Tim Humpage knows the playing surfaces like the back of his hand. Born and bred a stone's throw from the club, he recently stood down as cricket chairman.

He retired from the internal affairs of Cheshire Police to include groundskeeping among his leisure pursuits. "I thought 'Why don't I give it a try' so started halfway through the last rugby season. Mind you, the game is almost year round now; I'll be seeding the pitches mid to end of May."

Solo practitioner Tim contracts out some of the key services he needs to provide quality provision. "The cricket square was scarified in mid-February and's looking pretty good," reports Tim, who was mowing it with his Dennis pedestrian when I caught

up with him for a chat.

Contracted to 30 hours a week in summer and 15 weekly in winter by the club, Tim keeps things ticking over in winter ready for the busy season when he spends proportionately more time mowing and trimming. "My theory on winter sportspitch maintenance is not to overdo it," he states.

"From early November to the end of February, I factor in five hours a week - that's marking out two rugby and two lacrosse pitches in two hours and using the Sisis Quadraplay (my handiest piece of kit), for another two."

"I'm more selective with mowing now, especially in winter when the grass isn't growing too much," he adds. "I was cutting the rugby pitches twice a week last summer but reduced that to once a week, then every fortnight. They've only had one cut since November and just don't need it more regularly."

"Mowing the lacrosse pitches starts mid-September, but I haven't cut them since the beginning of October and I've had no complaints. The Quadraplay's been out several times though." The square gets a cut twice weekly in season, as does the outfield.

Although budgets often don't allow Tim to buy brand new kit, he will enjoy a red letter day soon when his rather tired, leaky linemarker (paint splashes on the shed forecourt provide





damming evidence) will retire. “Not before time,” he says.

Out have gone his ‘temperamental’ old blowers and trimmers too. He’s ‘gone electric’ with Honda 36V AXBs. “I’m really pleased with them,” he reports. “They come with two batteries, have only an hour charging time and hold their charge for a good hour, which is great.”

“My goal in winter is to get games on and never to say ‘You can’t play’ but by the same token ‘Don’t expect Twickenham next weekend!’”

An avid cricketer himself - “I’ve been a member here since I was a child. My dad was chairman and president and my lad Jack plays first team cricket” - he takes great pride in preparing pitches, using the guidance one of his predecessors, Nick James, bequeathed. “He became an ECB pitch advisor and his ‘Bible’ tells me what to do when to the square.”

Tim has to handle a seasonal issue common



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across the North West - the crossover from lacrosse (the region's a national focus for the sport) to cricket.

Heaton Mersey runs three senior teams on Saturday and Sunday afternoons from mid-September, one in the National Premier League, with juniors striding out in the mornings.

Most of the two pitches become the cricket outfield across summer, so Tim's renovation work starts in earnest when lacrosse hands over on 31 March each year. "I seed the outfield and lacrosse goalmouths in the first week of April, following scarification of the square."

Add in two rugby teams playing from mid-August to the end of May, with juniors on Sundays, and it's easy to see that maintenance intensity is only going one way, given the rise in women's cricket and lacrosse planned at the club. "A second ground would be Heaven," says



Tim. "I looked at a site nearby but it wasn't quite what we wanted."

A self-confessed 'amateur' turfcare professional, Tim keeps his nose to the ground to keep current. "There are amateurs everywhere who think they know better than you do, but I like picking people's brains on ways to improve my maintenance, which exists to provide facilities for sport as a service for the members."

He'll now be reporting to new grounds secretary, Jon Sherlock, continuing the tradition of a sports club that relies on contracting out essential maintenance, while delivering the very best provision it can on a tight budget. The Heaton's member strength in depth should ensure there's a ready source of enthusiasts to take up the baton.

Between times at the Heaton's, Tim's keeping fit playing golf at his local club, just a walk away, but he likes to monitor his output while tending the ground.

"My Fitbit tells me I complete 20,000 steps a day in summer, and I walk two miles cutting the square, 1.67 miles to mark out the rugby pitches and another 1.27 miles for the lacrosse. The machine itself has chalked up 500 miles."

On that note, we're done and I depart, with the Proclaimers' hit providing today's earworm for good measure.

Article by Greg Rhodes.

MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

After a year in post, Tim's already stamping his strategy on the maintenance programme. The original 19 strips have shrunk to 16 under his watch. "We didn't need that many and reducing the number means I spend less time maintaining them, while saving fuel and line paint costs," he explains. That said, he'll be preparing enough to cater for four senior teams, up to 50 games across 22 weekends.

"Then there are juniors games on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from April to the end of July," he adds. More than enough to keep him busy but it's a labour of love: "I find it so satisfying to prepare nice-looking pitches; presentation is so important, particularly for visiting teams who will judge the quality of our facilities when they play here."

Covid made "a hell of a difference" to the playing demographic, Tim says. "The 30s+ rugby group didn't come back after the pandemic but the juniors section is thriving - we have 250 just playing cricket, almost too many."



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Communication is key to well-being



Adam Lawrence
Head Groundsman

That is certainly what **Adam Lawrence** thinks. We sat down with the Head Groundsman at Altrincham FC to discuss the stress and anxiety that can sit on someone's shoulders when working in the industry.

Adam also highlights the benefit of talking through these issues and how communication has helped him to overcome the mental strains.

Adam expressed the need for people to start communicating with each other: "I think it's important to talk and not just bottle it up and try to deal with it yourself. Everyone just needs a little bit of help. A lot of things really do hit hard in this industry... many still think we just cut grass."

He alludes to the usefulness of feedback: "Sometimes, when you don't have communication, you can become lost in knowing whether the work is good enough. That's where my anxiety stems from. However, conversation and communication can help with this. If someone comes to you with what they think is a problem with the pitch and it's physically impossible for me to change this, I can explain it to them and there is better understanding."

"Both the staff and players always come to you with their opinion and this communication is helpful because it allows us to know if the pitch is up to standard or if things need improving. Management communicate well; they regularly check if anything needs to be changed with the pitch and if there's anything they can do to help. They've been really welcoming to me and the club has a family feel."

How are the club supporting you through the stress?

The club are brilliant. I posted a tweet after the Bromley game got cancelled about my mental health taking a battering because I didn't want the game to be called off. Within about half an hour of that tweet being out, I had several messages of support. When I next went into work, the directors came and spoke to me to make sure I was all right. I can't talk more highly of the club in terms of communication and support.

Is there any negative communication?

Negative communication normally comes online. On social media you get comments where people think they know better. You try not to read them, but the problem is I can't help myself because I like to know what people are thinking. He then indicates the need for support when this happens: "I know some groundsman around the country get those negative comments, but don't all have the support I do here. Sometimes they just need someone to take the weight off their shoulders."

What have you learnt throughout your career about the pressures of the job?

When you work under the assistant and head groundsman, you do have that pride in your work but, at the same time, you don't experience the backlash if something goes wrong. When

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Listen to others in order to gain knowledge and improve

Ask as many questions as possible. Nothing is stupid

Have a think before communicating allowing you to fully know what to say

Be straightforward and honest in your approach

Know the audience and adapt when needed

STEPS TO RELIEVE STRESS

Listen to music

Talk it out with a friend

Talk yourself through it

Eat healthy

Laugh it off. Laughter releases endorphins that improve mood and decrease levels of the stress-causing hormones cortisol and adrenaline

you become head groundsman, you then start to get the comments and the fallback which is an obvious increase in pressure.

