

The Golf Club Secretary

BRIEFING AND PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR GOLF CLUB ADMINISTRATORS

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Quote OF THE MONTH

OWNING A GREAT GOLF
COURSE GIVES YOU
GREAT POWER.

DONALD TRUMP

Business as Usual?

As the secretary or manager of your golf club, you are probably expected to have in depth knowledge on all manner of subjects ranging from Health and Safety legislation, the intricacies of your commercial insurance policy, to the finer aspects of when and how to treat the greens or perhaps how to pull the perfect pint in the event of an emergency in the bar.

Whilst we can't solve all of these issues for you, we have invited **John Hayes – Golf Development Executive, Marsh** to talk through one of the more complex insurance matters which may affect you. Indeed, business interruption (BI) cover may be the important life saver your golf club relies on should the worst happen – but do you know what it covers or in fact whether you have sufficient cover?



Business interruption is one of the more complicated and probably least understood covers within a golf club insurance policy. I believe it is a vitally important cover, but I am rarely challenged by secretaries and managers to explain it, how to calculate the limit of indemnity or what would be the most suitable indemnity period. As a result, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to provide the readers of *The GCS* a short guide to BI to help make sure you have the appropriate protection for your needs.

Why Does Business Interruption Cover Exist?

It is designed to protect a business so that in the event of an insured incident the cover aims to put the business back to the same position it enjoyed immediately prior to that incident. For example, in the event of significant damage to the clubhouse the Club may suffer a downturn in business, which may include a reduction in green fees, members leaving or a reduction in bar and restaurant takings. This downturn may last for a significant period while the clubhouse is repaired or rebuilt. A carefully thought out insurance should provide cover for the lost profit, as well as operating costs, and other expenses that continue to be incurred by the Club during this period.

A good policy should typically provide cover for the additional expenses of moving the operation to a temporary location and reimbursement for reasonable expenses that allows the Club to continue to operate while the property is being repaired.

How to Calculate the Amount of Indemnity Cover You Need

The two most common approaches to calculating the amount of business interruption protection that is needed is based on either insuring a business's 'Gross Profit' or its 'Gross Revenue', but either way the calculation must be done correctly.

- For gross profit you should insure the annual profit plus the important fixed costs of running your business. Fixed costs is an area that I find is often overlooked and which may cause issues in a claims situation, therefore it should include the annual wage bill, rent and rates. This annual figure is then adjusted to reflect the period of cover needed, typically referred to as 'the indemnity period'; in other words, multiplied by two for a 24 month indemnity period.
- In the case of gross revenue, the calculation should be the Club's annual income. This can be a more simplistic approach, however once again the amount will need to be multiplied by the indemnity period.

What Indemnity Period Should I Choose?

It is worth remembering that the purpose of the policy is to put the business back to the same position it enjoyed immediately prior to the incident, but if the indemnity period expires prior to the business having recovered in full, then regardless of the position of the

business the claim is stopped. Simply put, the indemnity period is your window of opportunity to claim. I often see indemnity periods of 18 months or fewer, but when the clubhouse is a substantial building, sometimes even listed, Clubs have to consider that it may take 12 months to replace the first brick of a rebuilding exercise. Clubs should seek advice from their brokers and ask what protection they are getting and how long they are indemnified for.

What are the 'Extensions' on a Typical Business Insurance Policy?

The BI section of a golf club policy wording may contain lots of extensions. Here are a few examples of some of the less well understood extensions.

- **Prevention of access.** If a building near the Club is damaged and access is restricted, this extension pays for any consequential loss, in other words losses that result as a direct consequence of the disruption to access.
- **Utilities.** This covers consequential loss following failure of your supply of electricity, gas, or water due to damage. It is worth checking the Club's policy for any limitations or how long the supply must be disrupted for.
- **Suppliers and customers.** This covers consequential loss as a result of damage at the premises of a supplier or customer.
- **Murder, disease or public health closure.** This extension covers interference with the business following a serious crime at the

premises or outbreak of contagious disease that forces temporary closure of the Club. Some policies will even provide protection if a case of food or drink poisoning is contracted at the golf club.

In the end, I believe there is no substitute for expert advice. This is where a broker can usually help; speak with a broker to check what level of protection the Club has in place, and, crucially, whether its indemnity period is likely to be sufficient in a worst-case scenario. After all, getting business interruption cover right can make the difference between being provided with the appropriate financial support for a long enough period to recover the business, or potentially face being left in serious financial difficulty, and at worst a major fight for survival.

