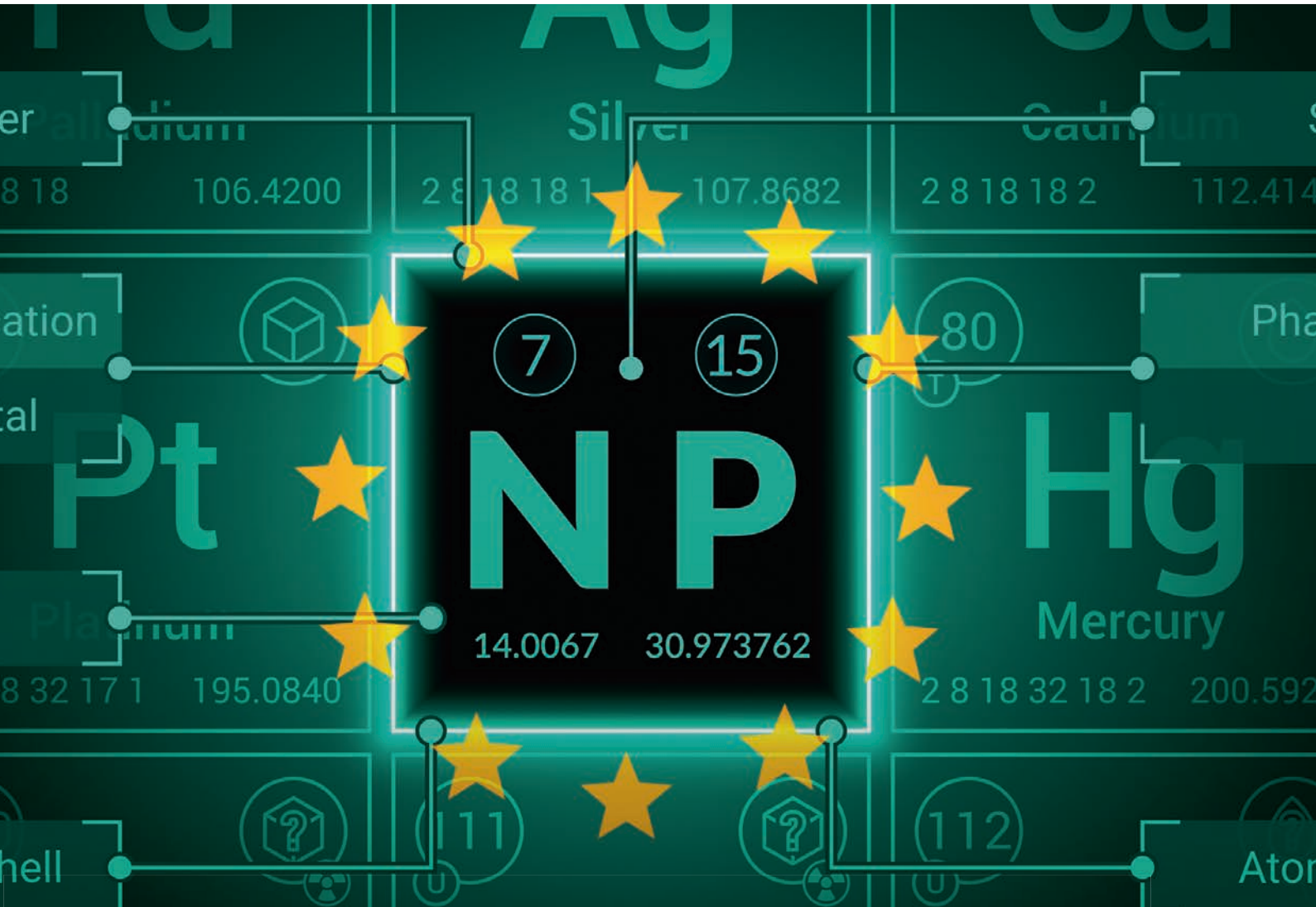


PITCHCARE

ISSUE 110

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023



GOING DUTCH ON N+P

HOW EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ARE LEADING CHANGE IN THEIR NITROGEN AND PHOSPHATE INPUTS

PLUS

STATE-SIDE STORY;
SNAPDRAGON STADIUM

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TOP TIPS - DISEASE
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Editor Kerry Haywood

ONGOING CHALLENGES



The UK turf community continue to produce world class surfaces - which is challenging enough. However, when you consider the variability in our climate and continuing demand for consistency and quality, it only reinforces why this is an industry that demands innovation and an open mind set.

To say this spring was challenging is an understatement; snow in March, then dry and cold in April with ground temperatures too low for the early season push you were all looking for. Fast forward into May and early June we saw baking hot weather with little to no rainfall. We all pay attention to weather but, despite the elements and ever increasing challenges, numerous annual prestigious events are hosted in the UK including The Ashes, Wimbledon, The Open and a calendar of race meetings - all of which proceeded as planned with world class surfaces - despite the weather. Gary Barwell even managed to grow Kryptonite!

In this issue, we go International; to New Zealand for the Women's World Cup (page 40) and also to San Diego (alas I didn't get to visit myself)! Director of Turf and Grounds, Mike Kerns at the brand-new Snapdragon Stadium (page 46) discusses what it's like to be involved in a new development and how he manages turf in a fixed warm climate.

There has been plenty in the news recently covering how European standards are changing to stop one of the Netherlands' peak polluters - Nitrogen. Our cover article features a Dutch perspective and how Scandinavian countries are leading change in their nitrogen and phosphate inputs. Find out how this will affect the UK amenity market and your surfaces from page 8.

As always, our regular sections offer a plethora of useful, informative content including disease management, winter use of soil surfactants, leaf clearance made easy, efficient water management, wellbeing advice and a host of conservation articles.

I wish you the best for the season ahead, whatever the climate brings us!

Kerry

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FOREWORD



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Printed by Buxton Press

Advertising TSP Media t: 01952 234000

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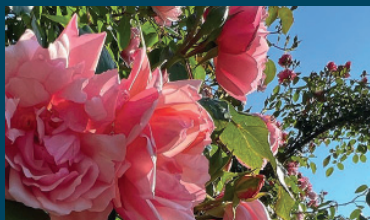
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GEO confirms SUSTAINABLE GOLF WEEK 2023

● Last year, people across the golf community came together around sustainable golf to Reflect, Celebrate, and Drive Further; asking important questions and sharing inspiring contributions and commitments.

Now, the Golf Environment Organisation (GEO) has announced that Sustainable Golf Week 2023 will tee-off from October 9-13. This year's theme is Golf - Better with Nature.

Golf's relationship with nature is unique among sport, with landscapes, eco-systems, and bio-diversity an essential part of the experience.

International Sustainable Golf Distinction

Walton Heath Golf Club, host venue of this week's AIG Women's Open, recently achieved GEO Certified® status for sustainable golf, underlining its strong commitment and performance across key themes for sustainable golf course operations.

Accordingly, with pressing challenges of climate change and eco-system degradation, preserving and actively reviving nature holds significant importance for both golf and society.

Sustainable Golf Week will explore golf's role in fostering nature, including the safeguarding of nature and prevention of 'net negative' impacts, as well as the active restoration and enrichment of our golfing landscapes.

"More widely, we'll look at the concept and criteria for Nature Positive Golf and how golf can champion the significance of the natural world to millions of players and followers," said a spokesperson for GEO, adding that initial questions or ideas are welcome.

"We look forward to linking your advocacy and contributions with the rapidly growing group of people throughout the sport who are stepping forward to play a part in helping sustainable golf drive further."

For further information, please contact Roddy Williams at roddy@sustainable.golf

GLOBAL TRIUMPHS

● In a fierce battle of wits and numbers, Reesink Turfcare emerged victorious on the global stage, being honoured with the prestigious International Outstanding Sales Achievement award by none other than Toro – a testament to their unparalleled excellence in the realm of sales.

Reesink Turfcare had to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to key performance indicators. An impeccable track record of sales growth, a positive market share trajectory, and an enviable win rate formed the trifecta of success. Yet, this was not a mere numbers game; it was a symphony of innovation and customer-centricity.

In the face of industry-wide scarcities, Reesink Turfcare defied odds and expectations, flooding clubs with an impressive array of machinery. This feat was only possible through the dedication of the sales team and dealer partners, who laboured tirelessly.



Our journey hasn't been devoid of challenges. We extend our deepest gratitude to our customers.

Jon Cole, Divisional Business Manager, Reesink Turfcare

Current Groundstaff Champions Cartmel Racecourse receive their prize.

2023 annual Racecourse Groundstaff Awards



● DLF Seeds, Agrovista Amenity and Duralock sponsor 26th annual awards.

New for 2023, the Richard Linley Award will reward the best newcomer to British horseracing. The Award is named in honour of Richard Linley, the former BHA Senior Inspector of Racecourses who recently retired after 35 years of service.

The awards celebrate excellence in turf husbandry across British racecourses and are unique in that they remain the only dedicated awards for groundstaff within the sport.

The core Racecourse Groundstaff Awards celebrate the winners and runners-up across the three racecourse types: flat, jump and dual purpose. The winners of each category will go onto the RCA's Showcase Awards on Thursday 23rd November at Aintree Racecourse where an overall Groundstaff Champion will be crowned.

For more information visit racecourseassociation.co.uk

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A new venue - The British Motor Museum, Warwickshire

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

THE AMENITY FORUM ANNOUNCE THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR 2023.

● The conference on Thursday 12th October will host quality speakers throughout the day, which will cover a range of subjects related to the amenity sector.

Technology:

2023 will see the introduction of technology to engage with the audience throughout the day. Culminating in an informed summary session at the end of the day which all delegates have participated in. All delegates will have the opportunity to download the app and take part.

A New Venue

The British Motor Museum, Warwickshire is an excellent conference venue which offers a great space for the conference, sponsors, lunch and networking.

Sponsors and Networking

Interact with all delegates and the opportunity to meet all the companies who support the conference each year.

For more information visit: amenityforum.co.uk/conference

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

COMPLIANCE | SCIENCE | TECHNOLOGY

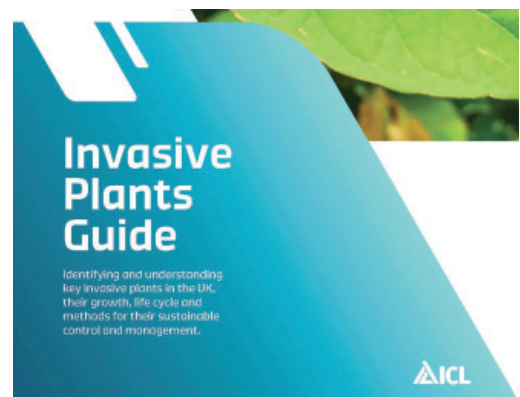
Invasive Plants Guide

ICL HAS ANNOUNCED THE LAUNCH OF THE GUIDE

● A detailed and comprehensive resource for understanding and managing key invasive plants in the United Kingdom.

Encompassing over 150 pages, the Invasive Plants Guide provides crucial information about identifying, understanding, and sustainably managing fourteen different types of invasive plants prevalent in the UK.

The varieties covered in the guide range from annuals such as Himalayan balsam and Smooth sowthistle to short-lived perennials like Giant hogweed and Common ragwort, as well as long-lived perennials including Japanese knotweed and Bracken. Woody weeds and trees, such as Buddleja and Rhododendron, are also included.



The guide offers a thorough understanding of what constitutes an invasive plant and the problems they can pose. It delves into their growth and lifecycle, with a focus on how this knowledge can be applied for their sustainable control and management.

“The Invasive Plant Guide is a comprehensive resource that brings together information to aid in the identification, understanding, and sustainable management of invasive plants,” said Barry Browne, Landscape & Industrial Sales Manager from ICL.

Register your interest in receiving your free copy of the guide at: bit.ly/ICLInvasivePlantsGuide



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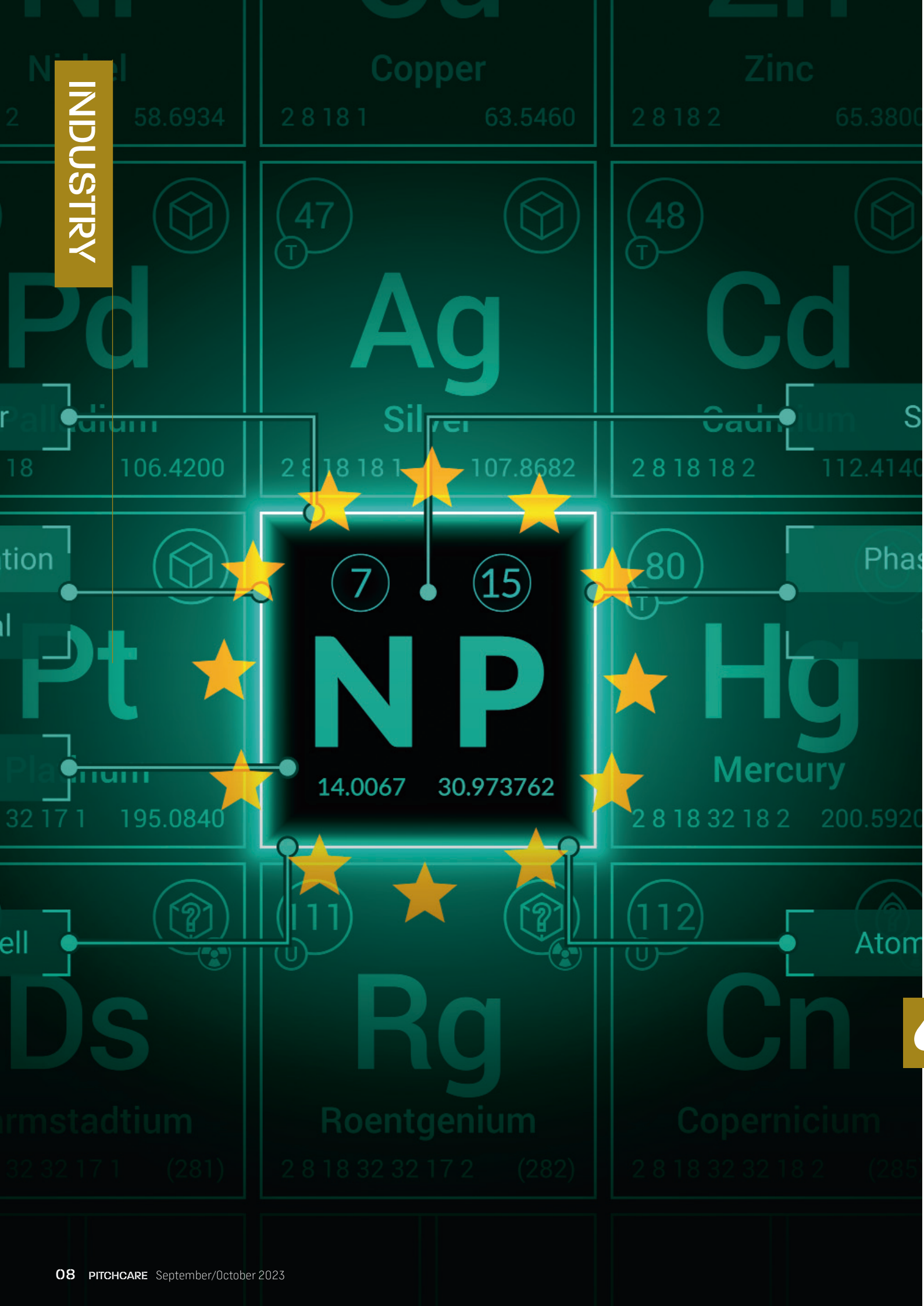
TOUGH TURF XCEL

As we head into autumn and winter, it's time to toughen your turf with Aquatrols' tank mixable Tough Turf package. These proven products work together to prepare your turf for protection against variable weather conditions and increased disease pressures that come with the changing seasons.

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INDUSTRY



Going Dutch

The bleak outlook is that **the world is running out** of viable reserves of phosphate in the very near future. European countries are leading change in their **nitrogen** and **phosphate inputs**. How will this affect the UK amenity market and your surfaces?

Due to its intensive agriculture, the Netherlands has the highest nitrogen emissions in Europe. As a result, Dutch forests and rivers are among the most polluted in the world. EU environmental standards dictate that the Dutch government must reduce the presence of this chemical element in the soil which has caused uproar and protests across the country. This is all something which hasn't quite got to the UK, but you would assume that the issues will soon be upon us.

A huge proportion of land in the UK is used agriculturally (63%), with a much smaller footprint being classified for outdoor recreation (2%). Amenity surfaces may not occupy as much

space as agriculture, but offer enjoyment for billions of people in the UK.

Half a century of development and understanding of plant hormone production has resulted in the manufacture of specialised premium products facilitating healthy root growth, disease resistance and, most importantly, protection against stress. This technology is used world-wide in both amenity and agriculture where continuing success is being maintained, often in extreme environments. Fruit, vegetable and even wine growers will bear testament to the understanding and product development.

The key to managing plant health is a better understanding of your plant needs and requirements.

