

# THE GOLF CLUB SECRETARY

Briefing and practical advice for golf club administrators

## From commercial to private after 19 years

*Scott Clark, general manager at Boyce Hill Golf Club in Essex since April 2018, spent the previous 19 years managing commercial golf operations, primarily for The Club Company. Here, he reflects on the transition from commercial set-up to private members' club, and how he feels his commercial experience has proved of benefit in his new role.*

Having started my career in golf as a PGA professional, I gained an incredible opportunity at the age of 25 to manage my first golf club, and 21 years later I am managing my seventh.

Having 'learned my trade', so to speak, within the commercial world, it prepared me for generating revenue and prudent cost-saving, while providing me with in-depth knowledge about driving P&L the right way, with expectations to deliver a healthy profit year in, year out.

The words EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization), daily membership sales, prospect daily contacts and hotel occupancy were soon substituted for governance, non profit-making, VAT exemptions and greens chairman following my move from the world of commercial golf to the private sector.

Having managed commercially orientated clubs for 19 years, with some exceeding seven-figure profits, why did I decide to take a walk over to the world of private golf? The answer, plain and simple, is that having worked for a leading commercial operator, I was given additional responsibilities to manage bigger and bigger clubs, but this was taking me further and further away from what mattered most to me, and why I got into the game in the first place - the people.



*Scott Clark made the leap from commercial to private in 2018*

Managing the commercial entity of a business can cause you to almost dehumanise yourself. It is obviously revenue-driven, and, in most cases, managed by a strict set of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) - days spent monitoring sales planners, analysing sales trends, generating lead pools. The private members' club focus has a refreshing contrast - to spend more time raising our profile with the membership and having a significant impact on the improvement of the golf course.

Having accepted the position of general manager at Boyce Hill, I was delighted to hear how progressive the club's ambitions appeared. It was an exciting proposition, knowing that I could have an impact by introducing what I had learned over the previous 19 years to help carry on the progression that had already been started at the club.

## Quote OF THE MONTH

*"What other people may find in poetry or art museums, I find in the flight of a good drive."*

**ARNOLD PALMER**

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I think that in moving over from the commercial side to the private, my apprehensions were mainly:

- How would I be able to do my job having previously had total autonomy day to day?
- Would I be allowed to carry out what I needed to do in order to achieve the club's objectives?
- Would I be able to understand the club's ethos and embrace the traditions while still being able to move the club forward?
- Would I be accepted by the membership?

Fortunately, I established very early on that I had made the correct choice thanks to an exceptionally forward-thinking board led by an open-minded and direct chairman. The club is very much

working to a 'club within a business' philosophy rather than a 'business within a club' one.

I can honestly say that my 20 years' experience within a commercial operation has stood me in good stead with regard to knowledge of the business, driving revenues, managing a sales process and being responsible for up to 100 staff. All of this, of course, I would not be able to put into practice if it was suppressed by the board or executive committee.

So, the right decision to move from commercial to private? Absolutely! Being able to make a difference every day is rewarding, but you must never forget where you came from and who taught you, which is why you are able to add value on the other side of golf's governance fence. [GCS](#)

# ON COURSE

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GCS

## Golf in a COVID world

*Golf environment consultant, Dr Keith Duff, assesses the impact of COVID-19 on the game and how its consequences may help to spark an environmentally beneficial rethink about the way golf clubs operate and care for their courses moving forward.*

As life returns to some semblance of normality after the challenges of the past few months, I find myself seeing subtle differences in how golfers and golf club administrators perceive things. In my experience, golfers are slipping back into a mindset where they can play golf pretty much as before (barring differences to do with flagsticks, bunker rakes and so on), while those with responsibilities for managing clubs are much more focused on risk management and financial health into the future. A lot of golfers still appear (thankfully) to be in the mindset of, "Isn't it great that we can get out onto the course again?" and are showing more tolerance than usual for the slight imperfections that may exist (in their eyes) in how the course is presented and plays.

Given the extremes of weather that were experienced pre- and during lockdown (the wettest February and driest May on record in many parts of the country), it's probably as well that there weren't any golfers out on the course. More importantly, the fact that The R&A, the national golf federations, and BIGGA had built good relationships with the Parliamentary Golf Group and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport over recent years was instrumental in the golf industry being able to convince government that greenkeepers should be allowed to stay at work and deliver essential maintenance during lockdown.