If you'd like to arrange a free insurance review of your golf club insurance, including your business interruption cover, contact Marsh on 020 7760 8930 or email golf@marsh.com to request a call back. Visit www.businessinsurancefor.com/golf for more general information about LinksMaster, its golf insurance solution.

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Stress – Things you can do to Reduce the Pressure of the Job

Bob Ashton, former secretary at **Corhampton**, provides some wordy-wise advice on this increasingly common workplace issue.

As golf club Managers/Secretaries, we have all experienced stress. There are occasions when we probably do not even realise that we were under stress but nevertheless were. Anxiety, restless sleep, excessive drinking, just some of the outcomes that are demonstrative of stress.

The role of a Club Secretary/Manager increasingly nowadays involves so many more diverse skills. As such, we are increasingly being called upon to be more dynamic, which results in extra work without having the resources to help and this can bring on many hidden stresses.

We all know of a colleague, or indeed colleagues, who are experiencing stressful times, invariably caused by the demands of, primarily, elected Committee/Board members, then members and fortunately, in fewer cases, a member of staff. Many of the instances are as a direct result of a clash of personalities or, dare I say, straight forward dislike of the Manager/Secretary by that individual(s).

Regrettably, in many instances of such demands over a prolonged period of time, a 'stress related sickness' ensues which is both detrimental to the individual and also to the Club.

Perhaps a law introduced in France with effect from the 1 January this year might be worth having in the UK. Known as the 'Right to Disconnect' law the new employment legislation gave French workers the right to ignore their emails outside working hours. I am sure that there are many within our industry here in the UK who check their work email accounts outside such hours and even when on holiday.

Not logging off after work is in effect unpaid overtime. There are many of our 'masters' who expect us to be available 24/7. This in itself is a factor that causes burnout and undue stress. It is said that 40% of all work related illnesses are as a result of stress.

We all want to do our best for our Club, our members and visitors. We are all guilty of saying "Yes" to taking something on which therefore increases our work load and consequently increases stress levels. We must remember that there are only 24 hours in a day and at least half of those hours must not have anything to do with work. How many of us can hand on heart say that we only do the hours as per our contract and no more; not many I would suggest!

I found that a good way of dealing with stress was to make a list of things required and prioritise them in order of urgency and importance:

- **Do Now** – these were both urgent and important.
- **Plan To Do** – these are important but not urgent.
- **Reject Diplomatically** – these might be urgent but are not important. We must learn to use the word “No” in a polite way, saying that we don’t have the time to carry out the request or the justification for it. If this is difficult, then acknowledge the request by advising you note what is being asked of you and that you will review it before giving an answer.
- **Resist and Cease** – these are both non-urgent and non-important.

Sometimes, for larger projects at work, it was easier to break the task down into smaller manageable chunks and take one

simple step at a time, completing it before bringing them all together at the end. Yes, it might have taken a little longer, but it also meant that the task was less stressful and addressed with due diligence.

If you begin to feel stressed on an existing task then speak to the relevant person and advise them that you will need a few days or a week longer to complete the task effectively, “I would much prefer to give you a properly researched and completed end result rather than a possibly flawed end result which would result in further delay.”

Probably the thing many of us are guilty of is not creating a good work/life balance. This is vital so make sure you have a mixture of home and work activities every week. As the saying goes “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” [GCS](#)

NOTICEBOARD



THE GOLF ENVIRONMENT AWARDS

The Golf Environment Awards 2017

The winners of the 2017 Golf Environment Awards (GEA) were recently announced.

- Environmental Golf Course of the Year 2017 – *Greatham Valley*
- Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year 2017 – **Edward Ainsworth**
- Outstanding Environmental Project of the Year 2017 – *Frilford Heath*
- Operation Pollinator 2017 – *John O’Gaunt*

Greatham Valley’s whole team effort created a sustainable golf course. **Adi Porter**, course manager of the 45-hole course has been the driving power to implement a number of ecological initiatives around the site along with the use of holistic greenkeeping techniques in the day-to-day management of the playing surfaces.

Conservation Greenkeeper Edward Ainsworth, of *Avro Golf Club*, impressed with his wildlife conservation, not only on the 9-hole course that he manages, but within the wider landscape.

