

GROUNDS MANAGEMENT



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Making sport possible

Spring 2023 / £7.50

INSIDE

HOW TALKING CAN
HELP IMPROVE YOUR
MENTAL HEALTH

FUTURE-PROOF YOUR
WATER MANAGEMENT

GMA RECOGNISES
KEITH BOYCE AS
INDUSTRY MENTOR

INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

The inspirational Roy Rigby reflects on his
success and induction into the GMA Hall of Fame



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WELCOME

Groundscare sector bouncing back in 2023



It was great to hear that BIGGA's BTME event was so well attended, that the buzz on the floor was really positive and that

generally business opportunities in the wider grounds sector are looking good. We are experiencing a very buoyant start to SALTEX exhibitor sales too – so much so that we've extended the floor plan to accommodate larger stands for our current exhibitors and are welcoming more exciting brands to the show this year.

The GMA is also getting ready to big up our industry and those who work within it with our annual #GroundsWeek, which is taking place from 20 to 26 March. We hope you'll support this awareness campaign, which aims to get recognition, by people both inside and outside of the industry, for your role in 'making sport possible'.

I hope you also enjoy reading about some of our amazing members and GMA Award winners in this issue too. These include two GMA Hall of Fame inductees – former Headingley 'inspirational' head groundsman Keith Boyce and Roy Rigby, who sets exceptional standards at Manchester City FC – as well as Sean Clixby, whose team of volunteers at Broughton Recreation Park in Lincolnshire have enabled more playing opportunities on quality sports surfaces for their community.

Our industry has got a great deal to be proud of, so let's join together to promote it and encourage new recruits to get involved.

Geoff Webb, GMA CEO



REGULARS

- 4 TWO-MINUTE UPDATE**
News from across the industry
- 6 BRIEFING**
Gearing up for #GroundsWeek 2023; GMA to review Annual Salary Framework Report; Serbo-Croat-Bosnian online course launched; GMA gains matrix Standard re-accreditation; Level 1 Bowling Green course – spaces available
- 17 PAS UPDATE**
Community sport at Wigan's Ashton Park is given a pitch improvement boost
- 31 TECHNICAL INSIGHT**
An update on Sport England's pilot study on carpet-hybrid pitches for community use
- 35 TECHNICAL INSIGHT**
Water resource regulations
- 40 TECHNICAL INSIGHT**
Sustainable water management
- 43 IN ACTION**
Products used by Merchant Taylors' School, VfL Wolfsburg and Worth Park Gardens
- 45 MAINTENANCE TIPS**
What to do in spring
- 49 PRODUCT SHOWCASE**
Product news from DLF, Kubota, Husqvarna, Redexim, Weedingtech and Collier Turf Care

FEATURES

- 12 IT'S GOOD TO TALK**
The mental wellness benefits of talking to someone who is prepared to listen
- 18 PASSING THE BATON**
GMA Hall of Fame inductee Keith Boyce has inspired Leeds Rugby's Jason Booth and Ryan Golding among many others in the industry
- 22 SETTING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**
Manchester City FC head of grounds and landscaping and GMA Hall of Fame inductee Roy Rigby talks about his career and retirement plans
- 26 LOCAL HERO**
How award-winner Sean Clixby worked with the GMA to help his team of volunteers transform the sports facilities at Broughton Recreation Park

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THINK

GROUNDS MANAGEMENT

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UPDATE

GMA AND INDUSTRY NEWS

DISTRIBUTOR AWARD FOR PRICE TURFCARE AT BTME

Price Turfcare, the UK and Ireland distributor of the Ventrac multi-impliment, all-terrain compact tractor, returned from a successful BTME event with two accolades after being named European Distributor of the Year and receiving Ventrac's Platinum Award for Sales Achievement.

After presenting the award, Tyler Dickie, Ventrac's international sales manager, said: "The effort that [Price Turfcare managing director] Rupert Price and his small team put into generating new business in the UK and Ireland is phenomenal. Since the formation of the business just six years ago, they have seen year-on-year increases in sales and they are our flagship European dealer."

Ventrac's marketing director, Isaac Roth, who was visiting from Ohio, US, said: "Just six years ago, our products were unknown in the UK, but with a defined marketing strategy, dedication and hard work, Ventrac is now a recognised, established and respected brand in the UK."



Price Turfcare's Rupert Price (centre) shows off the company's Platinum Award for Sales Achievement



Grassroots facilities are to receive £168m in funding in England

UK-wide multi-sport grassroots funding confirmed to 2025

As part of the ongoing drive to deliver the grassroots facilities every community needs and levelling up access to high-quality pitches, up to a further £168m will be invested into facilities in England by 2025 on top of a continued £18m annual commitment. It will be delivered by the Football Foundation – a partnership between the Premier League, the Football Association, and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – to improve and upgrade pitches and facilities across the country.

In addition, a further £18.1m will be invested in Scotland, £12.6m in Wales and £6.29m in Northern Ireland respectively by 2025. The UK Government's direct investment in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be rolled out in partnership with the Scottish Football Association, the Football Association of Wales and the Irish Football Association.

This funding will deliver improvements to hundreds of sites, with at least half of the investment going directly to the most deprived areas. It builds on the successful delivery of over £43m across the UK last year.

In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, each Football Association will invite and select projects across a range of facility types, from the creation or upgrading of changing rooms, grass pitches, 3G football turf pitches and pavilions, to floodlights, fencing and improved disabled access.

Grassroots football clubs, local authorities and schools with a project that could benefit from this investment in the next two financial years are encouraged to contact their relevant delivery partner: the Football Foundation in England; and the relevant Football Associations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Countdown to #GroundsWeek 2023

The GMA's #GroundsWeek 2023 awareness campaign kicks off in just a few weeks, with the annual celebration of GMA members and other grounds staff taking place from 20 to 26 March.

Using the hashtag #GroundsWeek, the GMA is encouraging members to give a shout out to themselves, their team members and colleagues regarding the amazing work they do in 'making sport possible' (see page 6 for more information).

Nottingham to host Touch Rugby World Cup 2024

The Federation of International Touch and the England Touch Association (ETA) have announced that the 2024 Touch World Cup will take place at the University of Nottingham's Highfields Sports Complex between 15 and 21 July 2024. Nottingham will also host the Atlantic Youth Touch Cup 2023 this summer.

The Highfields Sports Complex has become synonymous with major international Touch events over the past few years, having hosted the European Touch Championships in 2018 and 2022.

Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis, portfolio holder for leisure, culture and planning, said: "Nottingham has a strong history of hosting international events and the Touch World Cup will provide significant economic benefits to the city and the region. We look forward to working with the ETA and other partners in the city to raise the profile of the tournament and highlight the inclusivity of the game."



Ian Darler (left) with Cambridge United manager Mark Bonner

IAN'S LONDON TO QATAR CHARITY WALK IS WORTH SHOUTING ABOUT

Ian Darler BEM completed his 'Walk to Qatar' late last year in memory of a friend who sadly took his life due to mental health issues.