Without this, leaving golf courses fallow for three months would have created huge problems, which would have taken months to overcome. Getting greens back to a high-quality surface would have been a major task if no maintenance had been permitted. I wonder how many of our members appreciate this?

Interestingly, lockdown also put the impact of golfers out on the course into perspective. The restricted greens teams found that their productivity was significantly increased without the

disturbance caused by having to share space with golfers when trying to work on the course. There seems to have been considerable variation among clubs in the numbers of staff who stayed at work and, while the initial focus was on essential mowing, basic nutrition and irrigation, many teams found they were able to achieve more than anticipated in the absence of golfer disturbance. Also, swards have generally strengthened, and worn areas been able to repair, as courses were rested. And some clubs took the opportunity to carry out repair work or small-scale development work that would not otherwise have been possible at this time of the year.

Naturalisation has been another outcome in many places. Reduced cutting of roughs has often led to the appearance of plant species now rarely seen on golf courses, while carry roughs have often been re-established. Course definition has improved as a result. There have been some (thankfully rare) unfortunate consequences, such as the decision made by Bristol City Council to close nine holes on its Ashton Court golf course until mid-July as a result of green-winged orchid appearing in the uncut fairways. But generally, the flourishing of wildlife within the roughs has enhanced the setting and context of the playing areas without impacting on the playing of golf.

An unexpected consequence was the enhanced use of some golf courses during lockdown by the general public, especially in Scotland, for exercise. There were some concerns that this might cause problems when golfers returned, but this doesn't appear to have been realised. Instead, there seems to be increased public awareness that golf courses are pleasant green spaces, often with good-quality environmental features.

A bigger challenge for the industry may well arise from the tougher economic times that are inevitable as the UK starts to

recover from lockdown (second spikes notwithstanding). On the one hand, the initial restriction of play to golf club members, rather than visitors, seems to have caused some nomadic golfers to realise the benefits of being a member of a club, leading to influxes of new members. On the other, as the economic impacts of job losses, falls in investment income and other economic pressures begin to bite, membership renewals in the future may start to reduce, and this, along with reductions in food and beverage income as a result of social distancing requirements, implies that club income is likely to become more pressured.

It seems to me that finding ways to become more resilient and adaptable in how golf clubs are managed will become ever more necessary. This is especially true of the golf course itself, where moving towards more sustainable management approaches, less reliant on high-input regimes, can offer financial advantages. Interestingly, golf course architects are now recognising that this is an area where they can provide practical advice to clubs, with the European Institute of Golf Course Architects taking a lead. In these circumstances, the need to manage golfer expectations is only going to increase, and ensuring that the general manager, the course manager and the professional are on the same page in this respect is vital in raising golfer awareness of these fundamental issues.

Progress on The R&A-led Golf Course 2030 initiative has been impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions, leading to the deferral of completion dates for the many individual projects within the programme. But the importance of building in resilience and adaptability to golf clubs and golf courses has become even clearer, with growing awareness that issues such as water management and worm control are ones that will require more imaginative solutions in the future. With up to 60% of golf clubs in England drawing their irrigation water from the mains, and the cost of water likely to



Reduced cutting of rough has led to increased naturalisation on many courses

rise steadily as the impacts of climate change bite ever harder, the need to consider the capture and storage of rainfall and surface water can only increase. Paradoxically, clubs are also becoming more and more aware that drainage issues are becoming more pressing. Many drainage systems on golf courses are very old, and are often blocked by tree roots, but we are all familiar with the challenges that arise when it's proposed to remove trees.

Worm control problems aren't going to go away either, with the likelihood that legislative restrictions will become tighter. Increased recognition of the importance of cultural management will become more important, especially actions to reduce levels of organic matter in the sward. Removal of clippings from fairways and use of sand dressings are likely to prove beneficial, with growing acknowledgement that areas managed as fine grass tend to have fewer worm problems than coarser grass areas.