Frilford Heath’s extensive fen restoration works are a result of true determination. Its efforts have seen the return of a number of fen indicator species which have not been seen for many years.

The Operation Pollinator award went to bee and butterfly-friendly *John O’Gaunt* for its mosaic of nectar and pollen-rich habitats created by greenkeeper **Stephen Thompson**.

The GEA provides the platform from which the golf industry can demonstrate environmental excellence in all its forms, and from next year **The R&A** will become a lead partner.

Entries for the 2018 Golf Environment Awards are now open and all golf clubs, large or small, are encouraged to enter and show off their hard work.

Entries may be made at: www.strigroup.com/gea. For further information contact: **Bob Taylor** or **Sophie Vukelic** in STRI’s Ecology Department, on: **01274 565131** or email: info@strigroup.com

The Open Championship

Hosting The 145th Open at *Royal Troon* delivered more than £110 million worth of benefit to Scotland, according to an independent study.

The Open, which attracted 173,000 spectators in 2016, delivered an economic impact of more than £64 million. In addition, the country benefited from an additional £46 million in destination marketing benefit thanks to the exposure afforded to Scotland from the Championship, which was broadcast on television in 193 territories to more than 600 million households worldwide.

Almost half of the spectators who attended The Open (49 per cent) travelled from outwith Scotland, while two-thirds of Scots spectators came from outside Ayrshire. 62 per cent of non-Ayrshire residents indicated they would return to South Ayrshire for a break within 12 months.

Hillier Hopkins LLP 2016 Golf Survey Report for Members' Clubs – Part 2

Most members' clubs continue to have no driving range

Many members' clubs still have no driving range, but the 43% in 2016 that do, is a recovery from the decrease in 2015. Members' club yearly driving range income continues to be typically up to £5,000 for just over 70% of clubs, a small rise from the 68% reported in 2015. However, there has been a decrease in those members' clubs that earn over £10,000 from their driving range, falling from 14% in 2015 to 8% in 2016.

Fewer members' clubs than proprietary clubs have an academy area

In 2016 the percentage of members clubs' with an academy area has fallen from 36% to 30%.

Fees & Charges

Standard playing member subscriptions

Membership fees for standard playing members again vary from less than £500 to £1,500+. However, this year there has been a notable increase in subscriptions, with most clubs now charging £1,000-£1,500 and more clubs charging over £1,500.



Social membership charges

The most typical social membership charge was once again £50-£150. However, the percentage paying this amount (58%) is now recovering to the level of 2014 (61%) after it fell to 34% in 2015.

More clubs with rising entrance fees

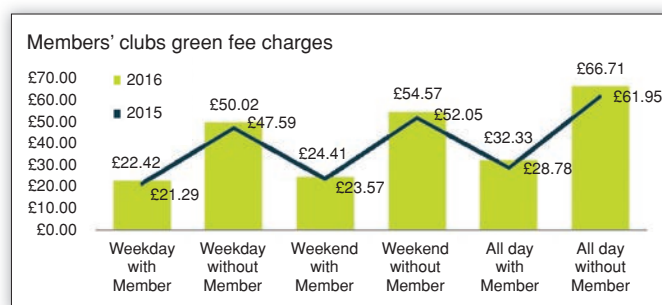
Similarly, entrance fees are charged by 65% of members' clubs, which is close to the level of 2014 (66%) after falling to 49% last year. The fees range from £25 to £4,500 and the average of £1,255 is close to that reported in 2015.

14% of members' clubs who charge an entrance fee plan to increase this fee.

As in previous years, few clubs currently without entrance fees propose implementing one, highlighting demand as the key aspect which would impact upon this decision. However, this year increasing emphasis is also placed on membership levels as having an influence on this decision.

Slightly higher green fee charges at members' clubs

Average green fee charges are shown below, across weekdays, weekends and all day use, both with and without members. These are similar to those of 2015, but are slightly higher across all categories.

