



JUST TOO GOOD

James Gaskell and Peter Pattenden emerge victorious at this year's Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards, hosted at Goodwood

Recruitment

Expert advice if you are working with recruitment agencies to enlist staff

Shiskine

Visiting Stewart Fotheringham at this cult favourite located on Arran's shores

Stoneham

How the creation of a new practice area generated additional income for the club

Setting budgets

How understanding your position in the club will help you gain more resources



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editor's Notes

Greenkeeper International editor,
Karl Hansell



Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year is usually a vibrant, exciting event as some of the association's most ambitious members come together to contest the competition.

And so it was odd at the conclusion of this year's event, when news began to spread about the death of the Queen. We had just announced the two very worthy winners – James Gaskell and Peter Pattenden – and were sitting down to a celebratory meal, when BIGGA's chief operating officer, Sami Strutt, showed real fortitude to stand up and make the announcement that the Queen had died. It was a sad, heartfelt moment, but one that necessitated the reshuffling of our post-event activities. It was no longer appropriate to issue a celebratory press release about the awards and we made the decision to alter BIGGA's logo to a sombre, black version that reflected the national period of mourning. BIGGA declined to issue any statements on social media, instead leaving the airwaves clear for those who had a clear relationship to the monarch. We chose to bow our heads respectfully while others delivered the eulogies and I hope that approach was appreciated and respected by all our members.

I hope you enjoy this month's magazine, which reflects upon the awards, as well as other great content.

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THE PEOPLE BEHIND YOUR MAGAZINE



Mike Chappell

A former groundsman who entered the recruitment and training consultancy business, Mike responded to the BIGGA Workforce

Survey with some advice to help golf clubs access new talent through agencies.



Mike Hyde

Mike works across the golf club industry, supporting both BIGGA as a freelance writer and the GCMA in its communications activities.

He's also a lifelong golfer and the owner of Carefree Golf Photography.



Laurence Pithie MG

The first BIGGA member to achieve Master Greenkeeper certification, Laurence continues to keep his finger on the pulse of

the industry, this month taking a visit to Stoneham to check out its new practice facility.



Kevin Fish

A former club manager at the Glen in North Berwick, Kevin was named UK Golf Club Manager of the Year in 2004. As director of

Contemporary Club Leadership, he now supports clubs in their management activities.

INVEST IN YOURSELF



CONFERENCE

CLASSES

SEMINARS

EXHIBITION



“Coming to this event is good for me as a greenkeeper who wants to move forward and progress. It’s an opportunity to make greenkeeping better as an industry.”

Jeremy Ward, head greenkeeper, West Bradford

There's a lot of talk about the spiralling cost of living and as our daily household bills continue to rise, we are all looking to build the resilience that will not only enable us to maximise our potential earnings, but also help protect us from potentially difficult circumstances.

One way to support yourself is by making savvy investments. We can't all be successful on the stock market, but there is another form of investment that never fails to provide dividends and that is investing in yourself and your own future. Continue to Learn at BTME provides you with the opportunity to do just that.

Over the past 30 years, Continue to Learn has grown to become one of the most influential events in the golf

industry calendar. Attended by greenkeepers, course managers and turf professionals from all over Europe and further afield, educational opportunities at Continue to Learn amount to over 2.5 hours of training for every golf club in the United Kingdom.

And this year there are more cost-effective ways of

learning than ever before, with discounts if members of the same club book onto the Conference schedule, opportunities to purchase learning through Turf Rewards, free BTME Breakfast Club sessions and our cost-free range of Seminars.

Deb Burnett, BIGGA
Learning & Development
Executive said: "Continue to

Learn provides today's turf professionals with the expertise, knowledge and ability to overcome the challenges we all face on a daily basis, while also providing the skills to help you achieve your career ambitions.

"The education programme is built with input from leading experts and educators and topics are selected by BIGGA members, which means content is tailored to the needs of the modern greenkeeper or course manager.

"With such an influential role in shaping the greenkeeping industry, Continue to Learn is always incredibly popular, so make sure you book early to avoid missing out on the world class education that is on offer."

CONFERENCE

The two-day conference programme spans Monday and Tuesday. Sessions are typically 40 to 60 minutes in length and there will usually be two sessions taking place at the same time, so you can choose which you would like to attend. We'll also be recording the sessions, so you can watch anything you miss at a later date.