Lockdown, and the consequences which have followed, has caused all sectors of society to look again at how things are best done into the future, and golf is no different. Using this opportunity to drive some fundamental re-thinking about how clubs operate could well prove beneficial, and it would be a shame to pass it by. [GCS](#)

## Conservation greenkeeping on inland courses: Hollinwell plays a leading role

*This article, first published on the FineGolf website ([www.finegolf.co.uk](http://www.finegolf.co.uk)), has been reproduced with kind permission in our August and September newsletters. FineGolf is a campaign that seeks to raise the profile of the 'traditional classic running-game' in golf course design and upkeep, in comparison with 'lush, target-golf' and encourages club members to support their local greenkeepers in following sustainable principles.*

How has Hollinwell (home of Notts Golf Club) achieved its steady climb up the course rankings, to return to the upper echelons of golf and now be considered by *FineGolf* as the finest inland course in Great Britain and Ireland?

The simple answer is that it has implemented:

- Conservation greenkeeping
- A regeneration of a heathland environment
- The recreation of running golf on firm, fine-grassed turf

This is a story about the enjoyment and tribulations encountered as the club has broken through to the sunny uplands of being an Open Championship Final Qualifying venue and hosting the Brabazon Trophy for the fifth time, while giving its membership and visitors the highest joy-to-be-alive rating. Notts will surely now become a future Walker Cup venue.

Hollinwell and Ganton, even though they are inland and their sites have for two millennia been open heathland, are similar to seaside links in that they are blessed with having a few inches of humus lying above sand. This profile provides well-draining poor soil on which wiry, deep-rooting, perennial grasses, those that are the most enjoyable for golf, love to grow.

This site also has the design advantage of considerable movement in the height of the land within the delightful contours that weave through the Mosely and Robin Hood hills, a part of the ancient Sherwood Forest.

The late Dr Ian McLachlan was the original driving force behind returning the course from what had become an almost parkland style, back to its original state of fast-running heathland.

As at many other courses, nobody realised that a slow invasion of self-set trees had occurred during the late twentieth century,

which was in addition to the planting of 1,100 trees gifted to the Duke of Devonshire – a Notts GC member – by the Duke of Sutherland in 1938. This led to a reduction of light and air, creating poor growth in the fairways and greens and causing an increase in the proportion of annual meadow weed grass (*poa annua*).

Photographs of the course from the early 1900s show how few trees were present even up to the 1950s.

In addition, mistakes were made with: excessively fine top-dressing reducing the greens' drainage; the use of peat on the fairways; and the spreading of manure, all of which resulted in softer annual meadow weed grass greens and lush fairways, limiting the running game so characteristic of its heathland heritage.

The club leadership came to recognise that there were two requirements fundamental to successful change:

- To retain the correct technical advice
- To communicate with, educate and gain support from the membership for a vision that would take a number of years to achieve

Therefore, in 2010, Gordon Irvine MG was retained, following his success at other clubs in working with greenkeeping teams to implement a fine grasses regime, using the Jim Arthur approach.

Phil Stain, the course manager with 20 years' experience at Hollinwell, became committed to the new non-chemical, simple programme of rigorous aeration, monitoring of humidity, overseeding and top-dressing with 80/20 sand/fendress, while

slow release organic products like hoof and horn replaced the use of inorganic salt-based fertilisers.

The British weather is ever-changing, and this creates the most difficult aspect of GB&I greenkeeping. Not only does it give a cool season climate that the best golf grasses such as the fescues (*festuca rubra*) and browntop bents (*agrostis tenuis*) appreciate but it has also always brought very challenging periods of drought and heavy precipitation to disrupt the best laid plans.

### Membership communication

The club sensibly invited Irvine to give talks to the members in the evening with a clear vision for the future, allowing open questions met with straightforward answers.

From a somewhat sceptical beginning, as the course improved with the best greens becoming smoother and truer, the struggle to convince became easier. Gradually a core group of members grew who understood what and why change was needed. They naturally spread the word and when greenkeeping setbacks inevitably happened, the programme was not reconsidered but was seen as needing to be accelerated.

Behind all of this change was a club leadership composed of a secretary, chair of green, finance controller and several captains that maintained a consistent approach across the last ten years. This gave the greenkeeping team the ability to ride out the lows while measuring objectively the increasing quality and performance of the course.

*To be continued in the September newsletter* 

## NOTICEBOARD

### Relaunch of Kanda Golf's management support services

Jerry Kilby, former CEO of the Club Managers Association of Europe (CMAE), has relaunched his Kanda Golf company, offering management support to golf clubs, suppliers and service providers to the golf industry. Among the services available are: revenue audits; governance reviews; interim management services; help with the creation and implementation of strategic plans; and sales training for golf club staff.