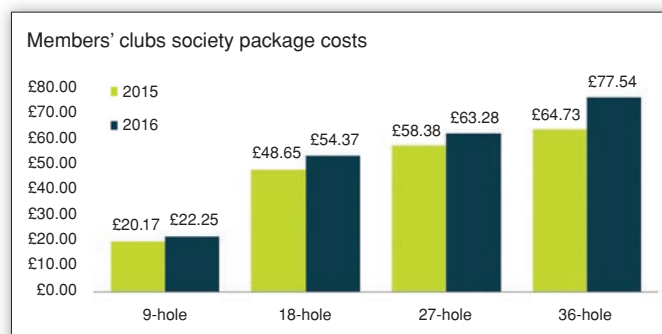


Steady green fee incomes at members' clubs

Incomes from green fees again range from zero to over £1,000,000. This year there are a similar number of clubs to 2015 at the higher income range of £140,000+. However, more clubs have increased income from the lower range of under £60,000, such that 44% of clubs now earn between £60,000-£140,000, compared to 39% in 2015.

Society packages and their costs

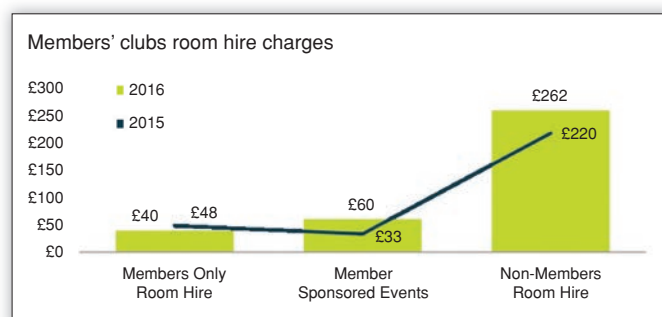
Many members clubs' offer society packages, with average costs shown in the chart below. In all cases the costs show an increase on the rates for 2015. The figures suggest that the difference between proprietary club and members' club society packages is diminishing.



The vast majority of members clubs' offering society packages continue to feel that two aspects impact most significantly on society packages – the time of year/season (90%) and the catering package level (71%). It is also evident this year that the time of day influences these packages (34%).

Average room & facility hire

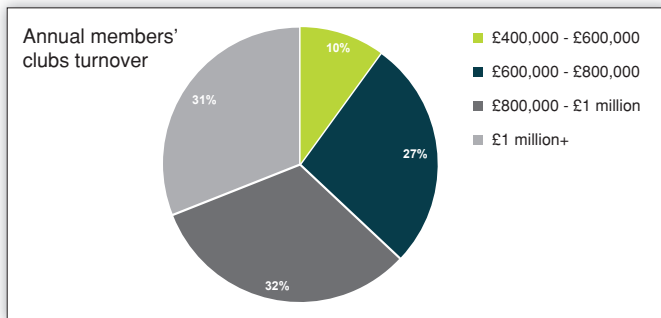
Average approximate rates for room hire within members' clubs are presented below. A large number of clubs indicated that this was free for members. Others indicated price per head facilities and variable charges dependent on numbers and catering. Members' only room hire rates have reduced since 2015, but other hire charges have increased since last year.



Financial Information

Most clubs with a turnover of £800,000-£1 million

Members' clubs report turnover levels ranging from £400,000 to £1 million+, with most members' clubs in the £800,000-£1 million category of turnover. Please note the turnover ranges have been changed since last year.



Society income at members' clubs

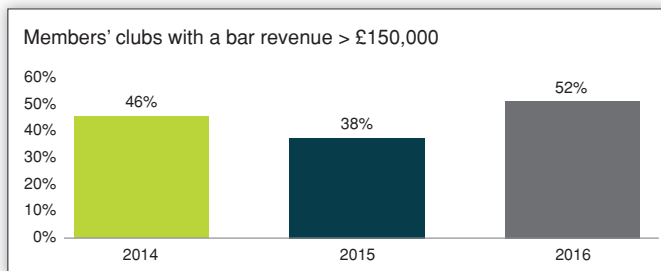
Society income for members clubs continues to be most frequently in the range £20,000-£40,000. However, this year the percentage of members' clubs with this amount of income has risen from 28% to 37%.

Reducing society surplus/increasing deficit

In members' clubs, the average society surplus figure has reduced significantly from the 2015 amount of £50,000 to £34,100 this year. The average society deficit had reduced last year from £22,600 in 2014 to £16,330, but it is now back at a similar level to 2014, with the average 2016 deficit being £23,250.