What are the main pressures of the job, and how do you manage these?

Adam alludes to weather and budgets as well as lack of understanding: "Something that I think people need to consider is you cannot control the weather. You can present a pitch which is perfect, then half an hour later after heavy rainfall, it's unplayable. Sometimes the weather can take away all your hard work in an instant."

He educates: "Every groundsman does not want a game to be called off. Whether it's frost covers, rain covers or forking the ground throughout the week, the groundsmen do everything to get the game on. No one sees this from the outside so therefore the assumption is that nothing is being done."

On money factors, he said: "Budget is also

a pressure on many clubs, lots of them don't have a huge budget to play with. So that makes it even harder. Every club wants an Arsenal or Manchester United standard pitch, but if you compare the budgets, it's totally different, therefore the expectation can't be the same. We get up early in the morning, and sometimes were not home until midnight."

He went on to explain the need to communicate for people inside and outside of the industry to understand the turf management: "What I want people to understand is that sometimes it's beyond our control. So don't feel like you have to say a negative comment as the guarantee is they have probably worked very hard, and the weather has just been too extreme. We need to communicate so that people understand in a space of 6-12 hours, due to weather conditions, the work done throughout the week can be chucked out the window."

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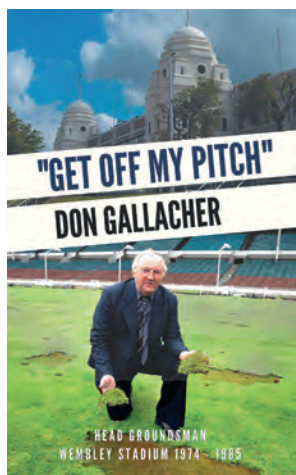
“Get Off My Pitch” by Don Gallacher - Book Review

We recommend reading the book “Get Off My Pitch” by Don Gallacher. The story told by both Don and his son Colin highlights the life of Don working at the Empire Stadium (Old Wembley Stadium) as Head Groundsman between 1974-1985.

Colin writes in dedication to his father; “Well, we got there eventually Dad, sorry it took so long, only you and I know why, but at last, your Wembley story is being told, I hope you approve.”

The book primarily comes from a first-person account of Don himself about his life experiences. He starts by highlighting his early life and how the influence of his father Patrick led him into the world of sports and grounds management. He started as a groundsman at a local college in Tottenham. When his friend Henry discovered a job advert in a magazine similar to Pitchcare, for the role of Head Groundsman at the Empire Stadium. Don didn't know it yet, but this would be his role for well over a decade.

Like many within the industry, the experiences reflected upon within this book are about a man endeavouring to produce a high-quality piece of



turf. Throughout the book, Don gives humble and informative accounts of his applying for and becoming the Head Groundsman at the Empire Stadium.

The book also gives an insight into the Empire Stadium, something that many did not get to experience. Don's description certainly makes you feel like you have been there in real life, whilst he also makes the reader feel like they have witnessed experiences he had to face while in charge of the sacred turf. Rugby, football and even greyhound racing are all

mentioned as events that Don and his team had to prepare for. I can't really imagine a greyhound running around the new Wembley.

The book also homes in on many of the industry issues that we still see today. Don talks about the pressures that many face on a day-to-day basis as well as the anxiety that these situations can cause.

SUPPORTING WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

If someone within your team discloses a mental health problem, it's a good idea to research it, to have a basic understanding of what they might be experiencing.

Remember, it's not the manager's role to provide medical advice. Specific conditions are often experienced differently by different people, so try not to make assumptions. Focus on what you as a manager can do to support.

Encourage staff to be open about problems.

Ensure confidentiality and provide an appropriate place for confidential conversations.

Listen, be respectful and don't assume.

Be positive - focus on what employees can do, rather than what they can't. Provide training, mentoring or coaching for skills gaps.

Work together to find solutions.

Support staff to develop personal resilience and coping strategies.

Involve staff in dialogue and decision making, remember that people are often the expert when it comes to identifying the support they need and how to manage their triggers for poor mental health.

Recognise and praise good work and commitment, providing regular opportunities to discuss positive achievements.

#GetTalking

Encourage staff to seek further advice and support



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Barry O'Brien, Burnley Football Club



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Synergising weather and agronomy

Turf management and the weather are inexplicably linked. Temperature, light, moisture, evapotranspiration and humidity play a massive role in **grass and fungal disease growth** and therefore directly impact on the way we manage our grass.

Mark Hunt's expertise has influenced many turf care professionals approaches to nutrition and disease management. Here, Mark explores the intrinsic relationship between turf management and weather, sharing his knowledge and understanding of Davis weather stations, and their usefulness to the turf manager.

Measuring climatic data is just one function of a weather station. With the array of sensors available to connect to a Davis Vantage Pro Weather Station (450 and counting), modern weather stations can do a lot more than just 'measure the weather'.

In addition, converting that data into agronomic parameters is the next step and allows the end-user to not only make better-informed decisions but also communicate these to management and members alike.

Weather Station - key considerations

Before I get into how we can use the data from a Davis Weather Station, it is worth discussing some of the key considerations when you are looking to purchase and use one ;

1. ***Where should you locate your weather station and how do you connect to it?***

Where you locate your weather station and how do you 'connect' to it are perhaps the most important

decisions you need to make. With Davis, there are two options;

a) Wireless connection - In this case, you have a Weatherlink Live hub in your office which connects to your WiFi network and then communicates with the Vantage Pro weather station. This needs to be situated within 300m line of sight of the Weatherlink Live hub.

b) Cellular connection - Sometimes it isn't practically possible to connect to a WiFi network and / or site a weather station within 300m. Fortunately there is a solution. A cellular Gateway connects to the mobile network on your site and effectively allows you to site your weather station wherever you want on your site provided you have 3G, 4G, etc coverage.

In both connections scenarios, the data is then streamed to the cloud and picked up on a pc at weatherlink.com or via the Weatherlink app on a smart phone or tablet.

2. ***Do you want to measure different areas across your site?***

Modern technology now allows you to fit not just a Davis weather station, but additional satellite systems called EnviroMonitor nodes that can be equipped with up to 4 sensors. The EM nodes communicate with each other and with the



weather station and send the data back. You can fit up to 25 EM nodes to one weather station, and if the two are fitted with long range aeriels, they can be up to 2.5km away from each other!

What do you want to measure?

For example, if you are looking to measure Evapotranspiration (E.T.), you need to ensure the model comes fitted with a solar radiation sensor and calculates E.T.

Are leaf moisture levels (dew formation) and soil temperature important to you on your site? – If yes, then you'll need to factor in an extra transmitter and a leaf moisture and soil temperature sensor into the installation and purchase equation.

Using weather station data in turfgrass management decisions and to communicate more effectively...

Rainfall intensity

Nowadays, it isn't just how much rain that

falls, it is the intensity of the rainfall that has implications for flooding, overwhelming rootzone drainage and washing out bunkers. Rainfall intensity greater than 50mm per hour is classified as violent.

