

THE GOLF BUSINESS

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FEATURING

Tim Allen

director of golf at Cowdray Park Golf Club

INVESTMENTS

THE PRO SHOP

Ways to maximise profits

FLOWERS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Making the course bee friendly

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HI

ere's three ways the Scottish golf industry is coping with the difficulties it is currently facing.

Scottish golf clubs collectively lost 75,000 members between 2005 and 2017, a drop of more than 28 per cent to 190,000 members in total, with predictions that this fall will continue for at least another decade.

In the last few months Eastwood, Brunston Castle and Carrick Knowe golf clubs have all closed down, while August was a particularly devastating month as both Mount Ellen Golf Club closed and Camperdown Golf Course announced it will shut next year.

However, there is hope, as August also saw the following:

Scottish GPs could start prescribing golf

Government agency Sport Scotland has held talks with Scottish Golf about the possibility of replicating projects in London where GPs prescribe rounds of golf to patients with heart disease or respiratory problems.

Scottish Golf CEO Andrew McKinlany said: "We all know we have huge problems with health in this country and I think golf could be a huge force for good in that."

Topgolf is coming to Scotland

Topgolf centres are driving ranges in which there is a focus on

entertainment, and they've been hugely successful at three locations in England.

One is now coming to Scotland, and it will feature a three-tiered range where people can play games against each other due to microchips in the balls, plus there will be a sports bar, lounge, an events hall and a restaurant.



Scottish clubs are building houses

This is a proven way to generate much-needed revenue and at least four Scottish clubs have applied for planning permission to build properties on disused land they own or overlooking their courses.

Some are very clear why they are doing this. Williamwood Golf Club, for example, says without this 'the club may become unsustainable', while Bearsden Golf Club's captain added: 'Without selling the land, the future of the club becomes highly uncertain'.

Alistair Dunsmuir
Editor

THE GOLF BUSINESS

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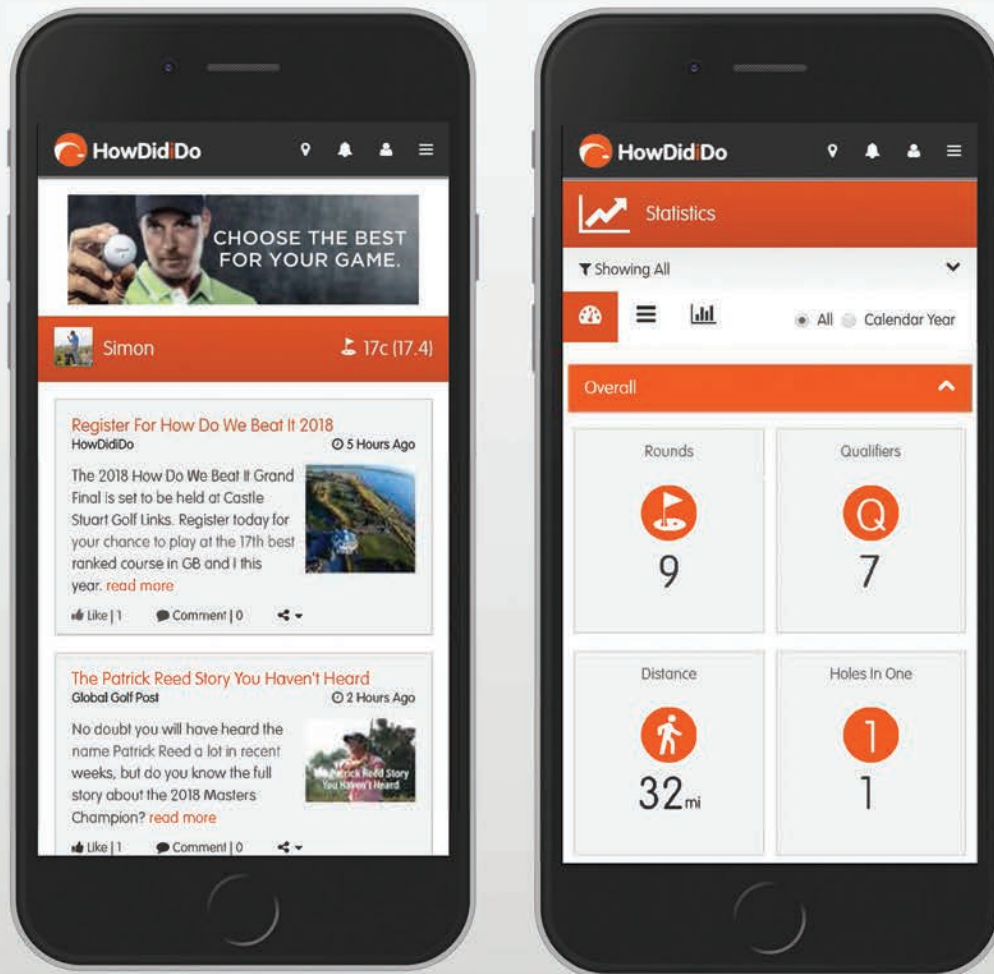
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Golf participation significantly up for first half of 2019

New data suggests that the number of rounds of golf played at UK golf courses in the first half of 2019 was up significantly compared to the same six months in 2018.

According to SMS INC's director, sports accounts, Richard Payne, the figures from the first quarter are up by more than 30 per cent on the previous year and are the highest for seven years.

"I can report that Q1 2019 saw the best average rounds played for seven years; an increase of over 30 per cent against what was quite a catastrophic Q1 in 2018. Indications suggest we are about eight per cent up in Q2.

"We've seen a resurgence in numbers following six years of continual decline with numbers closing back to the three million mark of full length course users. Importantly,

core golfers have also increased with the number of avid golfers, those who play at least weekly, having grown to pre-2015 levels of over 450,000," he said.

Colleague John Bushell added that the number of people in Great Britain and Ireland who had some sort of involvement with golf, including playing on 18-hole, nine-hole, pitch-and-putt, adventure golf and footgolf courses, and driving range usage is now 12.2 million adults per year, a figure that is also going upwards.

"An important measure, and an opportunity, when asked 'who have you introduced to golf?' – male golfers introducing their daughter to golf were 13 per cent," he added, however. "Whereas male golfers introducing their sons was 11 percentage points more at 24 per cent. We need male golfers to introduce their daughters to the game in the same percentage levels for us to really achieve the aims of 'family golf'."

Two Scottish golf clubs close down

Two Scottish golf clubs, one historic and the other considered to be one of the best public golf courses in the UK, have announced closures.

Mount Ellen Golf Club in Lanarkshire, formed in 1904, closed suddenly last month.

A spokesman said: "We've had the same problem as a number of golf clubs. Membership numbers have fallen over the years and it has become harder and harder.

"Basically, we are not bringing in enough money to cover our costs to be able to continue.

"In total, the membership was around about 300, but, out of that, we only had 196 paying full fees.

"We had seniors, juniors, associates and flexible memberships as well. If we had 300 full paying members, I think it would be a different story."

Meanwhile, Camperdown Golf Course in Dundee, which opened in 1959, will close down in the first half of next

year as its local council wants to save thousands of pounds of public money.

'A decline in golf participation nationally has been mirrored in Dundee with the number of rounds played at Camperdown dropping from 23,968 in 2009/10 to 17,369 in 2018/19, with the club's membership currently standing at 90,' states a council report.

Council leader John Alexander said: "This is a sensible approach to try to ensure sustainable public golf for the future in the face of difficult financial challenges. The development of a driving range and the reinstatement of the nine-hole course at nearby Caird Park would provide a first-class facility near to the Regional Performance Centre for Sport.

"I would hope that when the golfers used to playing Camperdown see the new facilities planned for Caird Park, and the extremely good value for money offered by Dundee's municipal golf facilities when compared with other alternatives, that they will make the move."

This year the 126-year-old Eastwood Golf Club on the outskirts of Glasgow also closed down, and so did Brunston Castle in Ayrshire, while Carrick Knowe in Edinburgh closed at the end of last year.

Scotland's first Topgolf centre to open

Topgolf, the entertainment company which has been highly successful in England where there are three venues, is to open its first in Scotland.

Topgolf centres are typically driving ranges featuring microchipped golf balls that provide instant feedback on each shot's accuracy and distance, where games can be played by all ages and skill levels. There are no dress codes, and drinks, including alcohol, along with food, are served.

The three in England all include areas featuring large screens broadcasting entertainment such as live sports, and they are very popular with younger people.

The venue for Scotland is set to be at Rutherglen in South Lanarkshire, and will feature what's being marketed as Scotland's first three-storey driving range.

Topgolf International says the complex will allow golfers to practice their swing from hitting bays 27 feet in the air. Full plans



include 72 hitting bays over three tiers, an open air roof terrace and bar with seating for 70 people, a sports bar, a lounge, an events hall with nearly 100 seats, and a drive-thru coffee shop and restaurant.

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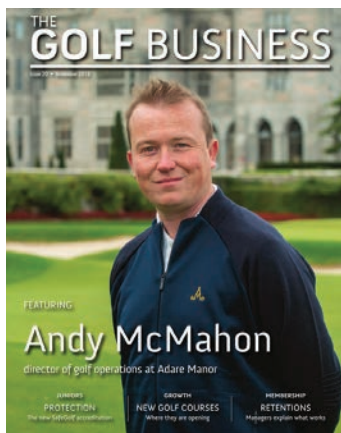
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Adare Manor will host the 2026 Ryder Cup

Adare Manor, which reopened just over a year ago, following a two-year reconstruction project, has been selected as the host of the 2026 Ryder Cup.



The club's director of golf, Andy McMahon, was featured on the cover of *The Golf Business* last year and was asked then what the club's chances of hosting the 2026 event were. He said: "Our infrastructure means we are ready to host golf tournaments and this is something we definitely see ourselves doing."

The Golf Business writer to help club with marketing

Thorpeness Golf Club and Hotel has appointed Jasmine (The Jazzy Golfer) to create exclusive video and social media content for the club.

Jasmine, a contributor to *The Golf Business*, said: "Thorpeness is famous for being a wonderfully unusual English seaside village with a floating house in the clouds, windmills and has a stunning lake that inspired the children's story Peter Pan. I'm very excited to showcase these beautiful and unique aspects in our content and help Thorpeness attract more golfers to play along the Suffolk Heritage Coast."

She has over 40,000 followers across social media, and has worked with both the European Tour and Ladies European Tour presenting their social media content, and is one of the official presenters at this month's Solheim Cup.



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£15m investment for public golf course

A golf course in Liverpool is set to be transformed by a £15 million investment – which will almost certainly be the largest investment in a municipal golf facility in British history.

Liverpool City Council says the money will be funded entirely by private investment and it will safeguard the public status of the course and the principle of 'affordable pay and play golf for all'.

The plan involves reconfiguring Allerton Manor's existing 18 and nine-hole courses to create an improved par-72 championship course with a new driving range and putting area, a purpose-built clubhouse comprising a new pro shop, changing and locker rooms and teaching facilities including an indoor practice putting area and golf simulators, a new family-friendly adventure golf course and the restoration and conversion of the Grade II-listed Allerton Manor house to create a 31-bed boutique hotel, spa and function space.

"Following our appointment by Liverpool City Council as

their golf operating partner, we have made a substantial investment to improve facilities at both Allerton Manor and Kirkby Valley," said Green Circle's director of golf, Bryan Joelson-Mulhall.

"But we always had longer term ambitions to create facilities that would set new standards and match the best private clubs whilst maintaining a 'golf for all' ethos. Golf is a dynamic, changing game with a growing and more diverse market demographic.

"There is a huge opportunity to improve and diversify the offer at Allerton Manor to create a vibrant, attractive and accessible golf destination for every age-group and ability level – from those who want the challenge of a genuine par 72 championship course, to those wanting to learn the game, develop their skills or enjoy a fun round of adventure golf."

Green Circle's operations manager, Craig Coley, added: "We want to create a family leisure destination that offers more than an enjoyable and affordable game of golf. The leisure sector is enormously competitive, so expanding our offer to provide excellent food and hospitality is an absolute must.

"We are proposing to complete the restoration of Allerton Manor's derelict but listed buildings and create a golf and family leisure destination with a unique sense of place."

Club sold to a charitable trust

A **private** members' golf club in Lincolnshire has been sold to a charity that preserves land and buildings of national importance.

Burghley Park Golf Club was founded in 1890 when the Marquis of Exeter granted permission to 30 people to use Burghley High Park to pursue their golfing hobby. In 2015 the club celebrated its 125th anniversary and today has almost 600 members.