"As golf clubs look to re-build their businesses after COVID-19... it will be very important to ensure the club has an effective governance structure and strategic plan to follow over the coming years, to ensure financial stability and a successful future," Kilby commented on the relaunch. "I am fortunate to have secured the services of numerous experienced golf club managers, who can help golf clubs with their specialist skills," he continued. "Each of these brings different knowledge and experience to the table, and together, we provide cost-effective, practical and extremely relevant advisory services to golf clubs."

For further information, contact **Jerry Kilby** on **07821 908597**, by email to [jerry@kandagolf.com](mailto:jerry@kandagolf.com) or visit the website [www.kandagolf.com](http://www.kandagolf.com)

### Reduced VAT and 'Eat Out to Help Out' schemes

The government has recently announced two schemes to help out the hospitality industry, and golf clubs that serve food could benefit from both. The first is a temporary reduction in the rate of VAT from 20% to 5% on food and non-alcoholic beverages sold for on-premises consumption, plus hot takeaway food and hot takeaway non-alcoholic beverages. The lower rate will apply from July 15th, 2020 until January 12th, 2021.

The 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme has also been launched by the government to encourage people to eat out in August and help stimulate the economy. Businesses that provide food for 'consumption at table', have their own or shared dining facilities and were registered with their local authority as a food business before July 7th, 2020 are eligible to register.

Once registered, they must offer 50% off meals and non-alcoholic drinks Monday to Wednesday each week in August, then apply for a reimbursement from the government of the 50% up to a maximum of £10 per head.

Full details of both schemes can be found by using the search facility at [www.gov.uk/search](http://www.gov.uk/search) 

# Returning to work from lockdown

*Alistair Smith, Chief Executive of the NGCAA, looks at some of the legal obligations placed upon golf club managers as clubhouses, bars and restaurants open up again after the shutdown.*

## Duty of care

At all times, employers have a duty of care for their staff: this comes under the common law from which an employer has to take reasonable care for the safety of those people its operations might reasonably affect. In addition, there is a statutory duty imposed by the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974, which imposes a duty on every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his or her employees. As well as its employees, golf clubs will owe a duty of care to those other people who use and visit the course and clubhouse, namely members, visitors and guests, as well as any outside contract workers.

The net effect of the duty of care on employers is that they must:

- Carry out risk assessments and keep those assessments under review
- Set up a safe system of work and then ensure that system is carried out (including the introduction of new work practices or provision of personal protective equipment)
- Prevent or control exposure to risk
- Provide any appropriate training on new practices or equipment.

## Government guidance

The health and safety obligations are heightened as a result of COVID-19 and we have seen the recent, "Our plan to rebuild: the UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy", which contains a step by step approach to allow businesses to reopen and for workplaces to follow COVID-19 secure guidelines.

The guidance should be considered alongside local public health and safety requirements and guidance and legislation in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The UK government had produced detailed guidance to cover **12 different types of workplace** settings, designed to help employers undertake COVID-19 risk assessment. This is supported by **5 key steps** to working safely:

### 1. Carry out and document COVID-19 risk assessment

- Carry out risk assessment in line with HSE guidance - how can the risk be avoided? What are the risks of putting people together?
- Consult with workers / unions
- Share results of risk assessment

### 2. Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures

- Encourage practice of NHS handwashing guidance
- Provide hand sanitisers around the workplace and adequate handwashing facilities
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of objects / surfaces
- Enhanced cleaning for busy areas

### 3. Help people to work from home

- Discuss working from home arrangements
- Ensure employees have the right equipment
- Include in communications
- Consider mental and physical wellbeing

### 4. Maintain social distancing

- Visible signs reminding workers of social distancing
- Avoid shared work stations
- Floor tape / markings to help maintain distance
- One-way traffic
- Visitors by appointment only

### 5. Manage transmission risk (where distancing not possible)

- Does the activity need to continue?
- Keep time as short as possible
- Screens and barriers
- Avoid face to face working
- Staggered arrival / departure times
- Limit contact - split teams

## Restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaway services - specific guidance

With reference to the re-opening of clubhouses, the hospitality industry is helped by the government guidance giving scope to relax the two-metre social distancing rules in certain instances in favour of a "one metre plus" rule. This means that people must remain one metre apart while taking other mitigating steps to reduce the risk of transmission, such as wearing face coverings.