Growth patterns

Converting minimum and maximum air temperature into plant growth models such as Growth-degree-days (GDD) and Growth Potential (G.P) for your site can help in determining PGR, fertiliser and pesticide applications (starting dates and duration). In addition, by monitoring daily Growth Potential, you can also highlight for example, how many good growth days you have had so far this spring or why aerating in September is better than October / November.

Evapotranspiration

Irrigation efficiency is more and more critical, both in terms of the increasing frequency of dry summers and record heat, but also the requirement to use the water available in the most efficient manner. Irrigating without



USEFUL SENSORS

Some of the most useful sensor types you can fit to a Davis Vantage Pro weather station for turfgrass management

6420 - Leaf moisture

Generates excellent data for disease monitoring.

6470 - Soil temperature

Useful for timing overseeding operations and monitoring plant growth.

Apogee SQ 212 - PAR Light

Provides a good indication of light availability on your site year-on-year and how it affects grass and different grass species growth.

Terros 12 - Soil moisture, temperature and salinity

This cabled sensor is placed horizontally and has a sensing volume of 1010 ml of soil surrounding the sensor.

understanding how much of that water is being lost from the grass plant and soil surface by evaporation (E.T), at what rate and how it varies across a day is an uninformed process.

Summary

A Davis Vantage Pro weather station does far more than just measure the weather. It can help

make turfgrass management decisions easier, optimise irrigation strategy and, above all, make communicating the effects of the weather on your site a more efficient process.



www.weatherstations.co.uk

Welcome to my regular weather column, where I take a look at all things weather-related and how they impact on turfgrass management. Weather dynamics have always fascinated me and especially how they impact on turfgrass growth, nutrition and disease management. No two years are the same.

MARK HUNT WEATHER CORNER



Mark Hunt
Weather
Analytics,
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What chance a nice spring?

As February 2023 heads to a conclusion, it has for many areas been an unusually dry and at times very mild month. Here in Leicestershire, my local weather station is showing a mere 6.1 mm rainfall for the month. Single-digit rainfall totals in February are a meteorological rarity with The Met Office listing 1932 as the driest February on record, recording an average of 8.8mm across the U.K.

Normally, the U.K & Ireland experiences a strong westerly jet stream flow from November to February which pushes Atlantic storms across our shores and provides seasonally high rainfall totals for many areas, especially in the west, northwest and north.

2023 has been different though, with a near shut down of rainfall since the 16th of January, particularly across the southern half of the U.K. This has been caused by a premature weakening of the jet stream which has allowed blocking patterns to form and high pressure to dominate our weather.¹

I think this weakening of the jet stream has occurred much earlier in the year than normal, typically we see it in late March / early April with a high pressure, blocking pattern developing. It is this phenomenon that has led to the absence of our once-traditional

¹Read all about the different types of blocking patterns and how they affect our weather:
www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/learn-about/weather/how-weather-works/high-and-low-pressure/blocks

²Read about why a SSW affects our weather @
www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/learn-about/weather/types-of-weather/wind/sudden-stratospheric-warming

April showers and the now more typical cold / dry - warm / dry April weather that makes turf management in April such a challenge.

As we now head towards the first day of meteorological spring (March 1st as opposed to the spring Equinox on March 20th), we have a further meteorological phenomenon that could potentially muddy the turf management waters for us.

As we now head towards the first day of meteorological spring (March 1st as opposed to the spring Equinox on March 20th), we have a further meteorological phenomenon that could potentially muddy the turf management waters for us.

A Sudden Stratospheric Warming (SSW) event has occurred over the North Pole in the middle of February. This has the potential to reverse the normal west-east flow of the jet stream and allow much colder weather to dominate. It is often the process behind the so called 'Beast from the East' that our tabloids are so fond of dusting down as a news story every winter!²

One thing to state here and now is that a SSW event doesn't always result in a return to winter, but it was behind the cold spring weather in 2009, 2010, 2013 and 2018. By the time you read this we will know if the SSW event of 2023 has caused a return to winter for the first half of March. Hopefully it will be short-lived and spring will be just around the corner.

Mark is well respected in the turfcare community and welcomes your questions. Send them to: editor@pitchcare.com

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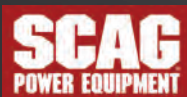
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Environmental benefits of golf

Golf has a unique relationship with the natural environment and a responsibility to ensure that future generations are able to enjoy the game played by millions around the world.



Not only is golf great for our health and well-being, but it can also provide a host of benefits for the climate and environment too.

What are the benefits?

By their very nature of an outside natural environment, golf courses can contribute to wildlife conservation, species protection and have the potential to play a role in mitigating the effects of climate change.

Sustainable agronomy practices contribute to good quality playing surfaces that can reduce the consumption of natural resources such as water, reduce the usage of fertiliser and pesticides and increase the biodiversity value.

These benefits are achieved by:

- Working with the natural environment to enhance biodiversity and conserving natural habitats
- Protecting species and encouraging species diversity
- Providing connectivity through the landscape to link other green spaces via nature corridors
- Working with nature conservation bodies such as Natural England and Nature Scot
- Conserving natural resources
- Managing waste efficiently following the waste hierarchy

- Managing healthy grass species, soil structure and drainage for sustainable course playability
- Increasing biological controls for pests and diseases

RSPB

The R&A have a long-established relationship with the conservation charity, the RSPB, who partner to improve the habitat management and wildlife value of golf courses and support golf in promoting its good work to the environmental lobby and government.

They are able to work with a dedicated Wildlife Support Advisor passionate around conserving wildlife and habitats of golf courses.

Protecting the Future of Golf

Course managers and greenkeepers play an incredibly important part in achieving these sustainability benefits and properly managed golf courses can deliver real advantages to the local environment and those living nearby.

To protect the sport in the face of climate change, resource constraints and increased regulation, we are working closely with organisations responsible for managing courses to help realise these benefits and ensure that sustainable golf agronomy practices are used to enhance and maintain facilities for the benefit of golfers.

DID YOU KNOW?

Over 98% of all lizard orchids can be found at Royal St George's. The Open venue is not only an oasis for this species but in acting as a nucleus it is helping their spread out and into the immediate countryside.

Bolster **kestrel** numbers

An ambitious project to bolster kestrel numbers in North East Fife has won a coveted ecological award as part of the prestigious Golf Environment Awards after an incredible 21 chicks were fledged over a four-year period.



The Kestrel Project was introduced by the St Andrews Links Trust greenkeeping team at the Castle Course in 2019 in an attempt to halt an alarming 80 per cent drop in Kestrel numbers in the area.

As part of the project, a breeding box fitted with a camera was installed at the course, perched on a grassland clifftop to the east of St Andrews, and has been used by a breeding pair ever since.

The pair, dubbed Kes and Mrs Kes by the team at the Castle Course, have gone on to fledge a total of 21 chicks since then, including six in 2022.

The project has now been recognised as the Ecological Project of the Year at the 2023 Golf Environment Awards, which seeks to highlight the increasingly important role golf courses play in protecting and enhancing the local environment.