The Cambridge United FC stadium manager and head groundsman is raising money and awareness for Shout 85258 – the club's mental health partner – having walked the equivalent distance from London to Qatar ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2022 kick-off. That's an incredible 3,239 miles.

■ To read the full story and donate, visit: mhi.enthuse.com/pf/ian-darler-b-e-m-8e9d9-2ee0e-0f551

Sport England gives Small Grants fund 50% boost

Sport England's Small Grants Programme can now give 50 per cent larger awards to help communities get active after the maximum grant amount was increased from £10,000 to £15,000 for 2023.


With a focus on providing sport and physical activities for people who may be less physically active, the programme will prioritise projects that focus on environmental sustainability, demonstrate how they connect with their communities, provide the biggest possible impact to those who need it most and are working with people living in areas of disadvantage.

Applications can be made for awards of between £300 and £15,000, with multiple applications permitted (up to £15,000 or less in any 12-month period).

Only not-for-profit organisations are eligible for the programme and applicants should explain the need for the project, as well as how end users have been involved in its development. Submissions should also consider how the project adds value to services currently available in their community and show how the organisation will collaborate with other groups to maximise the project's impact.

■ The closing date for applications to the programme is 30 June 2023.

ALAMY



GMA NATIONAL SALARY SURVEY

Due to the current economic uncertainty, the GMA is exploring the possibility of producing a more targeted salary benchmark for the sector. It will be collecting additional salary benchmarking data during its annual survey in February 2023.

BRIEFING

THE LATEST INDUSTRY HEADLINES FROM THE GMA

GMA gears up for #GroundsWeek 2023

Help us recognise the amazing work of grounds staff in the UK

The third annual #GroundsWeek in March will celebrate our industry's contribution to sport and the GMA is asking for your support to make the event the best yet.

Every week in the UK, sport brings millions of people together, from spectators enjoying world-class sporting spectacles to friends playing football in their local park. It helps keep the nation fit and has huge benefits when it comes to physical and mental health.

However, sport wouldn't be possible without the dedication of professional and volunteer grounds staff working up and down the country. Your work, often done behind the scenes and against the odds, ensures football, cricket, rugby,

tennis, horse racing and countless other sports can take place.

We believe it's vital your invaluable contribution is properly recognised, both inside our industry and out. It's also crucial to showcase how rewarding it is to work in this exciting and important industry, and encourage new recruits to get involved. That's what #GroundsWeek is all about.

MAKING A SPLASH

Since it was first launched two years ago, #GroundsWeek has made quite a splash, creating a buzz about grounds care on social media and well-known media outlets, including BBC Sport, Sky Sports and ITV News.



ALAMY



Annual Salary Framework Report set for review

UK economic volatility forces the Association to consider changes to its salary advice and guidance



**WE BELIEVE IT'S VITAL
THAT YOUR INVALUABLE
CONTRIBUTION IS PROPERLY
RECOGNISED, BOTH INSIDE
OUR INDUSTRY AND OUT**

Now in its third year, we want to build on that success.

#GroundsWeek 2023 kicks off in just a few weeks, with our annual celebration of GMA members and other grounds staff taking place from 20 to 26 March. If you haven't already, please get these dates in your diary because we need your support to make 2023 the biggest and best #GroundsWeek yet.

GET INVOLVED

Pitching in is as easy as a quick tweet or post on Instagram to support the campaign, using the hashtag #GroundsWeek. You can also encourage your sports club, at whatever level, to back the campaign on social media.

Shout out your team or the best bits of the job, tell people why it's so important or simply say how proud you are to be at the forefront of making sport possible. And don't forget to like and share the #GroundsWeek content we put out on social media to ensure the amazing work you do is seen far and wide.

The GMA is reconsidering its Annual Salary Framework Report due to the significant changes in the UK's economic circumstances.

The GMA's National Salary Recommendations 2022 were produced in November 2021 when the predicted Consumer Price Index inflation for 2022 was 2.3 per cent. Immediately after the publication of the recommendations in February last year, a combination of the war in Ukraine, global supply issues, energy shortages and the continuing challenges of operating in a post-COVID world all led to a huge increase in inflation.

This has resulted in the cost-of-living crisis we are all currently experiencing. This could not have been foreseen at the beginning of the year and overnight the GMA's salary recommendations became obsolete.

The current economic uncertainty is likely to continue into next year. Therefore, instead of producing an annual uprate figure, which could quickly become outdated, we have decided to review our methodology and change our approach to salary advice and guidance.

We are exploring the possibility of producing a more targeted salary benchmark for the sector. We will be collecting additional salary benchmarking data during our annual survey in February 2023, which we will

link to our new Grounds Management Framework. This framework will demonstrate the links between pitch quality, skills and knowledge, and career progression.

In the meantime, if any problems arise during discussions regarding salary and working conditions, we are offering free, personalised support to all members who contact us.

■ **For more information, visit:**
thegma.org.uk

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Association launches Serbo-Croat-Bosnian online course

The GMA has launched its first training course written in Serbo-Croat-Bosnian, Nivo 1 Održavanje Fudbalskih Terena (Level 1 Maintenance of Football Pitches)

The GMA has rolled out its first course in Serbo-Croat-Bosnian. It is a direct translation of an existing GMA course and, while it focuses on football, it enables participants to gain a general understanding of the tasks involved in maintaining playing surfaces.

The launch comes after two years of in-depth research and discussion, with a regime of rigorous testing by three turfcare experts native to Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia. It will also support learning in Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia.

Stefan Dičić, stadium and technical maintenance manager at Serbian football club Red Star Belgrade, said: "I am very impressed with what the Technical and Learning team at the GMA have achieved here. Having successfully completed the course myself during the testing process,



The online course covers natural turf pitch maintenance

I believe my team and I will be able to produce better results on the pitch, especially relating to greater safety, field presentation and machinery maintenance. It is always good to renew the theory behind pitch maintenance and then to apply it on the pitch."

According to the GMA's head of technical and learning, Dan Prest, who has already run numerous training sessions in Europe on behalf of European and international football authorities, the GMA recognises that while immediate short, sharp, face-to-face training sessions are invaluable, there was very little ongoing support in many regions. "With the help of our expert trainer, Bojan Jovanovic, we decided to translate an existing course into Serbo-Croat-Bosnian," he said.

"I am always keen to see people develop. Hopefully, this will inspire life-long learning for other nations to help improve both the knowledge and confidence of the people who maintain playing surfaces."

■ For more information, contact: learning@thegma.org.uk

GMA achieves matrix Standard accreditation once again

The GMA's Technical and Learning department celebrates its re-accreditation of the matrix Standard, which allows a benchmark against best practice, and gives confidence to current and potential learners

The GMA has been re-accredited to the matrix Standard. This is the international quality standard for organisations that deliver independent information, advice and/or guidance, and is supported by the government's Department for Education.