One of the 12 workplace-specific guidance documents relates to restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaway services and includes:

- Keeping a temporary record of customers for 21 days to assist with NHS Track and Trace requests
- Providing clear guidance on arrival of social distancing and hygiene measures in place at the venue
- Utilising contactless payment wherever possible
- Calculating the maximum number of customers it is safe to accommodate, taking into account either the two-metre social distancing rule or new "one metre plus" rule.
- Where PPE is already being used, that should continue. However, workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE and risk assessment should reflect the limited role such equipment will play.
- Table service should be offered with a designated server wherever possible. In instances where bar or counter service is unavoidable, customers need to be prevented from remaining at the bar after ordering.

The full guidance can be read here: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb96e8e86650c278b077616/Keeping-workers-and-customers-safe-during-covid-19-restaurants-pubs-bars-takeaways-230620.pdf>

### Employment law – some possible issues with staff

There could be a range of possible claims arising from the return from lockdown, with the most likely potential claims being:

1. Unfair dismissal / Constructive dismissal
2. Health and Safety claims (a) detriment (b) automatic unfair dismissal
3. Whistleblowing protection
4. Discrimination

### Vulnerable staff

- (a) Clinically extremely vulnerable (those who have been advised to shield)
- (b) Clinically vulnerable:
  - (i) Individuals aged 70 and over (regardless of medical conditions)
  - (ii) Individuals aged 70 and over with an underlying medical condition
  - (iii) Pregnant women

Where vulnerable staff are returning to work, golf clubs should carry out a careful assessment of risk. Can the staff be offered a different role temporarily to reduce contact with others? Clubs should consider specific duties for those with protected characteristics (e.g. reasonable adjustments for disabled employees / suspension on full pay for pregnant women). In general though, we advise that clubs adopt a cautious approach so as to reduce the risk of constructive dismissal and discrimination claims.

### Employees living with a vulnerable person

The shielding guidance for those sharing a house with a vulnerable person says:

“The rest of your household do not need to start shielding themselves, but they should do what they can to support you in shielding and to carefully follow guidance on social distancing.”


Employers should therefore adopt a sympathetic approach here. Suggestions to assist with employees living with a vulnerable person might be home working, furlough (where legally permitted), annual leave or unpaid leave. If such an employee went on to refuse any alternatives here, it would be dangerous to assume that it is a simple case of refusing to follow a reasonable and lawful management request. We recommend taking legal advice in any situation where an employee is refusing to return because of concerns over safety.

### Employees with worries and anxiety about returning to work

These employees may not be vulnerable or live with someone who is, but caution should be exercised when dealing with them. Again, golf clubs should look at options for working from home, flexible working or furlough (where legally permitted). Employers should explain the measures that are being put in place. Query if the person is vulnerable and is there any discrimination angle? The answers to these questions could throw a different light on the situation and, again, we recommend that clubs take advice before proceeding.

### Childcare issues

Some employees may have been on furlough for some time now, at home with their children while schools have been closed. With school holidays now upon us, the return to work might leave some families without childcare. Employers should consider more flexible homeworking arrangements, such as working different hours, part-time work, agreeing that the employee may not be able to work a full day or a full week, reducing work targets and being flexible about deadlines where possible.

Again, employers should adopt a flexible approach in order to reduce the prospect of claims and, as always, please get in touch with [alistair@ngcaa.co.uk](mailto:alistair@ngcaa.co.uk) or call **01886812943** for any further advice. 

## Protecting your golf club: risk management advice from Bluefin Sport

This year's Ryder Cup may have succumbed to the virus, but many will remember all too well an unfortunate incident at the 2018 event in Paris when a spectator was struck in the eye by a golf ball hit by Brooks Koepka.

The spectator in question subsequently lost her sight in that eye, and the incident understandably sparked renewed concerns among golf club secretaries and managers, with many pondering, “*What is my club doing to ensure that we are protected in the event of a similar incident occurring?*” Here, our insurance partner, Bluefin Sport, offers its thoughts and expertise on this important matter.