Recently however, the club has faced challenging times and its management committee and members have reached agreement with Burghley House Preservation Trust to take it over. The charitable trust has said it intends to continue to offer golf at the venue but it will also diversify into additional revenue streams.

Spokesman David Pennell said: "Over recent years, the

club has faced increasing competition from the many other clubs within the region which provide facilities with which Burghley Park can't compete.

"As a consequence, the club in its current format has become financially unsustainable, and so the estate has stepped-in to safeguard its future."

He added: "Our immediate goal is to stabilise the club financially and to grow the membership. However, we are also looking to the future and see great opportunities to create a first-class venue, still with golf at its heart, but with facilities which would appeal not just to golfers but those seeking a broader leisure experience. Potential developments are the subject of a strategic review which we have started and hope to complete later this year."

Samantha Halifax, membership and clubhouse manager, said: "We have a great story to tell about Burghley Park Golf Club, but in many ways what the club has to offer its members and visitors has been a well-kept secret.

"However, with Burghley's support, we can let people know about our great offer. Many are unaware that the club is open to all."

Several Scottish clubs hoping to build houses

A **number** of golf clubs in Scotland are hoping to build properties on land they own in a bid to secure their futures.

Plans to build 76 new homes on **Ballumbie Castle Golf Course** in Dundee have been approved by councillors.

The club has stated it will reconfigure the course's layout so it retains 18 holes.

Kingsknowe Golf Club in Edinburgh has applied to develop surplus disused land.

'The homes will be designed to achieve the Greener Standard of Sustainability and will be funded through a mixture of private finance and Scottish Government grant funding via the City of Edinburgh Council,' said a spokesman.

'The proposed development will be a mixture of mid-market properties, targeted at households on low to moderate incomes, and social rented properties. It is hoped that work will begin on-site by spring 2020.'

Williamwood Golf Club in Glasgow is seeking

permission for a residential flatted development of 14 properties to generate 'much-needed revenue'.

The application is accompanied by a report that highlights some of the difficulties currently faced by the golf club and indicates that without interventions and changes the club 'may become unsustainable'.

It says that the development would generate essential funds, which could be used to make improvements to the course and golf club, benefiting existing members and hopefully attracting new members, helping ensure the club is sustainable over the longer term.

The golf club has suffered a drop in income, with membership falling consistently for 10 years.

And **Bearsden Golf Club** in East Dunbartonshire is appealing to residents to support a proposal to build 65 homes – after selling its land to a developer.

Doreen Adams, club captain, said: "Our club members are an active part of the community and we consulted extensively before making the decision to sell land to fund an upgraded nine-hole course. We have invested significant amounts of time and money to get the best possible outcomes."

She added that without the funding and upgrade, "the future of the club and of the greenbelt land it occupies become highly uncertain".

PGA pros lose £9k per year due to cancellations



UK golf coaches are losing more than £9,000 per year due to clients cancelling their pre-booked coaching sessions, new research reveals.

According to fibodo, which looked at coaches covering a range of sports including golf, clients' top three excuses for failing to attend a pre-booked session

include tiredness (62 per cent), lack of motivation (59 per cent) and forgetting other commitments (52 per cent).

The figures equate to a loss of £239 million for the sports coaching industry as a whole.

"With lost earnings of more than £9,000 annually, many find themselves struggling to make ends meet, with their only option being to leave the profession altogether, despite their time and effort spent training," said a spokesman for the *Survival of the Fittest* report.

On average, coaches report five no-shows or last-minute cancellations every week. A fifth are even let down six to eight

times per week by clients who had committed to a session.

Jonathan Lamb, 53, a golf pro at Tehidy Park Golf Club, Cornwall, said: "It's frustrating, both for myself and the genuine customers that weren't able to book due to me showing no availability, which obviously also hurts me financially. People don't fully understand that our livelihoods rely on the sessions we deliver.

"The excuses were different every time; their car wouldn't start, they had a dental appointment, or they were simply stuck at work.

"Around one in three client bookings resulted in a late cancellation or no-show."

Solheim Cup to be 'most female-friendly golf event ever'

This month's Solheim Cup, the women's version of the Ryder Cup in which Europe take on the USA, will be the first major golf competition to tackle period poverty and it will feature an all-female police command structure.

Female fans at the event at Gleneagles will find that sanitary products are accessible and completely free of charge.

The news comes as the On the Ball campaign has led the fight for free period products at football grounds. Having started their campaign at Scottish champions, Celtic, 91 clubs – including ones in England, Wales, Ireland, Germany, Brazil and the United States, are now 'On the Ball'.

"We are delighted to see that the Solheim Cup team has made the decision to provide free period products for fans," said a spokesperson for the campaign. "It is the biggest competition in the world in women's golf and it's fitting that they are leading the way in the sport.

Meanwhile, the tournament will also become the first



ever major event in Scotland to feature an all-female police command structure.

Chief Superintendents Sharon Milton and Suzie Mertes, and Superintendent Maggie Pettigrew, will take control of safety proceedings.

Police Scotland provides policing support to major events and the role of the command team is to oversee the policing response, ultimately to ensure public safety.

New call for doctors to prescribe golf

The CEO of Scottish Golf, Andrew McKinlay, has called for the game to be prescribed on the NHS to help combat mental and physical health problems.

He said he has held talks with government agency Sport Scotland about the possibility of replicating projects in London where GPs prescribe golf rounds for patients with heart disease or respiratory problems.

McKinlay, a contributor to *The Golf Business*, was talking to BBC Scotland after it emerged that Scottish golf clubs are projected to lose nearly half of their members between 2007 and 2027.

He said: "My understanding is that there is social prescribing for sport but this is

very much focused on walking and the gym, and more physical benefits.

"My view is, yes there's a physical aspect to golf, but I see a massive benefit to mental health – around depression.

"We all know we have huge problems with health in this country and I think golf could be a huge force for good in that."

He also said Scottish golf clubs should relax rules surrounding dress codes and mobile phone usage in order to attract more juniors to the sport.

He said the attitudes and rules of some golf clubs in Scotland need to change in order to attract new players, and a cultural change among the country's golf clubs was needed.

"If you say to a kid you have to dress up to go to the golf course, it's not going to happen – they're not going to do it," he said.

"Or if you say to a kid, you can't use your mobile phone, that's not going to happen either.

"Some clubs will be determined to maintain their traditions and they are perfectly entitled to do that but do you know what? For the good of the future of your club, you need to embrace some of these things."

Scotland now has fewer than 190,000 golf club members, having lost over 75,000 members between 2005 and 2017, a drop of almost 29 per cent.

Promotion for Francisco de Lancastre David

Troon has announced the promotion of Francisco de Lancastre David to the role of 'cluster general manager' across all of its championship golf courses in Abu Dhabi.

The three venues are Yas Links, Abu Dhabi Golf Club and Saadiyat Beach Golf Club – widely considered to be three of the best golf venues in the world outside of the UK and USA.

Francisco de Lancastre David's role across these three properties is one of the biggest in golf club management worldwide due to the size and nature of the courses and in his position, he will manage the day-to-day operations of the cluster of golf clubs.

Francisco de Lancastre David said: "I am extremely excited with the opportunity extended to me. I understand the responsibility that this role carries and I am looking forward to delivering the vision that we have set for all three clubs.



"Our main short-term goal is to consolidate operations at all three clubs and ensure that members and guests start benefiting straight away from the synergies created by this. Longer-term we want to increase the visibility that golf in Abu Dhabi has on the international stage and drive up visitor numbers."

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in their own words

Robert Maxfield

chief executive of The Professional Golfers' Association



Robert Maxfield

Behind every great player is a PGA professional and over the course of another busy summer we've seen, once again, examples of the excellent work of those PGA members 'behind the scenes' coaching of the world's top players and promoting the value of a PGA professional. I often refer to PGA members as being at the 'coal face'. These are the men and women who are working day in, day out to deliver on the aspirations of the golf industry, whether it's helping golf clubs succeed as a business or recruiting more children into the game. We also have a core group of coaches who work full-time with the top players on both the PGA Tour and European Tour.

The four Majors are seen as golf's chance to shine on the world stage and they present an opportunity for PGA professionals all over the world to be in the spotlight.

This influence was again brought home to me following the US Open in June when, in his post-event interview with the press, one of the first people Gary Woodland thanked for his success at the iconic Pebble Beach course was PGA Master Professional Pete Cowen. Pete is coach to dozens of household names in the game and is widely regarded as one of the top golf coaches in the world.

In July we witnessed The Open Championship return to Royal Portrush in Northern Ireland and those scenes on the final day as Shane Lowry lifted the Claret Jug will live long in the memory. But what was key to the Irishman's success? Edinburgh-born Neil Manchip. A PGA Fellow Professional, Manchip has worked

with Lowry since his amateur days and played a key role throughout the week behind the scenes in Lowry's corner.

A walk along any practice ground at a major Tour event will find at least a dozen PGA members working with golf's elite players. You'll most likely find PGA Master Professional Phil Kenyon on the putting green. Phil is seen as the

'cream of the crop' when it comes to improving your putting game. Major winners such as Rory McIlroy, Justin

Rose and Henrik Stenson all seek his advice because Phil is seen as the expert in his field.

On the driving range you'll find Denis Pugh, perhaps one of the most high-profile swing coaches in the game. Denis is a key part of Francesco

Any amateur golfer or beginner has at some point sought the advice and skills of a PGA professional. This includes elite players at the top of their game. Long may that continue.

Molinari's team and has played a hugely important role in transforming the Italian into a Major winner.

Golf is the envy of many other sports in the UK and Ireland for its network of professionals for players at any level. Any amateur golfer or beginner has at some point sought the advice and skills of a PGA professional. This includes elite players at the top of their game. Long may that continue. TGB

To find out more about The PGA and how our thousands of PGA members across the UK, Ireland and overseas can benefit your golf club, visit www.pga.info



PGA Master Professional Denis Pugh alongside Francesco Molinari

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Unforgettable moments and flavours



the manager's office

Chris Duffy

The manager of Huddersfield GC believes there is a four-pronged process that should convert a membership enquiry into a sale – and underpinning this is a need to listen to the potential member and not simply hand them a price list



Is your club turning over rocks for new members?

Walking into the golf club I locate the management office where I am pleasantly welcomed by the office assistant who asks how can they help.

1. Is there any opportunities to become a member at the club?
2. If so, can you tell me why should I become a member here rather than the other golf clubs in the area?

3. What benefits do your members receive compared to pay and play visitors.
4. Can you give me some details on the club's strategic plan for the next three to five years and how my substantial joining fee will be used?

The assistant is kind enough to offer a seat, clear the desk of various papers and then proceeds to look at the computer for two minutes without another word spoken, printing a document. The document was the price list of the membership costs and the joining fees which was placed in front of me, before they started to go through the options, but unfortunately this wasn't what I was looking for.

Many larger clubs and resorts have specific membership departments or individuals trained in converting enquiries into new memberships, other clubs have forward thinking management teams who have undertaken training and are now either taking it upon themselves or educating their staff on how to convert enquiries into sales. Most are developing 'semi-scripted' procedures for

membership enquiries, detailing who and how they should be followed up upon.

Listen to the potential member, make notes on their expectations. Why they have come to see the club? What do they require? Who are they, what is their current family status and so on? We should always be connecting dots or turning over the rocks to find connections.

Becoming a member of a club is often a large expense for any individual or family so making this decision easier for them is in the club's interest!

- Does your club have a membership questionnaire for potential new members?
- Do you offer a complimentary round of golf? Could it be arranged to play with another group of members who are similar ages, with similar family status?
- Do you offer the potential member a discounted offer to bring some family or friends to try the club's latest menus?
- Do you introduce him to the professional? If a new player, maybe a free 20 minute introduction lesson with the pro?
- Do you walk the member through the club to make them feel like this is part of their family house, introducing various staff on the journey?

These ideas are basic, simple and effective ways to get your potential new member to feel part of the family and for many major clubs and resorts this is all normal practice, but what about the smaller clubs?

Price is very important but when someone walks in the club, don't sit them down and show them the price list. Take them for a walk around the club, have some key questions already thought of, take down the data away from the office, have a coffee in the clubhouse with a view

of the course. Invite them back for a game of golf or tennis followed by lunch / dinner with the family. The sale doesn't have to be done there and then.