Trevor Harris, who is now part of St Andrews Links Trust's West Sands Rangers team, introduced the project during his time as a greenkeeper at the Castle Course.

View the breeding box at:
youtu.be/aSGJNpCrCso



Fact

Golf courses support our rarest internationally protected wildlife including all species of bat and natterjack toad.

Nationally declining species such as Brown hare, Otter and all reptiles are making golf courses their home.

Wildflower for you

Foxglove: Digitalis purpurea

A strong indicator that summer is upon us is when you find the bold yet elegant Foxglove growing around woodland areas. The flower has become an indicator of the changing of seasons. Bees welcome the flower as it is a great source of pollen for them. The flower shape allows bees to land on the lip and crawl up to get to the pollen, in doing so the bee will drop pollen from other foxgloves, allowing reproduction to take place. The flower can grow up to a mighty 2m and can be seen from a distance due to its unique purple flowers. The leaves of the flower are large with an oval shape.





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A DAY in the LIFE



Bradley Tennant, Co-Founder of the International Greenkeepers for Hire talked us through how a team prepares for a 5:30pm Premier League game.

8:00am Arrive at work and a quick inspection to ensure nothing has happened during the night. It's not uncommon for an irrigation leak, or pest or disease damage.

8:30am Briefing with all staff, raising any potential issues or arrangements for the day.

9:00am Depending on the weather, much of the preparation may have been done the previous day. The weather can have a huge impact on preparations even at the highest level - not all clubs are equipped with underfloor heating, frost covers or even a suitable drainage system.

11:00am Once the pitch has been cut, install the main goals.

11:30am Begin marking the pitch using string lines, typically doing all width lines first followed by any length lines, centre circle and penalty spots. Now is also a good time to mark any dugout areas.

12:30pm Erect portable warm up goals, catch nets, lower and secure main goal nets and insert corner flags.

1:00pm Final checks and debrief with the team.

1:30-4:45pm Downtime, however it is important during this time that we remain on standby in case of any possible issues.

4:45pm The team speak with coaches about any areas to avoid during warm ups. Ask if they are happy with the surface and if they require any water.

5-5:30pm Remove portable goals and catch nets. This is probably the most intensive and time critical part of the day, as you'd typically get around five minutes to do this - along with a quick divot before the game. You can only pray it plays well in the knowledge you've done everything you possibly can.

5:30pm Kick off.

6:15pm Half time - the team would split into two groups, divoting and collecting any large debris from the pitch. 15 minutes really isn't that long and, before you know it, the pitch is back on the world stage.

7:15pm Immediately after the final whistle, the corner flags are collected and nets lifted from the main goals. Then, advertising banners and the goals are removed into their storage sockets.

7:30-8:30pm Divoting, mowing or brushing of the pitch are carried out to collect debris and reinstate the bay patterns into the surface. This is especially important if you are due wet weather over the coming days.

8:30-9:00pm Final checks and head home.

“

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Above
Wakehurst 22nd July
2021, Visual Air

Right Wakehurst's
Loder Valley, Visual Air



Far right
Wakehurst Autumn,
Claire Takacs

Bottom right
Wakehurst, Ash
dieback management



Bottom left
Wakehurst 27th October
2022, Visual Air

All images
© RBG Kew 2022





Ashes to Ashes

Ash dieback in the UK can be traced back to 2012, when plants carrying the fungus responsible for the disease were imported into the country.

The next year, major estates, such as Wakehurst, Kew's wild botanic garden in West Sussex, met the Forestry Commission to discuss how to identify ash dieback.

"By 2016, we were witnessing signs of ash dieback," recalls Wakehurst Arboretum Manager Russell Croft, "with the diamond-shaped lesions at the junctions of twigs and main stems, along with a yellowing crown."

In 2019, the site conducted its first large-scale roadside felling of diseased ashes, with some 90 specimens along the B2028 perimeter road going under the saw in stage one of an extensive dieback management programme.

"As a public attraction, our key priority is to ensure visitors can walk the site in safety," Russell states, "so we've focused on affected trees lining footpaths, as well as those along roads bordering us and boundaries with neighbours such as the South of England Showground, which stages public events throughout the year."

With a fair percentage of an estimated 1,000 diseased specimens already felled, some 250 along public access roads, work has switched to inside the gardens, but as Russell explains: "We don't always fell an entire tree, some are cut back. It's really a balance between necessity and cost, but highways work involves removing everything, whereas we adopt a different approach inside the garden."

Wakehurst has taken a considered view of how it tackles ash dieback. "I've had time to inspect the landscape over several years and can target trees growing round high usage areas and dwell

points," he says.

Tree inspection is a nuanced strategy of managing individual specimens, he continues. "Those showing signs of tolerance we keep. We conduct annual canopy surveys to check tree health - 75-100% of the expected canopy density is fine but when only 50-75% is present, that indicates dieback. Once the percentage of leaf canopy is reduced to 25-50%, we have to fell."

He has plenty of ground to cover - of Wakehurst's 535 acres, 300 are open to the public, while 200 acres of native woodland claim SSSI status. The 400 ashes in the formal gardens have been surveyed and 280 felled. The 70-100 left have a reasonable amount of crown and are showing signs of tolerance."

Measuring growth rate is not a reliable indicator of disease, he adds. "Some young trees may have grown tall in search of light, especially if they seeded in shady areas. But height is relevant in considering fall areas, which in turn can impact public safety."

Wakehurst is one of RBG Kew's two UK sites, the other being Kew Gardens in Richmond. Wakehurst's diverse range of habitats has led to its transformation into Kew's living laboratory, where Kew scientists can research across grasslands, wetlands and woodlands all in one place. This access to Kew scientists adds further insight for Russell to plan ash dieback strategy, as does on-site research capability. "Gene mapping can help discover what makes trees tolerant to disease," he says "but as ash dieback is purely windborne, biosecurity of our landscape is very difficult."

By Greg Rhodes.

Between **turf** and a **hard place**

The ongoing dilemma between presenting to high standards and addressing stakeholders' environmental concerns is especially striking when it comes to **weed control**, and with a range of alternatives coming onto the market, is it time to look at the options?

Right: Rootwave Pro delivers an electrical current to 'boil' weed roots, causing the plant to die back, and has been successfully used to control even difficult invasive weeds such as Japanese Knotweed.

Chemical use in groundcare remains in the spotlight, with consumers on one hand calling for higher standards in the care and presentation of sporting and leisure facilities, but on the other being concerned about products applied to turf and hard surfaces and their impact on human health and the environment.

Amenity Forum Executive Officer Peter Corbett reckons that legislation and industry practice already addresses these concerns, but that the EU's position, which still impacts the UK post-Brexit, looks to go further.

"Pesticides are highly regulated in terms of where they can be used and at what rates. Regulation also covers active ingredients and co-formulations, and how products are applied. But, we're governed by the Sustainable Use Directive, which highlights sensitive areas as anywhere the general public can use or walk across, and it has been proposed by the EU that all pesticides should be banned in urban situations."

Peter acknowledges the challenges, particularly when treating small areas.

"Applications are mainly via knapsack or pedestrian sprayers, where the operator is behind the boom or lance rather than protected by a cab and in front of it, so one issue is operator exposure. However, products that don't meet criteria on exposure have already disappeared from the market. Operator qualifications also offer protection to third parties and the environment."