36 The UK is addressing overuse of fertilisers through legislation, targets and industry incentives

7

N

Nitrogen
14.007

15

P

Phosphorus
30.974

IMPORTS TO UK

Europe's drive to reduce fertiliser use indirectly affects the UK because Europe is a key partner of the UK for fertiliser imports, with 26%, 17% and 15% of N, P and K imported from European countries in 2021 (FAO, n.d.). Clearly, if Europe reduces its production capacity, one knock on effect is a reduction in the amount available for export.



Nitrogen (N)

Nitrogen is the nutrient which makes plants grow, there are three forms, nitrate, ammonium and amine, all of which can be taken up by the plant, each form being utilised in a different way. A balance of all three forms are needed to keep turf and grass healthy,

Phosphorus (P)

Phosphorus is critical for the promotion of root development and the establishment of turf, so we often recommend higher levels for young turf. It is also required for the breakdown of carbohydrates and the transfer of energy.

The stresses of managing the plant often ends with unrealistic demands made upon groundspersons and greenkeepers. Not to mention the insufficient allocation of resources coupled with over ambitious expectations.

Sports facilities and the enjoyment that people obtain from spending time in a green environment, makes it clear that working to improve plant health and growth in amenity areas is a worthwhile endeavour. Fertilisers can help to improve both the aesthetic and the functional quality of these environments, particularly where they are subject to significant amounts of wear.

Notwithstanding the clear value to the use of fertilisers in both agricultural settings and in amenity areas, there are increasing financial and environmental costs associated with their use. In the United Kingdom, the ratio of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) fertilisers applied to crops is roughly 7:1:2 respectively, with 133 kg N/ha, 20 kg P/ha and 33 kg K/ha

applied in 2021.

These three nutrients are considered to be the major nutrients required for plant growth, but there are limits to the amount of each that plants are able to take up. It has been calculated that the UK over supplies nitrogen to crops at a rate of 62 kg/ha and phosphorus at a rate of 5 kg/ha. This results in unnecessary pollution into our natural environment, as well as wasting money and resources on inputs that are not used by the crop.

Due to the relative scales of the industries, there is not as much scrutiny of amenity derived pollutants, even though it is just as possible to overapply fertilisers in an amenity setting as in an agricultural setting. However, the amenity industry has a vested interest in maintaining the quality of the natural environment and takes steps to work according to best practice principles.

There is an increasing understanding of the requirement to use fertilisers within the limits of the ability of plants to uptake nutrients, to avoid unnecessary expenditure and to reduce environmental impacts of fertilisers. Within Europe, STERF (Scandinavian Turfgrass and Environment Research Foundation) recommends using a precision, demand driven fertilisation approach.

Similarly, the R&A recommends tailoring nutrient inputs to the requirements of the grass species in the sward (R & A, 2023). Using this type of best practice approach, the industry is acting in the best interests of the environment. It is also beneficial financially and improves the external perception of the industry as a whole.

**Office for
National
Statistics,
2022*

Increased awareness

Over recent years, awareness about the impacts on the natural environment and ecosystem services, and the limitations of traditional sources of fertilising materials, has increased.

36 To keep the plant healthy, nitrogen should always be the minimum factor

This has led to a drive to decrease fertiliser applications whilst maintaining yields in agriculture and maintaining quality standards in amenity horticulture. Like many other developed nations, the UK has seen a long-term trend of decreasing fertiliser since the 1980s, with notable plunges in use following major economic turmoil such as the 2008 recession and, more recently, the energy crisis and invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Reductions in gas availability due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine resulted in a 149% increase in the price of nitrogen fertilisers in the EU in September 2022 compared with September 2021 (European Union, 2022). There were two main consequences of this for agriculture and other industries that rely on fertilisers:

1. Farmers purchased and used less fertiliser
2. EU fertiliser companies reduced their production

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Above
Ullna Golf &
Country Club,
Åkersberga,
Sweden.

The effects of nitrogen - the Scandinavian way

Although Norway is a small country, it extends from latitude 58 to 71 degrees North. This makes light conditions comparable to those in the northern half of the Canadian mainland.

IN PRACTICE

Turfgrass species have different growth potential and a corresponding optimal demand for nutrients. Correct fertilisation involves keeping the nitrogen levels in the grass plants low and stable, while still encouraging enough plant growth to repair wear and tear. To keep the plant healthy, nitrogen should always be the minimum factor and should be applied as part of a balanced complete mixture of nutrients.

In practice, we recommend weekly spoon-feeding with a liquid fertiliser. This gives the greenkeeper the opportunity to adjust for changes in cutting height or weather conditions and to adapt the rates to other maintenance practices.

The climate is mild due to the north Atlantic drift, which keeps the country inhabitable and the coast free from ice throughout the winter. Annual precipitation ranges from more than 2000 mm on the west coast to less than 200 mm in the valleys sheltered from the prevailing westerly winds.

Fertilisation practices on the 170 golf courses in Norway have for the last few years been influenced by Associate Professor Tom Ericsson, who is now at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. He was a member of Professor Torsten Ingestad's research group, which worked on plant nutrition for some decades.

Sand-based golf greens are in many ways comparable to the inactive growth media used in greenhouses, and the fertilisation techniques that gardeners use to control plant growth and quality can be transferred to golf. For some years, we have based the fertilisation regime on our experimental greens at the Bioforsk Turfgrass Research Centre on these theories.

Effects of nitrogen

The art of fertilising a green is a delicate balance between the need for density and recuperative capacity and the negative consequences such as higher mowing costs and thatch accumulation.

Assuming that the plant is not suffering from nitrogen deficiency but has a normal green

colour, enhanced N levels will reduce plant stress tolerance. This problem becomes more distinct when growth conditions are not optimal.

Everyone seems to be aware of the positive correlation between nitrogen rate and growth (dry matter production), but the fact that enhanced growth rate reduces the sugar content in the plant is probably less well known. Sugar reserves are very important for the plant, as they are the source of energy needed for respiration, uptake of nutrients, growth, defence against pests and diseases and feed for the beneficial microbes that surround the roots in the rhizosphere. This leads to the conclusion that fertility should be reduced when the grass plant's growth potential is limited by suboptimal temperatures, shade, lower mowing height, compaction or drought. Experiments suggest that a leaf N concentration of 3.1-3.5 % is the lower limit for producing healthy-looking turf of fescues and bent grasses (*Ericsson et al., 2012a,b*).

Some do not consider it logical to decrease the fertiliser rates on a shaded green, but this is important to keep stress tolerance and root development as strong as possible.

Scandinavian Turfgrass and Environment Research Foundation (<http://sterf.golf.se>)



Where does this leave the UK **amenity industry**?

At only 2%, amenity surfaces occupy a fraction of the overall land usage compared with our much bigger agricultural sibling, covering 63%, but the opportunity to have a recognisable impact is not insignificant.

Tom Wood
Technical
Specialist,
Agrovista
Amenity

Amenity has an unparalleled interaction with the public and there is an unmistakable prospect of affecting public perception and awareness towards fertiliser usage, in particular nitrogen and phosphorus. The issues with these two nutrients and erroneous application are well documented within the agricultural environment, however it is not a like for like environment when we look at the amenity sector. There are many variables such as quantities applied, method of application and timing/ frequency of application. However, because of the overall general awareness around these issues, amenity, rightly comes under the spotlight too.

Because of the numbers and scale, this is likely to be a larger issue for the agricultural sector to navigate, however, because amenity has historically followed the trends that affect agriculture, it will also inevitably be affected by these issues.

The big question is when, and with what implications?

You could argue that the time to act is now, ahead of anything being imposed or enforced. This approach is where the sector can be seen to be making a positive change towards a sustainable future. Innovation is key, and there are increasingly more products available that can allow for a reduction in application of these key nutrients (N+P), whilst still maintaining healthy plant growth. This can only help reduce overall demand and consumption, thus aiding the movement and reliance away from these nutrients in the future.

Those that start to make changes to practices now will be far better positioned further along the journey of reduced inputs, and therefore the impact of any such imposed changes will be potentially negligible. **Those who decide not to act, until told they have no choice, may find a swift change of conditions and possibilities which makes turf management (as they know it) a whole different ball game.**

PRIORITY AREAS

The UK is also addressing overuse of fertilisers through legislation, targets and industry incentives. 55% of England is designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), primarily because of high nitrate concentrations in groundwater and rivers (Environment Agency, 2019). Use of fertilisers is seen as the main source of this pollution, contributing to 70% of total inputs. Similarly, 55% of rivers fail the current Water Framework

Directive Regulations standards for phosphorus, resulting in impacts on water quality and ecological status (Environment Agency, 2022).

Recent legislation linked to fertiliser use includes the introduction of the Environment Act 2021 which aims to improve the natural environment through targeting four priority areas: air quality, water, biodiversity and resource efficiency and waste

reduction. Although fertiliser use is not explicitly referenced, the target for water is to cut total phosphorus pollution from wastewater treatments by 80% by 2038. This follows on from existing legislation to reduce water pollution from fertilisers and other sources, such as the Farming Rules for Water and Water Framework Directive, which have been seen as helpful but insufficient.



The Celtic Chronicle

Celtic Manor Resort is steeped in history and Director of Golf Courses and Estates, **Jim McKenzie** has seen huge developments throughout his thirty year reign.

Celtic Manor Resort is a golf, spa, and leisure hotel in the city of Newport, Southeast Wales. Located on the side of Christchurch Hill running down into the beautiful Vale of Usk. The estate was the site of several converging Roman roads and settlements.

A manor house, built in 1860, later becoming

the Lydia Beynon Maternity Hospital in 1940. In 1980, Sir Terry Matthews (born in the hospital) bought and financed its refurbishment and expansion, opening as the Celtic Manor Hotel in 1982. Fast forward and the resort now consists of four hotels, a country inn, luxury lodges, two spas, six restaurants, three golf courses, two golf clubhouses, high ropes, adventure golf, laser tag and archery. The International Convention

“

When you take away options, that is when problems arise



THE COURSES

The Twenty Ten was designed by Ross McMurray of European Golf Design and was the first purpose-built course for the Ryder Cup tournament hosted in 2010.

Opening in 2007, the resultant course comprises nine pre-existing holes from the old Wentwood Hills course and a new nine to make the now famous eighteen-hole track. I must mention, Europe won memorably by $14\frac{1}{2} - 13\frac{1}{2}$ points! The Wales Open has been hosted at the resort an impressive nineteen times.

The Roman Road opened in 1995. The par-70 championship course hosted the Wales Open in 2005, 2006 and 2007, after which it handed the baton to the new Twenty Ten where it took over for a further twelve events to the present day.

The Montgomerie is a par-69 course designed by Colin Montgomerie, opening in July 2007. The new layout incorporated elements of both the then existing Coldra Woods course and the left over nine holes from the Wentwood Hills. It hosted the Wales Open between 2000 and 2004

Centre of Wales was added in 2019 and The Resort hosted the NATO summit in 2014.

Always learning

Close to Jim's heart is his love of the industry, his fellow greenkeepers, and the future of our profession. No surprise then that he has formulated an in-house training programme. To assist, he has Jake Waite leading the programme. Jake is quite rightly proud of the nine already through the programme, all gaining their NVQ level two. Jake explained, "Out of our team we only had a small number with qualifications, so it made sense to introduce this scheme. We now have greenkeepers from local clubs on the programme, which is great."

Jim explained, "We don't have a vast team, training is good for staff who want to gain new skills." Jim continued, "Work based learning is far more conducive as the classroom can be off putting." Jim explained he feels the word science (turf science) can be an obstacle too. "What we do isn't necessarily science. I believe

it's better classed as an art," Jim mused.

"Professors and technicians do the science. We require the art of observation and attention to detail. For me, art sums that up better. We look for passion in our people, as it's possible to teach skills but difficult (if not impossible) to teach good attitude."

The three-legged stool

Jim and his team follow a simple, yet insightful ethos based on three R's. Review, revenue and re-invest. Jim was quick to explain that this triangle varies widely between organisations, the biggest being members clubs versus corporate venues. However, it's an excellent business model to appreciate, and its positive effect on successful golf course management. Jim explained, "Golf is quite unique as a sport, it's played outdoors all year round on a living surface. Snooker and darts are played all year round indoors and winter sports such as football, rugby or cricket are all seasonal so don't have the same pressures we have in the

Above

A recent fairway drainage project.



We don't have a vast team, training is good for staff who want to gain new skills



JIM'S JOURNEY

Born in 1962 in Clydebank, Jim left school aged seventeen joining Haggs Castle G.C. as apprentice whilst attending College in Burnside, Glasgow. Jim moved to Cawder G.C. as head man on The Keir Course in 1985, where he was involved in multiple Ladies European Tours, before moving to Renfrew G.C. as course manager hosting many more European events. Jim then joined The Wentworth Club, Surrey in 1990 as head man on The West Course and was involved in a clutch of PGA Championships and World Match play events.

The calling from Celtic Manor Resort came in 1993 to oversee construction of the new Robert Trent Jones Roman Road Course. Upon completion, Jim became course manager where he subsequently developed a further four courses on site.

Jim held the position of Director of Golf and Courses Management for five years before becoming Director of Golf Courses and Estates, the role he holds today. Married to Debbie with a 27-year-old son (Elliot), he was awarded the MBE in 2011 in recognition of services to sport.

world of golf." Jim concluded, "Members clubs might put more emphasis on review as they have members they must keep satisfied. We too must be mindful of this, but revenue followed by re-investment is vitally important to our business. We believe that if we strike the right balance between the latter two, the review from our customers will be positive."

Efficiency tips and tricks

The big picture for Jim is who are the customers and what do they want. Jim explained, "We don't have 'maintenance days' here as we don't want to disrupt our customers' experience. We conduct little and often programmes when we know we can." With around 720 members and 95,000 rounds of golf per annum (over the three courses), this is a challenge,

but Jim and the team make it work. "We also prepare our golf courses differently, reflecting the standard of our customer. For example," Jim continued, "we set up the Montgomery and Roman Road courses far more 'forgiving' than The Twenty-Ten. Players who play that course expect faster, firmer, more punishing conditions, and so that's what we give them."

Jim was quick to point out the importance of customer choice, from which golf course to play to what weather conditions they play in. Jim explained, "When you take away options, that is when problems arise; we are continually morphing and changing as the business demands. We rarely close our courses and are happy to repair the damage caused with play in wet conditions. If conditions are safe, play continues."





Jim explained, “A good example of efficiency is striping fairways. It’s extremely time consuming, requires extra diesel and labour as well as causing compaction in the semi rough (which requires remedial costs to correct). So, we block cut light and dark. Most members preferred the fresh style, helping their game as they could ‘see’ the middle of the fairway!”

Jim has recently made some interesting efficiencies in his nutrition programmes, moving away from the more expensive

‘cocktails’ in favour of more traditional products. Jim added, “We now favour simple sulphate of ammonia mixed with sulphate of iron at a low 5kg/Ha rate mixed with a little ‘atrraxor’ PGR. This now does all our playing surfaces which has cut our nutrition programme costs by around 60% to 70% per annum.” Jim added, “We don’t make these efficiencies simply to save money. We make these reviews to re-invest elsewhere, where our customers will gain most benefit.”

Above
Hole 17.



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The Celtic team have been busy with the following projects:

1. **Overseeding.** “We’ve overseeded problematic greens with Crystal BlueLinks and Pure Select creeping bent.” Jim explained, “This trial is proving extremely beneficial. The creeping bent is quick to establish, tolerates heat and starts to grow at lower temperatures than the meadow grass.”
2. **Reducing the number of bunkers** (there are a whopping 175 altogether), reducing the size of greensides, and converting faces from sand to turf. Jim discussed, “We all know bunkers are a hugely labour-intensive

Below
Ryder Cup
Greenkeepers.

and our bunkers are ready for a make-over. We will install Whitemoss BunkerMat to the bases as it reduces contamination and the need for ‘topping up.’ Although turf faces require cutting, it’s better than fixing washouts daily in the wet.”

3. **Hole cup sleeves.** “We install hole cup sleeves for detail,” Jim explained, “but as a result, the hole retains its shape for longer so reduces the frequency of changing, thus saving time.”
4. **Widening of collars.** “Collars have been widened on two courses to allow for cutting with a triple instead of by hand.” Jim explained, “We’ve seen a reduction in time, without losing quality.”
5. **Re-investment** has gone into fairway drainage with a phased programme. “We’ve completed fourteen fairways so far,” explained Jim, “with more being taken on in-house every autumn. Main drains are spaced at 3 metre intervals and backfilled with 6mm pea gravel, blinded off with sand and seed. Secondary sand banding then goes in at right angles, again at 3 metre centres to increase percolation.”

I’d like to thank Jim for his time and congratulate him and his team for their hard work, passion and commitment to their art. When in Jim’s company, I always come away learning something new and my latest catch up was no different!

Article by Phil Helmn.



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How can we encourage more **women** to the industry?



We recently caught up with Head Greenkeeper at Wenvoe Castle Golf Club, **Lucy Sellick**, to discuss what it's like being a female in our industry.