Selling a membership is like running the 4x100m relay. Take each 100 metres as part of the sale process:

- **1** The introduction, walking tour, new member questionnaire and offering club information. What is the unique selling points (USPs) of the club against others, what benefits you'll receive as a member and, most importantly, why your club is the club to join. Invite the potential new member for a round of golf, preferably arrange it with other members followed by a lunch or dinner with the family (at a time when the club is busy to ensure a vibrant atmosphere).
- **2** The round of golf with selected members (members selected and potentially rewarded through club).
- **3** The dinner at the club with their family (maybe offer the potential new member a 50 per cent discounted price for dinner to help cover club costs).
- **4** The final visit gaining feedback from the potential new member, their impressions, a signature on the membership approval form and glass of Champagne to celebrate becoming part of the club family. Make them feel like a king / queen for the day!

Investing in a potential new member may cost management time and a green fee, but think about the true potential revenue that this new member could bring to your club or resort ... much more than a little time, a green fee and a cup of coffee.

TGB

Chris Duffy CMDip has been the general manager of Huddersfield Golf Club since the start of 2019. He previously worked as head of golf operations at Doha Golf Club. He also established Oryx Events, an event management agency that worked on the successful bid for the Qatar World Cup 2022 and was event staging manager at the European Tour Qatar Masters. He is a member of the Club Managers Association of Europe (CMAE) and has completed all five of the CMAE management development programmes and has participated in the Club Management Association of America (CMAA) world conference. For more information on his current golf club, visit www.huddersfield-golf.co.uk

Many larger golf clubs have specific membership departments or individuals trained in converting enquiries into new memberships, other clubs have forward thinking management teams

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Pleasure island

The UK's busiest driving range, Trafford Golf Centre, has invested £20,000 to build and complete an exact replica of arguably the most iconic par three hole in the world, the 17th hole at TPC Sawgrass.

The addition to the 57-bay driving range and golf academy is a 'real game changer' according to the facility, following a £30,000 investment earlier this year to bring a dedicated short-game practice area, featuring synthetic turf, to the popular TRAFFORDCITY golfing attraction.

The 137-yard 17th, known as the 'Island Green', is one of golf's most recognisable and difficult holes. Customers can now enjoy true-to-scale green dimensions and practice the same distance as if playing on the course in Florida.

Director of golf at Trafford Golf Centre, Pete Styles said: "We value the quality of practice at Trafford Golf Centre and we always strive to offer the best service, balls, mats and targets. Golf fans will have watched The Players Championship and seen the world's best players dunk it in the water.

"With the addition of this Island Green replica, customers can try it out for themselves without the flight to America's south coast."

Trafford Golf Centre is the biggest golf academy in the north west with nine PGA professionals and features a wealth of services and facilities including 16 Toptracer bays, six target greens spread over 300 yards, Power Tee Automatic Ball machines on 26 bays, a licensed café and bar serving Starbucks coffee and a range of food both inside and outside on the range plus the largest American Golf retail store in the north. The venue is also home to an 18-hole adventure golf course, Dino Falls Adventure Golf.

The venue's claim to being the UK's busiest driving range is based on data that 14 million golf balls were hit at the facility in 2018. TGB



The UK's busiest driving range – where 14 million balls are hit per year – has so far this year invested £50,000 on improvements and, at its heart, is a replica of the iconic 17th hole at TPC Sawgrass. Tania Longmire reports



Club Systems

www.clubsystems.com/2019-roadshows

Each year, Europe's leading golf club IT specialist, Club Systems International (CSI), tours the UK and Ireland in autumn, showcasing its new products, services and updates to both existing and potential clients, in an informal, yet informative, format, which also allows club representatives to network among themselves.

CSI staff, who will be showcasing a new website facility, will be joined by integration partners – such as **Fairway Credit**, which provides monthly payment options for membership subscriptions – and industry specialists, who can offer added value to CSI clients.

For the second successive year, **Fiserv** – formerly First Data – CSI's preferred payment gateway, will be on hand to demonstrate its merchant and card services, along with a new integration to

CSI's Merlin Touch till system. And, as golf clubs continue to look to realise the marketing potential of digital media, **Albatross Digital** will be present to offer its services to clubs looking to maximise revenue through various online channels. The company will also be offering a special exclusive deal to CSI customers.

The roadshow takes in 17 golf clubs in 37 days between September 17, when it begins at Deeside GC, in Aberdeen, and October 24, when the odyssey wraps up at East Devon GC, 900 miles away. Visit the above link to find a venue close to you.

Registration is open and each venue provides a complimentary buffet lunch for delegates. Any club can participate in the roadshow, with two representatives from any club welcome to attend for free.



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The history of presenting a medal in golf goes back well over 200 years – some were gold and others silver but it was the prestige of receiving the medal that meant everything to the golfer.



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Tim Allen

is the director of golf at Cowdray Park GC in West Sussex. He talks to *The Golf Business* about running a golf club on a viscount's estate that is also the home of British Polo, attracting members to a club that is in a remote location and how the former clubhouse has been converted into accommodation to attract stay-and-play golfers



Tim Allen

Cowdray Park Golf Club is not your average golf club. Can you tell us a bit about it?

The club was founded in 1904 and is set in the middle of the 16,500 acre Cowdray Estate. We are fortunate to have panoramic views of the beautiful South Downs, and the original deer park was landscaped by Capability Brown.

The course itself was designed by the Open champion of the same year, Jack White, with assistance from renowned course designers, Herbert Fowler and JF Abercromby. It is an undulating downland golf course which has not changed much in layout in the last 40 years or so.

We are fortunate to be open for play all year round as we are based on natural sandy soil as well as having the benefit of a full fairway irrigation system. Although not long by modern standards, the course is always a fair test and we host various regional and county events. This includes the resurrection of the largest pro am in Sussex.

What's it like having Viscount Cowdray as a boss and are there any unique challenges being part of the Cowdray Estate?

The club is proprietary run with a very strong membership at its core. There have been recent changes in management across the estate with the major change being the introduction of a new CEO, Jonathan Russell. I was appointed in January 2016, with clear objectives that feed into the one Cowdray approach to management. Each business on the estate has its own profit and loss accountability, and each decision must also fit with the Cowdray vision and values.

I am involved in heads of department meetings twice a month, monthly managers' meetings and quarterly



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Design for Golf



Bronze Plaque on Sleeper

The finishing touches make all the difference...

profile

meetings with Lord and Lady Cowdray. Both Lord and Lady Cowdray are wonderfully warm people who care deeply about all aspects of the estate, the staff in particular.

These opportunities are exciting to showcase what we are doing at the golf club as well as keeping me updated with the broad spectrum of the wider estate. We recently completed a rolling five-year plan and over the past two years we have significantly invested in the club. This includes a new first tee experience, new greenkeeping machinery, driving range renovation and the construction of five new tees on the course. The plan is to go through

the teeing areas one by one. Internally, the bar, reception and pro shop has been refurbished, new management and competition software systems put in to place and we also have a new fleet of buggies. This investment has to be quantified naturally, however the overarching ambition is to raise the standard of the estate and the golf club is no exception.

Have you ever tried polo?

Sadly not as my long list of injuries would certainly restrict the chance!! I have watched the game and it is quite a spectacle.

The 11th green at Cowdray Park Golf Club

Cowdray is the home of British Polo, with the very best players in the world playing just over the road from the golf club. The pinnacle of the season is the Gold Cup Final, which attracts up to 20,000 spectators.

The view from the 18th fairway across towards the Cowdray Ruins, including the polo fields, is special and on Gold Cup Final day it's spectacular.

How does Cowdray Park fit in with the local community?

Cowdray really does dominate the local area, with 16,500 acres spreading over seven towns and villages.

The estate employs over 200 full-time staff and a further 150

seasonal staff and the local community is at the core of our vision and values.

Across the nine businesses, including farming, property, hospitality, wellbeing and forestry, there are various ecological and long-term sustainability plans.

The golf club is no exception and we are proud to be in the 'Ecostim Ecological Top 100' list. Course manager Jonathan Smith is not only a supremely talented and experienced greenkeeper with a highly dedicated team, but he is always aware of our eco responsibilities.

The estate also supports numerous charity events, Christmas events, community days and local schools.

“We have significantly invested in the club. This includes a new first tee experience, new greenkeeping machinery, driving range renovation and the construction of five new tees on the course”



The 12th tee last winter

Can you talk us through the Cowdray Golf Academy? What does it offer and how many professionals work on it?

This is an area that we have worked hard on in the last couple of years in particular.

We have fantastic facilities, a five-hole par three course, short game area and a full length driving range. Over the winter months we constructed a swing / fitting studio. The work was undertaken by the estate's own works' department, who sourced timber panels sawn from the estate forest. This is a great example of the wider estate working together on a specific project.

This significant investment included the addition of Trackman 4 launch monitor which the team have all received full training in.

We have three teaching professionals here, Matt Watson, Harry Smith and Hannah Ralph. Matt and Harry are both keen to further their knowledge and learning into Trackman and the early signs are extremely positive.

The studio is in use daily, the range has never been busier and the pro shop has seen a huge surge in custom-fit sales since the start of this year.

You've been a PGA professional since the late 1990s, how have you found that role, and generally the golf club industry, has changed in the last 20 years?

Quite a bit! The PGA role is now, without doubt, less traditional. There are PGA professionals now filling more diverse roles within the golf industry in general. Many members are embarking on different career paths in the game, some extremely entrepreneurial, and I believe the PGA training is now developing to encourage this mind set.

The studio is in use daily, the range has never been busier and the pro shop has seen a huge surge in custom-fit sales since the start of this year

I have, along with many other PGA members, also joined the GCMA. In general, technology has stretched the game further and golfers are now better informed before making decisions, whether it be booking a golf break, buying equipment or joining a club. Various initiatives introduced to the industry over the past few years have also given golfers more options to play the game than ever before, which is great.

What do you find are the biggest challenges managing the club today?

As we strive to improve every day,

the natural knock-on effect is the challenge of meeting every customer's expectations. In particular members' ideals and demands.

This has come about by proactively creating a more welcoming environment with an enthusiastic team. That should be the easy part, but, as I mentioned, with this openness comes more expectations. It is crucial to help build trust and loyalty, again particularly in our membership. I'm sure most golf club managers echo the fact that, generally, golfers expect a much better overall experience than in the past.

We are no different and another challenge we face is our location. Although it is a really beautiful part of England, there is a limited demographic and not too many chimney pots nearby.

This heightens the need to create a memorable impression on all that come along to Cowdray as with the majority, they have chosen to make at times a significant journey. That didn't want to sound too much like a sob story as I am really fortunate to live and work in such a beautiful area!

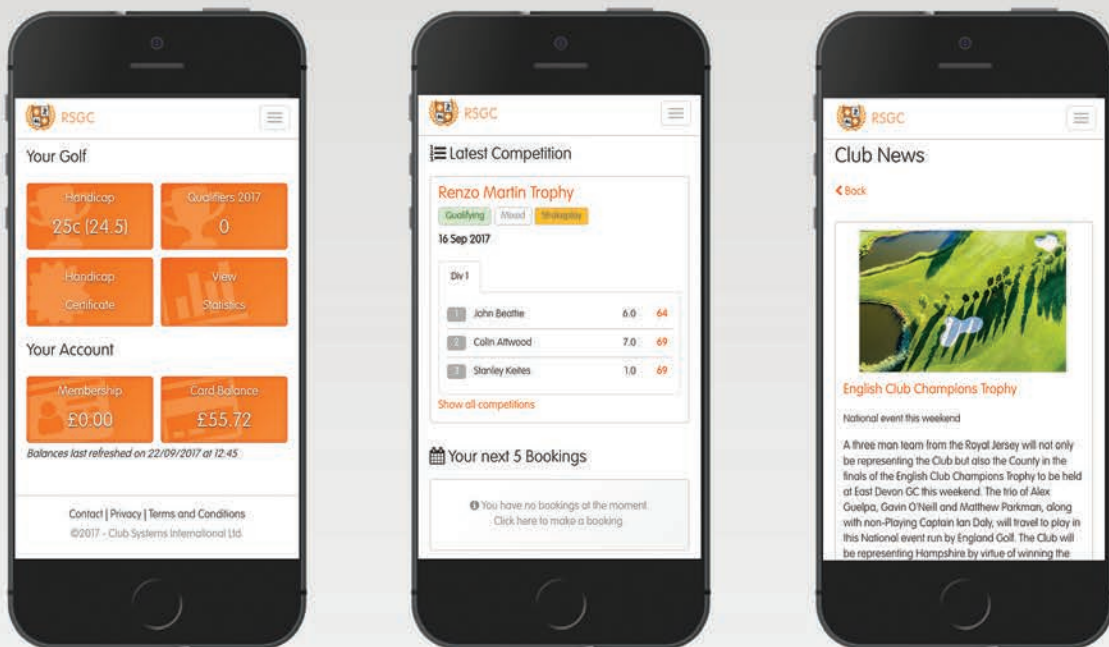
You previously worked at Playgolf Bournemouth, which particularly markets to younger people. What was that experience like?