He suggests that there is already a downward trend in spraying, depending on who runs the facility. Use of selective chemicals on turf is not as high on the political agenda as hard surface spraying, but is also worthy of review, he points out.

"Herbicides are an important part of the management package, but an integrated approach is becoming more significant, using physical, cultural and chemical methods of control. It is good groundsmanship – there is no silver bullet."

Turf is already highly competitive as a crop, and when well managed can hold its own against weeds, he comments. "But, this requires investment in people, equipment and turf nutrition."

“

100% weed control may not be achievable

He suggests that while stadia pitches have moved on dramatically in terms of quality, unfortunately, at the grass roots end it has gone the other way.

Advances in application technology have had a significant impact, increasing accuracy. “Future developments such as the use of robots and even drones to minimise operator exposure and improve accuracy and timeliness have potential. Legislation still presents barriers, however – aerial spraying is not permitted, yet the knapsack operator is effectively holding the nozzle ‘above the ground’”

Peter suggests that operators using best practice can help preserve the future of active ingredients.

“We need to avoid the risk of incidents in public – only spray at the right time and in the right way. But educating the public is also important, to show them what we are doing and why we are doing it.”

Amenity Forum chairman Ian Graham is also managing director of leading contractor Complete Weed Control, and he comments that much of the negative perception of glyphosate goes back to the links to former manufacturer

Monsanto and its work on genetically modified ‘Roundup Ready’ crops.

“This has led to pressure on the industry to rethink glyphosate use, but we only now have empirical evidence on the alternatives.

“The cost of alternative methods is significantly higher – hot foam is ten times as expensive as glyphosate. We need to have the research to inform our practices.”

Ian suggests that concerns about spraying largely come not from CWC’s customers, but from users of the facilities.

“As professionals we listen to advice from decision makers. We use the Pesticide Guide and product labels to inform us on PPE and applications – to make an analogy with medicine, it’s not for the doctor to decide if the medicines that are available to prescribe are safe. Instead, as practitioners we’re charged with the job of producing playing surfaces. Integrated Weed Management (IWM) is an important part of the approach, defining to what degree weed control is needed.”

This is also the case in the urban environment, he adds, where design can help or hinder weed control.

ABOVE:
RootWave Pro is a professional hand weeder



Above
John Deere's extensive R&D into precision spraying for agriculture brings benefits to groundcare, with GPS guidance increasing accuracy to offer significant chemical savings and minimise off-target application

Right: Weed brushes take out shallow-rooted weeds and are comparatively economical on fuel – Kersten also has battery powered models in development.

“Regular cleaning to remove detritus can help, and where there are fewer weeds there is a reduced need to use glyphosate.”

There are a range of sustainable options to help manage weed populations on hard surfaces, he points out.

“It comes down to what is acceptable – 100% weed control may not be achievable, but an absence of control is equally unacceptable. We need to get a balance, and cost and efficiency is key. Some methods that purport to be eco-friendly are more damaging than glyphosate application.”

He comments that there have been few truly scientific trials of alternative weed control methods, and that councils, having signed up to zero carbon, are being pressured into choosing alternatives that generate considerably more carbon than synthetic chemicals.

“The Cardiff study (see below) stands out as the first piece of work carried out in a real life situation and followed through with rigorous data collection.”

“GPS on sprayers is so accurate that there is no overlapping during application – we have seen savings of 10% on chemical use.”

Nozzle developments have also made an impact, cutting drift and off target application, as well as improving disease control treatment, which in itself improves the sward's resilience and competitiveness.

“Multiple small gains soon become significant,” he comments. He believes that increased public scrutiny - anyone with a mobile phone can take HD video - is positive in driving standards upwards.

“Some businesses have not invested in the training and technology to improve practices, but it's now harder to operate in that way.”

Cardiff trials treatments

In 2021 Cardiff Council and its weed control contractor trialled three pavement weed control methods across the City of Cardiff to find out how effective and sustainable each method was, as measured against four key criteria: cost, environmental, customer satisfaction and quality. Control methods trialled included glyphosate-based herbicide (applied three times per year), acetic acid-based herbicide (applied four times a year), and hot foam herbicide (applied three times per year). Efficiency and sustainability results showed that glyphosate was the most sustainable, being cost effective, with low environmental impacts and high customer satisfaction and quality. In contrast, acetic acid delivered intermediate costs and environmental impacts with low customer satisfaction and quality, while hot foam generated high costs and environmental impacts but high customer satisfaction and quality.

Based on cost, environmental, customer and





“

Hot foam is ten times as expensive as glyphosate

Amenity Forum chairman Ian Graham

quality criteria (efficacy and sustainability criteria) measured, the most effective and sustainable weed control method currently available for pavement weed control in the UK involves the use of glyphosate-based herbicide.

IWM and non-chemical treatments

Kersten has developed its business model around IWM for hard surfaces, offering a range of products aimed at preventing weed development or tackling small weeds before they become deep rooted and more

difficult to remove.

“Debris such as leaves or grass clippings builds up and rots down to form soil which provides nutrients for weed seeds. Removing detritus by sweeping it prevents weed growth or where small weeds are present can also remove them,” explains sales and marketing director Sean Faulkner.

He points out that different types of weeds grow depending on the depth of soil – where it is shallow, moss or annual weeds and where there

Left Operator exposure is an issue with knapsack spraying, but products that don't meet the criteria on exposure have already disappeared from the market.



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Above
Left: Heat-based treatments work best on small weeds which have not had chance to establish deep roots and can be a useful choice on surfaces such as gravel.

Right: Hot foam treatment uses a combination of near-boiling water and biodegradable foam to kill weeds – the foam maintains the heat of the water to above 57deg for 15 sec to improve kill rates and minimise regrowth.

is more soil, deeper rooted plants.
 “One pass with a brush or application of a heat-based control method can take out shallow weeds, rather than having to tackle deeper roots with repeated passes, so keeping on top of the depth of soil makes treatments more efficient.”

The company also offers a range of heat-based treatments, and here also Sean suggests that early treatment is key.

“It’s important that operators know how to use these treatments to get the best out of them.”

Choosing the right method for the surface in question is also key: “Some areas can be effectively treated by weed brushing, but heat may be a better option on gravel and gives the quickest results when passed over the weed.”

Where heat can present a fire risk, hot water or foam may be better, albeit with slower results.

“These methods target the cells used for photosynthesis so the plant dies off, and again work best on young plants without an established root system,” he comments.

Sean points out that Kersten petrol-engined weed brushes use around 10 litres of fuel over a period of four hours so are relatively efficient.

“Electric weed brushes are on the way, and we offer battery operated Eco Weedkiller hot water systems which use insulated tanks to keep the preheated water at the required temperature; the water can be heated back at base using green energy such as solar rather than on the go which would need a diesel heater.”

Electrical treatment

RootWave Pro is a professional hand weeder designed for parks, gardens and estates. It uses an electrical current from a generator mounted on a truck, ATV or barrow and transmitted via a hand lance to ‘boil’ the roots of weeds, causing them to die back with zero or minimal regrowth. It comes with a 27m long cable which allows 2000sqm to be treated at a time.