The message is clear - that we need more women in the industry. Lucy certainly gives the blueprint to any young women wanting to venture into the turf sector.

What made you want to become a greenkeeper and have you found any challenges with the industry being largely male dominated?

I fell in love with greenkeeping by accident. I grew up wanting to join the Navy, but a neighbour asked if I wanted some work. He was constructing a golf course and I started working there before and after school... I never looked back! I'm sure there's been a few challenges over the years, but nothing major. The industry has been very welcoming and it's full of peers all looking out for one another - myself included.

What would your main advice be to a young Lucy coming into the industry?

There are a few things I wish I'd learned sooner; firstly, get yourself a mentor. Someone that amplifies your voice, builds your courage and confidence so you put yourself forward for opportunities. Become

part of a network. It was lonely in my early days, but social media has now made it easier to reach for support and guidance. Also, be yourself. In the early years, I became one of the lads so that I could fit in and lost the true me. And finally, never stop learning.

What do you think about the BIGGA introduction of First Green to highlight the opportunities within our industry to schools?

The First Green initiative will benefit all young students by helping them apply their classroom knowledge in an outdoor setting. Women are particularly underrepresented in STEM education and, consequently, in STEM careers.

What are your own biggest achievements?

One of my biggest is purely staying in the industry - through tough times in my personal life and getting knockbacks from promotions which made it tough to carry on. That's why I talk passionately about shifting mindsets; looking for that silver lining and having thick skin. Another would be becoming a National Board Member for Southwest and South Wales with BIGGA.

Do you think that more can be done to try and balance out the industry diversity balance?

Definitely! I don't think the imbalance is intentional - it just mirrors what's going on in golf clubs where memberships are predominantly middle age, white males. This can clearly be seen in the halls at BTME. I'm always asked, 'why do you think there aren't many women in golf?' My answer is always the same - there are not many females around golf to see greenkeeping as a career. We need to find a solution, look at other sectors that have achieved this and start to make progress.

“

We need more women in the industry



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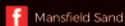
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Disease management:

Spot, identify, treat

With many in the industry likely to stumble across some sort of disease at some point during their career, we highlight three common turf diseases and how to treat them.

| DISEASE | IDENTIFICATION | POTENTIAL DAMAGE | HOW TO TREAT |
|---|---|--|--|
| Fusarium  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually a small orange to red-brown patch. Before it becomes aggressive it is recognisable by spotting a white cobweb-type substance - known as mycelium. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extremely damaging to fine turf due to the leaf dying and leaving behind scars. It can then lead to uneven and sometimes unplayable surfaces. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plenty of aeration to increase airflow and move moisture off the surface. Fungicides are available for chemical use, but some are limited. A non-chemical approach may be more sustainable. |
| Red Thread  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually identifiable by the bright pink-coloured leaf tips. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If left untreated it can harm fine turf. If left to develop over weeks, it can lead to an uneven surface. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though it is not a worrying disease it should still be treated. Usually, treatment of nitrogen to the affected area will suffice. |
| Fairy Rings  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually, three types of fairy rings, as shown; Type 1 will have a dark green circle Type 2 is drought-related Type 3 is a mushroom fairy ring. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type 1 does not normally cause a lot of damage - it will grow at an accelerated rate. Type 2 will cause harm to the turf and leave the surface uneven with bare patches. Type 3 is unsightly and will cause obstruction in playing conditions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of fertiliser can reduce the appearance of a fairy ring. Aeration can be useful to help with water movement with the use of a wetting agent. A good top dressing into the profile can be very helpful. |

By James Matthewman, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Maesteg Golf Club.

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Living next door to Epsom

Two superb contrasting golf courses in picturesque surroundings and a second clubhouse in the West End. That's just part of what the **Royal Automobile Club** membership offers.

Far right:
The focal point of the Woodcote Estate: the main house and (to the right) the clubhouse.

Below:
Left The tranquil surroundings of Epsom Downs.

Right
Course Manager Iain Dye.

When your neighbour holds a party, it's best all round if you're invited or even part of what's going on. If yours is Epsom Racecourse, once a year at the beginning of June you can expect quite a noisy one.

The Royal Automobile Club has a race on the Derby meeting card named after its adjacent Woodcote Park estate, many of its members 'hop over the fence' to go racing, and it turns one of its golf course holes into a temporary car park. We went to this century old club the day before racegoers massive descent onto this part of Surrey downland to learn more about the golfing

side of its prestigious and delightful facilities.

If you thought the Royal Automobile Club was to do with the long established roadside services business, you'd be wrong. That was sold off years ago and runs quite separately. The Club is one of the world's foremost private member clubs with two HQs, this one in Surrey; the other in London's Pall Mall. There are about 17,500 members all told. Among wide ranging social and sporting facilities available to them are two impressive and contrasting downland golf courses.

Golf at the Woodcote Park estate began in March 1915 with the opening of three nine-hole courses, designed by the renowned William





Herbert Fowler. These were imaginatively labelled A,B and C, the first two a few years later forming the front and back nines of what became and still is Woodcote Park's 18-hole Old Course. The C course, though then still nine holes, soon after effectively offered eighteen by having two sets of tees. This was ploughed up and utilised for crop growing during the Second World War, but re-designed as a proper 18-hole course and opened in 1953. This second course was appropriately named the Coronation Course to mark the crowning of Elizabeth II.

The Club's Golf Course Manager, Iain Dye, tells us more about the courses in his care and how this Coronation year kicks off significant changes to the so-named course.

"In the past, the Old Course was always the 'senior', but now in terms of play and popularity they are neck and neck, though they are quite different in character and managed in quite different ways."

"The Coronation course is more condensed than the Old Course and, in truth, hasn't had the same level of investment over the last 20 years or so. It is more up and down the Surrey Downs landscape than the Old

Course which is meandering and naturally tree-lined by contrast."

"The Old Course is much more traditional. There's a lot more rough fringing the holes. Big greens, big landscape. The Coronation Course has no tall, wispy rough at all. It is also much shorter and the greens are half the size of those on the Old Course. Golfers are offered contrasting playing experiences. We aim to preserve that choice."

If you belong to the Club, you are entitled to play golf on either of these courses. You just either pay a green fee per round or become a Golf Pass Holder.

Modernisation

At one of its regular strategic review meetings, the Club's Management Committee, which covers golf development and operation, felt the time was right to modernise parts of the Coronation Course layout, bringing it more in line with current golf expectations. The bunkers, the pathways and course irrigation in particular were due serious attention and the decision was made to have an overall project aimed for completion by January 2026. It gets started this autumn with the first of the bunker

CAREER

Iain began his greenkeeping career at St Andrews, where he worked on two Open Championships. After seven years as Course Manager at Tandridge Golf Club, he took the top job at the Royal Automobile Club in 2020. He recalls going through a stringent selection process, which included a psychometric test and making a detailed presentation. When he was offered the post, he felt he was taking a journey rather than seeing a destination.



Above:
Left Cutting the 8th green on the Old Course.

Below
Installation of new pathway at the 1st tee on the Coronation Course.

upgrades, though pathway improvement is already well under way.

Architect Tom McKenzie, who back in 2015 designed an upgrade to the Old Course which included a new irrigation system, has now created changes to the Coronation Course, principally to bunkering and fairway lines to bring it in line with modern thinking.

“You might say that architecturally the course has evolved rather than having a distinct style like the Old Course. Currently, the bunkers are laid in a variety of styles and do not flow particularly well. In truth, it could be described as a bit of a mishmash,” said Iain.

Contractor Profusion Environmental was selected from an initial tendering list of five or six to carry out all of the complex bunker work. The company is well known for its bunker



liner expertise and had successfully worked on the Royal Automobile Club courses in the past. It had already been engaged to undertake the pathway renovation. Specialist firm Green Irrigation will handle all of the irrigation installation work.

Some closure is inevitable, but will be minimal, Iain assures. A schedule is in place to see that 14 or 15 holes of the course will always be open for play. Bunker reconstruction will have the biggest effect on play, and the plan is to divide this aspect of the project into two distinctive phases, each covering nine of the holes; the first commencing this autumn, the second in autumn 2024.

Bunker reduction

Tom McKenzie has reduced the number of Coronation Course bunkers from 50 to 36. The scheduling is designed to see that areas of the course affected in the first phase are not disrupted a second time in phase two of re-bunkering. Detailed logistics are also in place covering pathways and irrigation, and in particular seeing that one follows the other smoothly and with minimal disruption.

When Iain first came to the Club three years ago, there were separate greenkeeping teams for each of the courses. Now, only the first assistants and senior greenkeepers concentrate on one or other course: the team generally covers both. He believes this helps broaden the skill set of team members from straight line cutting on the Coronation to more traditional requirements on the Old Course.

“Being a Downland setting, when it rains it’s





plentiful, but in the summer months when you most need moisture, anything you get drains away too readily,” said Iain.

There is no fairway irrigation on either of the Club’s courses and wetting agents are part of the routine. Generally, Iain can let nature takes its course and when fairway grass gets under stress cutting is moderated.

The whole of May, and right up to the beginning of the June Derby Festival ‘next door’, had been characterised by a cool and very drying north easterly wind, so there had been more hand watering than usual. Irrigation for greens, tees and approaches on both course is

served by a new reservoir built two years ago for the Club.

Different pressures

“The courses have always been great, but there was work to do to lift the level of excellence still higher,” he said.

“It was a big change in working environment with a different kind of pressure, much of it off course. There can’t be many clubs with two clubhouses, one of them in London’s West End. More ‘management’ is required, though I make sure I’m still a hands on greenkeeper.”

“It’s more than a golf club here. Resources and expectations are on a different level and

Above: Derby Day at ‘the noisy neighbours’.

Far left top The other RAC clubhouse at 89 Pall Mall.

Far left bottom Green waste and spoil is always recycled.

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“

Resources and expectations are on a different level

Above:
The 17th on
the Coronation
Course, the
signature hole.

it never really closes because of the wider club activities.”

When Iain was at St Andrews, the motto he vividly remembers was ‘This is always a championship course. Make sure it is every single day’.

Diverse team

At the Royal Automobile Club, he has a team of 22 full-time greenkeepers, plus five seasonal staff. Seven or eight of the regulars live on site in single room accommodation with the benefit of a staff canteen for all meals. The Club’s employment package is an attractive one with a number of benefits, not least of which are the flexible hours, which means Iain can have greenkeepers on the courses over a longer working day.

It’s a pretty diverse team, and an international one, with a range of special skills, which it has to be for what is a very high-end golf venue. High standards are rightly expected. Iain believes his

team deliver them on a daily basis. He will always do what it takes to see that play is consistent from tee to green, the St Andrews way his abiding mantra.

When the war in Ukraine kicked off last year, the Club held a recruitment day specifically aimed at offering employment to refugees from the country.

“Stets, who was a banker in his home country and had virtually no English, came along to it and joined us right away,” said Iain.

“We started him off on basic tasks like bunker raking, but he was a quick learner and a year on now plays a valuable part in what we do, cutting fairways and greens, and his English is amazing. A few weeks ago, he asked if there was any chance we could give his 18-year old brother, still in Ukraine, a greenkeeping job. His mum was worried he’d be called up to fight.”

“After speaking to the Ukraine Embassy, I offered him a contract and he’s about to start work here. He joins Igor, who came here with Stets last year, and Uri, a former air-conditioning engineer, who fled the country with his family. They are valued members of the team here. It certainly works for us and we believe it’s a good thing to do in difficult times.”

As we left the Woodcote Park Estate on this opening day of June, Iain was steeling himself for closure of the Old Course’s 7th hole for its Derby meeting ‘duties’. Only heavy rain would prevent this from happening. A big couple of days were ahead for the Club and racegoers, but for the golf side of things, it would be business as usual.

Article by Neville Johnson.



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Pete Allen, Gerrards Cross Golf Club

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A HIVE OF ACTIVITY

Beekeeping is buzzing. Hives are springing up across Britain as apiarists eye business opportunities from these **busy pollinators**.

Bees do make honey - but they can make money too, for sports clubs, parks and amenity sites. This mellifluous foodstuff commands premium prices today and is increasingly on operators' marketing menu.

Golf clubs particularly often have the space to accommodate bee hives - usually in less well-walked areas. Within the sustainable golf strategy, they make sound sense - a match made in Heaven when greens teams sow swathes of wildflowers along the course to create a ready source of nectar and pollen.

Most courses I've spoken to work with a local resident, who tends the hive(s) as beekeeping is a highly specialised skill. Now, though, market opportunities are starting to play out as professional providers

supply and manage hives, while also offering clubs an income stream from the honey they generate each season.

The Trafford Centre giant retail destination, just off the M60, chose beehives to populate an area of waste land on its estate, while central Manchester's Printworks houses four on its roof garden.

Both apiaries were supplied and are managed by Hive5 - at 29, founder Damson Tregaskis is one of Britain's youngest beekeepers, and only the second in the city to gain a Master status, she states.

Her dad is a beekeeper so you could say that she got bitten, or rather stung, by the bug at an early age.

Although focusing on the North-west, Damson is part of a national network delivering apiary

36 Bees offer a gateway, an easy entry and a drive to other wildlife

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services, another pointer to Britain's burgeoning beekeeping sector.

"The footprint for a hive is only 50cm square, while the height varies with the seasons - taller in summer as the population is larger, around 40,000, and making more honey," Damson explains. "The queen lays up to 2,000 eggs a day." Truly a busy bee.

The insects regulate their own numbers and the hive temperature (usually 35 C). "By the end of November into December, there may be no brood at all, as there's no forage for them. They then eat the honey in the hive," Damson adds.

With just forty flight hours in their six-week average lifespan, workers must make the most of available nectar and pollen, which raises the critical issue of suitable locations for apiaries, bearing in mind that bees can fly up to three miles at any one flight.

"Catchment can vary a lot," Damson continues. "Rural areas often provide less access to forage.

Fields may be bright yellow with oilseed rape for only two weeks a year, for example."

"Urban environments tend to provide a monoculture, although gardens can flower all year round. Ivy is particularly useful for pollinators as the plant flowers in late autumn, delivering invaluable pollen at a time when there's little else available. On a sunny day, it can be swarming with bees."

Damson offers several apiary business





Above
Hives at
The Trafford
Centre.

Below
Damson
suited and
booted.

packages depending on how much her clients wish to invest. Whatever the rental option, the first step is to assess the potential site. “We’re looking for a solution that will work for both bees and customers,” she says. “A harmonious relationship.”

Regular visits to her hives are vital to ensure hives stay structurally sound and the bees are healthy. “I visit weekly in summer, then monthly in winter. Clients don’t need to worry about anything - I take care of things for them.”

That said, every colony shares space with parasites. “Varroa mites invaded the UK in 1992

and gained a foothold because they are so small. They feed on larvae - bees are still learning to live with them in the UK but in Asia, where the mites are native to, studies show that they have acclimatised to them.”

So, just how productive are bees? “Lots of sub species of bee are available - designer breeds such as Buckfast Italian for example - but *Apis mellifera*, the European honey bee, is preferred as it is so efficient at its job,” Damson says.

“A colony averages 30 to 60lbs of honey a year, depending on the weather. It is the only bee to overwinter as a colony so needs to collect as much pollen and nectar as it can.”

Damson has the specialist kit needed to extract honey, and her clients are only too happy to leave that side of things to her.

When honey is retailing typically at up to £10 a pound weight, sites can market their own home-produced honey, with Damson’s help. “Once we’ve extracted the honey, we fill the jars, uniquely labelled with the customer’s own brand, for them to sell on. To comply with legal requirements, we have to state that the honey is produced in partnership with Hive5 Manchester.”

Considering the broader environmental





The footprint for a hive is only 50cm square

perspective, Damson says: “Just placing a couple of hives on a site is not doing much for pollinator diversity. Bees offer a gateway, an easy entry and a drive to other wildlife, so should be viewed in the wider context of encouraging more insects to visit.”

Damson sees a bright future for managed beekeeping, given the blossoming of awareness among operators and grounds care teams of the

importance of wildlife diversity on their sites.

Among her projects, most exciting of all perhaps is the 160-acre Northern Roots under development in Oldham, billed as the UK’s largest urban farm and eco-park, which is due to take custody of several hives under Damson’s management.

Oh, and just in case you were wondering - yes, Damson is stung regularly, but “I’ve become used to it by now”, and no, “I’ve never known a client to be stung,” so rest easy.

Article by Greg Rhodes.

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Surfactant technology has been available within the turfgrass industry for over sixty years to deliver greater control over spring and summer moisture levels and for dealing with established dry patch. However, the benefits of using good quality turf surfactants in autumn and winter are less well publicised. The chemistry in these products can play an important role in autumn and winter pitch surface management.