Increasing levels of bar revenue and activity

The importance of bar usage as an income stream should not be underestimated. Bar revenue has fluctuated over the last few years, but 2016 has seen a recovery with the percentage of members' clubs taking in excess of £150,000 now exceeding 2014 levels.

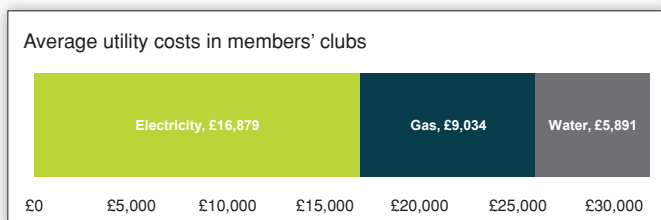


Average margins and rate costs this year were:

- Gross margin 57%
- Net profit 23%
- Rateable value £106,177
- Rate cost £38,090

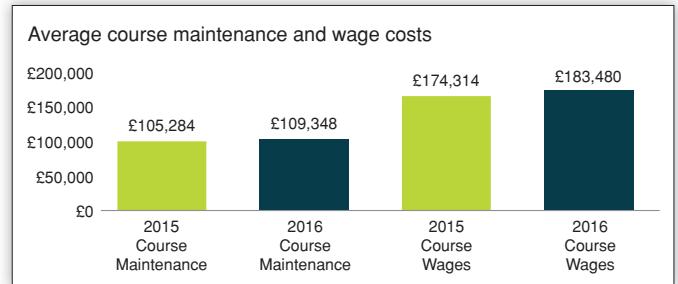
Utility costs

Average utility costs vary significantly across members' clubs. However, averages are as follows – with all costs being very close to the amounts reported in 2015.



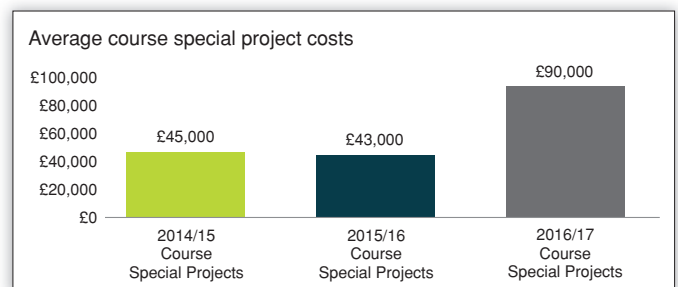
Average course maintenance and wage costs

Both maintenance costs and wages have increased slightly this year, to stand at £109,348 and £183,480 respectively.



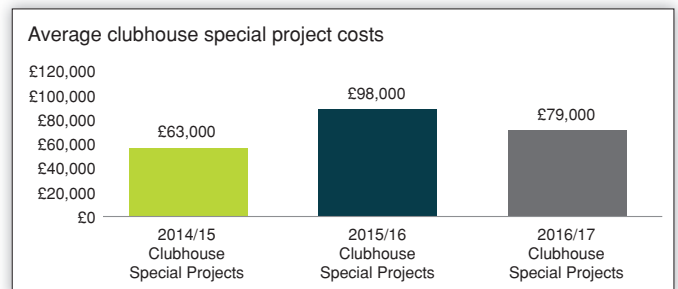
Average current and anticipated course special project costs

In overall terms spend is slightly down on the previous year's special project course costs, falling from £45,000 in 2015 to £43,000 currently. However, this is expected to more than double next year to £90,000.



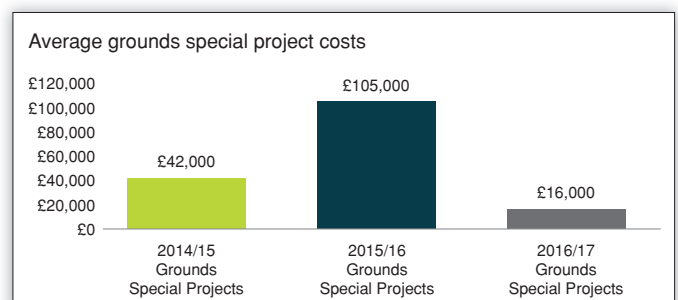
Average current and anticipated clubhouse special project costs

In overall terms spend has significantly increased on previous years on special project course costs, rising from £63,000 in 2015 to £98,000 currently. Interestingly, in 2015 the forecast spend on clubhouse special projects in 2016 was only £31,000. Spend for 2017 is expected to fall from this year's level to below £80,000.