Having the opportunity to move from full-time coaching into full-time management was a great experience and a steep learning curve!

It is a very busy facility which grew and grew under new ownership.



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profile

During my time there, the centre upgraded the 60-bay driving range and built a brand new family-friendly restaurant. More non-golf attractions were added to appeal to a wider audience and it gave me great education of the pay-and-play market.

Bournemouth is a great place and I even introduced golf to the beach, which was huge fun!

Is Cowdray Park trying to attract more women and juniors to the facility?

Juniors are certainly a growth area for us. With a new structure of our team, we are now able to deliver free coaching in local primary schools to fit into curriculum for the first time in this area.

There is only one secondary state school in the area, and we have close links, again offering free coaching sessions as well as supporting their open and community days.

We have a strong ladies' section at Cowdray, with 125 female members. Teaching professional Hannah Ralph delivers popular ladies' clinics, as well as numerous nine-hole role up sessions to help new and potential members get comfortable to the surroundings.

How do you communicate with existing members?

Structured monthly members' updates via email are really

Two views of the seventh green



We are now able to deliver free coaching in local primary schools to fit into curriculum for the first time in this area

well received. There is no such thing as too much information for our membership.

There is also a monthly newsletter which is more PR related, highlighting positive stories around the club.

Without doubt though, part of my role is to get out there and talk to them too, whether that is dusting off my clubs and playing, or simply chatting in the clubhouse. It is important to keep members updated as they like to feel 'in the loop'.

What is the club doing to enhance profitability of its food and beverage operation?

We recently invested heavily in refurbishing the bar in the clubhouse to create a warmer, more welcoming environment.

This was primarily to encourage non-golfers to come through door and enjoy just a drink, some lunch or a Sunday carvery.

During the change of management in 2016, the creation of the events'





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“Although all of the initiatives to appeal to a wider audience in the game are fantastic, there is still an appetite for golfers to ‘belong’ to a club”

business was pivotal to enhancing the food and beverage operation.

This enterprise incorporates all hospitality across the estate, including Cowdray House. We also were open to seek advice from an industry leading golf club catering franchisee to help streamline costs, better efficiencies, centralised ordering.

There is also the ongoing ambition to introduce more Cowdray produce onto the menu than ever before.

What is the club's approach to customer service?

It has to be 100 per cent all the time!

Creating the right team to not only be operationally strong, but

also to be approachable and engaging has been a focus in the past three years. The team has fantastic interaction with members particularly and visitors are guaranteed a very relaxed, warm and natural welcome for their day.

I feel it is important that although we have our high standards, the personal, natural touch and personality must never be compromised. We are a popular venue for society and visiting groups and it is really a great feeling to receive the positive feedback we do, which is always communicated to the whole team.

All feedback is monitored and responded to as efficiently as possible as it is vital not to let any potential issues linger.

profile

What is the club's approach to marketing? You get a lot of coverage in the Chichester press, is that something you've proactively sought?

We have a centralised estate marketing team who look after the mechanics of the marketing and have created a consistent look and feel.

However, we have our own annual marketing plan to refer to and the team at the club have the freedom to feed stories into the marketing department.

We do have local press coverage which we actively approach along with other PR opportunities.

Our social media presence is strong and traffic is directed to our award-winning website. Our teaching professionals are also in the process of launching coaching platforms via Instagram and YouTube.

The club offers lodges for golfers. How did this come about, how popular are they and how much management does this service provision require?



The 15th hole and, below, the 10th green last winter

The lodge at the golf club was actually the clubhouse up until 2002, which adds to the 'quirkiness' we have here!

The listed building was sympathetically renovated to a very high specification in 2017 and now incorporates seven bespoke bedrooms.

The core of the occupancy relates to hospitality across the estate including the thriving wedding market and events based around the wonderful Cowdray House.

We are, however, promoting stay-and-play offers based around Sunday afternoon golf, Sunday evening stay and Monday morning golf.



What are your predictions for the UK golf industry over the next five to ten years?

I'm sure that the game in general will still remain popular.

However, golfers will demand even better all-round experiences and standards will have to be met.

Middle-market facilities, I think, will struggle, and stronger, more proactive clubs will thrive as you simply can't stand still.

Although all of the initiatives to appeal to a wider audience in the game are fantastic, there is still an appetite for golfers to 'belong' to a club.

Quality, value and hopefully fun will continue to be the drivers for golfers in the future.

TGB

in their own words

Richard Dixon

chief executive of Wales Golf



Wales Golf is celebrating a couple of pieces of really good news, which show past efforts are paying off while providing an incentive for future improvements as well.

Next month I'll be exploring the news that the AIG Women's British Open will be held in Wales for the first time, but here Wales Golf has welcomed the facts and figures which highlight the initial successes of the new vision and strategy *Everyone's Game, Anywhere*, launched last year and which is having an impact across the board.

Golf club membership in Wales was up by almost 1,000 last year, news we have been waiting to hear for a while.

This shows golf clubs can thrive and grow by adapting to changing circumstances.

Golf club membership is up around 900 across Wales, with one club still to resolve exact figures, according to our 2019 club results.

The biggest group and the biggest area of increase is male adults, but we have also seen increases of female adults and female juniors joining clubs.

There has also been a rise of more than 50 per cent in children getting the chance to play golf, according to the latest School Sport Survey.

The number of girls trying golf in school has more than doubled, while more

**Golf club membership
in Wales was up by
almost 1,000 last year,
news we have been waiting
to hear for a while**



than half the people involved in Wales Golf schemes are women and girls.

While the news is positive, with participation in schemes up in all areas, the figures also show great potential with

four per cent of the general adult population in Wales playing golf regularly – along with latent demand from a further four per cent.

Golfers are more likely to hit chief medical office activity guidelines of two and a half hours a week by a rate of around three to two, compared to the rest of the population.

Around a third of golfers have a long-term illness or disability compared to a Wales average of a fifth, showing it is a sport which is widely accessible.

Mental well-being scores and social trust were also slightly higher among golfers.

TGB

For more information, visit www.walesgolf.org

Bullying and harassment



A golf club could also be liable for breaching the implied terms of an employee's contract such as the duties of mutual trust and confidence, to provide a suitable working environment and to redress grievances. At worst, that can entitle an employee to resign and claim constructive unfair dismissal.

Other implications of having a culture of bullying and harassment can include poor morale, poor performance, lost productivity and increased levels of absence.

2. What is bullying and harassment?

There is no legal definition of bullying but guidance from ACAS (*A guide for managers and employers: Bullying and harassment at Work*) describes it as 'offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient'.

Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'. The protected characteristics referred to are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and / or sexual

orientation. In order to make a complaint or pursue a legal claim for harassment, the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves, but it can be because of their association with a person who has that characteristic, or because they are wrongly perceived to have one, or are treated as if they do.

There is a fairly low threshold for an individual to make a claim for harassment under the legal definitions. A one-off incident can amount to harassment and the victim does not need to have made the perpetrator aware that the conduct was unwanted. Further, the perpetrator's conduct must have the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity or create that environment for the victim. Therefore, even if the perpetrator did not intend for the conduct to violate the victim's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, if it in fact had that effect then a claim for harassment may succeed (although an employment tribunal will look at whether it was reasonable for the conduct to have that effect).

Additionally, conduct, regardless of the reason for it, which is otherwise related to a protected characteristic because of the form it takes, will also amount to harassment. For example, engaging in racist or homophobic

Bullying and harassment can be very problematic for a golf club employer to deal with, creating the risk of employment tribunal claims. In extreme cases, bullying and harassment may be obvious, but often other behaviour which could amount to bullying and harassment is harder to detect and address.

1. What are the legal risks if bullying and harassment are not addressed by an employer?

If an employer fails to address bullying and harassment then it may be liable under the Equality Act 2010 where it fails to protect its employees and other workers from harassment in the course of employment. A club could be liable for harassment carried out by its staff, and in some cases, even by third parties such as members and visitors. Successful employment tribunal and other court claims under the Equality Act 2010 can result in payment of unlimited compensation.

In extreme cases a golf club, as an employer, could even be liable under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 which can impose criminal liability on an employer for a course of conduct amounting to harassment by an employee.



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legal matters

'banter' at the golf club that might offend workers regardless of their race or sexual orientation. Such conduct need not be directed at the person who is complaining and, in fact, could be directed at no one in particular.

Particular provision is made in the Equality Act 2010 for sexual harassment including protection from being treated less favourably where an individual has rejected or submitted to the unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. It is important to have in place clear guidance as to what would be considered sexual harassment.

Examples of bullying and harassment might include matters such as:

- Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by words or behaviour;
- Unfair treatment;
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power;
- Unwelcome sexual advances;
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone;
- Deliberately undermining a worker by overloading and criticism; or
- Preventing staff from progressing via promotion or training.

In general, if employees complain that they are being bullied or harassed, then they have a grievance which should be dealt with regardless of whether it strictly satisfies the definitions of bullying and harassment.

3. Liability of employees and third parties

Anything done by an employee in the

course of their employment is treated as having also been done by the employer, whether or not the harassment is done with the employer's knowledge or approval. Therefore, a club will have direct liability for any acts carried out by employees to their colleagues. There is a defence available to this claim if a club could show that it took 'all reasonable steps' to prevent the employee from doing the discriminatory act (see below for steps to be taken). The individual perpetrator is also likely to have personal liability and be named as a respondent in employment tribunal claims.

Where harassment is carried out by a third party such as a member or visitor, then an employee could argue that a club's reaction (or lack of it) might still amount to discrimination or harassment, particularly if a club had control to prevent it and did not take action.

4. What should a golf club do about bullying and harassment?

4.1. Golf clubs should have in place an anti-bullying and harassment policy. The policy need not be too lengthy but should include a statement of commitment to tackling bullying and harassment. A club should also have a disciplinary and grievance policy to enable staff to know to whom they can turn to if they have a problem. Managers should be aware of these policies and ideally receive training in relation to them.

4.2. In the event of a complaint or grievance, ensure that it is dealt with promptly under the correct procedure, usually the grievance procedure.

4.3. Make sure managers set a good example for staff and are aware of the club's legal obligations and the risk of claims against the club and them personally.

4.4. Make sure that standards of behaviour are clearly set out and communicated to staff and members wherever possible. This can be set out in the body of a

policy or elsewhere via email bulletins, constitutional documents or notice boards. It can include a statement to employees that complaints or bullying and harassment will be dealt with fairly and confidentially.

4.5. If a complaint of bullying or harassment is made, it should be investigated promptly and objectively. An investigating officer should be appointed and will need to consider all of the circumstances including the perception of the particular complainant. The ACAS guidance suggests that the matter may sometimes be capable of being resolved informally or via other routes such as counselling or mediation. However, where an informal resolution is not possible, a club must consider whether disciplinary action should be taken at the appropriate level. A club should then have careful regard to its disciplinary policy following the specified steps, whether that is under the employee or member disciplinary policy.

For further advice on this or any other matter affecting the law for a golf club, please contact Alistair Smith on 01886 812943 or alistair@ngcaa.co.uk



The National Golf Clubs' Advisory Association

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club profile

Aylesbury Vale Golf Club

The 30-year-old Bedfordshire golf club recently replaced its tired-looking metal lockers with modern wooden ones – and the results have been so successful that there’s now a waiting list for them, as Andy Waple details



When Aylesbury Vale Golf Club in Bedfordshire decided the time had come to replace its ageing lockers, it selected industry leader Ridgeway Furniture to transform the men’s changing room into a modern area

which the club and members could be proud of.

The men’s committee members who oversaw the project picked Ridgeway from a number of tendering companies and the results have delighted everybody at the club.

The committee and Ridgeway project managers jointly redesigned the space to accommodate 96 lockers of various sizes to replace the tired-looking metal lockers.

Wooden-framed cabinets with light wood finished doors and complementary wooden benches were selected to improve the appearance and functionality of the room.