Optimising surface drainage

Over the past few years, turf managers in the UK and Europe have started using penetrant wetting agents to help improve surface infiltration and drainage rates more effectively through the late autumn and winter months. Aquatrols have made significant investment in research within this area, however the results have been less

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Summary of benefits of autumn and winter soil surfactant use

- Firmer, drier pitch surfaces
- Increased success of any overseeding work
- Reduced effect of frost conditions
- Faster, more uniform penetration of any rainfall and/or snowmelt
- Improved surface playability
- Improved soil moisture uniformity

- Significantly increases infiltration rates of water
- Significantly reduces surface water run-off on sloped areas

The study conducted at Ohio State University to evaluate the effects of Dispatch Sprayable applications on water run-off was completed on a bent grass sward, on a 4% slope with a loam soil profile. Run-off was collected following each rainfall event and research results proved that Dispatch Sprayable reduced run-off by 20% over control plots and consequently low-lying areas remained drier.

The application of a penetrant increases the amount of water infiltrating into the ground at point of contact, reducing run-off onto adjacent areas, thereby helping to keep pitches drier and in better condition through high rainfall periods. This is especially useful on pitches cut into sloping ground where flow from higher land increases the amount of water the pitch is having to cope with. The benefits of using this surfactant technology are drier, firmer pitch surfaces, reduced impact of frost or snow and a reduction in levels of damage associated with play on overly wet, soft surfaces.

Many wetting agents sold as penetrants contain anionic surfactants due to their fast-acting properties, and consequently these products can scorch turf under certain

conditions. However, the chemistries used in Dispatch Sprayable ensure that it is safe to apply at any time of year without any risk of turf damage.

Use a soil surfactant alongside overseeding

For those who are overseeding worn or high wear areas in autumn and early winter, careful planning is needed to maximise seedling germination and establishment as well as retention of the new perennial ryegrass plants long term. A proven soil surfactant will overcome water repellency, enhance water infiltration and ensure that irrigation water or rain wets the soil and seed evenly for faster, more uniform germination.

In an age of increasing costs and budget cuts, the demand to get the most out of introduced seed has never been greater. For autumn and early winter overseeding, use Aquatrols soil surfactants as a part of this process to help maximise the benefits from introduced seed.

For the best results, suitable soil surfactants should be applied two weeks before seeding to prepare the soil. A second application is beneficial three to four weeks after seedling establishment to ensure continued soil moisture uniformity. Dispatch Sprayable, Revolution, Zipline and Primer Select are all proven to be safe for use on seedling turf.

AQUATROLS MISSION

Aquatrols is committed to pioneering new methods that advance soil and plant health for agriculture, turf and horticulture. As autumn and winter weather conditions make the development and retention of high-quality pitches more difficult, the use of surfactant technology can have a critical role to play in optimising turf surface performance at this time of year.

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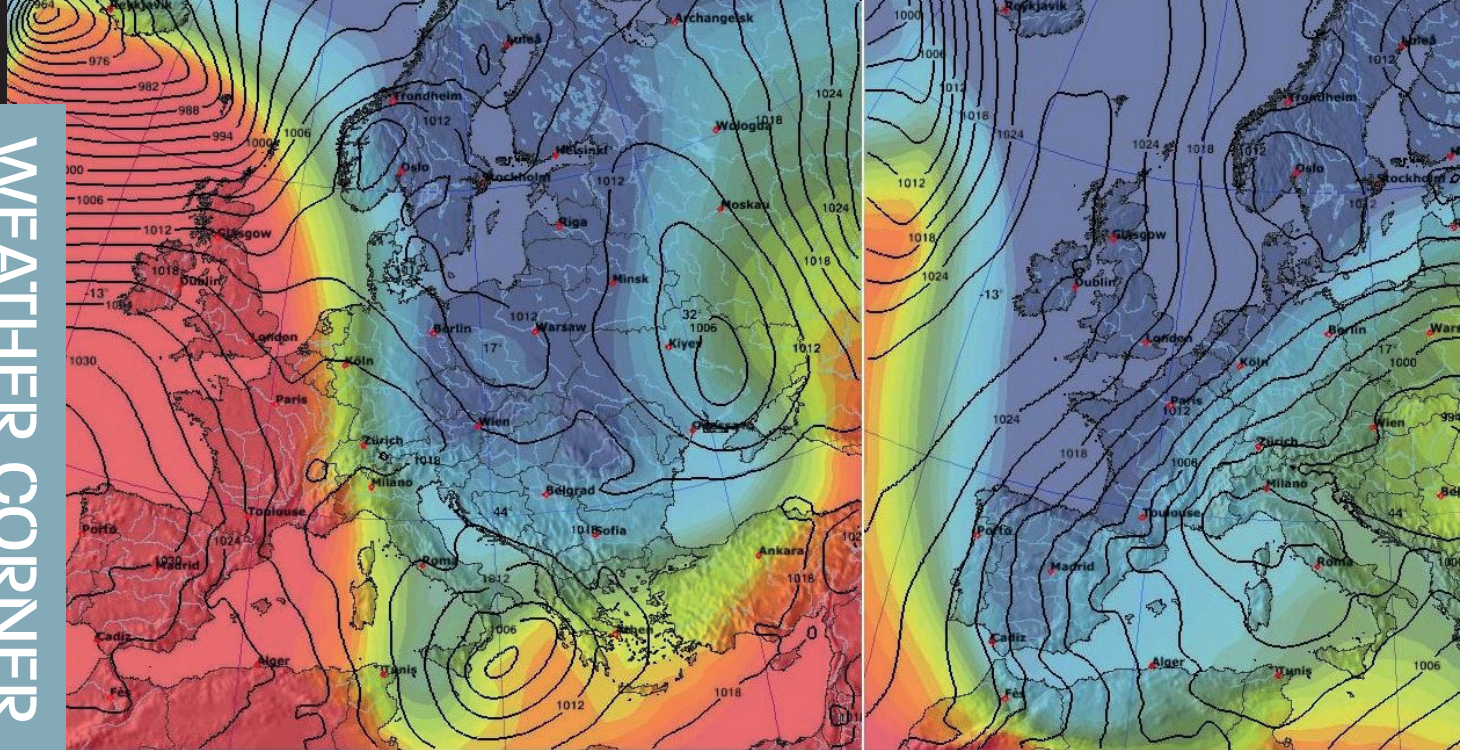
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Efficient water management

This summer has served as a timely reminder that two of the main consequences we face as a result of our changing climate industry concern irrigation and drainage.

It should also remind us of the fallacy that is long range weather forecasting beyond a couple of weeks; I can't remember reading anyone predicting our hottest June followed by one of our wettest July's, can you?

Our weather patterns (U.K & Ireland) are, as we know, strongly influenced by the behaviour of the jet stream and, in particular, its potential to form peak and trough patterns (image above left and right respectively) when it slows down periodically through the year. It is these jet stream patterns that bring us our most challenging weather conditions from a turf management perspective, and they can occur in any season of the year.

June and July graphically illustrated this phenomenon with a peak pattern staying in situ for 5 weeks and resulting in our hottest June ever as high pressure formed

Images courtesy of meteoblue.com

underneath. It also fixed the dominant wind direction for the same period. Come the end of June, a flip of the weather coin, and we end up sitting in a trough pattern, which allowed Atlantic low pressure after Atlantic low pressure to take their place in that trough and bring us cooler conditions and heavy rain (usually at the weekend!)

As I type this, I am sitting in my campervan on the cliffs of St Davids, Pembrokeshire, being buffeted by the howling wind and rain courtesy of Storm Betty and wondering if the awning is going to do a Mary Poppins (it didn't survive), and I can vouch for that particular pattern continuing into August!

It could so easily have been the other way round, with 40°C+ temperatures this summer as southern Europe has experienced.

What does this mean for turf management?

It means we have to become more proficient at water management at both ends of the weather spectrum.

The growing benefits of summer aeration

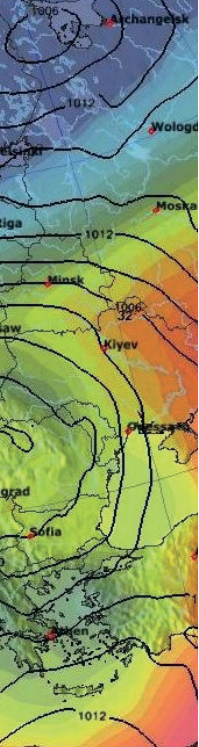
One of the biggest contributors to efficient water management, in my mind, is correctly targeted summer aeration. Removing and/or diluting surface organic matter ticks the twin boxes of increased water infiltration and the encouragement of a better root system to allow the grass plant to ride out those temperature extremes. We also get gaseous exchange as another benefit, a must during prolonged

Monthly Agronomic_GDD,GP, Smith Kerns - August 2023

| Day | T max °C | T min °C | T mean °C | RH mean % | Total Rain mm | Rain max mm/hr | Total ET mm | GDD 6°C base | GDD 0°C base | GP | S-K Probability % | SMS / SMD (month) mm |
|---------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | 21.9 | 13.3 | 17.1 | 80 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.30 | 11.1 | 17.1 | 0.99 | 33.9 | -3.3 |
| 2 | 19.4 | 14.6 | 16.4 | 92 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.29 | 10.4 | 16.4 | 0.96 | 34.3 | -5.1 |
| 3 | 21.0 | 13.6 | 16.4 | 83 | 4.2 | 1.152.0 | 2.84 | 10.4 | 16.4 | 0.96 | 37.6 | -4.2 |
| 4 | 17.8 | 12.6 | 15.1 | 84 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.91 | 9.1 | 15.1 | 0.87 | 34.3 | -6.1 |
| 5 | 17.8 | 11.9 | 13.5 | 93 | 7.8 | 21.0 | 1.22 | 7.5 | 13.5 | 0.71 | 33.4 | 0.4 |
| 6 | 18.7 | 9.7 | 13.9 | 85 | 0.8 | 26.8 | 2.57 | 7.9 | 13.9 | 0.76 | 32.8 | -1.3 |
| 7 | 20.5 | 9.1 | 15.0 | 80 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.71 | 9.0 | 15.0 | 0.86 | 27.7 | -5.0 |
| 8 | 17.6 | 10.7 | 14.1 | 95 | 7.6 | 22.0 | 1.04 | 8.1 | 14.1 | 0.78 | 29.6 | -1.5 |
| 9 | 25.3 | 10.4 | 17.7 | 82 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 3.61 | 11.7 | 17.7 | 0.99 | 29.7 | -1.9 |
| 10 | 25.6 | 12.6 | 20.0 | 82 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.06 | 14.0 | 20.0 | 0.99 | 31.2 | -5.9 |
| 11 | 24.6 | 15.0 | 20.0 | 78 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.68 | 14.0 | 20.0 | 0.99 | 34.4 | -9.6 |
| 12 | 20.9 | 13.3 | 17.1 | 88 | 1.4 | 7.4 | 2.36 | 11.1 | 17.1 | 0.99 | 36.4 | -10.6 |
| 13 | 20.3 | 14.8 | 17.1 | 85 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.21 | 11.1 | 17.1 | 0.99 | 29.2 | -12.8 |
| 14 | 21.1 | 13.4 | 17.0 | 89 | 8.6 | 36.6 | 1.78 | 11.0 | 17.0 | 0.99 | 40.8 | -6.0 |
| 15 | 22.9 | 11.2 | 16.8 | 84 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.97 | 10.8 | 16.8 | 0.99 | 37.9 | -8.9 |
| 16 | 25.3 | 9.9 | 18.0 | 78 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.84 | 12.0 | 18.0 | 0.99 | 35.9 | -12.8 |
| 17 | 24.2 | 12.4 | 18.6 | 79 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.73 | 12.6 | 18.6 | 0.99 | 33.4 | -16.5 |
| 18 | 23.9 | 15.8 | 18.8 | 89 | 3.0 | 4.6 | 1.93 | 12.8 | 18.8 | 0.99 | - | - |
| Overall | 25.6 | 9.1 | 16.8 | 85 | 33.6 | 1.152.0 | 49.05 | 194.6 | 302.6 | 16.69 | - | -16.5 |

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2023-08-18 17:05:51



rainfall and the associated development of anaerobic (oxygen deficient) soils. Decompacting with a narrow tine vertidrain joins the dots between surface and deeper profile aeration and is minimally invasive to boot.

Aeration in that critical window of mid-August to mid-September is also about the potential to get fast recovery, so surfaces return to optimum in the shortest possible timeframe.

The previous page features a snippet from our Prodata reporting software (for August-to-date) from a site near Thame, Oxford.

Just look at the daily Growth Potential; it has been sitting on or close to optimum since early August and will likely remain so until mid-September, so recovery from aeration at this time of year is usually rapid.

Far from being an inconvenience, I would argue that summer aeration is nowadays a necessity to allow us to cope with the

climatic extremes a topsy-turvy jet stream throws at us.

One last point relating to the above stats for August. I have highlighted the Smith Kerns Dollar Spot Probability figures, they are all > 25% peaking at > 40% mid-month. That means great conditions for fungal disease development, another consequence of a cool, wet summer and explains why Dollar Spot, Microdochium nivale, Red Thread, Anthracnose and Take All have all been prevalent of late. The good news is that any turf damage from these pathogens can be quickly rectified with good grass growth conditions and optimum soil temperature for seed germination.

Mark Hunt

Weather Analytics, Prodata Weather Systems



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FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP DOWN UNDER

Firsts dominated the **Women's World Cup** in Australia in New Zealand. It was the first final for England and Spain, and the first title for the latter after edging out the **Lionesses** in a tightly contested match.

**Above
Right**
Senior Pitch
Management
Manager Alan
Ferguson.

For the first time, the tournament was played in the southern hemisphere, all six confederations won matches, and there was the most extensive female involvement in pitch preparation.

The show-piece final at Stadium Australia was more than two years in the making by FIFA, the host countries and Senior Pitch Management Manager, Alan Ferguson. Despite the thorough planning on and off the pitch, Alan and others may have been surprised by just how much the tournament has caught the imagination, breaking several records from France 2019.

Evidence of that was an audience of 53.9 million viewers in China for their game against England, over 1,715,000 tickets sold and recording-breaking attendances in Australia and New Zealand for host nation matches.

At the Melbourne Rectangular Stadium, nine women prepared the pitch for Australia's crucial win against Canada. In 2021, only 1.4% of the Australian turf management industry was made up of women. FIFA, the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA) and host cities in Australia and Aotearoa, New Zealand, strived to change that.

Sports Turf Manager, Eden Zanker, was one



of the nine women working on the night and told FIFA.com she believes the programme has inspired women to excel.

"We see all the banners around the stadium saying, 'Football Unites the World', and that's not just on the field, but off the field too. The Women in Turf Initiative is bringing a lot of women together and showing that women can do anything we want to," said Eden.

"It's such an awesome programme for women to be involved in because it gives them opportunities such as tonight where we get to work at such an empowering and amazing event. We outnumbered the boys tonight, girl power all the way!"

FIFA's Women in Turf Legacy is the first step in providing more opportunities for women in the industry and is a programme Alan is keen to support.

"The sports turf industry is a great industry to get into and for too long was seen as a male

dominated industry. It's only right that it now acts as an equal opportunities industry," he said.

"The women's game is growing fast, and we are delighted to be playing our part in that. But as that progress happens, it's important we ensure every area around the game, including turf, is actively creating opportunities in the same way."

Pre-Tournament Pitch Preparation

While it may feel like a different time, Alan's preparations for this tournament began with a 14-day hotel quarantine in February 2021. After two weeks, the team got to inspect the four host cities of Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton and Dunedin in New Zealand before flying to Australia to visit Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane.

Around the time of the inspection, FIFA announced that the tournament would be expanded to 32 teams allowing greater



participation and adding to the main challenge of hosting a World Cup in the winter.

All ten proposed stadiums hosting the 64-game programme and the supporting training sites were visited, with the final selection coming soon after. Beyond the ten stadiums, there were 32 team base camps. The 32 participating teams were split between the two host countries for the group stages, with 16 teams in each country. In addition to the team base camps, each host city had two venue-specific training sites (VSTs). These sites are where the teams train on Matchday minus 1 (MD-1), having travelled from their base camp to play a group game and host their press and media obligations ahead of each game.

The team also had back-up pitches as the tournament was being staged in the southern hemisphere winter, with rain a real threat to the match schedule. In total, the team had 74 pitches to manage across both countries.

140 Member associations played for the 32 final spots over two years, and in February 2023, the final three places were filled following a

playoff tournament held in New Zealand.

With the play-off behind them, there were several lessons learned from the host nation, including the need to manage against bad weather. Twelve months previously, a workshop in Sydney was impacted by flooding and the same was experienced again in Auckland during the play-off tournament in February.

Getting the pitches ready for this challenge meant getting preparations right, and the focus was on renovations and stitching.

“Renovations are always crucial to the overall pitch success,” Alan explained. “Usually, these tournaments are hosted in the summer, and we have favourable conditions, but in the southern hemisphere, we’re playing in winter.”

“Getting good sward development and density established was essential because the pitches would have to deal with the intensity of a World Cup in winter, when growth and recovery are slower and weather difficult in some regions.”

“We - FIFA - also insisted that all stadium pitches in the tournament were hybrid. The hybrid policy of stitching has been successful since 2018 for the Men’s World Cup in Russia. The intensity of tournament play has increased, with team squads now up to 23 players in most tournaments.”