Average current and anticipated grounds special project costs

After doubling spend on grounds special project costs between 2014 and 2015, this year the spend of £105,000 has again doubled compared to the 2015 levels. However, this figure is expected to fall substantially in the following year.



Continued in the March issue

The Visitor Experience

Jeremy Ellwood stresses the need to set your Club apart with a good visitor experience that often starts long before a visitor sets foot in your clubhouse...

The visitor or customer experience is very important, isn't it? Practically every company you engage with these days will want to know how well they did or didn't do at the end of proceedings via an optional telephone or online customer satisfaction survey. I must confess, such surveys irritate me a little. I'll probably only respond if something hasn't gone well, so if there are others like me out there, many companies must end up with slightly skewed feedback. But there's probably more to be gained by learning what you are doing wrong than right.

Over the years many golf clubs have got the visitor experience wrong, particularly in the 'years of plenty' when there were more would-be visitors than tee times. Some Clubs either were – or gave the impression they were – not overly concerned about their visitors, who were perhaps tolerated rather than embraced.

Those days are, of course, almost universally gone, and in today's competitive marketplace, a good visitor experience is critical if the Club is to reap the benefit of repeat bookings or word-of-mouth recommendations, rather than see the customers of today become the customers of somewhere else tomorrow.

Bad experiences certainly linger. Let me recount the tale of my first visit to a Sussex coast course some 20 years ago, which had previously been quite exclusive but had recently joined the two-for-one brigade, presumably out of economic necessity. I say this, for clearly the members we encountered didn't want the likes of us there! I was a member of the AGCS at the time and had kindly been offered courtesy while my two playing companions were enjoying the new two-for-one offer. In other words, we were only paying one green fee.

Some members got wind of this in the pro shop, clearly took umbrage, and then spent most of the morning trying to hound us off the course. Over lunch, one of my companions pointed out the course record scorecard hanging on the wall and, perhaps foolishly, took it down to show me his signature in the marker's space. One of the members came storming over and accused us of stealing Club property.

I didn't play the afternoon round with my friends. I didn't go back for many years. In fact, I probably would never have gone back but for an event I was playing in. You could, of course, argue that it wasn't the Club's fault, but clearly a number of its members were not happy with the more open-door visitor policy and were willing to take suitable action to convey their displeasure. Bad visitor experiences – regardless of whose fault they are – are not good for business.

What constitutes a good visitor experience then? Before relating a few good experiences, or points of difference that I have enjoyed recently, for me, the visitor experience begins long before you walk through the clubhouse door on the day of your visit. It starts with the initial communication with the Club, and very often with its website.

If the website doesn't impress me or make it as straightforward as possible to access the information I'm after (typically green fees, tee-time availability and what the course looks like), chances are I'll never actually progress on to the visitor phase – I'll end up elsewhere. Often it is easy to navigate through to the info I want; sometimes it requires an Enigma machine to crack the code. Sometimes Clubs do portray their core asset well in their website photography; still, all too often they do not.

I think if I were a secretary I would rather be at an average Club with excellent course photography than an excellent Club with average course photography. I would certainly do away with visitor car parks and visitor changing rooms. I know there are differing views on this, and it is a balance between giving members something extra for their loyalty and making visitors feel fully welcome. For me, the scales should be tipped in favour of the latter, especially if visitor revenue is critical to a Club's balance sheet. I know I would never want any Club that I'm a member of to ask visitors and members to go their separate ways in car park or clubhouse. It would be interesting to hear your views?

For me, the visitor experience often boils down to staff and their attitude, so it's vitally important that all front-of-house staff realise just what a pivotal role they play. Explaining where to go, entry/exit codes, dress code (if it isn't obvious) = welcome!

One of my best experiences last year came at *Cockermouth*. The staff couldn't have been more welcoming and helpful, pointing out where to go and advising me that if I got out quickly I'd be ahead of the large group waiting in the bar. More importantly, when I went in afterwards for a drink, the chap behind the bar was happy to chat and tell me more about the Club, its history and how it was doing in these testing times for smaller Clubs. That's often all I want – someone who's as happy to chat to me as he or she is to the members.