This re-accreditation confirms formal recognition of the outcomes achieved by the GMA in delivering industry-wide information, advice and guidance, and further enhances the reputation of the GMA as an authoritative organisation within the groundscape industry.

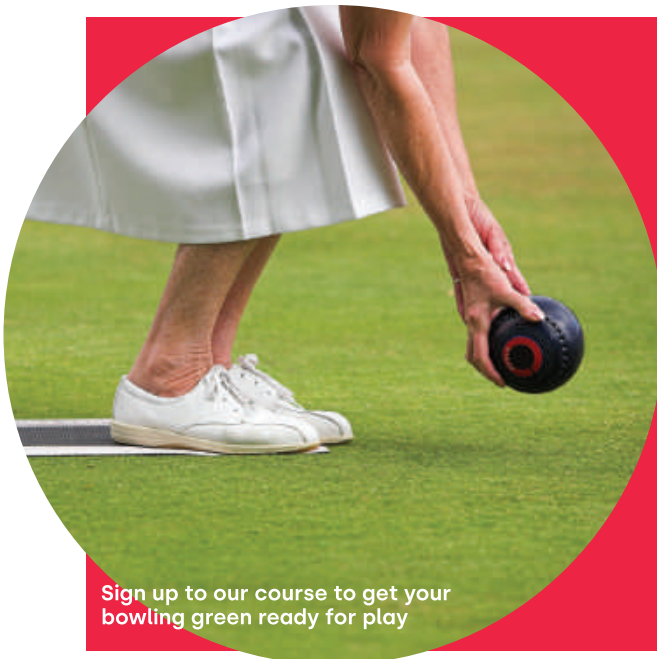
The year-round continual process involves maintaining good relationships with stakeholders, engaging and developing learners, creating new supporting material and technical content for learners, providing regular feedback to stakeholders, routinely communicating to the industry the

benefits of GMA services and developing staff through training courses.

Acknowledging this, the independent assessor commented that the GMA had "demonstrated an ongoing focus on strategic development, which has continued as a theme since its previous assessment up until the present" and that it is an organisation that "clearly demonstrates its desire and passion to support the improvement of sports venues, public areas and the personnel (volunteers and professionals) involved with maintaining them".



Developing staff through training courses is just one of the pillars of matrix Standard accreditation



Sign up to our course to get your bowling green ready for play

Level 1 Bowling Greens: Annual Maintenance

Optimise your bowling green playability with a one-day maintenance course run by the GMA

Delivered by an industry expert, the Level 1 Bowling Greens: Annual Maintenance course is taking place at Gillingham Outdoor Bowling Club on Friday 17 March, and covers a practical and theoretical sequence of effective techniques including aeration, scarification and mowing, linked to effective seasonal operations and safe working practices.

This Level 1 course is ideal for volunteers and new employees, or as a refresher for people who want to update their knowledge base.

The course is worth five CPD points and can prepare you for the Level 2 Bowling Greens: Applied Turf Culture or the Level 2 GMA Technical Certificate in Turf Surface Maintenance.

It costs £168 for members or £336 for non-members.

■ For more information, email: learning@thegma.org.uk



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IT'S GOOD TO TALK

No one enjoys feeling vulnerable. Or do they? We examine the cathartic benefits of getting things off your chest by talking to someone who is prepared to listen

**BY NICK TAYLOR, ADVANCED EXECUTIVE COACH
AND LEADERSHIP CONSULTANT, GREYCIRCLE**

Hopefully, everyone has experienced what it's like to speak to someone who really listens. You know, those conversations when someone makes you feel as if you're the only person in the room. Those conversations are impactful and make us feel better. But why? It's probably because in those moments, what you inadvertently do is make yourself vulnerable.

Imagine having someone to talk to who isn't going to dive in with advice. Someone who isn't going to just try to fix things and patch over issues so you can just keep going. Imagine offloading to someone who will listen to your every word and just sit with you while you get it all off your chest. Imagine that person then asking for you to elaborate and to keep going, to explain in more detail how you feel about certain situations, people or challenges you may be facing.

In this context, 'vulnerable' means offering truthful information about your feelings, your insecurities and your challenges; laying it all bare and revealing what you're actually feeling. For example, if someone asks you how

you are, you can answer in two different ways. You can dismiss it: "Yeah, fine thanks – not too bad", ensuring that neither party gets anything from the exchange. Or you can answer honestly, in more depth, actually offering some information: "To be honest, I'm struggling a bit today. I feel quite low in mood and it's affecting my motivation." The more information you share, the more impactful conversations will be and the better you will feel.

So why don't people talk more? Why don't they talk about how tough the job is or how they might be struggling with their mental health? Maybe it's because, broadly speaking, people aren't very good at listening to each other. Why would you talk if people don't listen to what you're saying?

Talking to someone impartial can really help all of us. Speaking with someone who asks good questions to encourage you to be specific about how you're feeling is really impactful. It helps you offload and release stress and pressure. It can also help you gain clarity in situations and work them through with a neutral influence, relieving anxiety and calming you down.





Talking about how you are feeling relieves stress and increases wellbeing

TOP TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING

ASK YOURSELF THREE SIMPLE QUESTIONS

Something you can do to proactively support your own mood and wellbeing is to perform a 'soft review' of your day-to-day behaviours and habits by asking yourself the following questions:

1 What are you going to keep doing?

For example, keep doing the things that contribute positively to your mood, such as spending time with a colleague who makes you laugh.

2 What are you going to get rid of completely?

Think about the habits you need to completely cut out that are detrimental to your mood – for example, avoiding negative conversations with colleagues who like to moan.

3 What are you going to adapt or modify?

There are things you do with good intentions that need changing slightly to make them more beneficial, such as managing your expectations within your role. You can examine your to-do list and your weekly pattern of activity. Look for things that you need to get rid of altogether, those that you need to keep, and things that you need to alter slightly to improve how they contribute to your wellbeing or health.

THE SMALLER THE TARGET, THE SMALLER THE MISS

Get specific. The next time you're feeling down, flat or demotivated, it will help you to be more specific about why you're feeling that way.



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For example, if you're feeling frustrated about something, slow yourself down and find a quiet space to think about what is causing this frustration. Do your best to work it through from the feeling of general frustration to getting really focused on the part of that issue that makes you feel how you do. Is it a person, or a specific thing that's been said? Maybe it's a particular aspect of a task.

The more precise you can be about the root cause of the emotions, the easier it is to confront, adjust or accept that issue. It takes you from feeling overwhelmed to focusing on an issue that can be specifically targeted.

GMA Mental Wellness Policy Template

The GMA has recently launched the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Template, which is now available for download in the members' area of the GMA website, and can be tailored to fit the needs of individual clubs and organisations.

According to GMA membership manager Steve Mattin, the template is a great start for those organisations that haven't had the time or resources

to set up something like this themselves. "It can be used as a guide/benchmark for our members to use in the workplace," he says.