“As we have also increased team participation by creating more matches per tournament, group games are coming every 48 hours in the senior World Cups, with double headers a feature in the youth tournaments.”

“Without stitching, pitches would break up after three to four games, so it helps maintain the stability and appearance of the surface.”

Playing games in winter also causes scheduling issues with other sports. Just eight days before the Matilda’s opened their tournament - FIFA usually requires the stadium four weeks before a tournament - against the Republic of Ireland at Stadium Australia, the last State of Origin rugby league match was being





“

It's not always possible to keep the high standard we start off with

played between New South Wales Blues and Queensland Maroons.

In this case, stitching was crucial to ensure top quality all the way to the final. The ten pitches used in the competition were either stitched with Desso Grass master (now Grassmax) SISGRASS or Hero Turf.

In Tournament Management

The tournament finally kicked off in Eden Park, New Zealand, on July 20th, with two years of

work coming together. Match 1 was closely followed by M2, which saw Australia vs Republic of Ireland in Stadium Australia in Sydney, and for Alan, it's always a proud moment.

“The opening game of any tournament is a proud moment because the planning and work have been done, and we're ready to go,” Alan said. “Obviously, it's a fleeting moment because, from there, the hard work really begins with the training sites and match schedule, so it's when the pitch venue managers play their part.”

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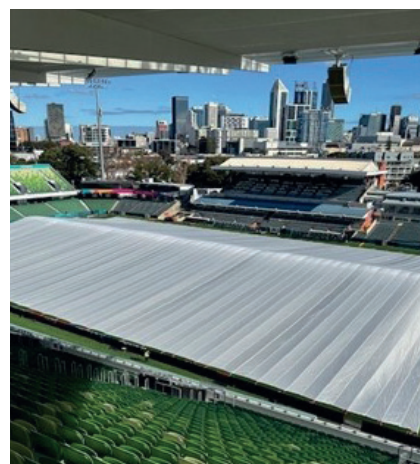
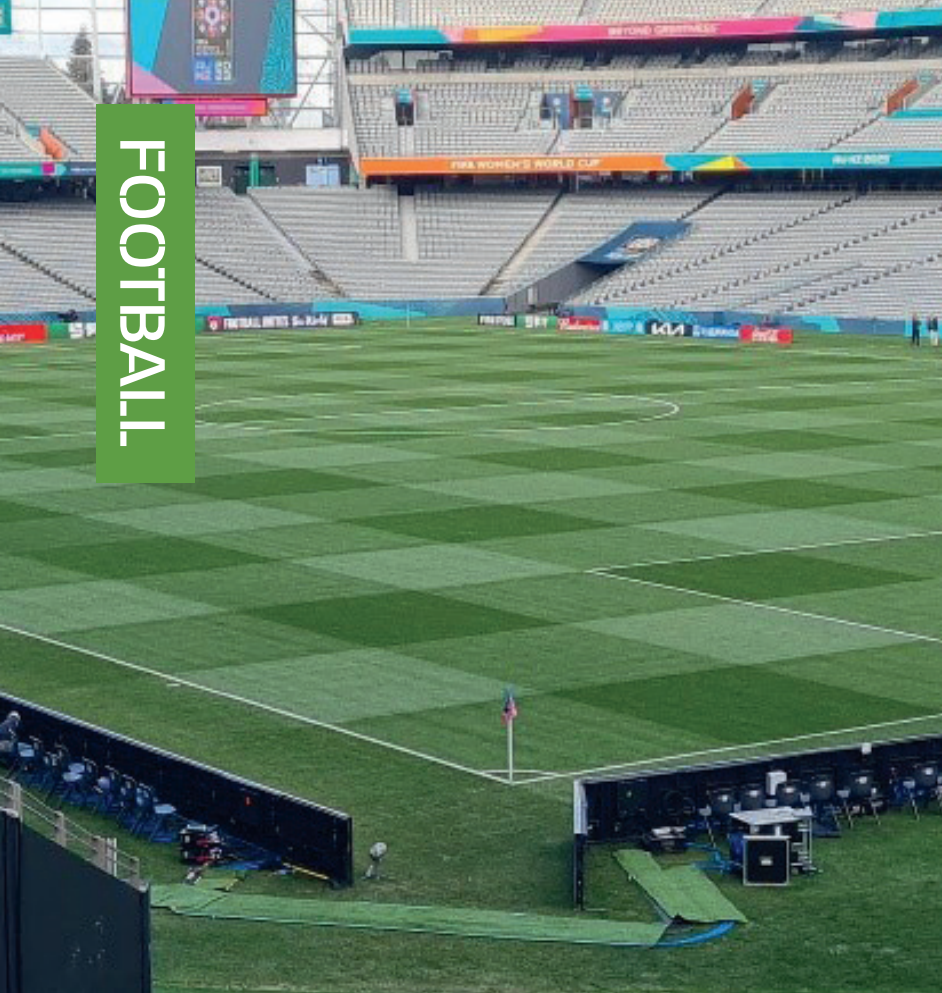
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SETTING STANDARDS

For Alan, this tournament has set the standards on and off the pitch for the yet-to-be-announced tournament in 2027. As ever, he and the FIFA pitch team will strive to raise the bar, but they've set themselves a hard act to follow.

"It's always the toughest part of the tournament because the match and training intensity is at its greatest. The peak time for pitch use comes in five days ahead of the tournament when all the teams are required to be in the country, and it's the first two group games."

"After this, things ease off a bit as teams tend to tick over, reducing the intensity of the training sessions. Further relief for the training pitches also comes from the travelling the teams have to do from the base camps to the host city stadiums to play games. It's often the first chance the pitch teams have to catch

up on some much-needed in-tournament maintenance since the kick-off."

"The pitches are regularly tested for surface hardness, traction and moisture. These three key playing characteristics are monitored daily in the stadiums and once every two to three days on the training sites. Reports are filled out for each pitch and sent to me, and any issues can then be raised with the project team and senior management."

"Happily, the vast majority of the pitches were well prepared, with only a small handful requiring some late work to meet the standard required for the tournament. The team base camp pitches and VSTs used for pre-match training are all maintained to a very high standard."

"Sometimes, it's not always possible to keep the high standard we start off with going for the whole tournament. Part of the challenge comes from the diversity of sites which can range from local club pitches to professional stadiums; and in New Zealand, frost, snow and heavy rain presented challenges throughout the group phase."

"That's why the decision was made to use bespoke rain covers from Sports and Stadia. They were used to protect the pitches in the four high-risk cities of Perth, Sydney, Auckland and Wellington."



The luxury of the new stadium will be such a joy

Article by Blair Ferguson.

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TALKING TURF:

A State-side story

from Snapdragon Stadium, San Diego

In this special edition of Talking Turf, we speak with Director of Turf and Grounds, **Mike Kerns**, at the brand-new **Snapdragon Stadium**. We discover what it's like to be involved in a new development and how he manages turf in a **fixed warm climate**.

John Marland, Head of Amenity at Agrovista, was the lucky correspondent and commented: "After what feels like a very long spring and summer, I decided to take a holiday and visit family in the USA - it just so happens Manchester United were playing a pre-season friendly against Wrexham just a short drive from where I was staying so, as a life-long red, it would have been rude not to attend! I don't consider working in this industry a job, I genuinely love what I do, so I jumped at the opportunity to chat to Mike Kerns at the new stadium."

"Once I had arranged the meeting - my introduction as a roving reporter for Pitchcare magazine (under Kerry's expert guidance), I started considering the differences in warm and cool season approaches and the type of questions I may ask. Whilst thinking, it made me reflect on the challenges the UK turf management community face, as opposed to those working in a fixed warm climate... OK call it what it is - HOT!"

Mike gave us a brief analysis of the current climate of his new pitch: "This field has been in since May 15th and the centre of the field to the six-yard box got repaired a few weeks ago. There



“

You want everyone involved to experience high quality playing surfaces



Technology is much more advanced here

are a number of teams who use the facility and we have to cater for all their requirements. We knew that we had an NWSL game on the Saturday and they decided they would like to reset it. We replaced the playing surface on the Sunday for a Concacaf Gold Cup semi-final match between USA and Panama. It took roughly twelve hours for contractors to come in, strip the middle and lay sods of turf, all within one day.”

Below
Three hours post game of World Lacrosse Championships.

“In these summer months, nitrogen levels drop significantly low because we don’t need it, but the new turf has knitted tightly. We’ve



cut everyday and it feels like it is repairing itself. Our calendar ultimately dictates how we manage the turf and we can only do what is possible, but we do not want one soccer team playing to a high standard and another team playing on a lower standard.”

New stadium development

Back in 2017, when the NFL’s Chargers decided to move from what was then SDCCU Stadium to the Los Angeles area, the focus began on building a new stadium for the Aztecs. Over the course of the next two years, the plan for what would become Snapdragon Stadium and the rest of the SDSU Mission Valley development took shape. Mike outlined what the experience has been like: “It’s nice as I have input into the management of the stadium and the developments. To open a stadium is a unique thing; it has been a huge challenge and it’s something that I don’t know if I’ll ever do again. The growing of the new pitch has been the trickiest part.”

With the stadium playing host to a number of different sports including football, lacrosse and rugby – as well as a handful of concerts, Mike explained how he manages the transitions. “San Diego State owns the building and then we have an NWSL club and the rugby club. We could have a Saturday NWSL game at 7:00pm, followed by a 1:00pm kick off for rugby the next day and, in that that time, the team have to remove lines to the best of our ability. The biggest challenge we have here, is making sure every tenant feels at home!”

“It makes my job so much harder, as there are obvious playability and player safety issues to consider. Lacrosse for example does an immense amount of damage to the surface; this means that a lot of recovery and work has to happen to get the pitch playable. After a lacrosse game, we have to reset completely, and my personal opinion is that it should not be played

PREMIER PREPARATIONS

Mike gave an insight into his routine as he prepared for his first visit of a Premier League side: "Ten days before the event, we contracted DryJect Southwest to relieve compaction. The water-based injection system blasts aeration holes through the root zone to fracture the soil at three-by-three spacing. We're trying to find new ways to incorporate sand into our profile because we have such a large soccer presence. This process allows increased water filtration, compaction relief and it also alleviates the dual process of stamping and then brushing back in. It cores and topdresses in one pass, which usually takes about five hours in total."

"We also have a tractor-mounted aerator that we use regularly to get oxygen in. It is my first time hosting a Premier League game and you want everyone involved to arrive and experience the same things as everybody else - high quality playing surfaces."



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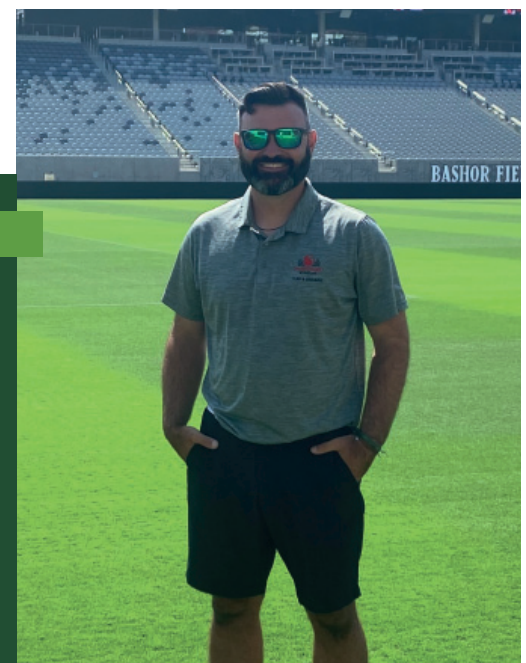
Stadium management is continually growing and Mike tips his hat to technology for being a key factor to his role. “The one difference I think here to overseas is that technology is more advanced; here, we have turf pods that read all of the information that we need. White pods provide the soil temperature - which allows me to monitor what the turf is doing, and salinity is important. We have two of these pods and four more currently on order. Once we have six of them, it can create a heat map on the playing surface to determine drier or warmer areas – allowing a full understanding of the turf. We also have eight irrigation zones that run north to south.”

With the world of stadium management changing to a more business environment, Mike talked us through what that is like and how he has incorporated a money focus alongside pitch focus. “We would all love to have a pitch and a playing surface that stays in great shape all year round. Unfortunately, the stadium needs

We're trying to find new ways to incorporate sand into our profile

to make money and it's my job to adapt and facilitate events to allow a stream of revenue. It used to be all about creating the best surface for sport, but now we have to think about off-season concerts and events that can be held in the arena to increase revenue.”

“It's not just agronomy anymore; it's agronomy inside the schedule of money-making. Look at what's happening in Europe in the Premier League. Some things are more important to me and you have to pick your battles. As long as it is safe for players, you know that you have produced a good enough surface. The aesthetics might not be top quality, but as long as it plays well and you know it's safe for the players, then that's the ideal.”



CAREER PATH

My journey began with a summer job working at a golf course. I worked from 16 until I graduated, and I was like, well, what am I going to do now? I took a year off from school and then decided that this is what I wanted to do. I went to Rutgers University in New Jersey where I would stay in a hotel for ten weeks at a time during term. I worked with the Seattle Mariners; changing their field from a baseball field to a soccer field and learnt everything about managing turf and pests, weeds, diseases etc. I spent a year up there before this opportunity arose and it was a once in a lifetime opportunity to build a stadium from the ground up... very few people get that chance, and I would encourage everyone to push themselves in their careers.”



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Dealing with darkness



After learning that former greenkeeper **John Turner** had lost his eyesight, we wanted to learn more about the pressures in his career and adapting to a new lifestyle.

Did your job as a greenkeeper ever have an effect on your well-being? Do you think that everything that has happened over the last couple of years all ties into one?

I spent forty years in greenkeeping and gained vast experience in sustainable golf. So much so that I was chosen (from a handful of clubs in the UK and Europe) to undertake a programme overseen by the R&A. This lasted almost seven years and required in-depth technical knowledge. It is therefore hard for head greenkeepers/course managers to accept how a greens chairman (usually with skills such as a milkman, fireman or plumber etc) tell staff how to run a golf course.

Greens chairmen and committees find it very acceptable to express their opinions in negative ways - both verbally and written - without having a rounded understanding of the situation in hand. I have been present at some golf clubs where greens staff have come under a torrent of abuse.

I myself have received communications late in the evening expressing opinions on that

day's play. Out of hours communication means greenkeepers can never fully shut off from their roles and this can have a negative mental impact and also take its toll on home life.

Can you describe how your sight loss has affected you both physically and mentally?

From a physical point of view, I have had to give up the greenkeeping career I was truly passionate about and one I had been in for thirty-nine years. I also surrendered a lot of independence such as driving and commuting. In the beginning, I could not perform basic household tasks - until I was given the support and guidance to do so. As a busy greenkeeper, it was a shock to suddenly lose my active and physical routine.

Mentally, I have found this far harder to deal with than the physical aspect; coping with job loss, financial pressures, relationship concerns, loneliness, feelings of despair and suicidal thoughts. Luckily, I have a small, tight-knit family who supported me tremendously through the early days of processing my new way of living.

“ Without greenkeepers, there are no golf courses! ”

STAFFORDSHIRE SIGHT LOSS

My experience with Staffordshire Sight Loss has only been over the last twelve months or so. This is a small charity based in Stoke-On-Trent that gives crucial help, support and guidance to people in the local area. I am due to start volunteering with this charity on a regular basis in order to continue this vital work to support others dealing with sight loss and mental health issues.



Above John's stepdaughter recently did a skydive to raise money for Staffordshire Sight Loss Association.

Do you think more needs to be done to highlight stress and pressures of the job externally?

100%! Long hours and physical demands are equally as high at smaller clubs (often working with smaller budgets), as those at larger clubs. Members who travel between clubs are very opinionated and often don't see the internal workings and restrictions given

to head greenkeepers. I describe this as Augusta syndrome.

Whilst working, I focused direction to achieve year-round golf and make it sustainable - not only from a playing perspective but also cost. The greens chairman's job should be to communicate all the processes and pressures to the committee and members for a better understanding.

How important is it for greenkeepers to talk about the stress within the industry?

It's extremely important. We are a very proud bunch of people and, unfortunately, will tend not to open up. The job is relatively male-dominated and men do not express their feelings to each other - which is a shame.

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As a busy greenkeeper, it was a shock to lose my active/physical routine

Do you think that sometimes greenkeepers' well-being is overlooked?

Absolutely, as there is not a great deal of support in place across the board. I appreciate that all clubs have to be run as a business, but greenkeepers are not robots; they are human beings who work extremely hard in all elements. In most circumstances, greenkeepers face extreme pressures from members to provide an immaculate course, however some facilities that greenkeepers are expected to work out of are a disgrace. It just shows a lack of respect for their extremely important role within the golfing

industry. Without greenkeepers, there are no golf courses!

Was it a surprise when your stepdaughter suggested that she wanted to do the leap of faith to raise money for the charity?