Topics are varied and primarily aimed at course manager, head greenkeeper and deputy level, although all are welcome to take part.

This year the Conference will take place in the DoubleTree by Hilton Harrogate Majestic Hotel & Spa, located adjacent to the Harrogate Convention Centre.

Conference topics include:

- motivation; sustainability; nature;
- optimising light; Marco Simone Golf and Country Club; communications;
- aggregates; using data; plant parasitic nematodes; environmental stewardship;
- workplace culture; golf course design;
- supporting greenkeepers; biodiversity;
- summer diseases; course renovation;

mindful resilience; climate change; managing fine fescue; Royal Liverpool Golf Club (Hoylake).

“ Meeting and learning with the rest of the industry is really exciting.

Matt Milligan, first assistant, Rudding Park

CLASSES

Classes are held across full or half days and cover a wide range of subjects for greenkeepers at every stage of their career. Classes take place Sunday to Wednesday and are usually held in the Queen's Suite, within Harrogate Convention Centre, although a limited number take place in the adjacent Crowne Plaza hotel.

With smaller class sizes than the Conference, the Classes are often an opportunity for interactive learning, helping you develop practical or theoretical skills for the benefit of your golf

facility and your career. Topics vary from agronomy to people management and places sell out quickly, so don't hesitate to book if a topic catches your eye.

Class topics include: irrigation; developing teams; turf machinery maintenance — electrics and hydraulics; mindful greenkeeping; strategic planning; turf diseases; combatting drought; governance in golf; non-pesticidal disease management; water security; course renovation; fertiliser programmes; grinding; agronomic data; personal wellbeing; soil

analysis; budgeting; soil surfactants; motivation; turf species identification; brilliant management; managing a greens committee; rhizosphere engineering; sprayer calibration; surveying trees; weed management; supporting others; coaching and mentoring; using Excel; soil microbiology; hosting effective meetings; creating greens complexes; dealing with negativity; being a better boss; soils; creating videos; positive thinking; succeeding at meetings; organisation; how to criticise and correct people.

Continue to Learn is supported by



WANT SOME HELP FIGHTING FOR YOUR BUDGET?

Stop having opinions and start having data at your fingertips

Kevin Fish, Contemporary Club Leadership, with Karl Hansell, BIGGA

Read this for:

- / Budgeting
- / Persuading
- / Senior management

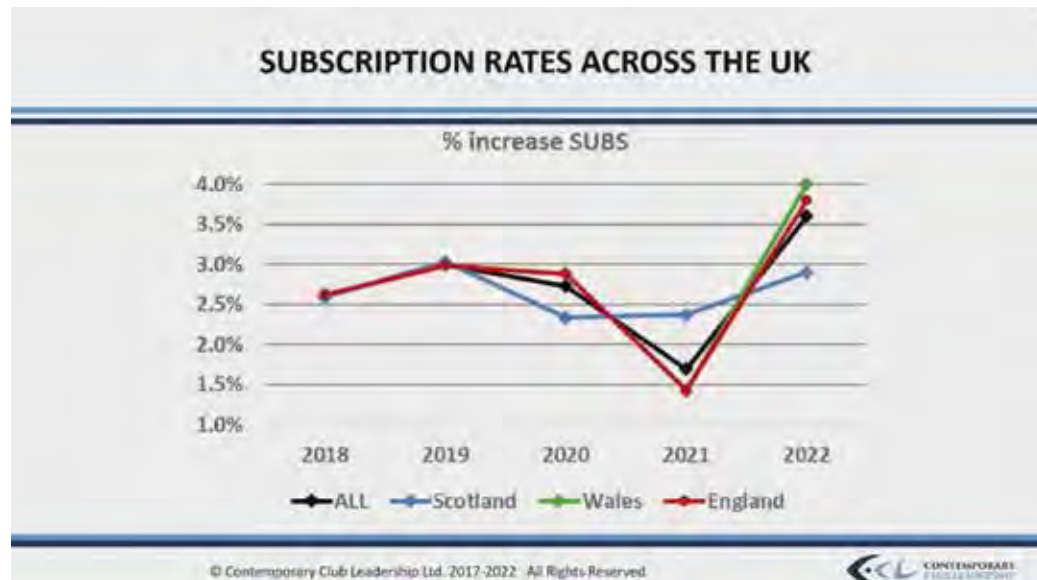
Do you have an opinion on what your course budget should be?