Recessed areas with hanging room for clothes and with lockers above were added to make best use of the space available.

As a result the club now has a much better facility which is more useable.

“The project has been to great effect and has made a big difference to the room,” said club manager Chris Wright.

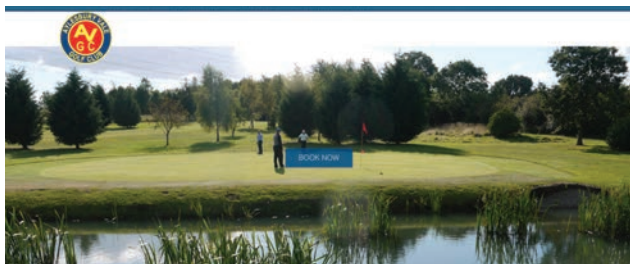
He added: “The new lockers have made a big difference

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and have been very well received. They are neat and stylish and a

A very clever design ... we now have a greater number of lockers than before and they are more suitable ... the members are very happy and as a result we have a waiting list for them

very clever design has maximised the use of the space so we now have a greater number of lockers than before and they are more suitable than the ones they replaced.

"The members are very happy with them and as a result we have a waiting list for them.

"I can recommend Ridgeway Furniture to any club looking to modernise their changing rooms, they did a very good job."

Since its inception Ridgeway has manufactured tens of thousands of lockers that have been installed in some of the most prestigious golf clubs in the world.

The company has seen turnover increase by more than 100 per cent over the past six years and has invested more than £500,000 in a new factory increasing its capacity by over 50 per cent. The facility, at more than 18,000 square feet, means the company is now the UK's largest dedicated manufacturer of wooden lockers.

Aylesbury Vale Golf Club is situated about four miles to the west of Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, just a short drive from Milton Keynes and Dunstable. The Vale of Aylesbury itself was voted as 27th in the Halifax 2018 Rural Areas Quality of Life Survey and the club enjoys a beautiful location.

Established in 1989 it opened for play in 1991 with a challenging course measuring 6,622 yards.

Whilst the golf course is long, the fairways are generous, and many are lined with mature trees giving a splendid definition. Each hole is complemented by excellent greens maintained in top condition.

The course was designed with ample space between holes and a brook runs through the course creating some challenging water features.

Other golfing facilities overseen by head PGA professional Russell Phillips and professional Terry Bunyan include a practice green, chipping area and 250-plus yard driving range with additional grass tees. TGB



An example of the work Ridgeway has completed, here at Northenden Golf Club

the PGA professional

Glam Rockliffe

Martyn Stubbings is the director of golf at Rockliffe Hall in Durham. He talks to *The Golf Business* about what this role in a major resort entails, getting more women to play the game and the technology he utilises to offer customers something extra



Martyn Stubbings

What daily challenges do you face in running a pro shop and teaching?

After 20 years in this business, we think we have seen everything, but there is always something new to challenge you!

The biggest skill any successful retailer and PGA professional must show is that they truly care. Generally what every pro shop sells within store is a generic product that can also be bought elsewhere, so to split themselves apart and make somebody want to spend their money with them, be it a lesson or a product, they have to create a superb experience.

It's not enough just to expect the members' business anymore. This added value of experience could be in the pro's demeanour, humour or just a beautifully-presented shop in which people want to spend time, as well as their hard-earned money.

There is a constant flow of new golf products – how do you manage your stock to serve the needs of your members and visitors?

Every company now offers excellent products, so choosing which equipment to stock is becoming harder and harder. In my experience, stocking fewer brands in more depth shows commitment to them, which improves the relationship and more importantly support towards our business.



The biggest skill any successful retailer and PGA professional must show is that they truly care

I find this pays dividends towards the service given from suppliers and ultimately the margin received.

How do you manage your day?

Wow...there is a question. Time management is a skill that I don't think anybody truly masters, but most of my best planning is done in the car driving to and from work.

The role 'director of golf' encompasses many things and being a modern professional, certainly at a resort, is spinning many plates at once. The key to my job is having a great team in place that are more than capable of dealing with any situation.

If I was to become a private club professional again, I would certainly make it a paramount priority to invest and train my staff to not just be seen as a way for me to get a day off, but incentivising them and motivating them to be more than just a shop assistant.

What are you doing to support junior golf and introduce kids to the sport?

Golf has never been so accessible, or 'cool' to play, but the millennial generation and younger have been brought up immersed in technology which they spend lots of free time on.

This spare time is when we as kids would have been playing golf, football or other outdoor-based hobbies.

I don't think it's golf's fault that junior participation at clubs is decreasing, or anybody working within it. Every club offers junior coaching sessions, either for free or affordable, but essentially the kid has to want to do it! Our head of instruction, Simon Robinson, runs various sessions, both group and individual, with great success.

Are you trying to attract more women to golf?

In a word, yes! We feel ladies' golf is a real emerging market. Again, working at a five-red-star resort, we have lots of footfall through the hotel, spa and the

clubhouse. Offering taster sessions, group sessions (with wine), helps to get the ladies together and when they get to know each other as a group they pull each other along and friendships blossom.

Again, like juniors, it's not easy to develop them into full members but all of us as golf professionals have a responsibility to sustain the future of golf by bringing new players into the game.

Do you have any programmes in place such as academy membership to make it easier to introduce beginners to the game?

We are just introducing an 'Academy Membership'. Our membership works slightly different as the driving range balls are inclusive with membership; we are very lucky to have excellent practice facilities and may not have the time to justify a full membership. This also gives beginner golfers who are having lessons the chance to access the practice facilities.

A lot of PGA pros are having to be a step ahead of their competitors in their offerings and technology – what additional added value services do you provide?

I think the customers' perception of a 'modern' fitting has to comprise of some sort of launch monitor. We as professionals don't necessarily need one to define the desired ball flight, but it definitely gains an element of trust for the customer to the information you are giving.

They now don't just want the numbers, but they actually understand them! I have always owned a Trackman since turning professional, and have believed in the technology and benefit they provide to the customer.



When I moved to Rockliffe there was very little coaching and fitting in place, but a fantastic academy facility that wasn't being maximised. We invested in two Trackman units five years ago and the difference it made to our fitting and lesson experience was huge.

We are one of only two five-red-star hotel and golf properties in the UK, so our standards are very high. We need to get it right so we offer 'golf service' at Rockliffe Hall, offering club cleaning, starters, marshalling, car valeting and a half-way house facility at the driving range. Again, for me it's all about trying to set us apart and create the added value to a member or guest, to accompany a great golf course.

When did you join the TGI Golf Partnership and what was it about it that attracted you?

I joined TGI back in 2003, my training professional at the club was associated with them so I knew the value to the business and how the partnership worked. It was the first decision I made when I became a head professional.

Has TGI Golf been of benefit to you as a PGA professional?

Undoubtedly. Knowing you can compete in the market with the best prices gives you confidence in the industry, and to the consumer.

From the managing director right through the company, all I have ever been offered is help and



Martyn Stubbings

support to make my business better.

In recent years, the business conference has been invaluable. The seminars are current, with interesting speakers that engage you into wanting to learn and gain knowledge, held at the best properties in the UK.

Aside from business, the networking opportunities that are created from the events and the good friends I have met, that I would never have had the exposure to. I can't understand the professionals that don't get involved with the events, they are the highlight of my golfing year.

Every position held in the company I have had the pleasure of dealing with is filled with a super competent individual, and I would have no hesitation in recommending another professional to join the partnership. From my experience I scratch my head in wonder why every professional isn't knocking on the door to join!

What year did you turn professional and what have been your career highlights, both playing and employment?

I turned professional on my 18th birthday in 2000, and

became head professional at Dinsdale Spa Golf Club in 2003, aged 21. Being the club professional at the club I grew up playing at was an honour, especially being so young.

It was a quick learning curve, and without the help of the TGI Partnership, it would have been much harder. In 2011 I moved to Rockliffe Hall, a completely different experience from the village golf course I left, learning the ropes in the corporate resort world.

Again the first thing I did was join the resort with the TGI Partnership. Holding roles as head of instruction, head professional, and latterly director of golf, I'm proud of my career progression so far and feel very lucky I've had the chance to work at two fantastic places.

I would describe myself as slow to get it when it comes to the playing side of golf. I turned professional barely off a four handicap, purely to work in the business side of the game. But I have always loved playing, and I'm quite the opposite of the norm that professionals tend to say they get worse as they get older, my exposure to Trackman as a professional gave me not just the tools to teach ... but to play.

I think a big part of our job is playing with the members, conducting yourself professionally and involving yourself within the club. Members want to see their club professional play, even if they're not Tiger Woods, giving the odd tip here and there. Just count yourself lucky you don't have to play them on a 7,900 yard golf course with links rough like I have to! TGB

Fairway Credit – making golf more accessible

One way some golf clubs are securing their futures is by investing in revenue streams in addition to golf, such as their restaurants, as Tewkesbury Park has done here. A proven way to raise finances for this is via membership fees. Fairway Credit has over 25 years' experience providing clubs with their membership fees in full in one hit, whilst offering their members a monthly repayment option

future proofing their business.

Where does the future of golf club membership lie?

Golf in its current guise has been played for over half a millennium. With the first written record of golf being played at the now 'home of golf', St Andrews, in 1552.

Golf has come a long way since those early days. Over the last 25 years since Fairway Credit entered the golf industry as one of only a handful of companies willing to help fund golfers' annual fees, there has been a huge change in those who want to play golf, how

they want to pay for the privilege of playing and how clubs are trying to be more commercial.

Fairway Credit has seen clubs invest heavily in their junior and training programmes, trying to find that next superstar to win a championship, whilst keeping their membership books full of budding juniors who'll become fully-fledged members.

The introduction of flexible memberships, points-driven schemes, multi club membership / alliances and the development of resort style clubs, like Royal Norwich, are

The golf industry over the last 25 years has changed considerably and Fairway Credit has been able to help clubs, managers and golfers realise their dreams by reducing administration, offering market-leading finance products, providing lump sum payments to allow for investment in the club and predominantly, allowing golfers the freedom to enjoy the membership of their choice without breaking the bank.

Fairway Credit has been at the forefront of all technological and regulatory changes on how the industry offers memberships to golfers. We move with the times, embracing change to make the lives of golf club managers and golfers easier, allowing clubs to invest and grow, becoming more accessible, whilst



all great examples of the changing face of golf club membership. Fairway Credit has kept abreast of these changes and supported all these developments.

So, what does the future hold? Should all clubs start to add new facilities, look for partnerships with local businesses to build an experience-driven centre, add restaurants, become a wedding venue or carry on as they are? Whatever the industry decides, Fairway Credit will work hard to maintain a relevant proposition to support those objectives.

So, can golf compete with other pastimes?

Of course, it can. However, there isn't a silver bullet that can miraculously give you more members or stop potential members from cycling and start hitting the fairway instead. There is a solution that could help make your club more **ACCESSIBLE** to all different kinds of people.

Clubs need to ask themselves questions such as: Where do you see yourself in five years? What changes can you make to be more accessible to a new type of member? How do you entice families, corporate memberships and / or more society days?

These changes could be as little as, changing your membership types, introducing family-friendly days, building corporate memberships offers; any of these and a whole lot more can help to keep the revenue coming in and help

you further plan for the future. Having the ability to offer potential members an easy alternative way of paying can help boost numbers allowing them to have multiple hobbies and pastimes as they are able to spread the costs.

How could clubs invest in their future?

To grow a business, golf club, pretty much everything in life, you need to invest. Cash is king.

We have over 25 years' experience providing clubs with their membership fees in full at the beginning of the season, whilst offering their members a monthly repayment option. This solution helps clubs make those investments early in the season rather than waiting for cash to come into the club 'on the drip' through their in-house finance option. This can aid budgeting and bringing forward some of those critical investments.

Next steps...

For more information on how Fairway Credit could help your club to realise its dreams call us on: 0344 736 9818 so we can help you and your members. **TGB**

the pro shop

Top of the shops



The host of this month's Solheim Cup, Gleneagles, has revamped its pro shop, increasing retail space by nearly a third. There are also now multiple podiums, creating a better flow – and average spend has significantly increased as a result. Tania Longmire reports



G

leneagles has completed an extensive renovation project to elevate and enhance the golf retail experience within its clubhouse.

Golf visitors and members at the Perthshire venue, host of this month's Solheim Cup, are now welcomed into a larger, modern and more flexible golf shop.