There's nothing worse than a steward who's off-hand with those he doesn't know, while putting on a jolly 'best pals' act with the regulars – even more galling if the visitor gets to witness this Jekyll and Hyde transformation. Consistency is the name of the game in customer service – there's no room for favouritism.

That wasn't the only time I enjoyed such a welcome last year – *Strathpeffer, Fortrose & Rosemarkie, Fort William* and *Sedbergh* all stood out too. While I appreciate that I'm often visiting in a *Golf Monthly* capacity, that's not always the case. Indeed, my first game this year was at a local course I'd not previously played – *Hassocks* – which was offering a very good '18 holes and lunch' deal.

The interaction was excellent from start to finish, whether with the pro, the chef or the bar staff, even at a Club likely to be reduced to nine holes in the not too distant future if a planned housing development goes ahead. They knew what deal we'd booked on and politely asked us to pre-order our lunches before we went out if possible, before showing us round as first-time visitors.

When it comes to points of difference, it's often the little things that really register, starting with a reinforcement of the above...

- The pro shop staff knowing who you are (if you've booked) with a 'welcome speech' and helpful instructions (*Ladybank* a great example). Then the offering for sale of course planner, ball markers and so on, suitably 'branded' (by *The GCS* – Open Supporter **Eagle Promotions?**).

- Halving the bacon rolls and serving them on a long dish as at *Goodwood* – much easier to eat and no one knows how many you've had (not that we're encouraging greed). The hound 'branded' coffee mugs decorated with the Kennel's (aka the Clubhouse) former occupants.

- Fish and chips being served by the Lady Captain in *The GCS* qualifier at *Seascale*. Club officials who are prepared to go above and beyond to welcome visitors should always be applauded, as they clearly 'get it'.

- The names of your fourball printed out and stuck in the ground next to four sets of clubs at *Renaissance*. We may not want the full American experience, but who doesn't like being made to feel just a little bit more special?

- 'Different' tee markers, from pieces of wood to pine cones, models or emblems relevant to your Club (perhaps from the Club logo). Little things like this convey that the Club pays real attention to detail.

- The selection of perfumes in the Ladies at *Sunningdale*.

One final thing from me – I also like Clubs that offer a 'phone through from the 9th tee' ordering facility for the halfway hut. It keeps things moving while still allowing you your little pit-stop!

What are you most pleased about at your Club that makes the 'difference' (that you are prepared to share!) or what have you been most impressed by on your travels? Let us know via email or perhaps on our Twitter account [@GolfClubSec...](#) [GCS](#)

Continued from page 112...

Ensure irrigation and moisture delivery treatments are satisfactory. Do not dry down shallow rooted turf, and make sure volumetric moisture content values are comfortable i.e. circa 15-20% during periods of heat stress. This is particularly important during the spring and early summer.

Anthracnose is a condition of under fed turf and low nitrogen levels. Balanced nitrogen delivery is essential to ensure plants are healthy and able to resist disease. Always remember that most of a plant's nutrient is taken up in solution so if moisture management is compromised it is likely nutrition will be compromised as well. Be flexible and use different types of nitrogen in different forms to maintain the correct balance. Prolonged low or ineffective feeding will create a population of susceptible host plants.

Finally make sure surface profiles are aerated regularly. Anthracnose is spread in films of water. These films are unable to form if surfaces are broken regularly. Sarel rollers or star slitters are often all that are necessary to achieve this key objective if general profile conditions are healthy. Golfers needn't know the work has been done. No need to use a sledgehammer if a small mallet will do!!

Anthracnose is ignored at your peril. It is important to use this checklist to protect against it. If the fundamentals of agronomy are followed anthracnose should not be a major problem. This cultural checklist is even more important when one accepts that anthracnose does not respond well to fungicide treatment. The arsenal of chemicals available to control fusarium do not work well against this disease, and if the basic causal mechanisms are not identified and corrected it will continue to remove the weaker plants in the sward until they are. [GCS](#)

NOTICEBOARD

2017 Ping Welsh Junior Tour

Entries are now open for the 2017 Ping Welsh Junior Tour.

Thursday 13th April	<i>Parc Golf Club</i>
Thursday 20th April	<i>Mold Golf Club</i>
Sunday 9th July	<i>Carmarthen Golf Club</i>
Sunday 16th July	<i>Abergele Golf Club</i>
Wednesday 9th August	<i>Lakeside (Garthym) Golf Club</i>
Sunday 1st October	<i>St Pierre Golf Club</i>

It is retaining the format which worked well last year so the mixed U8, U10 and U12 age groups will play a modified

stableford competition over 9 holes on shortened courses. The U14 age group will also be a mixed category this year and will be run as a normal stableford event.