The template was produced by Heads Together, the charity that is supported by the Prince and Princess of Wales and works closely with the FA. Its recent Heads Up campaign has gained a lot of traction throughout the football community and

aims to get people talking about mental health as much as they do about football itself.

The GMA is also working towards adding a comprehensive Members' Assistance Programme via Health Assured to the suite of GMA members' benefits, which Steve says will further support members and strengthen its commitment to this important area.

London Golf Club case study

For the past 14 months, Nick Taylor, advanced executive coach and leadership consultant at GreyCircle, has been meeting regularly with members of the greenkeeping department at London Golf Club in one-to-one private coaching conversations. He is someone impartial to talk to and is trained to listen. There is no focus to the meetings, just a confidential open forum for the staff member to explore their current role, performance, future career opportunities, personal life, emotions, and general mood and mental health. He has helped individuals plan difficult conversations, explore career moves, navigate personal issues and ultimately just talk.

This service is helping to retain team members within the club and the industry by giving them support from someone who is not in their line-management structure, but impartial and



understanding of the industry and its demands.

This helps individual team members, but it also supports London Golf Club's master greenkeeper and golf courses and estates manager, Lee Sayers, by protecting his own wellbeing and his time. Lee refers members of his team to meet with someone

impartial when they need a little support or some time with someone neutral, plus he benefits from regular leadership coaching too. "My time spent with Nick is a chance to reflect and think about life, and to discuss and investigate what's good and what could be better both personally and professionally," he says.

If you want to know more about how impartial coaching can support you or members of your setting, get in touch with Nick at: hello@greycircle.co.uk or visit: [greycircle.co.uk](https://www.greycircle.co.uk)



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Find out more about #GroundsWeek, and how to get involved,
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please contact our Sales Manager, Jill Rodham at: jrodham@thegma.org.uk

Bright future for Ashton Bears

Community sport in Wigan has been given a major boost as the GMA helps Bear Park find a pitch drainage solution

BY NATHAN WOODFORD-RÖTT, GMA SENIOR COMMS, MARKETING AND PR EXECUTIVE

Located in Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, Bear Park has been home to Ashton Bears since the club's formation in 1987. However, the rugby league facility, which hosts a total of 25 men's, women's and junior teams, has been hampered by an unstable pitch that was frequently waterlogged during the playing season.

Originally a shortened pitch, the playing surface also had a drop in one corner, which meant plans for a rapid expansion of the club had to be put on hold.

"While junior teams could play on the pitch, senior teams could not," Mark Webster, club secretary and women's open-age coach at Ashton Bears, explains.

"In addition, the ground was simply too soft to use during the months of March to May and September onwards – in fact, we were only able to play on it three months a year," he adds.

PITCH ASSESSMENT

Ashton Bears' application for funding from the Rugby League World Cup CreatedBy programme was subsequently granted, which enabled the club to level the

problem pitch and create a secondary space for a mini pitch. However, it did not cover a viable fix for the drainage issues.

In order to find a solution, Rugby Football League national clubs manager John McMullen contacted the GMA's Pitch Advisory Service, and the GMA's key account manager for rugby league, Richard Eastham, visited the site in October 2021.

Richard assessed the Bear Park pitches using Performance Quality Standards specific to rugby league. These tests included assessing the grass length, grass cover, weed content, soil depth, thatch depth, root

length, surface levels and surface debris.

Based on his data findings, he recommended a reduction in the height of the cut to 40mm and an increase in cutting frequency to weekly. In addition, he also prescribed decompaction, sand top-dressing, weed killing and overseeding to ensure the pitch standard would be rated as 'good' on the GMA's Grounds Management Framework. The club agreed to implement all of Richard's recommendations.

PROMISING OUTCOME

Following Richard's assessment, Bear Park sought additional funding from

Sport England's Multisport Capital Fund to enable the club to install a pitch drainage solution, with work due to begin this spring.

"Once this is done, we will hopefully be able to have two senior games playing simultaneously and up to eight games played on a Sunday.

"In addition, our girls' teams will be able to play concurrently and both men's open-age teams can play at home," Mark says.

"This also means that the club's expansion plans could also now go ahead, with the introduction of additional women's teams, something that was previously impossible," he adds.



Bear Park is creating improved playing surfaces for its rugby league teams thanks to the Pitch Advisory Service

RICHARD RECOMMENDED A REDUCTION IN THE HEIGHT OF THE CUT TO 40MM FROM 70MM AND AN INCREASE IN CUTTING FREQUENCY TO WEEKLY

PASSING THE BATON

Keith Boyce has provided 'a lifetime of inspiration' to many within the grounds care industry – not least Jason Booth and Ryan Golding. We highlight this special relationship

BY COLIN HOSKINS,
FREELANCE WRITER

With Keith Boyce entering the GMA's Hall of Fame, the 87-year-old Yorkshireman would perhaps think the accolade is due to his renowned skills as head groundsman at Headingley Stadium – home of Yorkshire County Cricket Club and Leeds Rugby – for 17 years. Or because of his achievements as the groundsman at the New Rover cricket ground, where, following his retirement from Headingley, he transformed what was "a run-of-the-mill village pitch" to a County-standard playing surface.

However, hundreds of groundspeople throughout the UK would also suggest that Keith's well-deserved recognition by the GMA, to add to his multi-award-winning career, has been his ability to transfer invaluable pitch-care wisdom at seminars held up and down the country over a number of years. Indeed, his well-attended presentations would regularly attract audiences of more than 100.

Added to this is his involvement in re-laying pitches at various cricket clubs throughout the country and, of course, his encyclopaedic grounds care expertise that has enabled him to undertake numerous site visits, and produce detailed advice and recommendations on what's needed to improve pitches.



Keith (left) inspired Jason Booth (right), who in turn mentored Ryan Golding (centre)

"I've really enjoyed helping others," reflects Keith. "I've met some very good lads over the years and have always encouraged them to better themselves – which many have done."

EXCEPTIONAL PROTÉGÉS

GMA chief operating officer Jason Booth is one of many who have reaped the benefits of Keith's mentoring skills, which are, in fact, responsible for a unique chain of events at Headingley Stadium: Keith mentored Jason and

he, in turn, mentored Ryan Golding – and both Jason and Ryan subsequently became head groundsmen at the Leeds rugby ground, which is adjacent to the cricket pitches.

There are undoubtedly lots of grounds managers who have mentored team members – often juniors who subsequently went on to achieve great things by heading up teams of their own at other clubs. However, what has happened at Leeds over the years involving Keith, Jason and Ryan is outstanding.



WORKING WITH KEITH WAS NOT ONLY ABOUT BEST-PRACTICE GROUNDCARE, IT ALSO INCLUDED LEARNING LIFE SKILLS, WHICH PREPARED ME FOR ADULTHOOD

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Following a brief career as a professional cricketer with Yorkshire CCC, Jason joined the Leeds Rhinos grounds team following a spell with Keith at the Headingley cricket ground, when Keith's team managed both the rugby and the Test cricket pitches.