Dovetailing beautiful dark walnut joinery and aged brass fittings with the relaxed and warm ambience of the Auchterarder 70 bar and Dormy Restaurant, the new golf shop allows guests more freedom to browse exclusive golf and leisurewear from some of the world's finest brands.

Alyson Lilley, head of golf retail at Gleneagles, said: "Our reinvented retail space hugely enhances the customer journey, offering everyone a more contemporary shopping experience without removing the heritage and friendliness that continues to make a visit to Gleneagles so special."

She continued: "Our retail space has effectively increased by nearly 30 per cent. We have replaced the traditional 'welcome desk' with a series of podiums throughout the shop that now allows our team of six, highly-trained retail experts the freedom to offer advice to our valued customers in a friendly meet-and-greet style.

"Before these important changes, and in busy periods, there may have been a small queue of guests waiting to buy products or ask for advice at our main desk. Now, with multiple customer touchpoints throughout the shop, this does not happen.

"There is a better flow, an improved level of service for everyone, and we are already seeing a significant increases in average spend because of this work."

TGB



A goal in mind

The cover of the June 2019 issue of *The Golf Business* featured the general manager of The North Berwick GC, Elaine McBride, who is an advocate of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) when it comes to her approach to management. Here, she explains how the club's staff were taught about NLP – and why this led to positive results. Tania Longmire reports



Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques have long been utilised to help golfers improve their game, however general manager at The North Berwick Golf Club, Elaine McBride, believes the golf industry as a whole would benefit from adopting an NLP approach to staff training.

Elaine first introduced the staff at the historic golf club to NLP as part of the management team's training and the results have been so transformative that she urges other golf clubs to consider a similar approach.

She said: "NLP techniques have been used by golf coaches for many years, not just for game improvement but also within the psychology of golf.

"I am not aware that NLP training is being used widely in the golf industry and I

think there is a gap in the industry for this type of training. It is very common in the public and private sectors and has

been for many years. It would be good for the golf industry to 'catch up' with other industries."

Elaine enlisted EnjoyNLP, a company designed to deliver bespoke training to the club management team.

Elaine explained: "Many of the staff were a little sceptical since they had never been exposed to NLP and had typically completed more 'conventional' training courses in the past. The course itself was called *Making Managers into Leaders*, designed to include

Many of the staff were sceptical since they had never been exposed to NLP and had typically completed more conventional training courses in the past





The North Berwick Golf Club's food and beverage events planner, Amy Grant, (with Rickie Fowler)

advanced skills in coaching, internal and external communications, customer services and people management.

"The structure of the training involved an individual 'pre-coaching' call to each member of staff to ascertain their capability, needs and questions. This

Feedback from staff during the course made me realise that I had become too focused on managing, in that I was making the decisions, rather than leading and empowering them to feel involved

Elaine revealed: "The written feedback provided by the team was very positive and allowed me to re-evaluate my own management style. It became evident that the focus

on 'managing' the team during my initial six months at the club had got us to where we needed to be and that 'leading' was now needed to achieve the club vision.

"This feedback from the staff during the course made me realise that I had become too focused on managing, in that I

allowed EnjoyNLP to create a more bespoke course in order to meet the needs of the staff attending and the outcomes required by the club."

A two-day intensive training course was delivered with full participation, followed by 'post-coaching' calls with each member of the team to ensure all needs had been met.

was making the decisions and telling them, rather than leading and empowering them to feel involved. With any new role it is natural to get heavily involved in the detail and it made me realise that I had not quite achieved the right balance.

Luggage style green fee tickets

www.eagle.uk.com

Eagle's 'Luggage Style' green fee tickets are the perfect solution to manage and account for the constant flow of green fee paying golfers playing your course.

Unlike the traditional green fee ticket, usually printed on an uninspiring piece of card, the Luggage Style has a self-looping system that, just like its namesake, can be easily attached so avoiding the use of elastic bands and any fumbling or struggle of attaching it is instantly removed. It is visible and is clearly distinguishable on any golf bag.



Available in both a 'tear proof paper' option and a standard 'economy' version, the Luggage Style green fee ticket is an optimum

solution for an all-in-one ticketing system.

The ticket can be clearly

branded, printed in full colour (tear proof, rain resistant paper) which makes identification of a visitor's proof of payment on the correct day that much easier for the golf club.

Depending on the design option that you take, these green fee tickets can actually be a great advertisement for your course as there a lot of golfers who will leave them on their bags to highlight where they have played.

On a day to day basis, the ticket also has a practical role to play as every ticket can be sequentially numbered as a further means of double-checking the visitor's right to be on your course.



The team now can observe many communication patterns with colleagues, members and visitors which help them have a better understanding

“This proved to be a very powerful realisation for me and as such I was able to change some of my own behaviours and share this with the team to ensure that we were all committed to

navigate our journey together.”

EnjoyNLP delivered a further one-day training programme six months later in order to review and reflect how the team members had used their new knowledge, information and techniques in the workplace.

Elaine said: “It was interesting to note that all team members had taken away many different things from the course which had benefited them not only in a work environment, with their teams; but also in their personal life.

“It was very visible that, through this programme, the team had the ability to have more confidence. The programme provided them with exposure to a range of powerful approaches they have since successfully applied in the workplace. I would recommend this programme to individuals seeking an opportunity to link their professional and personal development objectives.

“The team now can observe many communication patterns with colleagues, members and visitors which help them have a better understanding. Furthermore, they are all now using different methods to improve certain behaviours or thinking including building rapport, pre-suppositions of NLP, reframing and personal empowerment.”

Elaine encourages other golf clubs to consider a similar NLP-led approach to training; something she believes would benefit clubs and the golf industry as a whole.

“I would totally support other clubs to use NLP. You cannot put a price on the tangible benefits it brings. I appreciate that not every club will have a large training budget, but my own view is that you can't afford not to.”

NLP is how to use the language of the mind to consistently achieve our specific and desired outcomes



What is NLP?

Neuro

The nervous system (the mind), through which our experience is processed via the five senses: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory.

Linguistic

Language and other non-verbal communication systems, for example hand gestures, physiology, through which our neural representations are coded, ordered and given meaning. This includes: pictures, sounds, feelings, tastes, smells, words (self-talk).

Programming

The ability to discover and utilise the programmes that we run (our communication to ourselves and others) in our neurological systems to achieve our specific and desired outcomes

In other words, NLP is how to use the language of the mind to consistently achieve our specific and desired outcomes.

NLP presuppositions

In NLP we live and work by a number of convenient assumptions – these are the presuppositions of NLP.

Here's a taster:

- Respect for the other person's model of the world
- Resistance in a client is a sign of a lack of rapport – there are no resistant clients, only inflexible communicators
- People are not their behaviours – accept the person, change the behaviour
- Everyone is doing the best that they can with the resources they have available
- The map is not the territory – the words we use are not the event or the item they represent (we are

not out behaviours, they are typically circumstantial)

- You are in charge of your mind and therefore your results
- People have all the resources they need to succeed and achieve their desired outcomes
- The meaning of communication is the response you get
- All procedures should be designed to increase choice
- All procedures should increase wholeness
- The law of requisite variety – the system or person with the most flexibility will control the system.

The name Neuro-Linguistic Programming says exactly what it does: through the use of language and body language it enables practitioners to change the thoughts and feelings of themselves and those around them in a predictable way. It allows for more effective communication of a message by making sure the 'mood music' is correct, that is, it enables people to be shifted to receptive emotional states, as well as getting the raw data of the message across.

NLP was initially devised to help in therapy which is why it is regularly used



Mary Lou Watkins, golf and membership operations manager, and Naim Abbes, food and beverage operations manager, at The North Berwick Golf Club

to cure phobias, decrease anxiety, reduce stress and overcome neuroses. However, the ability to identify the ways that people are thinking and feeling, and ethically make changes in those states, also makes it ideal for business. TGB

1st Products tackles tough task at Royal Norwich

reesinkturfcare.co.uk

Royal Norwich Golf Club has already been benefitting from Toro machines as it builds its new golf course from scratch, but now course manager Peter Todd has also enlisted the help of a second Reesink Turfcare brand, 1st Products.

With construction traffic at the club creating compacted turf, Peter needed a robust attachment able to break down compacted soil easily, and it was the 1st Products UA60 AERA-vator that proved up to the task.

And it's no surprise considering Peter's long history with the

product. "I used the AERA-vator at my previous club in London for 20 years," he says.

"The fact we had that machine for so long just proves how robust and capable it is."

This time however, Peter has made a significant upgrade with the addition of an optional seeder. "The seeder option saves a lot of time because I can now re-seed new turf at the same time as breaking down the soil.

"Having used the AERA-vator before, I knew that it would do the job well and would be able to deal with tough conditions easily but with this extra feature it's even more impressive."

Despite initially being brought on board to deal with the compacted soil from tracks made by construction traffic, Peter has long term plans for the AERA-vator.

He says: "We wanted to create a course that looked as natural as possible, so wherever possible we've opted not to have hard buggy tracks made from tarmac or gravel. Instead we have grass walkways and we will need the AERA-vator to carry out annual renovation work and keep them in good condition."



managing overseas

In the mix

Chris White is the director of operations at Ayla Golf Club in Jordan. He talks about his career to date, the club, what it's like managing a club in the Middle East when his family lives in the UK and the unique Jordan Mixed Open, which he launched this year

Chris White

You've been at the helm at some of the most exciting new golf courses and developments in the Middle East. Can you tell us more about your career path through to your current position as director of operations at Ayla in Jordan?

It was a pretty simple and humble beginning – I couldn't get a job at the garden centre but the local golf club would allow me to dust the pro shop shelves.

In 1990 I turned pro and enrolled in the PGA training programme whilst studying business, finance and marketing at night school three nights a week. In 1994 the PGA of Europe put me forward for a director of golf position to open and run Klassis Golf and Country Club in Istanbul, Turkey where I was fortunate to stage two European Challenge Tour events and one European Seniors Tour event amongst many other things.

In 1999 I joined Abu Dhabi Golf Club, venue of the HSBC Abu Dhabi Golf Championship, where I was director of golf / deputy general manager. 2005 saw me move across and oversee the construction, opening and operation of the Peter Harrdine-designed Al Hamra Golf Club, venue of The European Challenge Tour's Tour championship.

2008 was a move back to Abu Dhabi as general manager of Yas Links, designed by Kyle Phillips, overseeing the full construction, opening and operation where we staged multiple amateur and professional events including The Invitational and Nomura Cup.

Finally, August 15, 2015 saw me arrive in Jordan as director of operations at Ayla Oasis Development Company, a role that not only oversees Jordan's first grass golf course but also a 300 berth marina, some 500 residential homes with facility management and technical operations, beach clubs, security, a retail village with boutique hotel, a sports avenue with racquet and ball sports and a soon to open adventure centre with high ropes, a zip line and adventure mini-golf.

What is the golf industry in Jordan like? How many people play and how many courses are there?

Golf is very new to Jordan – though a sand course has existed in Amman since the late 1980s it's very much a developing sport. Given the game of golf was thought to have first been played back in 1457 it's wonderful to have been part of the team responsible to open a country's first golf course in 2016 – our role now is to grow the game to all demographics.

During your time working in UAE the golf industry boomed massively. Do you see something similar happening in Jordan?

The UAE is unique and now trying to be replicated by many. The country is wealthy and benefits from natural resource. The

establishment of golf courses essentially achieved a number of objectives:

- It gave a growing expat community a leisure activity
- It stabilised the ever moving desert
- Through population growth and thus the treatment of waste water / treated sewage effluent (TSE) become a by-product that enhanced and sustained the growth of vegetation in a harsh and barren environment
- Green spaces offered great residential views hence the boom of residential homes bordering fairways allowing a premium / uplift in sales value
- Golf courses then complemented the vision of using sport to showcase the destination and drive footfall whilst being revenue generating (unlike most parks which are also green but have no real source of income).

The resultant 20-plus golf courses has delivered significant tourism rounds which helps drive a collective tourism economy.

Will this happen in Jordan? There is no real reason it won't. Of course water is scarce but desalinising the Red Sea for fresh water begins the above cycle and can produce the TSE water that supports grass growth. The land exists, the topography and landscapes are spectacular but it needs a joined-up approach.

Drive industry and create jobs = population increase needing homes who require fresh water to live. This results in waste water as a by-product = golf course irrigation water = leisure activity = desirable place to live = more people and homes = more jobs = more golfers = a sustainable golf / tourism business.