When Lauren suggested she would do a skydive to raise money for Staffordshire Sight Loss Association, it was a big surprise. She herself has seen first-hand the positive impact associated with Staffordshire Sight Loss. I was very proud.

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Finding meaning and purpose can bring a profound sense of happiness. Engage in activities that align with your passions, values, and strengths. Reflect on your values and explore your interests.

CULTIVATING GRATITUDE

Practising gratitude can shift focus towards the positive aspects of life. Take time each day to appreciate things. This can foster a sense of contentment and bring greater happiness.

BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Valuing deep and meaningful connections with others can enhance our well-being. Invest time and effort in building and maintaining positive relationships.

EMBRACING AUTHENTICITY

Being true to yourself and embracing your uniqueness can bring genuine happiness. Embrace your strengths, accept your imperfections, and live in alignment with your values.

PRACTISING SELF-CARE

Taking care of your physical, emotional, and mental well-being is essential. Prioritize self-care activities that recharge and rejuvenate you. This can include exercise, mindfulness, hobbies, or engaging in activities that bring you joy and relaxation.

EMBRACING THE PRESENT MOMENT:

Cultivating mindfulness and living in the present moment can bring a deep sense of peace and happiness. Focus on the here and now without dwelling on the past or worrying excessively about the future.

CONTINUOUS GROWTH AND LEARNING

Engage in lifelong learning and personal development. Set goals, explore new interests, and challenge yourself. Striving for growth can provide a sense of fulfilment.

FOOD FOR THE BRAIN

Include more whole grains, fruits and vegetables in your diet.

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A SELF-DRIVEN **SUSTAINABILITY** DRIVE



We spoke to Deputy Head Greenkeeper, **Craig Swindells**, about his passion for the environment and sustainability, and how this has transferred from his personal life to work life.



company called Keystone who helped move our badger population. We had to have cameras set up to see what movements they were making and it was fascinating to watch them. We also put upside-down plastic bottles in the ponds and ditches to record the newt population. Keystone did most of the hands-on work, but we worked closely with them and directed when required.”

Craig has also worked to improve the bird population across the course: “We had a couple of resident buzzards and, after a little research looking at what they like and don’t like, I used this knowledge to improve their habitat. It was the exact same when we had owls come to the course. We worked closely with the Hawk and Owl Trust in order to get the best possible environment for them.”

He explained how the environmental projects have added a different aspect to his job: “Maintaining the course and everything

Craig has been working for Chipping Sodbury Golf Club in Bristol for the last thirteen years. The club hadn’t adopted a sustainability view of management until he suggested it a few years ago.

“The wildflower project was probably the start of things, which was a couple of years ago now, and since then it’s just pushed on and on. We most recently worked with an environmental

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Will's Story



“

It adds interest to your role by learning about different pollinators

involved with that is something we all do in the industry. All of a sudden, when you get involved with a completely different side of things, it adds a lot of interest to your role by learning about different pollinators and the habitats that you can create; for example, I have built my own bird boxes which we have put up around the course and we are keen to add more successful projects.”



Craig thinks that the sustainability route is something that many golf courses across the UK will adopt in the coming years: “I think in the next five to ten years it’s going to be the way that golf courses go. The sooner you start doing sustainable projects and the sooner you start putting provisions in place, the better it will be. I think if you’re interested in it, then go for it.”

Having said that, Craig feels there needs to be much more environmental and sustainability education: “It’s being incorporated into golf courses, however, I don’t think it is included when you qualify to be a greenkeeper. If you view a current prospectus of NVQ Level 2 or Level 3, it’s not something that they would be teaching; it’s almost like it is a completely separate entity. You only have to look at the fertiliser rules and how they are changing to know how important sustainability is; lots of people are switching to organic fertilisers to improve plant health and reduce fungicide application.”

“I think moving forward, especially for colleges and universities, it’s something that they should be adding to the qualification, even if it’s only one module... until then, new recruits will not know that much about it. The media side of things can do a little bit of education, but it’s hard because a lot of the stuff is product based as opposed to projects. If industry magazines stopped pushing stories about sustainability and environmental projects, then many wouldn’t



know about it.”

Craig went on to describe how members have reacted to all the recent projects: “First and foremost, we don’t have leisure facilities or anything like that here, therefore, the main revenue for us is the course. If you can start educating members about wildlife and habitats, they also enjoy that side of things and we have received a very positive reaction. So much so, a few members have said they’ll buy trail cameras to put up and watch the wildlife.”

Projects have seen visitors come from far and wide to see the work that Craig has done, despite not wanting to play golf. “We have had people who aren’t even members

come and visit the course to just see the wildflower project that I completed with DLF. That’s interesting because it means that people will come and see the projects, have a walk around the course and they often stay for food and drinks, which brings in revenue.”

Craig explained the importance of clubs being supportive of these projects and seeing what can happen with some investment: “You almost need to put in a few years of work and then be patient for people to see the changes; when the committee and management see results, it’s a lot easier to get them on board for future projects.”

Article by James Kimmings.

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THE MAIN EVENT

Above
Guy Herbert trims brush to exacting specifications to meet international regulations on height and width.

Right
Recent trends in cross country fence design include the use of 'skinny' obstacles where every horse takes off and lands in the same small area, requiring extra maintenance to give safe, stable footing.

Defender **Burghley Horse Trials** is a firm fixture in the calendar for many horse lovers, attracting more than **173,000 visitors** over the four days to witness the world's top event riders compete.

Many spectators would, however, be surprised to know that the competition surfaces are professionally managed year-round.

The first event was held at Burghley, near Stamford in Lincolnshire, in 1961 after a leading competition at Harewood in Yorkshire was cancelled due to a suspected outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease. It has since hosted two World Championships, six European Championships and one Young Riders European Championship. The parkland venue is also in the running for the 2026 FEI World Championship, despite a move to synthetic arena surfaces for the dressage and showjumping elsewhere.

Scene of the climactic show jumping phase that has cemented the career of many an eventing legend and the initial dressage phase, the main arena has remained in the same spot since 1961, but the cross-country course has taken many different routes, explains clerk of the course Philip Herbert.

"The cross-country track is 6000-7000m long or longer, depending on the nature of the competition – whether it is a championship or young rider event. The most significant development is that we now maintain the track year-round rather than relying on livestock grazing the parkland."

Until about 2000, all the obstacles were built on site and had to be dismantled to alter the

**Above**

Top The Toro Groundskeeper has an impressive working width but can also cut closely round jumps and ride over undulations.

Bottom Irrigation water is extracted from the estate's lake.

course. With the advent of rough terrain forklifts, many fences are now built in the workshop and then anchored onto the course, meaning they can be moved for ground maintenance.

Often, they are redesigned or reversed so that the track can run in the opposite direction.

In the 1980s, eventing's international body, the FEI, its national affiliates and rider groups pressed for better management of ground at competitions and for Burghley, which takes place in early September, this is especially demanding.

"It can be any weather: very wet or very dry. Our first action was to remove the livestock from the course – they can damage the obstacles and cause poaching or tracks. Fencing the course also protects it from vehicles driving over or the hunt riding over it."

To tackle dry conditions, an irrigation programme was put in place - initially with equipment borrowed from a local potato grower!

"We started by fencing the course off in early July and then adding the crowd fence just before the event; now the majority is protected with 'permanent' electric fence, which is however easy to move if we re-route the track."

A programme of weekly mowing from March to October was instigated, and the mower of

choice is a seven-deck Toro Groundskeeper 4700D. Mowing height is key, explains Guy Herbert, responsible for much of the groundcare work at Burghley.

"We aim for a cut height of 3in on cross-country days but work down at 2.5in for much of the year, going to 2in in spring and early summer when we're putting on water and fertiliser. Heading towards the event, cut height is raised by ¼in each week, which I find helps avoid thatch building up in the top."

Fertiliser and water applied to ensure the perfect green sward for the world's TV cameras means plenty of growth in the final few days before the event.

"George Burnham, who drives the mower, used to do a final cut on the Friday before Saturday's cross-country," says Philip, "But the site is so busy now, it's hard to get round, so the mower has LED lights fitted and he cuts through the night."

A handy addition to the mower, a star trimmer, is swapped for one of the decks to cut around the fence posts, but is now due for replacement.

The yearly maintenance programme begins on the Sunday after the event, Guy confirms.

"If it's been a dry year and there is minimal

TEAM EFFORT

Philip's team work closely with the estate staff who maintain the public areas at the event and include a head forester, responsible for the wonderful trees that add to the visual appeal of the course.

It's a huge team effort all round to produce arguably the ultimate test of the equine athlete on natural turf, a surface that horses have been bred to perform on for centuries.



Above
Left Ground remediation helps meet regulation fence heights on undulating land. Rather than using fresh turf or seed, the existing turf is power harrowed, bucketed off and then replaced to give a more natural finish.

Right The main arena also sees jumping action on cross country day.

damage, a pass with an Aera-vator will take out hoof marks. I try to avoid manual divoting as the soil mix can encourage weeds, but in a wet year we do need to add some material."

In the dressage arena, the centre line and perimeter may need subsoiling to take out compacted tracks.

Mowing three or four times in the autumn helps revitalise the sward, and Guy adds: "If there's been a lot of damage, I'll use a Twose slitter which has multiple 200mm long blades, with a Joskin harrow towed behind it. This takes out poaching and the harrow tines encourage regrowth."

The slitter comes out once again at the end of autumn to let any frost get into the ground; slow release fertiliser is also applied.

"We'd build any new ditches or steps at this time too, and reprofile ground where needed," comments Philip.

Leaf mould and waste rubber or fibre from synthetic riding surfaces are also deployed where needed, spread and integrated with the soil to add stability at the same time as 'give'.

Repairing take-off and landing points has become more significant in recent years, Guy comments, due to the increased use of 'skinny' fences to test rider accuracy. "Each horse uses the same piece of ground, so it has to be firm and stable."

At the end of winter, slitting takes place as early as possible with the harrow taking out dead material.

"We'll spot spray weeds to keep the sward clean; in 2022 when grass was dying off, the weeds persisted. We also tackle clover which has deep roots and withstands drought but is slippery underfoot, so has to be removed."

In the main arena, creeping bent is an issue, so is scarified off with a Wiedenmann flail collector in late summer.

"The surface looks sparse afterwards, but soon comes back," comments Philip. Summer fertiliser with iron is applied to green up ahead of the event, and in a dry year, a programme of Aera-vating and irrigation is used.

"We Aera-vate first to loosen the surface and make the most of the water," explains Guy. "There's a modern irrigation system with three Briggs reels fed by an electric pump extracting from the lake via 4500m of underground pipe. At full capacity, the system can put a cubic metre of water on the cross-country course every 45sec."

It's a delicate balance, however, since the

A RENOVATION REVOLUTION

Requirement for higher standards of turf presentation has filtered down through the levels of eventing and to other related sports and it is common for equestrian fixtures to use an 'aera-vator' of some sort to address firm ground conditions.

"The previous approach was to apply sand, especially to fence take-off and landing points. Prior to installing irrigation at Burghley, we put silt along the course in three dry years," Philip recalls. A visit to Saltex brought the Aera-vator to his attention.

"I couldn't understand why one piece of turf was softer than the ground around it, but it had been treated with the Aera-vator. This, and its bigger brother the Agri-vator, use an

oscillating, vibrating tine system to loosen the soil to relieve compaction and allow air and water to infiltrate.

British Eventing built up a fleet of 18 machines which are loaned out to events across the country, and Philip comments that they have been key to the progression of the sport.

"But they can be a bit slow if you are looking to treat a large area. So I commissioned the 'Equi-vator' which is a 5.2m folding version, built out of Aera-vator components."

Parts are costly, he comments, at £1600 for a new set of tines, but Reesink UK now have the franchise and offer a ready supply of spares.



“

I try to avoid manual divoting

ideal ground for eventing is what a racecourse groundsman would call ‘good to firm’. A moisture meter is deployed and the team works with consultant Mark Lucey to measure ground firmness using a drop test in the final weeks before the event. Of equal importance, Philip walks the track – all 7000m of it – regularly.

“Most of all it has to be consistent over that 7000m, where there are four different soil types, from clay around the lake to limestone, and varying soil depths,” he comments.

All clay areas have land drains and the subsoiler is deployed, if necessary – in this case, a Howard Paraplow with angled legs that lift rather than opening up the surface. A notched Guttler press follows to firm and even the surface without compacting.

As Burghley becomes a hive of activity in the final week before the event – most marquees and other infrastructure start coming in a month ahead – there is little left for Philip, Guy and the team to do. Fence judges (who record any competitor faults at each obstacle) are briefed and fences dressed with flowers, greenery or, in the case of Daniel Lambert’s Sofa, a two-thirds life size figure of England’s heaviest man himself.

“We’re always pleased if there is a shower of rain in the final week before the event; we might irrigate at night in extreme heat but not at the detriment of consistency. With the good thick sward, the footing doesn’t change much,” Philip comments.

Climate change has offered groundsmen some extra dilemmas in recent years, and in hot years such as 2018 and 2022 the shortage of water meant having to irrigate to green up and soften up at the same time. “This wet summer has actually been useful,” he says. “Everything has remained green and growing.”

Water crossings are required to be no more

than 150-200mm deep for safe negotiation at speed. At Burghley, natural features the Trout Hatchery and Lake are used, but the soft material below the surface is dug out and replaced with hardcore topped with 100mm of 20mm limestone, which is firm with a small amount of give. To include an island on the lake, ‘aqua dams’ (waterfilled barriers) are installed to control the water level.

Article by Jane Carley.

Below

Left Aera-vators being used as a fleet.

Right The estate team is closely involved in the preparations - tackling jobs such as building temporary fencing.

Bottom Father and son team, Philip and Guy Herbert manage the track year-round.





LIVE and KICKING

after a century and a half

West Heaton Bowling, Tennis and Squash Club is **150 years old** this year, an age unmatched by any sports or social club in the Four Heatons district of south Manchester, it claims.

Only Nelstrop Flour Mill in Stockport is older, says club member Alan Mansfield, who handles marketing for West Heaton Bowling, Tennis and Squash Club (WHBTC).

The 1870s was a time of great change. After the railways came, so did high-end suburbia, inhabited by wealthy textile magnets among other notable residents.

Like pioneering sports hubs of the Victoria era, WHBTC began with a pavilion and croquet lawn, which still survive. "The turf serves as a junior kickabout area for U10s football now," adds Alan, "with a central square of artificial grass where we place a table tennis table in good weather."

His local history research has unearthed a map dating back to 1895, which clearly shows

the pavilion and a bowling green (on which the first match took place in 1873). "The first houses, built in the early 1870s, overlooked bare ground, before the club emerged on a triangular parcel of land."

Elements of the current pavilion date back to 1930, surrounded by later additions. "It keeps growing," says Alan, "never-ending, like painting the Forth Bridge once was."

Run almost solely by volunteers (the secretary and a part-time bar steward are the only paid employees), strengthening club finances allow West Heaton to contract out essential grounds care services to keep courts and the bowling green in good order.

The surface looks in fine fettle - something increasingly rare among cash-strapped clubs. "It's one of the best kept in the region,"



Left Programmed irrigation.

Above Peter Goulding, House and Grounds Manager.

EVERY LITTLE HELPS

Enjoying several income streams, including a popular bonfire event (the biggest fundraiser), a full calendar of school and junior coaching, and social events such as summer balls, West Heaton Bowling Tennis and Squash Club is alive and kicking, also thanks to prudent, cost-conscious management.

“I think the club is in a better financial position than it was previously,” Peter states, “which gives us the opportunity to contract out grounds work when we can to enable us to maintain and improve the quality of provision.”

Alan notes, “and well-used. We’re in the Cheadle & Gatley open leagues and last year topped the veterans division. Our oldest regular player is 93.”

The contractor handles a number of local sports clubs besides West Heaton, and balancing budgets with the turfcare needed to maintain quality playing surfaces is an ongoing conversation with them, they say, “especially in these challenging times”.

“Scarification, verticutting and aeration using our Toro ProCore aerator and GKB V-strong kit, all vital services for the bowling green as part of end of season renovation we usually conduct mid to late September,” they explain. It’s all part of the commitment to maintaining a healthy sward over the long term and particularly important given that trees on its southern edge shade a good third of the surface.

Renovations also include overseeding with Barenbrug Bar 2 using a GKB V-strong dimple seeder after hollow coring to three or four inches. The cultivar is hardwearing and resists disease, the contractor adds.

Bowling greens (Crown green in the North West) are up against it across Greater Manchester. The quality is patchy and clubs

are crying out for volunteers. The slow start to the 2023 spring season and prolonged dry spells meant May dawned before greens started to show their quality. West Heaton is again fortunate in having programmed irrigation for its green, turned on daily in dry conditions.

Over the club’s lifetime, the original cinder tennis courts gave way to shale ones, with three Playdeck areas added in 1979 and three synthetic surfaces in 1990 to replace the “unforgiving” hard courts, while TigerTurf superceded the lower level shale in 2003. Same brand synthetics replaced those in 2019.