### Niddry Castle Incident

A good place to start is back in 2007 at Niddry Castle Golf Club, an 18-hole parkland course in West Lothian. It was here where an incident similar to the aforementioned situation occurred, in which a golfer, Mr Phee, lost an eye from a stray

shot hit by a Mr Gordon. The claim went to court and the judge held the golfer who hit the shot, Mr Gordon, 70% liable for the incident, with Niddry Castle Golf Club liable for the remaining 30%. In short, the reason for the golf club being 30% liable was due to their failure to place signs at appropriate places on the golf course.

Niddry Castle appealed this decision, and upon further review, the judge amended his verdict and ordered that Niddry Castle was 80% liable with Mr Gordon the remaining 20%. To succinctly sum up, the golf club's failure to warn was a significant failure and of greater magnitude than that of Mr Gordon playing a wayward shot.

### What protective measures can I implement at my golf club?

The above mentioned case was significant at the time and is still talked about to this day. At Bluefin Sport, the vast majority

of claims we deal with are in regard to wayward golf shots causing injury or damage. We always encourage our clients to implement and continually monitor the following points to ensure they are protecting the golf club.

1. The first and most effective measure is to install explicit warning signs around the course where there are foreseeable risks, to draw the attention of golfers. Such signage will likely be heeded by golfers and ensures the golf club is making efforts to keep everyone on the course safe.
2. Secondly, and just as importantly, is to carry out risk assessments of the course. Risk assessments are an excellent method of identifying potential risks or hazards on the golf course, and they ensure that you implement measures to prevent an incident from occurring. This is something which should form part of a golf club's day-to-day duties,

and such risk assessments should be continually addressed and updated where necessary.

3. It is also beneficial to encourage a culture at the golf club where golfers admit to, and report, wayward shots that could have caused injury or damage.

### Would you like more advice?

Bluefin Sport would be delighted to have an informal chat with any golf club secretary who would like some more information on this subject. Please contact **Scott Howe** on **07959 192135** or email [golf@bluefinsport.co.uk](mailto:golf@bluefinsport.co.uk).

We would encourage all golf club secretaries to review their existing insurance arrangements to ensure they are covered in the appropriate areas. Bluefin Sport is able to provide this type of cover as part of the insurance package it offers. **GCS**

## Slip! Slap! Swing! Sun Protection Accreditation

**G**olfers and greenkeepers can be particularly susceptible to melanoma and other forms of skin cancer, which is why in 2019 the Melanoma Fund created the Slip! Slap! Swing! sun protection campaign, a free resource for all in golf. This year, the charity is encouraging golf clubs to get Sun Protection Accredited, in a bid to take skin cancer off the fairways.

There are three good reasons why those who play, or work in, golf are at a particularly high risk of skin cancer:

1. A round of golf can lead to prolonged sun exposure when UV levels are at their strongest, typically from 11am until 3pm from April to September.
2. Many courses offer little shade, and all have highly reflective UV surfaces such as grass, water and sand.
3. Golfers tend not to apply sunscreen frequently enough to avoid greasy grips and club slips.

To tackle this, the Slip! Slap! Swing! campaign seeks to develop a network of Sun Protection Accredited golf clubs to help spread awareness of the risk among members, visitors, and staff. The campaign, supported by major golf organisations in the UK and Ireland, including The R&A, BIGGA, The PGA and all the national associations, is free, with accreditation achieved by pledging five simple steps:

1. Nominate a Sun Pro Ambassador, promoting the campaign to members/staff.
2. Add a sun protection statement to the Terms & Conditions of play or Health & Safety policy.
3. Display awareness posters and promote the campaign internally and externally on social media channels.
4. Ensure sunscreen is available in the club, either for sale or for complimentary use.
5. Display the Sun Protection Accreditation logo, both digitally and in the club.

Michelle Baker, CEO of the Melanoma Fund, explains the goals of the campaign: "We would like to get 250 golf clubs signed up this year, and with over 50 already onboard since the start of

June, including Stoke Park, The Grove and Royal Dornoch, this is a cause that is grabbing attention. We will supply clubs with a sun protection goodie bag and promote their involvement on our social media channels. Our aim is to raise awareness and save lives, but we can only do this with club support."