What are your biggest challenges for operations at Ayla Golf Club?

Footfall. Golf is so new and there isn't an immediate local market – we are having to create it. Turkish Airlines, EasyJet and Ryanair now flying direct to Aqaba along with the opening of the Hyatt Regency Aqaba Ayla Resort has resulted in immediate golfers arriving from Europe.

From an 'on the ground perspective', even our workforce of greenkeeping and operations staff have never had any experience or exposure to golf so that too has required a lot of training and development.

Ayla hosted the world's first Mixed Open this April. Can you tell us more about this event?

The Jordan Mixed Open is a concept that I had and solely created some years ago but never found the right environment to activate. In light of the correct and current global movement and change in

managing overseas

industry and leadership roles, encompassing equal opportunity to all it just felt right to introduce a 'Mixed Tour' event.

The wonderful thing about golf is that a family of four of different abilities and genders can go out and play a competitive game together. The 'levelling' of the playing field can be done by handicap, length of course, angle / playability of the hole and even restricting equipment.

For, what is considered as a 'world first' The Jordan Mixed Open involved 40 European Ladies Tour professionals, 40 European Challenge Tour professionals and 40 European Staysure senior professionals as well as one amateur from each category so a full field of 123 players.

The course set up was 7,100 yards for Challenge Tour players, 6,601 yards for Staysure Senior Tour players and 6,139 yards for Ladies European Tour players.

A 54-hole tournament with a cut after 36 holes where players went out in three balls with one player from each Tour per group. Competing for \$393,000 and the bragging rights.

In the end, 66 players made the cut, 25 from the Challenge Tour, 21 from the European Senior Tour, 19 professionals from the Ladies European Tour and one of the three amateurs, Emilie Alba Paltrinieri. Daan Huizing, from the Challenge Tour, won the tournament, two strokes ahead of Meghan MacLaren. José Cóceres was the leading senior, finishing tied for fourth place.

What is your vision for the future of the Jordan Mixed Open?

I believe that every professional event that gets launched has a desire to see 'multiple' editions and longevity and we are not ruling that out. We hope it will become a regular feature and may even stimulate more co-sanctioned tournaments around the world.

Ayla Golf Club was constructed in accordance with eco-friendly guidelines. Can you tell us a little more about what that means?

Greg Norman considers his Ayla Golf Club design as one of

Three of the competitors at this year's Jordan Mixed Open: Olivia Cowan, Borja Virto and Barry Lane



For The Jordan Mixed Open, the course set up was 7,100 yards for Challenge Tour players, 6,601 yards for Staysure Senior Tour players and 6,139 yards for Ladies European Tour players

the most sustainable he has done. Water is a scarce commodity in the desert and it was therefore important that we were as efficient as we can be.

Ayla golf course is currently irrigated with a blend of 'saline' ground water that is blended with treated sewage effluent water (common in arid regions) resulting in a purification level that sustains growth of the specially-selected paspallum grass.

The ground water wells are powered by Ayla's three solar farms as are the street lighting and our par three floodlights – in fact the development generates more energy than it uses and thus sends power back to the grid.

What is your average day like?

I have a great, full, fun and varied

day. My family live in the UK so I work a seven-day week here for about five weeks then pop home for a week.

Sundays and Mondays I'm in Amman at our corporate head office the other days in Aqaba following the below routine. Fridays are the best day as almost no-one is in the office so I can catch up.

- 06:45 alarm
- 07:15 leave the house
- 07:20 in the office
- 08:30 operations meeting
- 09:00 – 16:00 Interaction with all departments and assets both in the office and on site
- 17:00 – 18:00 Wrap things up
- May squeeze in nine holes of floodlit golf or one of our weekly team building dinners.
- 22:30 lights out.

TGB

in their own words



Jim Croxton

Chief Executive of the British and International Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA)



Jim Croxton

September traditionally marks the culmination of the UK golfing calendar and as the professionals build towards end of season championships, greenkeepers are on hand to make sure the playing surfaces are in the best condition they possibly can be.

The Solheim Cup at Gleneagles and the BMW PGA Championship at Wentworth are two huge events for the women's and men's games. Both venues are sure to look spectacular for their worldwide audiences and both have two things in common: the golf courses are prepared for play each day by large greenkeeping teams and they will also have a huge number of volunteers on hand, helping to push those high standards even further.

I'm delighted that among those greenkeepers and volunteers will be many BIGGA members and it's fitting that a number of those will be women.

The greenkeeping profession is particularly male-dominated and the number of ladies in the industry is reflected in our membership, where less than 2 per cent are female. It's my belief that as schemes such as Women & Girls Golf Week, which coincided with the British Women's Open, raise interest in golf among ladies, we'll see the knock-on effect of more women choosing to pursue a career in greenkeeping.

Those ladies who are members of the association invariably tell us that they enjoy the lifestyle that greenkeeping affords them, both in terms of having a physically-active role and working outdoors. They'll tell you that there's nothing a man can do out on the course that they can't and they are, of course, absolutely correct.

At the Women's British Open in July, I was delighted that courses manager John Clarke extended an invitation to every female member of BIGGA to join the volunteer team, with seven answering the call. These ladies had a fantastic time and in addition to gaining invaluable tournament experience themselves, they also acted as incredible ambassadors for the profession and my thanks go out to them all.

It is perhaps strange that the most critical part of every golf tournament – and by that I'm referring to the golf course itself – supplements the paid workforce with volunteers to ensure it is in the condition expected of it by the tournament hosts and the viewing public. I'm not sure the same can be said of

any other aspect of the event, certainly not hospitality, merchandising and so on, and yet without the course, there could be no tournament.

In their passion to do the job and their professional pride to produce a course that is as good as physically possible, the greenkeepers have perhaps made a rod for their own backs – no one expects Michelin-starred food service from the catering tents, but if greenkeepers were in

charge, you'd be certain that they'd enlist volunteers from all over the country to create an incredible menu.

The problem then arises when the customer begins to expect that level of service on a regular basis, not understanding the exceptional circumstances in the background.

Returning to our hope that more ladies will take up greenkeeping as a career, BIGGA is actively

supporting The R&A's Women and Golf Charter. We've also published a Women in Turfcare booklet and established a Facebook community where women greenkeepers from all over the world can come together, talk about their experiences and help each other out.

The greenkeeping industry will continue to do its part to make sure the sport is as attractive as it can be, whether as a pastime or as a career choice, and I'm delighted that there's an interest from the general public in finding out what's going on behind the scenes at events such as the Solheim Cup. With golf in the spotlight, it's great that the greenkeeping industry is also gaining the recognition our members deserve. Long may that continue. TGB

For more information, visit www.bigga.org.uk

Ladies who are members of BIGGA invariably tell us that they enjoy the lifestyle that greenkeeping affords them, both in terms of having a physically-active role and working outdoors

Let it bee

Some golf course attempts to make their facilities more attractive to bees have been so successful that they're being studied at a college. Tania Longmire reports

The 'bee lawn' wildflower plot, the size of a football pitch, at Fairmont St Andrews



K

een to make their venues more attractive to bees, golf clubs in Scotland have been earning praise for their environmental credentials.

The St Andrews Links Trust, for example, has been planting buffer zones of wild flowers to attract pollinating insects and has adopted seven beehives.

Trevor Harris, deputy course manager at the Castle Course, said: "What we are doing at St Andrews Links is to make it more diverse for wildlife. As well as the beehives, we are thinking about the introduction of bird boxes and insect hotels to make sure we have got the

right habitat to encourage wildlife.

"Creating an oasis for wildlife is something that is very important for any modern-day golf course."

Head gardener at Fairmont St Andrews, John Mitchell, has worked with greenkeeping staff to plant a 'bee lawn' the size of a football pitch in front of the hotel to attract more pollinators to the area. He has also undertaken a beekeeping course, with general manager John Keating, and is now looking after two hives on site.

"The lawn was planted in time for the bee hives coming last July," he said. "It helps make people more aware of what we're doing here because it's very visual.

"It's very handy for us having the golf course close by as there is a lot of gorse which the bees love, and hopefully by the end of this year we will have our own honey."

The projects have been so successful that HNC golf course management students at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) have visited them while learning the importance of considering both birds and bees in their golf course designs.

The students, such as Tod Bannerman, then each designed a golf course. His one includes areas of natural grassland and a wetland area.

"On my design, each hole becomes 'individual' with large areas of natural grassland vegetation left to grow in between holes throughout the year, encouraging more wildlife to the site and providing a habitat and food source for the wildlife and insects," he said.

"I have also included a wetland / pond area on my design because they play a significant part in biodiversity. Ponds provide drinking water during dry weather, a supply of insect and plant-based food, and shelter among surrounding plants and trees."

Lecturer Ian Butcher said: "Golf is in a process of evolution, not least in working with nature rather than against it.

"And this opens doors to specialisms for our students to consider, all the while learning knowledge and skills that are

applicable across a range of landscape management scenarios.”

Meanwhile, the Ladies European Tour (LET), with help from GEO Foundation, has developed a sustainability plan that aims to set out a new and strengthened commitment to social and environmental responsibility.

The plan includes a number of new policies spanning the reach and influence of the LET, including:

- Encouragement for all venues to be actively engaged in credible sustainability programmes and ideally accredited to international standards
- Guidance made available to staging and promoting teams, to help extend the integration of best practices across key operations, including waste, energy, transportation, catering and water
- Joint development of new outreach and legacy opportunities around events, to support local communities and their environments
- Guidance and support for communications and spectator engagement.



The LET visits over 30 venues each year and is aware that many of them are already engaged with the issues of sustainability and are taking great care when maintaining their courses. Similarly, the event promoters are aware of their responsibilities and have environmentally-friendly procedures and practices in place.

However, much of this work is going unnoticed, and the ‘LET’s Go Green’ strategy will also provide a platform for all those involved to profile credible work they are doing to address a variety of important sustainability issues.

Jonathan Smith, executive director of GEO Foundation, commented: “This is welcome leadership from the LET at a time when most businesses are recognising the need to deliver even clearer social and environmental purpose and results. We are excited about continuing to support implementation, engagement with any venues or tournaments that would like support and recognition, and to helping to champion the outcomes.”

Students from Scotland’s Rural College visiting a wildlife habitat at a nearby golf course. Above: One of the courses on the Ladies’ European Tour, which has developed a plan to promote the environmental best practice of all its host venues



Looking forward, the LET’s development director, Mike Round, said: “This sustainability plan matches well with our other core principles, and as such should prove to be a good fit and an important area of extending the value the LET offers to all partners, sponsors and stakeholders. We will now be contacting the venues and promoters to inform them of the ‘LET’s Go Green’ plan, encouraging them to get involved and working with them to identify and promote their stories and examples of good practice. We hope that, over time, celebrating sustainability work will become a standard feature at all of our tournaments and with all of our partners.” TGB



Oswestry Golf Club in Shropshire is known for its all-year-round play. Head greenkeeper, Gary Barnfield, talks about how that is achieved at a time when greenkeepers do not have unlimited budgets – in particular via the irrigation system the club uses and how his team has tackled the problem of worm casts

Gary Barnfield

Shrewd in Shropshire

Set in mature parkland and designed by James Braid for the club's relocation in 1931, Oswestry Golf Club in Shropshire is renowned for its excellent all-year-round condition. Three-time Open champion Henry Cotton said the course was one of the best he had played on and that the 12th hole was one of the best he had ever seen, while two former Ryder Cup players, Harry Weetman and Ian Woosnam, along with 2004 Volvo PGA champion Scott Drummond, have all been members of the club.

Head greenkeeper, Gary Barnfield, talks about the challenges involved at the club.

"Over the last few seasons the weather has been very challenging,

from last year's drought to this year's floods," he said. "This has complicated our daily duties and work programmes.

**When you see
members of staff
taking pictures of
what the greenkeeping
team have done it
gives you a really good
feeling and helps you
to keep motivated**

"After last year's drought, several fairways suffered scorch damage, resulting in bare areas. To help recovery they were over-seeded at the end of last season and the beginning of this season. Applications of wetting agents have also been applied. The fairways have now made a very good recovery.

"Also golfers' extremely high expectations of the course and their never-ending thirst for course perfection, which is sometimes difficult to achieve on such a busy golf course (apparently greenkeepers should never be seen!)"

Barnfield takes us through the equipment his team uses and the maintenance programmes they follow.