Well, so do your board members. The difference is they get to vote and you don't, and I don't like those odds.

But if you possess data and know how to use it, you'll soon find you begin winning those arguments. I want you to go into every committee room and every conversation with every member with more information than they have. If you do that, you will win nearly every time.

Let's begin by putting the feel good factor around the current golf boom in to some context. Golf membership has been in decline since the Millennium, with membership numbers reduced by around 20%. But then in early 2020 COVID-19 hit and, after that initial uncertain wobble, golf found it actually had a monopoly on fun and for a while it felt like we had won some kind of lockdown lottery.

As of November last year, over half the clubs in the country declared they had a



waiting list. While membership was in decline year-on-year, you could understand a club treasurer saying they were too frightened to put the subs up by more than 2 or 3%. But for a couple of years now, golf has never had it so good and yet those same treasurers only put subscriptions up by an average of 4%.

Clubs were, however, more willing to put the price up to visitors, with visitor fees

increasing on average by around 10%. Clubs knew that demand for their product was high and they experienced two outstanding financial years. Despite this buoyancy, they didn't want to charge members more when they could and that might be about to bite us.

Key takeaway 1: Golf won the lockdown lottery, but when we had the opportunity to capitalise, our treasurers thought a 4% increase on

members' subs would do.

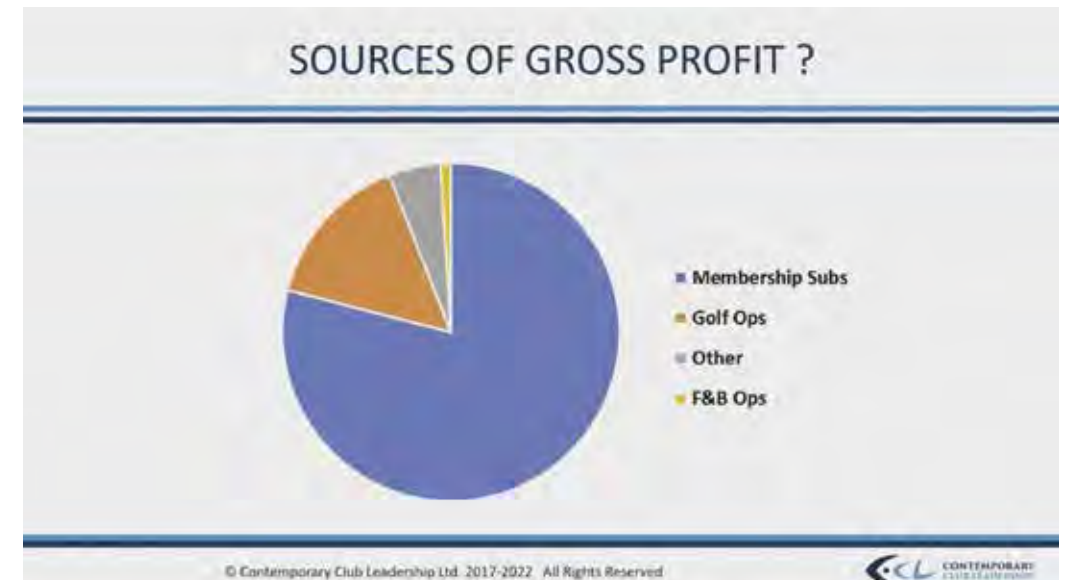
Post COVID-19, if things return to normal for the club industry — as they have in most other industries — we will find that clubs experience a typical membership churn of around 6.4%. This means that every year, for every 100 members you have, at least six will need to be replaced. And that is before we factor in the current economic uncertainties in people's lives, which may see a decline in spending on what

might be called 'non-essential purchases'.

So, firstly, spare a thought for the people at the club who have to keep one eye on a crystal ball and their other eye on the spreadsheet containing the club's overall budget. Then, secondly, be prepared for all eventualities and be ready to justify your slice of the budget.

What really matters to members at a club when they are deciding whether to renew their membership? We asked over 30,000 golf club members what they think is important to them at a golf club. Of the 10 choices we gave them to choose from (beverage, club professional, competition golf, golf course, office support, clubhouse facilities, customer service, food, management of the club, social functions), the golf course came out as number one — the most important thing contributing to a members' enjoyment at a club.