“Treatments are chemical-free and completely targeted, and there is no soil disturbance, avoiding the risk of weed seeds being spread,” explains RootWave’s Stephen Jelley.

Designed to treat anything from small weeds up to large invasive species, RootWave Pro is suitable for sensitive areas where chemical weed control is not appropriate, such as close to watercourses or favourable plant species. Customers include English Heritage, the Environment Agency and National Parks.

“It has proved to be highly effective against Japanese Knotweed as an alternative to spraying or stem injection and Transport for London are using it at London Underground sites. On small sites, it can remove the plant in one treatment, where roots are especially deep it can take a programme of multiple treatments, but this compares well to the treatment programme needed for chemical control and there is no need to remove debris from the site,” says Stephen.

While the initial outlay of around £17,850 means that this is a machine that tends to



be purchased by weed control professionals, running costs are low, using around 15 litres of petrol or diesel per day for the generator.

Hot foam

Foamstream uses a combination of near boiling water and biodegradable foam to kill weeds - the foam, formulated from plant oils and sugars, maintains the heat of the water to above 57deg for 15 seconds to improve kill rates and minimise regrowth.

There are two models: the L12 which is powered by a petrol generator and 95kw Honda diesel engine, designed for larger scale operations, and the hybrid M600H, which

uses a smaller diesel engine for the boiler and L-ion batteries and is targeted as smaller and inner city applications. They are supplied with 20/30m of hose to the hand lance.

Outputs are up to 700m² and 420m² per hour respectively, depending on the density of vegetation.

Designed for use in all weathers, the low pressure application system means that it can be applied on all types of surface, and also reduces splashing and wastage. Results are instantaneous and the heat is also designed to sterilise weed seeds and spores to reduce regrowth.

UK supplier Weedingtech says that for moss and algae, control is achieved in a single annual treatment, and that its multi-purpose properties - Foamstream can also be used for graffiti removal, urban cleaning and to clear chewing gum - give a high return on investment.

With prices at £19,950 for the L12 and £26,100 for the M600H, rental costs for the L12 are from £340-£750, or monthly costs on finance £396 and £518 respectively.

Left WEEDit - which uses infra-red light to identify weeds for selective spraying - is part of contractor CWC's weed control armoury.

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Above Left: Techneat's Weedwizard, due for commercial trials this year, uses camera technology to identify weeds for selective spraying.

Right: Urban design can play an important role in weed control – where debris collects and can't be easily removed, weeds flourish.

Spot spraying - Infra red

Complete Weed Control introduced the WEEDit selective pavement spraying technology at Saltex in 1997, a development ahead of its time.

Mounted on a quad bike or other carrier vehicle with a spray boom at the front, WEEDit uses an infra-red sensor to locate the weeds as it passes over them by fluorescing the chlorophyll in the leaves, switching on nozzles to apply glyphosate to the weed only.

"Label restrictions that require spot spraying were introduced in 2012," comments Ian Graham of CWC, UK distributor for the Dutch-made system. "The system can now be hired by local authorities, but is used almost entirely through our network as a contracting tool. We have established a successful contract service and there is now growing interest in using the system."

Ian comments that the technology has developed to offer greater accuracy.

"Hardware and software improvements have allowed the application process to become even more accurate with reduced margins before and after the weed which is being detected."

- Camera guided

Precision application specialist Techneat has developed the WeedWizard, a spot sprayer designed to offer targeted herbicide application on footpaths, roadsides and cycle paths.

It uses camera technology to identify 'green on brown' weed growth on hard surfaces, with artificial intelligence software used to switch on low drift spray nozzles and apply herbicide to the green areas only. The camera, spray tank and 1.2m spray boom are mounted on a quad bike.

"Compared to blanket application just 1-5% of the chemical is used, and the unit can work

at up to 5kph," explains managing director Tom Neat. "The low drift nozzles keep the product on target and allow a defined line such as at the edge of a kerb to be sprayed."

There are operational benefits too, he points out: "As the application is automatic, the driver can concentrate on steering the bike and with such small amounts applied, the outfit can cover a lot more ground before needing a refill."

The camera identifies the level of weed pressure and sets the coverage; weeds from 25mm across can be targeted.

"We're using the latest technology to make spraying more accurate and safer, while cutting application costs," explains Tom.

The WeedWizard is being demonstrated throughout the country this season before going into production; the price is expected to be £35,000 including a Honda or Kawasaki quad bike.

Tech for turf

John Deere was one of the pioneers of GPS technology for site specific applications in farming, and groundcare has benefited from this.

The Progator GPS sprayer offers 2cm accuracy and individual nozzle control, switching off the spray as the boom approaches the edge of the area to be sprayed according to a pre-set map, and minimises overlaps with Auto Trac steering.

"This offers significant savings in chemical use, which not only benefits the environment, but cuts costs too," comments John Deere's golf and turf specialist Chris Meacock.

For larger turf areas, Auto Trac can also be fitted to a compact tractor and used to steer around straight or curved lines when using a mounted or trailed sprayer, reducing overlaps.

"The financial savings are less dramatic, but this approach can certainly contribute to sustainability," says Chris. "Operations are recorded and mapped for easier record keeping, which makes it possible to prove what has been applied."

Article by Jane Carley.

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Navigating **weather**

What wetter winters and drier summers mean
for landscapers and groundspeople

Forty countries, covering 2,309 jurisdictions and accounting for over one billion citizens, have declared a climate emergency - 61 million of those citizens dwelling in the UK.*

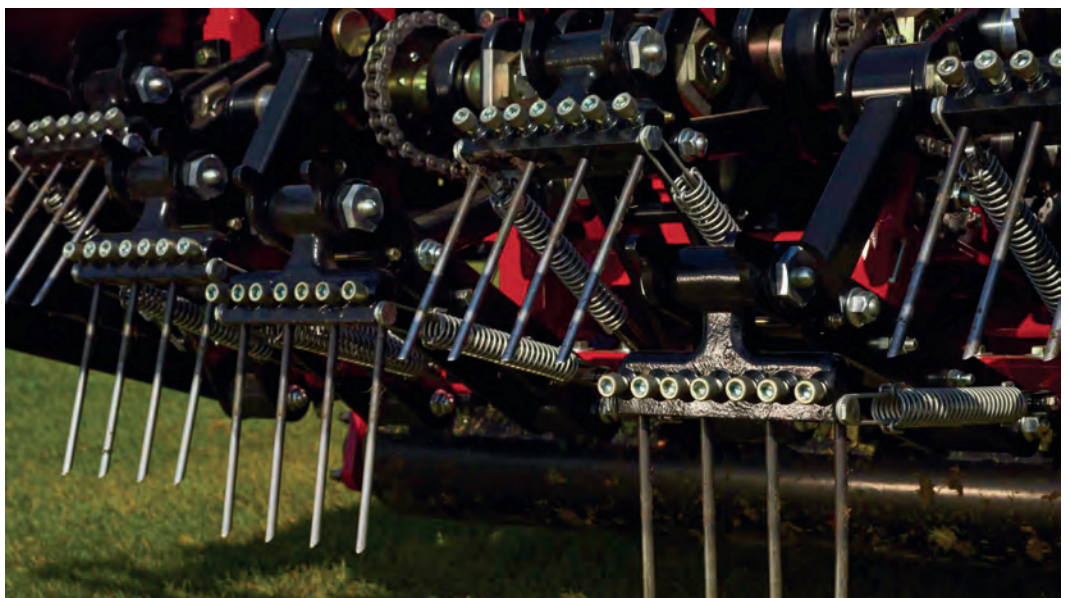
Unpredictable weather is becoming the new norm, with wetter winters and drier summers expected meaning landscapers and groundspeople need to have their wits about them to get the most out of the green spaces they maintain. Here, Jon Cole - Divisional Business Manager at Reesink Turfcare explains the best ways to combat the most extremes of weather to keep grounds healthy all year round.