“The artificial surfaces play a bit slower than natural grass, but don’t wear around the serving sites,” says Peter Goulding, House and Grounds Manager. “The old surfaces gave us 17 years’ use, so lasted well.”

“The lower courts are more popular - sheltered, they don’t have car park lights intruding and provide better viewing of the ball, so it made good economic sense to opt earlier for a replacement surface.”

“We rotary brush all six TigerTurf sand-filled courts regularly,” Peter confirms, “and use our mini tractor to haul a triangular brush over them fortnightly. The contractor undertakes more



extensive maintenance, including sand cleaning and deep decompacting when needed.”

“West Heaton is a very busy tennis club,” the contractor spokesperson adds, “so maintaining the six floodlit sand-filled synthetic courts is essential. We usually loosen, lift and relay the infill every three or four months, with a deep clean twice a year.”

Such work is critical in ensuring the club delivers quality playing surfaces for its five men’s, four women’s and veterans’ teams.

Once a persistent problem, court drainage no longer holds up league matches or training sessions. “We play tennis year-round, and flooding proved a problem before we installed slip drains to take surface water to a soakaway. Our natural gradient also helps,” says Peter.

A 10,000l above-ground reservoir tank stores mains water to apply across the site, which includes attractive bedding by the car park,

pavilion and lining the club perimeter. “Our water consumption is scarcely more than a domestic user,” Peter says proudly.

Alan adds: “Even after a deluge, the courts are playable after ten minutes - so different from how it was.”

What can cause issues though is autumn leaf fall. The club is surrounded by Victorian houses, many with gardens boasting fine deciduous specimens. Acting as a visual and acoustic screen, they aren’t a friend when foliage drops. The club liaises with neighbours to ensure they are happy with reducing the tree canopy, conducted by a local gardening firm, which also cuts the hedges every fortnight.

“Our four drag mats are great for picking up leaves,” Peter says. “Stepping on them creates mulch, which can pollute the surfaces, so it’s important to remove as many as we can. The contractor applies chemical and moss treatments, which help keep courts clean and hygienic.”

The club is loathe to dispose of materials that it can repurpose or recycle and canvasses its 600+ members regularly on eco-friendly ways of saving money. “The artificial grass from our first courts has come in handy across the site,” says Peter.

“Stretches of it criss-cross the kitchen garden as paths to provide easy access to the plots, while more of it provides the square on the football kickabout area.”

“We have links with Heaton Moor Golf Club, who wanted some to lay as link paths between

“

It’s all part of the commitment to maintaining a healthy sward



Left
Peter's wife Una (right) with
member volunteer.



holes, so we supplied them with off-cuts too."

The shale tennis surface, replaced in 2003, also found a home on the course, complementing the synthetic turf along paths. Even tennis balls are recycled.

Several years ago, in typically creative mode, the club spotted an opportunity to create something really special - its own kitchen garden.

Waste ground used for tipping rubble, grass clippings and other leftovers was transformed into a fruit and vegetable oasis, lovingly tended by Peter's wife Una and a team of volunteers.

"The soil quality was phenomenal," Una recalls, "with plenty of mulch and organic matter. Peter and I had visited family in Guatemala and returned keen to create an organic garden. Peter built a retaining wall and away we went."

That was some six years ago and the first plantings included pear, plum and apple trees, followed by tomatoes, cabbage, broccoli,

mangetout, spring, red and white onions, potatoes, kale, spinach, runner beans and green and yellow courgettes. Complementing the fruit trees are soft fruits - raspberries, strawberries - and rhubarb.

"We wanted to include wildflowers, so planted a patch of them, plus calendulas, to attract pollinators."

I leave the club with Una and a member volunteer chatting about the next work planned in the garden. "The winter cabbage has to go in," says Una, "then there's the broccoli and runner beans to pick. The apples, plums and pears are coming on now too."

A more productive use of waste ground would be hard to find and, in keeping with the trend among football clubs to sow, grow and harvest their own kitchen produce, West Heaton is helping to ease its bottom line in an era when every penny counts.

Article by Greg Rhodes.

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I promised you a rose garden

The Formal Gardens at **Blenheim Palace** reflect a journey through the horticultural styles of the ages. Head Gardener, Andy Mills, tells us how he and his team manage the Rose Garden.

The Gardens, created over the centuries by esteemed designers such as Henry Wise and Achille Duchêne, reflect a journey through the horticultural styles of the ages, with many of the previous Dukes of Marlborough making their mark by introducing or removing certain elements. Our focus is on the Rose Garden. However, that is only a small part of a larger vision.

Blenheim's circular rosarium, which was created for the 7th Duke of Marlborough in the early 1870s, is home to more than 1,800 roses - most of them chosen for their strong fragrance.

Head Gardener, Andy Mills has a strong team of fourteen who all play their part. "The Garden team are justifiably proud of the display in the Rose Garden - it never gets old - the scent and colour on each day evolves and delights. Whilst working in the Rose Garden deadheading and or weeding, we often hear the delight in the visitors' voices and witness their reactions to the spectacle."

Andy told us what developments are to come: "Quite a few projects are planned across the 90-acre Garden; specifically in the Rose Garden. Though we have sent away the central statue for restoration and repair, the pool it stood in the middle of has been excavated and we intend to restore it to its original splendour. To do this, we will have to install pumps and filters to keep it clean and presentable. The pathways will be edged with Victorian rope to define them and maintain symmetry."

"The roses themselves are to be refreshed over a number of years - we intend to restore some of the varieties which the 7th Duke would have enjoyed. The height of the beds is to be lowered back to their original level, plus the Rose arches and boundary fences are to be repainted and repaired."

He summarised his ambition for the overall look of the gardens at Blenheim: "Our aim is to strengthen Blenheim Palace's place on the World Garden map. We are blessed with 90-acres of inspirational gardens; these plans will make them even more stunning than ever and truly blow people away. **We are aiming to raise the horticultural standards right across the Gardens.**"





“

A garden is never truly complete. There is always something to do!

All images © Pete Seaward



TALKING TURF

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

Education

Ecology, budgeting and more...



Rob Dyer

Head Greenkeeper
The Downs Course

Head Greenkeeper at **The Downs Course** (Golf At Goodwood), **Rob Dyer** has started to incorporate education days into his schedule.

Rob talked us through how education has helped him to learn about ecology, budgeting and much more...

How important is education in the turf industry?

Education is highly important - if it is relevant and up to date. With intensive research from universities and fertiliser companies, we are now able to understand products and new techniques to aid in agronomy decisions. We are extremely lucky to work in an industry which shares ideas, as well as being open and willing to help.

In terms of budgeting and finances, how has education helped you and your club?

When Education Officer for BIGGA Essex section Tom Stidder visited, we looked at the quality of the cut, plus wear and tear on the cutting units. After a few adjustments with bedknife angles, aggression and clip rate, we improved the quality of cut and longevity of the reels with them staying on the cut for longer. This has now saved us money on replacing reels and mechanic hours.

We also looked at rotary blades and when to sharpen, how to sharpen correctly or when to replace them. This has a massive saving on fuel if the rotary blade is cutting correctly, compared to a blunt blade, which can run into hundreds of pounds worth of savings on running costs and emissions. With sustainability in mind, this is a no-brainer.

Should sustainability and ecology/wildlife be implemented more in turf education?

At Goodwood, we have an ecology policy in place to allow a good balance between playability and ecological value. Over the past five years, I have seen a massive change in how sustainability is looked upon and it is trending in the right direction. I think it would be a good idea to incorporate a sustainability module in every qualification.

How has your course management approach changed since the training?

We have changed our course management by increasing the height of cuts to get a more even cut within the multicultural grass species we have on-site. With the HOC slightly increased, this also allows us to use less water and the plant has more surface area for photosynthesis.

Any further courses planned?

I think any education which benefits your development and knowledge is vital to progress - not only in your career, but in your job role. Last year, I found content on TikTok for how to present to a group of people; it turned out to be one of the best things I have ever done. Anything can help from learning Microsoft Excel to local beekeeping courses.

Would you recommend others to attend education days, regardless of how much experience they might already have?

Yes, without a doubt. In the past, I didn't



What other way can you share the hallowed turf with your idols?

attend courses as I thought it wasn't relevant, however with age I am more open-minded. In every course I have been on, I have taken something away to use in one way or another.

Regarding budgeting, is this something your club has found challenging in the past?

I think if you ask any head greenkeeper about budgets, they will always come back with the

same answer.... I need more for consumables and resources; this is because most of us always want what's best for our golf course. What is going on with the world has had a big impact on budgets and, with some fertilisers doubling in price, it has become important to use your resources carefully and efficiently.

Will you attend more education events in the future?

BTME is always a must for me. It is a hugely



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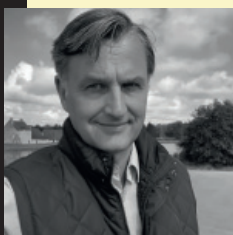


beneficial week and so much knowledge is shared and gained - not only on the courses provided, but in networking with like-minded people in the industry. I am extremely lucky to work for a company that develops people. They are very open-minded in what we request - as long as there is value in it, either for the golf course or personal development. A few years back we were lucky enough to visit three courses in Denmark. The trip gave us a great insight into non-chemical disease prevention and communication with members in regards to the control measures used.

In addition...

Personally, I think we should be showcasing all the good and fun things we do as a profession. Not many people really know what a grounds person or greenkeeper does, and it's not advertised in schools for the younger generation to learn about. Most of us enjoy sports and, with less than 1% making it in professional sports, what other way can you share the hallowed turf of stadiums with these idols?

CUTTING UNIT SET UP GUIDANCE



Tom Stidder

BIGGA Regional Patron and owner of TCS Turfcare Equipment

BIGGA Regional Patron, Tom Stidder, gives comment on cutting unit set up and how this can help greenkeepers to enhance the work they are doing.

During the last twenty-seven years of working in the machinery side of the industry, I have been fortunate enough to learn a great deal through working as a mechanic, service manager and manufacturer technical rep.

It's only in the last six years of working for my independent company that I have really learnt about cutting unit set up and the benefits of having the correct specification, optimal geometry set up and, most importantly, the knowledge of the person deciding the heights of cut setting.

I have learnt through many trials around the world that it is so important to understand how the cutting unit interacts with your local turf species and agronomic conditions.

The initial specification selection, and then the geometry set up, will determine the parameters at which the cutting unit

is 'happy', or operating within its designed parameters.

The benefits of a 'happy' cutting unit can be incredible - with the main one being the unit will stay 'on cut' for longer. This directly equates to less adjusting of the shear point contact, less sharpening, a longer interval between bed knife (or bottom blade) replacement and the reel (cylinder) too. Over a large fleet, this can equate to a substantial saving over the year.

Added to this benefit is also the improvement to quality of cut by having the optimal geometry set up. This can include shear point position or bed knife attitude, clip rate and much more.

I agree with Rob that we should be showcasing all the opportunities that our industry has to offer and, from my point of view, in particular the technical side.



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THANK A GREENKEEPER

especially those delivering for nature!

Above
Turtle Dove
© Ben Andrew,
RSPB Images.

Dr Marie Athorn from the **RSPB** and **The R&A** partnership talks about how **thankful** we should be for the **greenkeepers** that are the fundamental delivery mechanism for **nature on golf courses**.

BIGGA recently hosted 'Thank a greenkeeper day'. Greenkeepers are known, and most definitely should be respected and celebrated, for the amazing playing surfaces they create to deliver for the game of golf. But, I personally am most thankful for their contribution to nature conservation.

Without greenkeepers, golf courses couldn't be the amazing places that support nature... Whether that is managing areas of long rough with nature in mind, managing areas of habitat for nature away from playing surfaces, putting up bat boxes and creating other homes for nature, most, if not all, of it wouldn't happen without greenkeepers!

Championing nature conservation advocates

At a recent event to celebrate Women in Golf, Amanda Dorans won the Women in Turfcare award and was commended for her incredible contribution to the industry, and especially for her work championing women in the industry. Amanda's contribution to sustainability and nature conservation was also a huge part of her accolade. Amanda was a vital team member in delivering a landscape scale project to reintroduce the small blue butterfly along the Ayrshire coast by planting its food plant, kidney vetch, and this was just the start of her influence.

And, speaking of championing - championship events this year have been a



Left
Kidney vetch at
Dundonald Links
© Amanda Dorans.

Below
A sea of flax in the chalk
grasslands at Gog Magog
© Aaron Bowen.



fantastic platform to highlight the work done by greenkeepers on every level – including that for nature. Head greenkeepers at both The Open (James Bledge) and AIG Women’s Open (Michael Mann) were rightly celebrated for their fundamental contributions to two hugely successful tournaments. But their contributions away from playing surfaces were equally important - to me anyway. And this year, through platforms like Sky TV, they were both praised for their work for nature, whether managing the priority habitats that support rare species like Natterjack Toad at Royal Liverpool or Adder at Walton Heath.

Teams big or small

But nature conservation on golf courses doesn’t need to be delivered by a large team, with huge time and financial resource. Individual greenkeepers, or small greenkeeping teams can and do deliver for nature.

John Milne is an exemplar of what can be delivered by one individual with the right knowledge, passion and determination. Although John is the only greenkeeper at Garmouth and Kingston Golf Club, he rallies and encourages volunteers to support him on his journey to support nature at this unique golf club. The community feel is incredible and John works hard to utilise that, not only to deliver a great golf course but also to support nature along the way. And even sometimes having limited resource can make you think about how much time you spend on management, and whether there are areas that could be left more natural, still playable for golf but providing more areas that would support nature.

Sharing enthusiasm for the wildlife and habitats they support

Having a fantastic golf course that supports nature isn’t the only important part of what greenkeepers deliver. What may appear as simple steps around communicating the work that the golf course does to manage the habitats and support species is crucial. Aaron Bowen at Gog Magog Golf Club not only has brilliant knowledge of the beautiful chalk grasslands there, but does a fantastic job of ensuring his members can fully appreciate the habitats and species that call the golf club home through newsletters and social media.

Others like Ray Goodsall have been fundamental in delivering for species of conservation concern, in his case Turtle Dove in and around Canterbury Golf Club.

Turtle Dove are one of the UK’s fastest declining birds, and to have any chance of seeing their recovery in the UK it will have to be a monumental effort from conservation organisations and land managers alike. Ray’s enthusiasm to support this cause has impressed and encouraged the local RSPB teams to show that golf courses are more than capable of delivering this, and can play a role in what we hope to be Turtle Dove recovery.

So, Ray’s work (and many others like him) is not just important for the species but for the way that golf is perceived in this space.

The more stories like this we have to tell, the more we can showcase the contribution golf can and is making.

**FEELING
INSPIRED?**

There are way too many greenkeepers to have named individually here who do contribute on a small and large scale to nature conservation, but I am thankful for all of them. Whether it is managing important priority habitats or supporting species of conservation concern, the impact golf can and does make is important. So, if any of the stories shared here have inspired you to want to take your first steps on your journey to support nature on your golf course, then please do get in touch.

Wildflower for you

Field Poppy: *Papaver rhoeas*

Once a common flower, it is now becoming rare due to modern agricultural methods. It is of medium height with bright scarlet red flowers from May to October. Although each flower only lasts for one day, a single plant can produce over 400 flowers during the summer. Poppies can be encouraged to return each year by allowing the seed to fall before cutting back the dead plants. It thrives in disturbed ground, so re-cultivate the ground the following spring.



Nowadays, the poppy often is a symbol of Remembrance Day. Due to the extent of ground disturbance, it was the flower which bloomed in between the trench lines on the Western Front during the First World War.

Sow seed in situ in early spring. Alternatively, sowing in situ during autumn will produce larger and earlier-flowering plants. The seed can also be sown in March in the greenhouse. Prick seedlings out into pots & plant out in May.



A bee's life

As golf courses continue to embrace sustainability efforts to better align with nature, many course superintendents have added on-property honeybee hives.

Not only do the bees help to pollinate plants throughout the golf course, but they also sometimes provide a byproduct of locally produced honey. There are already a number of golf courses that have been involved with Bumblebee Conservation Trust projects to support rare and declining species. It could be something for your course to consider when introducing further conservation projects.

Read more in our article on page 30.

Starling spotting

Starling murmurations often happen during the colder winter months.

Bolstered by winter migrants from Scandinavia and Germany, UK starlings congregate in their thousands at fairly predictable winter roosting sites – usually marshes or reedbeds, but also man-made environments. With the increase in population, it could be a perfect time for greenkeepers to encourage starling populations onto their courses.

Before they lay down for the night, they frequently engage in large-scale sky dances, their sheer numbers producing exhilarating visuals in the sky in the late afternoon. The flocks finally rush onto the reedbed soon before



dusk and start to settle down, though their chattering can sound like a far-off steam train.

The sky-dance, or murmuration, is supposed to be a strategy for deceiving predators who assemble to take advantage of what appears to be easy pickings and to compete for the best roosting position. Additionally, ornithologists think that the birds congregate to exchange knowledge about the best foraging locations for the following day.