"Nobody could have had a better mentor than Keith," Jason admits. "Working with him was not only about best-practice grounds care, it also included learning life skills, which, looking back, actually prepared me for adulthood. I know I wouldn't be the person I am now if I hadn't benefited from Keith's influences."

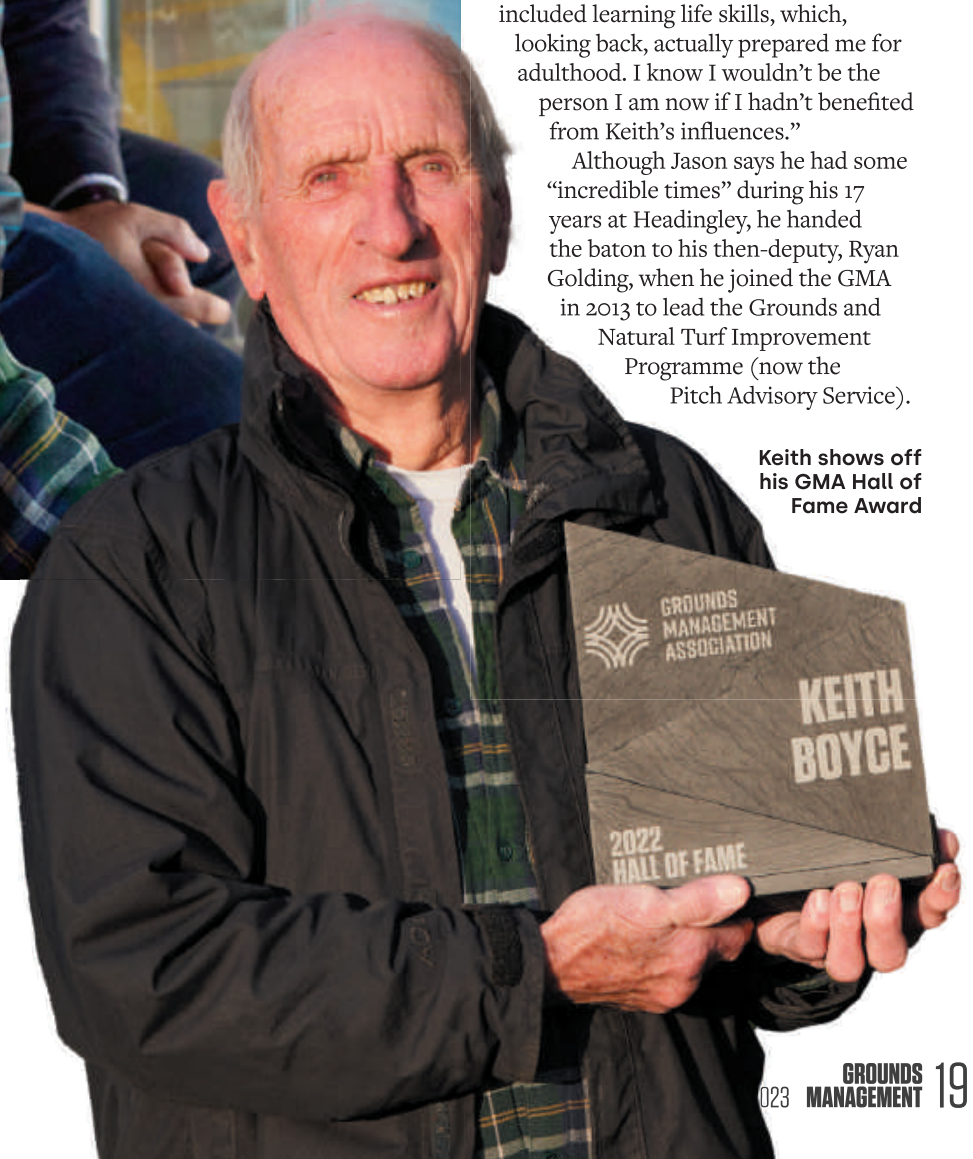
Although Jason says he had some "incredible times" during his 17 years at Headingley, he handed the baton to his then-deputy, Ryan Golding, when he joined the GMA in 2013 to lead the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme (now the Pitch Advisory Service).

Keith shows off his GMA Hall of Fame Award

When the GMA presented Keith with a memento 'for a lifetime of inspiration to many' in 2019, to complement his 2010 GMA Lifetime Achievement Award, Keith typically commented: "I don't feel as though I've done anything special to deserve such an award; all I've done is enjoy myself."

Part of that enjoyment, he admits, has not only been witnessing the progress in others' pitches following his advice, but also in how people in his team have progressed over the years.

CLAIRE WOOD



IF ONLY ONE IN EVERY HUNDRED DECIDES THAT THEY WANT TO MAKE A CAREER OF IT, THEN I'LL BE PLEASED, AND AT THE MOMENT I HAVE A BRILLIANT SET OF LADS

In that year, both Jason and Ryan secured GMA Industry Awards: Jason won Professional Rugby League Groundsman of the Year and Ryan took home Young Groundsman of the Year. A few months later, 27-year-old Ryan moved up to become head groundsman at Leeds Rugby.

Ryan and his grounds team have since gone on to win additional GMA Awards for their care of the stadium's pitch, as well as the academy ground, a training area and a pitch that is home to the amateur Rugby League club and stages some of Leeds Rugby's junior fixtures. In total, the team manages around 35 acres.

RECOGNITION AND REWARD

Ryan's promotion to head groundsman was, says Jason, suitable recognition and reward for the role he played at the club since joining from school in 2002 as a "16-year-old with a lot of typical teenage exuberance", which thanks to Jason was channelled into something that Ryan realised he enjoyed and had a talent for.

"Jason had a huge influence on my groundsmanship upbringing, and taught me real groundsmanship and basic skills, and it's something that I'm very grateful for," Ryan says.

Today, Ryan heads up a grounds team that accommodates work experience for youngsters for six months a year, with a regular number of match-day assistants. While Ryan says the youngsters always express surprise at what the job entails, he ensures that each person is supported and encouraged. "If only one in every hundred eventually decides that they want to make a career of it, then I'll be pleased, and at the moment I have a brilliant set of lads," Ryan says.

And, who knows, one of Ryan's mentorees may eventually become head groundsman at Leeds Rugby to add another chapter to this Headingley story.



Together again: the three award-winning groundsmen on the pitch at Headingley

Keith's journey

Keith Boyce's introduction to the industry began after National Service, when he started playing for his local (Castleton) cricket team. "Like most village teams then (and now), we all mucked in to get things done, and that included me 'fiddling around' with the wicket – I prepared my first wicket in 1958," he says.

His next encounter with groundsmanship came after a move to Guisborough in the early 1960s, where he started working on the club's outfield and square. Due to his reputation, he was invited to Middlesbrough County Cricket ground. During his time there (1973–1978), he won several awards for grounds presentation and staged his first County match in 1974, before moving to Headingley in 1978.

