

COUNTY COUNSELLING



By Colin Hoskins
Features editor

The IOG-led Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme has reinforced its support for grassroots cricket and the England and Wales Cricket Board's network of county pitch advisors

As the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) continues its support of the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme (GaNTIP), the ECB's team of county pitch advisors have not only been reminded of the role at grassroots level being played by GaNTIP but also how the programme will continue to support them.

"GaNTIP will carry on targeting grassroots sites and the volunteers who look after them," said Ian Mather-Brewster, GaNTIP's key account manager for cricket. "Going forward, there will be renewed emphasis on liaising with local authorities, which are investing in groundscare but not necessarily in the right way."

Addressing 80 or so delegates – including many ECB county pitch advisors – at the Emirates Old Trafford, home of Lancashire County Cricket Club, Ian pointed out that the event also enabled a review of the needs of groundsmen's associations as well as the ECB and its pitch advisors.

He also explained how Performance Quality Standards (PQS) will continue to play a major part of GaNTIP assessments, and both he and the ECB thanked Martin Ford for his diligent work as IOG-ECB fine turf manager – which includes championing PQS – over the past 10 years or so.

It was such achievements that contributed to Martin being acclaimed as the Lifetime Achievement Award winner at the 2017 IOG Industry Awards and while his former role as fine turf manager is now

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Martin Ford (centre) was thanked for his work as IOG-ECB fine turf manager

absorbed by GaNTIP, the fact that he is entering only semi-retirement (rather than full retirement) was welcomed by everyone.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Undertaking PQS or detailed pitch assessments – and producing detailed reports of the findings – is just one role of an ECB county pitch advisor, who also:

- Carries out basic advisory assessments including visual inspections;
- Advises on urgent issues – for example, when a club has to deal with vandalism, flooding or a request from a league;
- Supports initiatives from the ECB and county cricket boards to promote groundsmanship and improve surfaces, including helping to build effective cricket groundsmen's associations.

Regional groundsmen's associations were well represented at the meeting and the best practice advice and information presented by the delegates from Kent, who have been successfully working with grassroots/village cricket clubs for the past 20 years,

proved particularly useful – especially Peter Robinson's views on funding opportunities.

"There are lots of nooks and crannies of funding – not vast amounts of money but enough to make a difference – and the trick is knowing where to find them," he advised.

While grassroots cricket was the main focus of the day-long event, a series of informative and interesting presentations were equally well received. These included:

- Iain James from TGMS, talking about the hybrid pitch trials at the National Cricket Performance Centre, as well as the construction of the synthetic wickets in the Old Trafford nets;
- Amenity Training & Consultancy's Paul Bannister providing a health and safety update; and
- Lancashire CCC's head groundsmen Matt Merchant presenting a behind-the-scenes view of the Old Trafford pitch reconstruction.

[i] Visit www.iog.org for more information about GaNTIP