For full details and to find out more, visit [www.melanoma-fund.co.uk/golf](http://www.melanoma-fund.co.uk/golf)

### Melanoma: Top 10 facts

1. There are around 16,200 new melanoma skin cancer cases in the UK every year, that's 44 every day.
2. Since the early 1990s, melanoma incidence has increased by more than 135% in the UK. Rates in females have doubled and rates in males have almost tripled.
3. Although the cancer is more prevalent in women, deaths from the disease are highest among men.
4. By the time it is diagnosed, around 24% of male cases are terminal as opposed to 15% of female cases because women tend to check themselves more frequently and present at GPs earlier than males.
5. The typical locations of melanoma in men also contribute, with men more likely to develop the disease on the back and the head and neck, where it is tricky to spot.
6. Melanoma incidence also increases with age; almost three-quarters (72%) of male cases occur in those aged over 50.
7. Melanoma may suddenly appear without warning but can also develop from or near an existing mole in the form of a lesion.
8. As it frequently spreads to lymph nodes and most internal organs, early detection and treatment are both essential.
9. New, rapidly growing moles, or moles that itch, bleed, or change colour are often early warning signs of melanoma.
10. Check your skin regularly and if you notice any of the above, visit your GP immediately, as if detected early and treated properly, melanoma is highly treatable. **GCS**

# GRASS CLIPPINGS

## Short-term performance vs long-term health

**Paul Woodham**, General Manager of Agronomy at the STRI, stresses the need to focus on long-term improvement in your turf rather than yielding to unsustainable short-term desires and demands.



Many bent grass greens have fared well this summer

Our courses are well into the swing of summer golf and extremely busy. It is encouraging to see many clubs reporting increases in membership and to see courses with full starting sheets. Long may this continue, although it is presenting a new challenge for the greenkeepers who have very little time in the day outside of the golden hours at daybreak in which maintenance can be performed without the interruption of golf.

The term 'essential maintenance' was much talked-about during the lockdown, with the guidance produced focusing on the minimum requirements while courses remained closed. The pressure of day-to-day play and expectations for competition standards now limit the windows for many of the operations which may not have been undertaken and the normal routine maintenance outside of simple cutting and course set-up. There is a fine line being walked between managing the conditions beneath your feet and the current demand for dawn-to-dusk play.

Occasional rain returned in July to provide good growing conditions, which blessed monoculture *poa annua*-dominated greens. These swards can perform well and tolerate low cutting heights if maintained with the necessary increased intensity.

It is, therefore, no surprise to hear debate comparing the summer performance of 11ft poa greens against the more sustainable fine grass-dominant greens in heathland courses, or in parkland settings where greens are transitioning back to a blend. For the record, I have seen fantastic health and performance in 9ft bent grass greens this summer, right at a time when the poa was starting to show signs of anthracnose disease.

For many, the maintenance of *poa annua* is a necessary ongoing focus as the environmental conditions in old soil greens and heavily tree-lined parkland do not present an environment conducive to finer grass species such as bent. The environment will need to be adjusted, and addressing the issue of trees responsibly is a priority.

Back to the point of my musings. Debate is good, but there is a lack of patience and understanding over the whys and wherefores of the importance of managing the grass species composition, if it is achievable. Golfers sometimes are too quick to demand the need for speed or to judge any visible differences in presentation of a mixed-sward species as ugly and therefore not a good surface, even if the performance data suggests otherwise. I accept that a lack of understanding is inevitable and that it is our job to find a happy medium of presentation and performance without giving up and giving in to the demands of today at the cost of longer-term improvement. Why should the golfer care or want to know about poa, bent, fescue or Brillo pad! It is about the performance, right?

The same judgement will be aired when the poa greens start to seed, or succumb to disease or soft surface conditions when out of the easy passage of main-season play. That's why it is important to make a change if you can. I believe much of the industry was calling for the post-coronavirus era to be used as a platform to change what we do and how we may need to manage with less resources. I fear that many have already slipped back to a default setting of cutting the greens low, rolling the grass to excess and stimping to measure success. Please get in touch via [paul.woodham@strigroup.com](mailto:paul.woodham@strigroup.com) if you wish to discuss any of this month's thoughts further. [GCS](#)

Published monthly by Broadside Publishing Ltd., PO Box 72 72, Frinton-on-Sea, Essex CO13 0BP. Tel: (01255) 676727. Annual Subscription (including occasional supplements and ring binder) £245. Subscribers' Helpline: [info@golfclubsec.co.uk](mailto:info@golfclubsec.co.uk). Twitter: @golfclubsec

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