His time at Headingley, where he worked until 1995, can clearly

be classed as Keith's golden era, and his proud record includes the preparation of 17 Test pitches and 14 results, no Test match was over in fewer than four days and there was always plenty of cricket on the fourth day.

Despite his lack of formal training "and with no qualifications or certificates in cricket groundsmanship", Keith clearly had the knack. "I've always liked the land and believed that cricket groundsmanship in particular is about feel and touch. There's no scientific formula – it's about having an ability to 'judge' the condition of the pitch, balancing the weather conditions with, say, how much rolling is done, how often and how short the grass is cut. Having a decent depth of soil on a good base – plus correct rolling – has always been the way forward."

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SETTING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

We look back on Roy Rigby's international Manchester City Football Club career and find out how he plans to share his knowledge post-retirement **BY COLIN HOSKINS**

When Roy Rigby hands over the keys to his office at Manchester City Football Club's (MCFC) training and academy site, he will be closing the door on a glittering two-decade career as the Premier League club's head of grounds and landscaping, leaving a legacy of superb pitches – not only in Manchester, but across the world from Australia to South America.

His early retirement, after 22 years with MCFC, was a decision prompted by an enforced work-at-home period during the COVID-19 pandemic (with asthma, Roy is classed as a vulnerable person) when, like many others, he had time to reflect on his life and to think about his future.

"It's the hardest decision I have ever made, but the end of season 2022/23 will be the right time for me to leave the club – and I feel it is right for the club too," Roy says.

"My role has changed so much in recent years; the club continues to grow, including sister clubs all over the world, and as expected this has meant that I have spent more time at my desk rather than being outdoors and hands-on, which is why I originally joined the industry. However, the MCFC staff have been overwhelmingly supportive to me over

the years and I've had a fantastic journey with the club."

While Roy's team leadership and interpersonal skills have earned him much esteem throughout the industry and endeared him to everyone he has worked with – he currently oversees a team of 22 people at MCFC – it is his meticulous 'never cut corners' pitch care mentality that also means he will be leaving the club on a high, having led a grounds team that manages and maintains playing surfaces that garner worldwide acclaim.

SETTING STANDARDS

This mentality has clearly rubbed off on every member of the MCFC grounds team, and it has spearheaded their attitude to the management and maintenance of the Etihad Stadium pitch and the pitches and facilities at the impressive City Football Academy (CFA). During the CFA's development phase, Roy was heavily involved in the selection of the 17 pitches, including three artificial surfaces.

These high standards have resulted in MCFC winning a number of GMA Industry Awards (for environmental and ecological actions, as well as pitch care at the stadium and the CFA). It is no surprise, therefore, that Roy's latest accolade was his induction into the GMA

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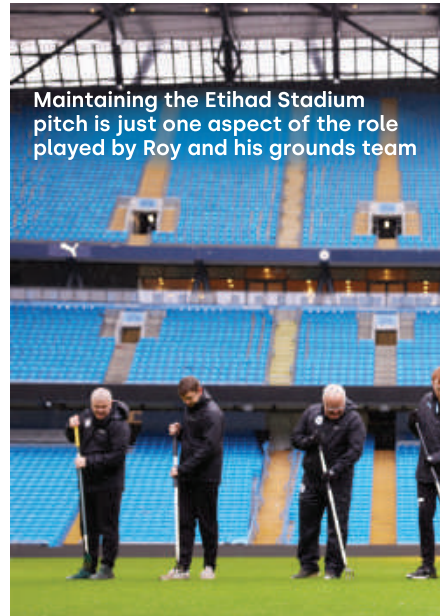
Hall of Fame in November 2022, which he describes as “a dream come true for me and my family”.

WORLD CLASS

Roy's grounds management role has naturally extended beyond these shores over the years. He has been heavily involved in the quality of the playing surfaces at the club's 10 international sister clubs, in addition to MCFC training camps in Ghana and Tokyo.

This included a whistlestop 44-hour round trip to Melbourne in 2014 to sign off the first Desso GrassMaster pitch to be installed in Australia. He stayed overnight before flying back to Manchester in time for a home game on the Sunday when MCFC clinched the Premier League championship title (for the second time).

While Roy has seen many changes in UK pitches and pitch care practices over the years, it is at some of the overseas sites he has visited (on behalf of FIFA and UEFA, as well as MCFC) where he has witnessed some interesting events. Like the time, in 2012, when MCFC were scheduled to play a pre-season



Maintaining the Etihad Stadium pitch is just one aspect of the role played by Roy and his grounds team



The use of grow lights is an integral part of the team's pitch management routine

release apprenticeship courses for both grounds care and greenkeeping.

After 15 years with Blackburn Council, culminating as foreman with a team of 10, Roy worked at Blackburn Rovers FC's training ground for 10 years before joining MCFC in 2001. He started out at the stadium (Maine Road) then moved to the club's Platts Lane training ground, an academy site and leased pitches at Carrington, before Etihad Stadium (renamed in 2011 from the City of Manchester Stadium), then the CFA came into the picture.

During this time, both fibresand and stitched/carpet system hybrid pitches were added to his remit, as was the management of warm-season (Bermuda) grass pitches – an activity that started in 2009 at the FIFA World Club tournament when working with agronomists to help look after training and stadia pitches in Abu Dhabi. Complemented by consultancy advice and a GMA warm-season grasses training course, Roy's experience has subsequently been put to good use on MCFC sister club pitches in Bolivia, India, New York and Uruguay.

This year, Roy will close one door and open another onto a future where he'll be able to spend more quality time with his family and may consider part-time work within the industry.

“I have always helped out at my local crown green bowls club and I will continue to do that, but I have a lot of transferable knowledge on all types of playing surfaces and if I can use that to help others, then I will,” Roy concludes.

Highly qualified

In addition to apprenticeship-gaining qualifications in sports management and fine turf, Roy holds qualifications in:

- How to apply fertilisers – granules and chemicals
- PA1 spraying
- STRI ryegrass, including working with different machinery and rootzones, how different sands perform, and irrigation systems
- Sprinkler setup and repair
- STRI courses on design and construction of football pitches, renovations, pitch quality and performance, pitch preparation – player expectations
- Health and safety
- Working with and maintenance of Astro carpets (GMA course)
- Working with warm-season grasses (GMA course).

China Cup game against Arsenal FC in the Bird's Nest Stadium, Beijing, directly after a motor rally event was held there.

“In just two days, the tarmac had to be removed and the pitch dug down to sub-soil level before the new turf was laid,” says Roy. “When I arrived at the stadium, there must have been at least 200 operatives lifting the turf from trucks and manually laying it. I've never seen so many people on a pitch. But we did it.”

remarking on the industry changes over the years, not least the demands for consistently high-quality playing surfaces with shorter sward heights that enable the ball to move faster, Roy says: “This puts continual pressure on grounds teams but, as an industry, we've actually created this pressure by being so good at our jobs.”