Heading into this new future, groundspersons are set to face a number of challenges that are likely to become routine problems. Wetter winters can lead to more instances of waterlogging and in turn soil compaction, starving roots of much needed nutrients. In the short term, this can lead to increased vulnerability to disease and unsightly bogs, but in the long term winter compaction can be a leading cause of summer drought. Dehydrated grounds will leave your grounds brown and sparse and can ultimately see it die off all together.

How wetter winters can affect grounds

Whilst warmer summers are seeing longer hotter periods, winter is experiencing the opposite. As winters get warmer, we're predicted to see a significant increase in overall rainfall and a higher likelihood of winter storms. Air can hold up to seven percent more moisture for every one degree Celsius of temperature rise, resulting in more rain events that can ultimately impact how you go about landscaping.

Wet weather can quickly turn once hard, dry grounds into soft, muddy bogs, especially when surfaces lack sufficient drainage. And, with these conditions set to become more frequent, this will put soil at risk of compaction, which occurs when it becomes waterlogged, and foot and vehicle traffic causes it to become compacted. This significantly reduces drainage and can see soil retaining too much water, causing mud and dead patches as the roots are damaged beneath, which as we know will cause problems later down the line in the summer heat too. To target drought at the source, solve any compaction issues early in the winter and spring.



ABOVE: The answer to extreme weather once again is aeration - deep-tine aeration to be exact.



Combat waterlogging

Installing additional drainage is expensive with increased aggregate and material costs driving up prices. For many landscapers, installing new drainage is just not an affordable option. Instead, mechanical techniques can be employed to improve the speed of water movement away from surfaces and reduce soil compaction.

The answer to extreme weather once again is aeration – deep-tine aeration to be exact. This kind of aeration relieves soil compaction at lower soil levels than the typical process. The tines fracture the soil creating channels through



the root zone allowing oxygen, water and critical nutrients to penetrate deep into the soil profile. This allows for plenty of drainage and helps roots to grow deeper, producing a stronger lawn in the long run.

Sand topdressing after aeration works particularly well in waterlogged conditions as the topdressing can be worked into the soil through the holes left behind, firming up the surface and improving the soil's drainage.

Using a sand with a medium particle size, neither too fine or coarse and lime-free is ideal for topdressing. This type of topsoil is good for smoothing and releveling the lawn's surface after the trauma of waterlogging.

How warmer weather can affect grounds

It can be easy to assume drought is simply down to a lack of sufficient rainfall and hotter than usual temperatures. In actuality, most plants are hardy enough to survive the temperature increase - drought is down to what lies beneath.

Management of moisture in the root zone is fundamental to maintaining healthy grounds, and is one of the things most greatly affected by changes in the weather. Excessively wet or dry conditions change the soil environment, negatively impacting soil moisture relations. What's more, the effect of poor drainage will not only be present immediately, it will cause issues months down the line. Compaction in the winter, depriving the root zone of necessary moisture to develop properly, will eventually lead to drought in the summer when those roots are needed to retrieve and hold water, a disaster in a heat wave.

The dryness of grass can be judged by the moisture - or lack thereof - within the top two or three inches of soil that allows the grass to remain green, springy and growing well. If grass begins to look dull, holds onto footprints without springing back or slows in growth then it's safe to assume the moisture level is low and in danger of drought. Otherwise, opening the soil to a two or three-inch depth will enable you to

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

The best way to combat a drought is to avoid it all together. Aeration is a key part of the landscaping and groundskeeping calendars, and with rising temperatures, it's more important than ever to ensure roots have access to the nutrients they need year-round.

Drought sees the ground surface become dry and hard, making it difficult for water to permeate down to the root. Aeration involves creating holes in the ground which will allow water and oxygen to filter through all the way down to the roots and

will help the soil to retain water for longer if a drought does occur.

That being said, aeration should be avoided in the midst of a drought as it can increase water evaporation from the soil. The optimum time to aerate is during the spring, when the ground is dry enough for the holes to not seal up and grass is in its peak growing period. Aerating in the spring also means that the ground can recover quickly from the coring process, and will be in the best possible condition by the time warm weather arrives.



GROW YOUR OWN

To double down on the benefits of wildflowers, groundskeepers can grow their own too. And, by mulching any flowerbeds in the spring just as perennials begin to grow, it won't come with the need for extra water.

observe whether the soil is moist or dry.

Dehydration goes beyond leaving grass looking sparse and brown, it can also affect its ability to fight off disease. To avoid this, there are changes that can be made to grounds maintenance that will help your grounds survive a drought.

During warmer weather

Getting grounds through a drought is all about preserving moisture, preventing evaporation and causing as little damage to

your grass as possible.

While grass can still be cut during hot, dry conditions, cutting patterns may need to change to accommodate fragile turf. Grass is 85 percent water, so for every inch cut, moisture is lost. Moreover, cutting will promote growth that will encourage grass to unnecessarily use up precious water resources. To avoid this, follow the one third rule of never removing more than one third of the grass in any one cut and commit to a longer cut to avoid losing important moisture.

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Above Rotary mowers like the Toro Groundsmaster 3300 are recommended for use on parched grass to achieve a longer cut.

By leaving longer amounts of time between cutting cycles, you can allow for longer grass that will create a barrier between the soil and the drying effects of the sun and wind. This natural shade will keep the soil beneath cooler, allowing it to hold onto water for longer and preventing evaporation that can exacerbate drought conditions, not to mention longer grass can trap morning dew providing the ground with an extra drink for the day.

Less frequent cuts will also allow for the growth of drought resistant plants like perennials that will help the ground to repair in the long run. Perennials will grow naturally every spring, and not only do the flowers provide some much needed colour to what could otherwise be a browning landscape, they'll create a microclimate that helps reduce water loss through evaporation while their extensive root system can hold soil to prevent erosion and further compaction.

When the time to cut does come around,

cutting should be raised approximately three inches to allow for a longer grass finish to maintain some of this natural shelter for the soil. Even better if your mower allows mow with the box off and let the finer than usual clippings sit on the grass. Within 24 hours they will disappear and transfer valuable moisture back into the ground.

Rotary mowers are recommended for use on parched grass as they have one very high speed rotating blade underneath that will 'chop' the blades of grass on impact leaving it longer, opposed to a cylinder mower's scissoring motion that prefers a closer cut. With sufficient power and sharp blades, a rotary mower will provide a clean cut that will prevent excessive water loss during the process.