"Greens are aerated every other week with either a SISIS Star



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the golf course

Slitter, Sarrel rollers or a Groundsman aerator. Throughout the colder months a SISIS deep slitter is used and an Air2G2 is hired in," he explained.

"At the beginning of the season the greens are micro-hollow cored and a heavy top-dressing is applied, after which a dusting of top-dressing is applied monthly. In August our 'Greens Renovation Week' is carried out, when they are verti-drained, over-seeded and have another heavy top-dressing. We aim for 110 tonnes per year.

"Tees are aerated, top-dressed and over-seeded twice a year and the fairways are deep slit at the beginning of the year and verti-drained in October, along with walkways and any wet areas.

"We have also just had a new irrigation panel fitted, a Rain Bird ESP-LXD. This was done by North Staffs Irrigation. They have looked after our system for many years. The new panel allows us to work it from a mobile phone. This means we don't have to be at the club to set the irrigation to come on."

Worm casting is a problem for Oswestry. Barnfield details how he has solved it.

"One of the chemicals we have lost is carbendazim, which is used to deter worm casting. To replace this we have been advised to top-dress the worst areas with a sharp sand. We have introduced this to our tees but to do large areas of fairways this would prove very expensive. We have purchased a SISIS Flexibrush to disperse the casting.

"We trialled several wide-area brushes and we found the Flexibrush did the best job, following the ground a lot better than the others. The brush is 5.37 metres wide and covers the fairways in no time. We purchased the Flexibrush early in the season so it will be our first season using it. It's also ideal to clear dew from the fairways when cutting in the early mornings, which we all have to do to avoid the golfers. It also stands the grass up giving a much cleaner cut and superb finish."

Barnfield also talks about life as a greenkeeper – especially whose son is an apprentice at the club.



"Over the years I have learnt to have extremely broad shoulders and not to take negative comments to heart," he said. "At the end of the day all golfers are entitled to their opinions. An old greenkeeper once gave me advice to just go deaf and get on with what I know to be right. Having an extremely good team around me makes the job a lot easier. With having a couple of young lads in the team, one just completed his time in college, and one just starting, fetches new ideas and techniques to the course, we are all learning every day.

"I get a great deal of satisfaction from my job. Seeing the course in great condition makes me, and all the team, feel extremely proud, when you see members of staff taking pictures of what they have done it gives you a really good feeling and helps you to keep motivated.

"The advice I would give to a youngster starting in greenkeeping is to make sure they are aware of what the job entails. I have told my son Joel (our apprentice) to get used to early mornings and weekend work. We have to work very long hours regardless of the weather, as I said, you have to love it to do it. Joel is doing very well and is keen to learn. He is doing well with his Level 2 and has already completed his PA1 and PA6 spraying tests."

Finally, Barnfield details how the profession could be improved.

"I would like to see members of the club and committees educated more about what greenkeeping involves; there is a lot more to it than just cutting grass," he said.

"With the withdrawal of chemicals and so on, and the pressure on budgets, it is going to become more difficult to maintain the standards we are used to. It would be good if people were educated about this."

TGB



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the golf course

Royal Portrush Golf Club

www.royalportrushgolfclub.com

The host of this year's Open Championship, Royal Portrush Golf Club, has renewed its sustainability distinction, the 'GEO Certified' status.

The club first became certified in 2015 and has continued to strengthen its commitment to sustainability and protecting the natural links habitat. Examples of this include grassland and scrub improvement and maintaining a thriving habitat for native bee species.

"The Open is played on some of the world's most revered golf courses, at venues which represent the many ways that golf can be beneficial to communities and the environment," GEO Foundation executive director Jonathan Smith, said. "Congratulations to the team at Royal Portrush for their achievements, and for helping to ensure the continuation of The R&A's leadership policy of high sustainability standards for Open venues."

"We, as a club, are delighted to renew our GEO certification and are able to track our progress and achieve continued improvement in our commitment to being an environmentally sustainable business," Royal

Portrush course manager Graeme Beatt said.

"We are custodians of the links here at Royal Portrush and take great pride in the flora and fauna within its sand dune grassland while

also managing all departments of the business in a sustainable manner."

R&A director of sustainability, Steve Isaac, added: "Our commitment to only host the Open at certified venues has been very well received and is a good match with the Open GreenLinks initiative across the staging of the Championship related to nature, communities and resources."

The Open GreenLinks initiative was set up with the assistance of GEO Foundation's 'OnCourse Tournaments' programme, utilising many of the guidelines and resources that are designed to help golf tournaments around the world accelerate their own commitments, actions and results.



Fulwell Golf Club

www.fulwellgolfclub.co.uk

Fulwell Golf Club in Middlesex has unveiled its new-look layout to members and visitors following a bunker renovation project.

"Fulwell Golf Club is the proud owner of a reinvigorated course that not only lays down a more thorough challenge to today's breed of long hitters, but also revives the visual styling and shape of its bunkers of old, with more than a passing tribute to the rugged-edged bunkering from Alister MacKenzie's input in the 1920s," said a spokesman.

"Some bunkers have been removed, others repositioned, and all renovated and restyled to ensure consistency of design and playing surfaces throughout. Some of the most significant changes to fairway bunkering have taken place on the third, fourth and eighth holes, with bunkers left and right of the eighth fairway now demanding a high degree of accuracy from anyone attempting to take the hole on. Around the greens, some of the most visually striking changes have been to the sixth and ninth holes, both already very attractive par threes near the clubhouse that are now even prettier."

"The membership is delighted with the changes carried out to ensure that our bunkers are now consistent throughout and perfectly positioned for modern driving distances," commented club secretary, Murray Cook.

"We are delighted that our bunkering now meets the high standards we set for our other playing surfaces. We are convinced that our significant investment, along with our hard-working greenstaff, led by our Master Greenkeeper, Sam Evans, will enable us to cement our position as one of the premier clubs in the London area while helping us to attract more members and visitors as our reputation continues to grow."

Harleyford Golf Club

www.harleyfordgolf.co.uk

Harleyford Golf Club's newly constructed and equipped greenkeeping facility has been opened by Richard Scott, the mayor of Marlow in Buckinghamshire.

"The new facility was designed to be both efficient and environmentally friendly," said a spokesman. "Water from the wash down down-bays is recycled and reused, modern lighting reduces energy consumption, compost sites encourage green recycling and the introduction of 'bug hotels' increases pollinating insects.

"Harleyford has invested over £300,000 in new machinery. This new fleet will ensure that the course is maintained to the highest standard."

Harleyford is the home club of touring professional Tyrrell Hatton, who has been a member of the club since the age of nine and last year played in the winning Ryder Cup team at Le



Golf National in Paris. He regularly visits the club and discusses his ideas with the greenkeeping team.

The Donald Steel-designed course is set on a private estate by the River Thames in Marlow. Beautifully crafted in a natural downland setting, the 6,903 yard, par 72 course is both challenging and rewarding to players of all levels.

Frilford Heath Golf Club

www.frilfordheath.co.uk

Well known in the greenkeeping industry for his work at Frilford Heath Golf Club and as a president of BIGGA, Sid Arrowsmith has retired after working for 42 years in the greenkeeping industry.

"One of the things I'm proudest of is what we achieved at Frilford Heath Golf Club, where I was course manager for 25 years," he said. "From developing a third championship course, to obtaining GEO certification for our sustainability efforts and



becoming an Open regional qualifying club, Frilford Heath has come a long way since I arrived. And the successful relationship we had with Toro really aided the club's progression.

"And the same could be said for my time as head greenkeeper at Royal Portrush. I was responsible for preparing the courses for the club's centenary year."

One of the biggest tests of Sid's career was obtaining BIGGA 'Master Greenkeeper' certification, but he says he loved the challenge. "The Master Greenkeeper certification means an awful lot," he said. "It's a demanding and lengthy process which isn't for everyone, particularly the two exams – they're definitely not for the faint hearted! But the fact I was able to test myself at the highest level possible and be successful, is definitely one of my proudest moments."

With such an incredible career behind him, Sid is now taking some much deserved time off. "I'm going to really miss working with the guys at the club every day, but I'm looking forward to spending as much time with my wife as possible. We're spending a lot of time travelling and have three trips booked for this year alone!"

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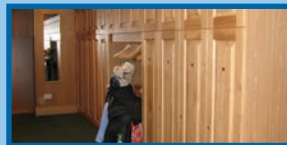


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Netting Installers

Pro-Fit Net Installations Ltd

Tel. 01308 488939

e-mail mark.cowling2@btopenworld.com

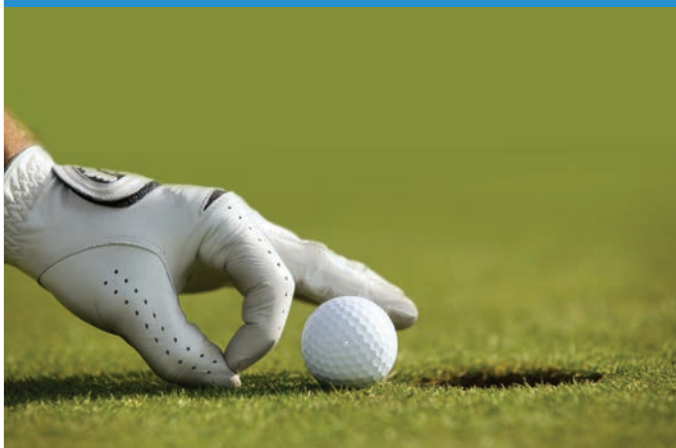


Pro-Fit Net Installations Ltd are one of the most experienced installers of ball catch systems in the UK with the key staff having over 25 years of personal experience each. The company specialises in the design, supply and installation of ball catch systems from golf practice bays to driving range fences as well as systems for other sports.

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THE GOLF BUSINESS

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Director of Golf Operations

The Northumberland Golf Club, founded in 1898, designed and revised by Colt and Braid in the golden era of golf course design, is one of the region's most prestigious courses. "The Park" is home to thriving gentlemen's and ladies' clubs nestling in woodland with views over High Gosforth Park. The clubhouse is traditional, spacious and impressive and the course is often used as a Regional Qualifier for the Open Championship.

They now wish to appoint a Director of Golf Operations who, reporting to the Chairman and General Committee, will have executive responsibility for all aspects of the administration of the Club in line with the Club's business plan.

This is a high profile leadership role in a dynamic and competitive environment. Candidates must have first class people management and communication skills, a flexible, "can-do" attitude and sound commercial and financial acumen. Experience of working within a golf club environment will be a clear advantage. A competitive remuneration package is offered.

For full details please see our website
www.thengc.co.uk/policies/recruitment/

Candidates should contact Fred Howie of Howie White Resourcing enclosing a detailed curriculum vitae at fred@howiewhite.co.uk



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A small selection of jobs available on the website:

- Director of Golf Operations – Northumberland Golf Club
- Head of Membership – England Golf
- Club Manager – Newcastle-under-Lyme Golf Club
- Golf Operations Manager – Wharton Park Golf & Country Club
- Golf and Marketing Administrator – The New Golf Club, St Andrews
- Senior Manager – TaylorMade Golf
- Pro Shop Retail Assistant – Old Course Hotel, Golf Resort & Spa
- Accountant – Bourn Golf & Country Club
- Greenkeeper – Fairmont St Andrews



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Design for Golf

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STARTING RULES
Please 'check in' at the professional shop to confirm starting tee.

SLOW PLAY
Your place on the course is behind the game in front - not in front of the game behind.

DRESS CODE
Appropriate dress code is required on the course at all times.

ETIQUETTE
Please look after your course -
Replace Divots, Repair Pitch Marks
& Rake Bunkers - thank you

ON COURSE MAINTENANCE

ALL TROLLEYS ALLOWED
SUMMER RULES APPLY
NO ELECTRIC TROLLEYS
WINTER RULES APPLY

START TIMES

MONDAY - FRIDAY

2 BALLS TEE

0800 - 0915 10th
0945 - 1130 1st
1130 - 1315 10th
1315 onwards 1st or 10th

3/4 BALLS TEE

0800 - 0930 1st
0930 - 1130 10th
1130 - 1315 1st
1315 onwards 1st or 10th

SATURDAY, SUNDAY & BANK HOLIDAY

NON COMPETITION DAYS

0730 - 0930 1st & 10th
0930 - 1130 TEES CLOSED
1130 onwards 1st & 10th

PIN POSITION GUIDE

FRONT MIDDLE BACK

1st TEE **PRACTICE FACILITIES** **10th TEE**

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