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Roy started his grounds career in Blackburn as a schoolboy volunteer helping the greenkeeper on the local crown bowls rink before joining Blackburn Parks Department aged 16. There, he learned his trade on fine turf (bowls greens) and soil- and sand-based football pitches, while undertaking day-

LOCAL HERO

We ask PE teacher and award-winning volunteer Sean Clixby how he helped to transform his local community sports facilities with support and advice from the GMA

BY KAREN MAXWELL, EDITOR



Sean (right) is honoured at the 2022 GMA Awards presented by host Mark Clemmit (left)

Sean Clixby is no stranger to success. He won the GMA's Volunteer Sports Ground Team/ Individual of the Year in 2022, and for good reason – he and his team of volunteers have turned 'poor' pitches into playing surfaces that ensure year-long community use. We caught up with him to find out how it all happened.

What's your background and day job?

I'm 44, married with two boys aged 13 and 14. Apart from moving away to study

at Loughborough University, I have lived in the small town of Broughton in North Lincolnshire all my life.

I have always had a passion for sport. I've played football, cricket and golf, and have enjoyed swimming all my life. I gained a degree in PE, Sports Science and Geography, which led me to becoming a secondary school PE teacher in Scunthorpe, where I ended up as head of PE in 2015.

I then worked for social impact company Evolve as a health mentor/

assistant regional manager, then regional manager for Lincolnshire, before setting up Clixby Active Pro Sports Ltd, where I teach PE in schools, and run after-school clubs, community coaching sessions and school holiday multi-sports camps.

I initially started as a volunteer coach for both Broughton Ravers Junior Football Club (JFC) and Broughton Cricket Club in the late 1990s. I'm now club development officer and U-14s team manager for Broughton Ravers JFC, and I'm also head

Broughton Cricket Club women's softball cricket team enjoy their 'advanced' class pitch



THE GMA AND FA'S PITCH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME REPORT WAS DAMNING. THIS GAVE US THE EVIDENCE WE NEEDED TO PROVE TO THE COUNCIL THAT SOMETHING NEEDED TO BE DONE

junior coach, club safeguarding officer and player for Broughton Cricket Club.

I'm also chair of Trustees of Broughton Community and Sports Association (BCSA). As part of my role, I also coordinate our grounds maintenance works. I wear many different hats!

Why did you set up BCSA?

In 2014, myself and a couple of guys met in our local pub and set out on a mission to improve the standard of sports provision in Broughton, which we noticed

had dramatically gone downhill. One of our main aims was to improve the grass pitch on the town's recreation field, and Broughton Sports Association was born.

We quickly gained interest and support from the community, and we changed our name to Broughton Community and Sports Association. We became a registered charity in 2016.

As our charity grew, we were involved in many projects/events within our community. For example, we helped to set up a walking group, a running group and a history group. We supported many community events including Broughton in the Park, World Cup Family Fun Day and Jubilee celebrations to name a few. Recently we helped set up Broughton in Bloom and Broughton Wombles.

Due to the efforts of these volunteers, Broughton has won Best Small Town in North Lincolnshire's Best Kept Village Competition three years running.

How many volunteers do you have on board and what roles do they play?

We have a pool of approximately 12 volunteers. These are a mixture of people from Broughton Ravers JFC and Broughton Cricket Club. Some do

more hours than others, as most of us have full-time jobs.

Between us, we do the cutting, slitting, brushing, fertilising, top dressing, disc seeding and both general and end-of-season repairs. Our volunteers also organise contractors to carry out deep aeration and weed-killing procedures.

What process did you go through to improve the playing surfaces?

Between 2016 and 2018, Broughton Recreation Field was severely damaged by chafer grubs and associated bird damage. We campaigned to Broughton Town Council (landowners) to do something about it. Unfortunately, this fell on deaf ears for a few years until a more proactive set of town councillors were voted in.

During this time, we organised volunteer repair days. At the time, we had limited knowledge of what to do – basically, just what we could google.

We also got the site's first FA pitch inspection through the GMA and FA's Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP) and the report that came back was damning. This gave us the evidence we needed to prove to the council that something needed to be done.



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Paul White, Head Groundsman, Bloxham School

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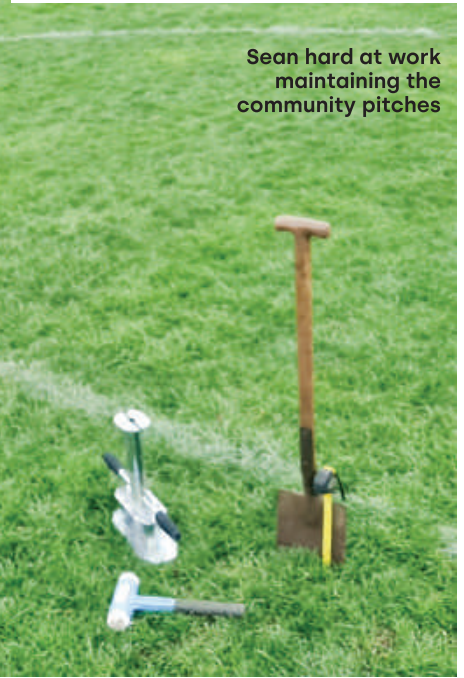
Before and after: Broughton's community sports field in 2018 (above) and the same site in 2022 after the BCSA's renovations (right)



2022



Sean hard at work maintaining the community pitches



The PIP gave us many opportunities. We followed the recommendations and secured Football Foundation funding to help us and the council buy the machinery to help with the improvements.

We then won the contract to maintain the site and we were successful in securing another Football Foundation grant as part of the enhanced pitch programme. This enabled us to purchase consumables such as grass seed and fertiliser, along with part funding weed-killing and deep-aeration procedures.

Our latest PitchPower report (November 2022) classed all but one of our pitches as 'advanced'. They all used to be 'poor'. The help and guidance from the GMA Pitch Advisory Service has been instrumental throughout this process.

What does your current pitch maintenance include?

We cut at the appropriate heights at the right time of the year and when the ground conditions are favourable. We use the multi-sports tool to slit, brush, rake and lightly roll. We use our own equipment to disc seed and fertilise at least twice a year.

OUR LATEST PITCHPOWER REPORT CLASSED ALL BUT ONE OF OUR PITCHES AS 'ADVANCED'. THEY ALL USED TO BE 'POOR'

We hire in a top-dressing spreader and contract in others to carry out the deep-aeration and weed-killing procedures. We top dress as part of our end-of-season renovations. Deep aeration is done in March/April and again in September when ground conditions allow. Weed killing is performed in May.

We also regularly carry out pitch repairs, whether that is due to matches being played or chafer grub damage. We use germination sheets to help with this.

How have the improved playing surfaces benefited the community?

Before we started, there were only four junior football teams and a couple of senior teams using our ground. The cricket club had a successful senior setup, but its junior setup was almost non-existent.