Watering can be a tricky situation in a heatwave. If water supplies allow, it can be tempting to drench the soil with moisture the first chance you get. However, quantity and timing are everything.

The trick is to water deeply and infrequently. A shallow water can actually do grass more harm than good. With water only penetrating the top layer of soil, roots will be encouraged to grow near the surface where they are at a much higher risk of drying out – and a dry root is much harder to fix than dry soil. Watering a patch of turf for an hour at a time early in the morning before the sun can evaporate any added water is ideal.

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Jon Cole
Divisional Business Manager
Reesink Turfcare

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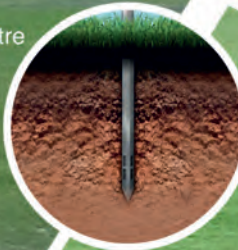
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Is your team

FULLY COMMITTED

Popular trainer **Frank Newberry** looks at how we can raise commitment levels in our work teams. What can team leaders do to raise commitment? What can team members do to help?

Until we have the commitment of people, they are all potentially underperforming in the workplace. Greater commitment might include: everyone in the team doing 'problem finding' as well as 'problem solving'. Everyone 'taking ownership and 'being accountable'. Everyone 'going the extra mile' when needed, seeking

'best practice' and striving for 'continuous improvement' at work.

Short cuts in selection methods or leadership failings

For some time, I have been of the opinion that when people underperform or lack the right level of commitment to the work - the quantity and the quality of it - this can often be because of short cuts in selection methods or leadership failings. Particularly in the turfcare sector, where many employers just seem to assume people are fully committed when they hire them. In addition, many supervisors happily judge team members by their own personal standard of commitment. Back in the day, the commitment of these supervisors was rarely in question, and they were probably good performers when they were at team member level. Nowadays, many of these (now) supervisors are baffled when the people in the work team are not just like they were when they were at the lower level.

Without involvement, there is no commitment

I would like to focus on one particular way you might get greater commitment from team members and colleagues. Through involvement. It may be that your work team are, as a group, or as individuals in the team, at more than one level on the hierarchy (left). Equally, you may have people between two of the levels described. You, of course, will need to be at the 'commitment' or top level - willing to encourage

THE HIERARCHY OF COMMITMENT

Commitment level

The level at which people at all levels will make a commitment (for example) to undertake new ways of working, and will encourage others to undertake new tasks, and give their personal commitment.

Compliance level

The level at which people do the work but only when they are ordered to do it - then they comply, but they give no personal commitment.

Complaining level

The level at which people whinge and moan and question why they should work differently, why they should show personal commitment etc.

Non-Committal level

The level at which people refuse to co-operate and show commitment - even influencing others to resist making a commitment. Please note: there could be legal or contractual jeopardy in people taking this line. A reminder to us all to keep job descriptions up to date!



others to give their personal commitment and all that comes with it.

Once your commitment is in place, and it is clear to all that you are setting a good example, you can move onto prevention and then cure.

Prevention

By ‘prevention’ I mean recruiting or promoting people who show commitment to the work and to the work team. They take their own performance and those of people around them seriously. A committed person takes things personally and professionally. S/he seeks best practice in work methods and in doing so is interested in continuous improvement.

Before you can test for evidence of commitment, you will have to ensure that Job Advertisements, Job Descriptions and Employee Specifications (a description of the ideal candidate) all indicate clearly that you or your employer are looking specifically for a person with (amongst other things) commitment to the work. It is a requirement, an essential part of the job – not just a ‘nice to have’.

A committed person also understands that if s/he is not able to strive for the best in one job, there are other employers elsewhere who reward commitment and consistent excellence in performance, teamworking and supervision.

Cure

By ‘cure’ I mean providing training and development for the uncommitted supervisor. This training will help the supervisor to show, or demonstrate to all, a sense of commitment.

The training can also help them to get the commitment of others in the workplace. Until we have the commitment of others, they are all potentially underperforming. You will need to have the training and development in place that will take supervisors and team members from wherever they are now, all the way up to the top of the Hierarchy of Commitment.

Involvement

Team members also have a key role to play once you can count on their personal commitment. To gain their commitment, it would be good to involve them. They are much more likely to commit to something that may be new, or unexpected, if they have been consulted and involved in the introduction, or roll out, of what is needed in the workplace.

Be explicit about the behaviour and the attitudes of a committed person that you want them to demonstrate. It will really help them if you ask them to help you by getting involved in updating their job descriptions. That way, you will get the up-to- date realities of their jobs and you can ensure that any amendments include the requirement for them to do things like: problem finding and problem solving; taking ownership and being accountable; going the extra mile when needed; seeking best practice and striving for continuous improvement at work.

May I wish you well in securing the commitment of people at work. It is so important.

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ASK FOR EVIDENCE

At interview stage, candidates can be asked for evidence that they are committed to work, e.g. ‘Please give me a recent example of when you showed commitment to your work’. ‘Please give me a recent example of how you gained and maintained the commitment of your colleagues and team members’.

A good interviewer will then probe each candidate’s first response with questions like ‘How did you achieve that?’ ‘What did that involve you doing?’ ‘What difference did it make at the time?’

Managing greens footfall



We sat down with James Matthewman to discuss the effect that **footfall** has had on his course to gain the best possible tips for dealing with the **compaction of turf**.



James Matthewman
Deputy Head
Greenkeeper,
Maesteg Golf Club

James started by outlining the technical side of footfall, as he highlights key examples of 23 people on a football pitch, or a four-ball walking around a green.

“The amount of compaction that is caused by footfall is staggering; a goalkeeper box, or around the hole on a golf green are two areas largely effected due to increased footfall. Both experience much more compaction due to the amount of footfall in that area and this is why aeration is so important to us as greenkeepers and groundsmen as it relieves compaction.”

James went into detail about the impact of a four-ball on his course; “Compacted soils can be very harmful to the playing surface, especially wetter soils - because the soil particles are compressed much easier, which will then lead to the soil becoming anaerobic (when there is no room in the soil for air movement). Anaerobic bacteria can then dominate the soil and, if left untreated, it can lead to a black layer.”

“The solution is to make the soil more aerobic which can be achieved with aeration. It will allow for more air, water and nutrient movement and various gaseous exchanges. When people are putting towards

the hole, they sometimes notice the ball will veer off. What is happening here is due to the amount of footfall in and around the pin and the compaction causes crowning.”

As well as indicating aeration as a way to combat compaction and the results of footfall, he also conveys another method; “You can also move the pin around the green in order to try and increase that surface area of footfall, this is why in football we see much more compaction and damage to the goalkeeper area because we obviously can’t move the goals.”

James’ top tip for footfall: “When dealing with footfall, you want golfers to be playing all-year-round, but you don’t want them to be causing significant damage. Therefore, either close off the greens - especially when they are saturated and frosty - as this will just cause a huge amount of damage. If you cannot do this, manage the maintenance as much as you can through aeration to release as much of the compaction as possible.”

“The turf is like a carpet in a restaurant, you can tell where people have been standing in one area because the footfall has caused damage to the carpet. This is the same near the pin in golf and in a goalkeeper area in football - these areas are having more footfall and therefore the ground is more damaged.”

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