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LIFE ON THE (CLIFF) EDGE!

I have heard the word 'gem' used numerous times to describe many a course, but **Lewes Golf Club** is what I would call a true gem. Head Greenkeeper Tim Brewster discusses how this small club is run on an environmentally and sympathetically modest budget.

Golf has been played on this stunningly naturally beautiful East Sussex downland course since 1896. The course sits atop the chalk cliffs that overlook the town of Lewes (half an hour's drive east of Brighton on the south coast). As a result, the course offers breathtaking views across the South Downs National Park in one direction and the equally impressive English Channel in the other.

Lewes Golf Club is an 18-hole, par 71 (6,248 yard), members club, downland golf course when measured from the back tees. Admittedly, the course is not the longest in the area, but the undulating small greens and sloping fairways challenge any golfer, especially if the wind gets up (which Course Manager Tim Brewster was quick to tell me is 99% of the time)!

I defend my description to call this course a true gem - not only because of its striking natural beauty, but the fact that it's a small club run on an environmentally and sympathetically modest budget, and what it lacks in size and prestige it more than makes up for in authenticity, passion and heart, especially from its dedicated team that tend the course (more of that later).

Wildlife

"The course forms part of the South Downs National Park (not an S.S.S.I.), but we work very closely with the park rangers and are in constant communication with them on all the works we do on the course. We are very much aware of our responsibility to nurture the flora and fauna on the golf course."

By the side of the 18th green (on the edge of the chalky cliff face), there is a nesting pair of peregrine falcons. "We're really pleased we have these rare birds on our land," said Tim, "you can easily spend an hour of your day watching these beautiful birds, playing in the skies above the clubhouse." He went on, "we also have kestrels, skylarks and we're proud that our rough grass management has helped encourage breeding pairs of red kites. The kites are also doing a great job in scaring off the crows," smiled Tim.

"Leaving long grass areas has not only benefited wildlife but has significantly helped reduce our labour costs," explained Tim. "It's a win-win all round really. We all benefit from designating wildlife areas and the members like the fact that we are doing our best for the environment. In recent years, it's been encouraging to see an increase in our butterfly population; we've noticed Dark Green Fritillary,



Chalk hill Blue and White butterfly numbers steadily increase,” he mentioned with pride. “It also gives some much-needed definition on what can be a rather bleak course at certain times of the year. We apply just the one selective weedkiller at the beginning of the year before any bird activity begins, then only cut and collect these areas at the end of the season, which is perfect timing so as not to disturb the kites and insect populations.”

In the past, Tim and his team used an old cut and collect machine to harvest these areas which took months. Now however, thanks to financial aid from the South Downs National Park, the club have just bought a new larger Wessex 180 flail cut and collector and a terrarake which does a great job to speed up the process. He was quick to point out that this mutually beneficial collaboration was started way back in the day by his predecessor Lawrie Tremlett (now at West Cornwall G.C.) who was Lewes’s head greenkeeper for 25 years.

Water Management

As you would expect, irrigation is a challenge, especially as Tim’s Hunter system only covers greens and the new 13th tees. “Each green has four Hunter i85 heads which provide decent coverage, but that’s it,” he explained. “The

pump system is adequate for now, but as we build more tees and tag them to the system, I envisage we’ll need an additional pump to provide enough pressure. We’re borehole fed with mains back up; we only used this last year when temperatures tipped 40 degrees.”

From experience on similar sites, I know watering on the top of a chalk hill is challenging to say the least. Tim favours occasional heavy watering (when the wind eases off), then relies on ‘topping up’ with regular hand watering. Moisture levels (which he constantly monitors), determines which areas need extra. “It’s a fine line, so it’s constantly at the forefront of my mind all summer,” confessed Tim.

“Some greens are constructed with pure sand, some are ballast, and some are clay based (to hold moisture). I’m fascinated by historic construction methods. 125 years ago, the greens were built with whatever was available on site. As a result, there is little consistency of material, depth, or grass species, so I need to understand every green intimately as they all perform differently.”

Sustainability

Being on a chalk hill does have some advantages! Disease isn’t an issue as the ‘open’ course has little shade thus reducing moisture

Above: **Left** The course has seen an increase in butterfly population including this Marbled White butterfly.

Top Tim finds time to reflect.

Bottom left Deer are often seen on the course.

Bottom right Shrub clearance allowing natural flora to thrive.



Above:
Team from left to
right: Colin Martin
James Brown
Tim Brewster and
Simon Garcia.

Below More
maneagable
smaller bunkers.

and dew. Tim is rightly proud he hasn't sprayed a fungicide since he started! He admitted, "there have been times when disease has 'flared up', but I leave these areas to help the sward develop its own natural immunity."

He uses a low nutrient programme based on soil samples from consolidated turf, and Sea nymph seaweed helped with Aquatrols wetting agents. "Liquid only feeds are a challenge," he explained, "getting a decent spray day is few and far between, but we make it work!"

Tim is trying to promote a fescue rich surface on his greens, higher heights of cut, never lower

“

I need to understand every green as they all perform differently

than 5mm, frequent rolling and lower nutritional applications. "Aeration is a challenge due to dry conditions," he mentioned, "I'm always careful when punching holes. Our main aeration is completed in the winter months, with some old school slitting and sarrel rolling throughout the year. I have two greens maintenance days, spring and autumn, where we get on fendress 80/20 sand and overseed with fescue. In the future, I'd like a Vredo type overseeder which I would like to use more frequently and try to move more away from broadcasting seed."

The club is proactive when it comes to machinery. "We own various dedicated pieces of equipment for specific tasks," explained Tim, "and I'm looking forward to the new Toro hybrid cutting equipment fleet being delivered, hopefully very soon!"

Projects

"When the course was built, there were no bunkers, and now we have eleven. We've rebuilt four, changing the sand to China Clay because its angular particles help maintain moisture.



TIM'S JOURNEY

Prior to his joining Lewes, Tim climbed the ranks and served his time as assistant at Dorking G.C. and Guilford G.C., before heading off travelling down under for a year where he found work at Auckland G.C. as assistant. On his return, he quickly picked up the assistant role at Betchworth Park G.C. and Close House G.C. before moving to The Royal Automobile Club as senior greenkeeper. He then moved to Reigate Hill G.C. in 2017 as deputy and, after two years, successfully got his own course at Lewes as head man in 2019. Fair to say, since joining the club Tim has settled into his new role with ease.

Tim's a family man and when he's not helping to bring up his three-year-old daughter,

he enjoys playing football, cricket and golf.

I caught up with Tim following a recent Sussex B.I.G.G.A. section tournament. "We had 53 greenkeepers playing," he explained, "It was a bit nerve wracking as it was the first event I have hosted as the main man. Obviously, the golf course had to be at its best, but the team delivered the course to a high standard." No mean feat with just three greenkeepers and Tim making four. "They're a great bunch; they have passion and are all willing to go the extra distance to produce a lovely golf course. One of my team, Colin Martin, has been here for 43 years and his knowledge of the course is invaluable."



We've also made them deeper and put steps in to help better access," explained Tim.

"Two new tees have been built on hole thirteen, with further planned. The emphasis is to enlarge the width. Due to the rules of golf, we must be mindful of the measured distance; long narrow tees don't help wear and tear, whilst wider tees give more flexibility. We're using 200mm of 70/30 rootzone and a dwarf rye/

fescue seed mix and, where possible, we've changed the angles of play. Start to finish, it took us eight months to complete."

I must mention a couple of future projects Tim and the guys have in the pipeline - creating a wash down area complete with natural reed bed and a nature dew pond out on the course, again all sustainable and wildlife conscious.

Article by Phil Helmn.

Above:
Left Red kites often seen on the course.

Right The 18th hole.

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Leaf clearance

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Autumn for turfcare professionals means one thing: **leaves** – and lots of them. Millions of kilos of leaf debris cover golf courses, parks, pathways and driveways. They can **affect play, cause an eyesore, pose a danger** and **lead to damage**.

Unseasonably strong winds and heavy rain have swept the country this summer and there's no sign of that changing as we head into autumn. And those conditions make a perfect storm for premature, fast and furious leaf shedding. Here, award-winning distributor Reesink UK, discusses how to make an essential autumn maintenance job easy.

How does a leaf blower work?

Leaf blowers are designed to generate enough airflow to move plant debris, usually leaves, into piles by blowing air through a chute, or by sucking air up the chute to vacuum them into a container/bag.

Why is it so important?

It's not just an aesthetic consideration, autumn debris can cause damage – it can create slippery conditions and ruin grass. If not cleared, the damage to even the toughest and roughest of lawns can be long lasting. In a

nutshell, leaves can smother the grass and kill it in just a few weeks, they can allow moss to take over, disease to take hold and thatch to form. Ideally, leaves should be cleared from the grass at least once a week.

Choosing your tools

When gathering your arsenal, you need to make sure the tools selected are as efficient as possible and tailored for the task and size of the job.

While handheld tools do well in domestic applications, most grounds maintenance businesses look after extensive open areas and need more heavy-duty attachments for a productive, efficient, headache-free operation that can cover vast amounts of ground.

Power

First, it's important to look at the power required. This usually means the combination of CFM (cubic feet per minute) – or how much the blower/collector pulls in or out – and the MPH (miles per hour) – or how fast the air moves.

Below

Toro's Pro Force debris blower is ideal for clearing grass clippings, leaves, chaff and other debris from fairways, clubhouse grounds, fence lines, paths and other paved areas.





Above
Toro's ProLine H800 high-volume collector at The Mere Golf Resort.

A high CFM blows or sucks many leaves at once and farther away, whereas a high MPH moves heavier debris or wet leaves easily.

When in doubt, it's always better to go for a higher CFM and MPH combination to make sure you have a tool that can tackle anything you throw at it.

Capacity

The other thing to consider, if you are looking

at collectors, is the capacity: the bigger the compartment you have to work with, the longer you can go without having to stop to empty it, improving productivity. This also means there's less risk of the machine clogging due to excess or overflow if the operator doesn't check the compartment often enough.

Again, it's always best to go with more capacity than you think you require than end up with less.

Hand-held or attachment

As for the actual type of blower or collector, there are quite a few to choose from. For commercial businesses that already own a tractor or a



It's not just an aesthetic consideration, autumn debris can cause damage



Below left
The AgriMetal Tuff Vac can be towed by a smaller tractor or larger utility vehicle, pictured here with a Farmtrac model.

utility vehicle, we recommend ones that can be attached to the vehicle via the three-point hitch: they are unbeatable when it comes to performance as well as convenience.

They're large and powerful but don't need to be pulled or held manually (the vehicle does all the work), so you don't have to worry about the effects on your physical health and enjoy a much less tiring operation.

Noise level

Blowers and collectors tend to be noisy machines: the air coming in and out through a nozzle and the rumble of the unit's engine will naturally produce some level of noise, which can be measured in decibels.

This can cause a problem depending on the type of environment you'll be working on, but it doesn't have to: tractor-mounted attachments, for instance, have reasonably low decibel levels for the size of the machine so they can be used in sensitive environments like residential areas, golf courses and urban sports grounds.

Equipment

When it comes to the machinery you need for fast, efficient leaf clearance for golf courses and green spaces, Reesink deals in the big stuff.

For the golf course

Every tee box, green, dip and undulation on a golf course is like a magnet for drifting leaves, twigs, pine needles and more. Clearing debris

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nozzle is moulded to resist damage, helping to reduce downtime and lower repair costs.

For green spaces

AgriMetal has three tractor-mounted blower models to choose from: the B25, B35 and B50 for 25hp, 35hp and 50hp at the PTO respectively. They have an aluminium impellor, a maximum of 91 decibels and an exclusive design that increases airflow CFM by around 25 percent compared to other blowers in the market.

You can work in the worst conditions without marking or compacting the turf, which is particularly useful for sports surfaces, especially on turns. In fact, the roller will often repair imperfections on the turf.

As for collectors, AgriMetal's Tuff Vac comes in two variants: PTO driven for use with a 35hp+ tractor, or with its own 27hp engine, allowing it to be towed by a smaller tractor or larger utility vehicle. The Multi Vac is pulled and powered by any 50hp or higher tractor. Both deliver a simple but effective proposition with the Tuff Vac having a 50 percent bigger exhaust area than some competitive models, meaning more vacuum and less clogging.

away to return to the playing conditions golfers expect can be time consuming. The ProLine H800 is a single machine, mower and collection system that quickly clears away debris into a 214-gallon capacity system in one pass. It has a cutting width of 50ins and uses its Smart AirFlow system to move clippings and debris from the cutting deck surface to the hopper to leave a clear path of grass in its wake.

The Pro Force debris blower is the ideal choice for clearing grass clippings, leaves, chaff and other debris from fairways, clubhouse grounds, fence lines, paths, and other paved areas. With an abundance of air volume flow from the single nozzle turbine-style debris blower, it's built to move a lot of debris - farther and faster - in little time. It has the force to send even wet, heavy leaves flying in the direction you want them to go. The single-piece, impact-resistant plastic

Below

Previously relying on manual backpack blowers, clearing the course of debris was tying up two greenstaff for a day. With the AgriMetal B50 blower, Peebles Golf Club can do the same job in just a fraction of the time.



Jon Cole

Divisional Business Manager
Reesink Turfcare

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Be Strong - You are only OK if you hide your feelings and wants from people

Try Hard - You are only OK if you keep trying hard to do things

Hurry Up - You are only OK if you do everything right now

Some years ago, when I first started helping people with their time management issues, I learned two things: first that stress is sometimes self-inflicted - it is something we do to ourselves, and second, a lot of people firmly believe that tight deadlines and pressure at work 'bring the best out of me; I get more energy and I get more work done as the deadline drew nearer.'

When, in reality, a lot of these workers were being forced to prioritise some tasks over others and, with stress increasing and adrenalin pumping, it naturally felt to them that they were getting more done. Most were in fact dropping less urgent tasks in favour of urgent ones.

Adrenalin can be addictive after a while, and many found that they would slow down if a tight

deadline was not in place to drive them harder.

Half of UK workers say work is becoming more intense

Now a recent poll suggests that half of UK workers say work is becoming more 'intense', with staff shortages and advances in technology to blame.

Experts warn that while trouble recruiting is part of the issue, managers, work cultures and changes in the industry - all contribute to an increase in intensity in the work place.

Sixty one per cent of workers said they feel exhausted

More than half (55 per cent) of UK workers feel that work is getting more intense and demanding - with technology and staff shortages cited as reasons for this increased

intensity. The polling found that 61 per cent of workers said they feel exhausted at the end of most working days.

Taibi Kahler's Five Drivers

Some time after completing this work assignment, I discovered Taibi Kahler's Five Drivers. If I had known about them beforehand it would have made my work life easier. Taibi Kahler's Five Drivers helped me to understand what drives people, what motivates people and what stresses people.

What are the Five Drivers?

1. Be Perfect
 2. Hurry Up
 3. Please People
 4. Be Strong
 5. Try Hard
- They are unconscious internal pressures that make us do things in certain ways, e.g. with speed, with strength, to please people, to a perfect standard etc.
 - These drivers tend to satisfy our inner needs,

and we have been carrying them in our thoughts since childhood when we were first told (by parents, teachers, authority figures et al) that it was good to be quick, good to be strong, bad to be slow, bad to be weak etc.

- The drivers are good for raising a person's self-awareness – particularly about what stresses and pressures us in our lives.

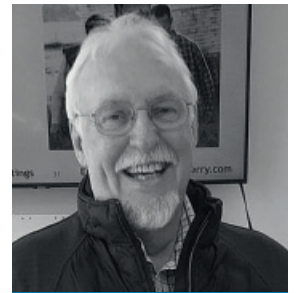
Take the Drivers Questionnaire!

At this point I would like to encourage you to take the Drivers Questionnaire. You can do this by going online and typing the words 'Kahler Drivers Questionnaire' into a search engine.

There are a number of websites offering free versions. Some websites give the basics about how you can reduce the stress and intensity that these drivers can make you feel, and others go into greater detail.

Good luck with the online questionnaire! I hope your results will help you to reduce the pressure that you might be inflicting on yourself - at this time of change in people's work-lives.

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1 Apply preventatively. Acelepryn is only effective on 1st and 2nd instar. Larger grubs / larvae will not be controlled.



4 Apply at 0.6L/ha, in 500-600 litres of water, using a Syngenta XC soil nozzle or suitable air induction 08 nozzle between 2-4 bar pressure.



2 Chafers: Apply once peak flight has been observed (typically June).
Leatherjackets: Adult crane fly activity may not peak until mid-October. Always check peak flight has occurred for application timing.
Sites with historic high pressure have increased probability of re-infestation.
Follow reports of adult activity and record sightings on PestTracker at:
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5 Ensure the soil profile is not hydrophobic at the time of application. Syngenta wetting agent Qualibra is compatible with Acelepryn for convenient application in tank-mix or sequence.



6 Keep surfaces irrigated where possible, to attract pest larvae to towards the surface.



3 Mow prior to application.



7 Delay mowing for as long as possible and return the clippings if feasible.

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