Key takeaway 2: The golf course is the most important factor to members (but spare a



thought for your general manager who must deliver in all 10 areas)

I have a report containing the accounts from over 200 UK golf clubs and I can confirm that more than three quarters of a club's gross profit comes from membership subscriptions. When combined with visitor fees, it could be said that the golf course is responsible for around 94% of the club's gross profit. This doesn't mean

that those other areas aren't important but, financially, they do not contribute to the bottom line the way the golf course does.

Key takeaway 3: 94% of all

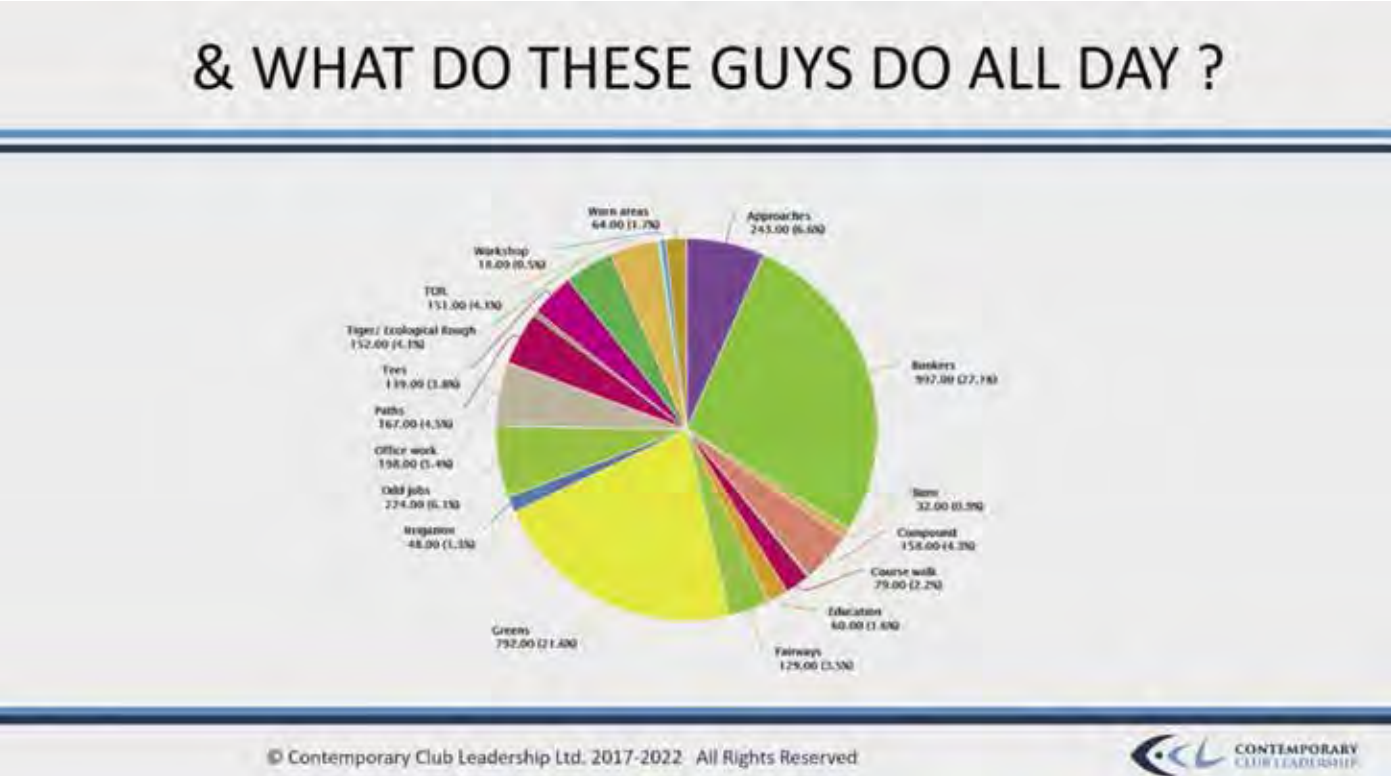
the profit that reaches a club is reliant on the golf course you manage.

If that's the case, which department spends the most money? The biggest »



Watch the full webinar by scanning the QR code





overhead in a golf club is the course. You manage the biggest part of the club's budget and with that power comes great responsibility, so make sure that you earn the respect of your manager and board by being comfortable with the numbers at budget time. You can build confidence throughout the year by having a keen eye on your financial reports and forecasts.