The Skills Challenges proved popular with the players last season and so it will again be running them at all the Junior Tour events. This year however, it will also be involving family members and guardians who are present at the events.

For further information visit: www.golfunionwales.org/championships

Alistair Beggs BSc Hons, Head of Agronomy STRI, Agronomist to R&A Championship Committee

The abiding memory of a trip I made to the north east of the United States in the early summer of 2004 is the speed of surface that some of the top Clubs were managing to achieve. Greens were running regularly at 11-12ft on the stimpmeter and were frankly frightening to play on. It was not unusual to encounter mowing heights of around 2mm in order for the greenkeeping teams to deliver on these goals. Managing turf this close to the edge always has a price, and here in this sometimes warm and humid environment, anthracnose basal rot disease was becoming an ever more formidable foe! Most of the greens in this part of the world comprise a mix of annual meadow grass and bent (very similar to the botanical makeup of greens in the UK), and the meadow grass component of the turf was becoming ever more susceptible to this fungal problem.

In 2008 Uddin, Solke and Livingston "Vertical mowing and Mowing Height affect anthracnose basal rot" proved that intensive verticutting and low mowing renders meadow grass dominated fine turf more vulnerable to basal rot. It is therefore disappointing to see so many UK courses following the same route of decline already seen in the US. We need to change the way we manage, and quickly, if the anthracnose problems seen during the summer and autumn of 2016 are to be avoided.

Anthracnose often plays 'second fiddle' to fusarium in the UK when it comes to problematic disease conditions on putting greens. Admittedly, fusarium is normally more aggressive, but it is also easier to identify and often treat, given the range of fungicides we have available. Anthracnose on the other hand can often be overlooked, a diffuse weakening and thinning of the turf often blamed on inadequate nutrition, or poor sunlight penetration. The longer it is left untreated the worse it gets, and the slight thinning and discolouration can turn into a general loss of grass and a serious decline in putting standards. As always, returning the turf to good health in such an intensively played and managed environment is not always straightforward. This disease must not be taken for granted, particularly given the ever-increasing expectations of golfers. If we are not careful this condition is likely to become more of a problem, and a serious one in the years ahead.

As is often the case with disease, the origins lie in a breakdown of good basic husbandry. In 2016 a dry April and May gave way to deluges in June. This combination of dry then wet periods of weather are perfect for the development of this condition. Drought is a grass killer, so making sure turf has enough moisture during the early part of the season (without overwatering) is critical. Modern moisture probes can help greenkeepers a great deal in terms of managing moisture levels and ensuring the turf remains healthy. Not doing so weakens it, potentially predisposing the turf to pathogenic attack.

Anthracnose is a fungal condition, and like many fungi it thrives in moist and damp conditions. While the prior drought doesn't spread it, it helps create a population of compromised host plants which are attacked when the rains return and moisture persists around the crown of the plant. This quickly leads to the develop-

ment of basal rot, and the discolouration and thinning of turf which can last throughout the season. This cycle of decline happened too often last year and had a significant impact on the performance of golf greens in this country.

So, what can we do to prevent further attacks? My initial advice is to avoid falling into the speed trap to which too many golf clubs are succumbing. There is nothing good about extreme speed and having the fastest greens in the area. This will come at a cost, and increased disease susceptibility is one of them. Be sensible – mow at or around 4mm on greens. If everything else is right this should give perfectly reasonable putting speeds for most of the season. Additionally, watch the rolling. Rolling can be very helpful but it should never be practiced more than two or three times a week. Daily rolling is a recipe for disaster, not only in terms of sealing the surface but in terms of physical abrasion as well.

Avoid aggressive verticutting, particularly on weakened turf early in the season. Verticutting has a place at certain times of the year but it is stressful and has been proven to encourage anthracnose in certain conditions.

Do all that is possible to move the botanical blend away from meadow grass and towards bent. Bent is far less susceptible to anthracnose than meadow grass.

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Anthracbasalrot on individual plant

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COMING SOON
• **RECYCLING IN GOLF CLUBS**