Key takeaway 4: For every £100 a club spends, £47 is typically dedicated to the golf course, so make sure you have it all under control.

Incredible though it may seem, around the globe benchmark reports like ours reveal that the percentage spent on the golf course does not change significantly whether you are running a major championship venue or a nine-hole with an honesty box.

The largest expense within that course budget is payroll and our analysis of that data is also remarkably robust. There will come a time when a club captain says to you, 'I'll tell you what's wrong around here, we've got too many staff'. In that moment, you must be able to look up the data and present the facts, rather than

If you possess data and know how to use it, you'll soon find you begin winning those arguments

allow emotion to win the day. If you don't have that data, eventually there will be a captain or course convener who decides you're going to have to let some people go. I have seen an excellent example of helping the members to better understand the complexities of the course budget at my own club, where the former course manager, Darren McLaughlan, would send out newsletters that said

tasks your staff carry out, because if a recession bites, you are just one greens convenor away from having two fewer staff.

Golf club budgets can be divided into operating funds and capital funds. Operating funds are the blood flow that once spent is gone forever. These include employee costs, food and beverage supplies, course supplies, heating and lighting and administration expenses. Capital funds are the skeleton that a successful club is built around and include buildings, asset replacement, refurbishment



costs, course developments and facility enhancements.

There is no single metric that tells us whether a club is in a healthy position. But the level of capital funds that are available is a good indicator as it represents a club's ability to not only fund its operations but also provide enough funds for capital reinvestment that will keep the whole facility attractive for the next generation.

Of the 200 clubs in our benchmark analysis, over a half had capital funding below zero. Those clubs are watching the assets of their club go backwards on their watch and making no provision for the replacement or development of assets.

It is your responsibility to make sure that you have a robust plan for replacing all of your assets. You may well have a machinery replacement plan and this could be financed through leasing arrangements, but what about the other assets you are responsible for? The buildings, office contents (IT) and the stuff below ground that, if you don't remind people about, they will simply forget it needs to be replaced.

Is your club putting enough money away so that when something goes wrong or reaches the end of its natural life, you can fulfil your role and maintain the course to the agreed standard?

Key takeaway 6: Take a professional and pro-active rather than reactive approach to management by taking control of your assets and budgeting accordingly.

If a club makes a healthy profit, it doesn't go down well with members because they don't like to think you are 'sticking it in the bank' at their expense. My suggestion is that clubs don't make a profit — not from operations anyway. Rather, seek to break even on operations, but highlight the importance of also making a permanent annual contribution to the capital

“ One club we work with in Scotland put a ‘drainage levy’ on subscription costs and now does a hole every year. Everyone thinks it’s brilliant because they can see they are contributing to a specific improvement on their course.

investment fund.

Capital items include machinery replacement programmes, irrigation, course maintenance facilities, drainage and your IT equipment and team's welfare facilities.

Why would the owners of a business not want to see continuous investment in their business, particularly when it is one that they personally utilise every week?

By doing so, the members (owners), will start to pay more attention to the investments made by their club and, in our experience, become more likely to want to see this contribution increased because they are the visible beneficiaries of that investment.

One club we work with in Scotland put a 'drainage levy' on subscription costs and now does a hole every year. Everyone thinks it's brilliant because they can see they are contributing to a specific improvement on their course.

Now imagine that was across the board and the members had a genuine interest in the big ticket replacement items under your control.

Here are some basic capital needs assessment facts:

- / Depreciation means you must eventually replace what is already there just to maintain existing standards
- / Most items increase in cost over time
- / Schedule a refurbishment programme, otherwise areas of your operations will be forgotten, including staff welfare facilities

to play our part and educate them to act like owners rather than customers, which will lead to investment in the business that will benefit generations to come.

In summary, I could make a strong case for saying that greenkeeping has led the way when it comes to data-driven decision making on the course and I want you to take that approach in to the boardroom, because the facts are on your side.

Continue the conversation

You can email Kevin at kevin@ccl.services or visit www.ccl.services for more information.

Kevin was speaking at Continue to Learn 2022. This is just a taste of the incredible learning that is on offer at Continue to Learn each year. Check out the Continue to Learn 2023 brochure that arrived with this month's Greenkeeper International and start building a better future for you and your golf course today. Visit www.btme.org.uk for more

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