We now have 14 junior football teams at Broughton Ravers JFC (U-4s to U-15s), this season including an U-12 girls' team. There is also a women's training squad and a very successful girls-only Wildcats group attached to the club. We also have two senior football teams that use the site, one of which travels from a nearby town to use our facilities.

Broughton Cricket Club has three senior teams and is looking to add a fourth during the 2023 season. Its junior setup is now very successful, with teams at U-11, two at U-13 and an U-16 team. It also has a thriving All Stars and Dynamos programme for boys and girls aged five to 11 years.

During 2021/22, the club also added women's and girls' softball cricket teams. It held a women's festival of cricket, which attracted teams from across the county.

A community running group regularly meets for training sessions at the site, and, in 2022, it hosted a Colour Run.

The site is now also attracting more bookings – for example, businesses wanting to hire it for school holiday football camps.

What plans do you have for the future?

Broughton Town Council is looking to install an outdoor gym for the community and has recently secured funding. BCSA is working with the council to improve the changing rooms, social space and storage on the site too.

BCSA is also in the process of securing the tenancy on another 20 acres of land adjacent to this site. We have obtained planning permission to build a 4G floodlit facility with additional car parking.

What advice would you give to people looking to improve playing surfaces in their area?

Never give up! Have a goal and keep working towards it. There is help out there. First, contact your local FA, which will put you in touch with the relevant support. Get yourself on the pitch improvement programme. This will then give you the evidence regarding what needs to be done and will hopefully open up funding opportunities that will help.

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TECHNICAL INSIGHT

CARPET-HYBRID PITCHES, SUSTAINABILITY AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Carpet-hybrid pitches for community sport

Can carpet-hybrid pitches support 20 to 25 hours of use per week and maintain reasonable playing quality at a reasonable cost, with good user feedback? This report summarises the findings of the fourth year of an ongoing Sport England research study that aims to provide the answers

BY DR RICHARD EARL, PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT, TGMS/PSD

Carpet-hybrid pitches are constructed by creating a flat, drained surface and then covering this with a specially manufactured artificial grass carpet that has a backing fabric designed to allow

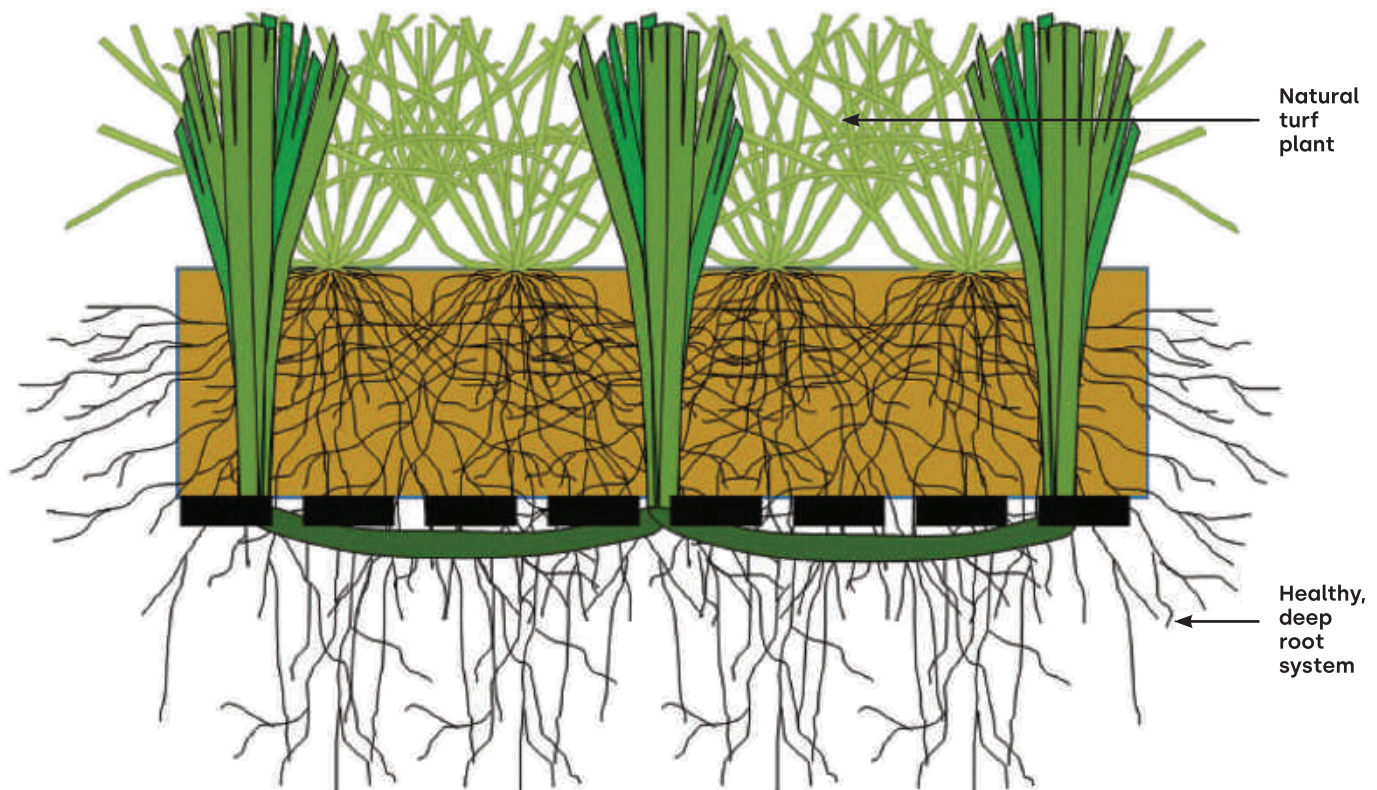
grass roots to grow through. Once installed, the carpet is infilled with a manufactured sand rootzone and seeded with standard natural turfgrass so that a hybrid of natural and artificial grass is used to play sports such

as rugby and football. The purpose of the artificial grass fibres is to help increase the wear resistance and strength of the natural grass without creating a fully artificial grass environment (see Figure 1).

The focus of this research study is on the original community-based hybrid pitch, based in Regent's Park, London, as this has accommodated significant usage since October 2017. However, the project also encompasses research data from five other community hybrid pitches located at Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre, Runcorn Linnets FC, Bootle FC, Thatto HC ARLFC and Siddal ARLFC, all of which experience varying levels of annual rainfall.

This fourth year of the research has focused on assessing usage, performance, user feedback and maintenance inputs

Figure 1: Illustration of a carpet-hybrid pitch system





Carpet-hybrid pitch being laid at Thatto



Siddal's carpet-hybrid installation under way

with particular reference to determination of the cost per hour of use.

USAGE AND PQS

Mean weekly hours of use for the Bisham Abbey and Regent's Park pitches over the first four years of the project are presented in Figure 2. Mean weekly usage for the Regent's Park carpet-hybrid pitch continues to be high, at 23.9 hours/week, which is significantly higher than that for the adjacent natural turf pitch (13 hours/week) and the anticipated typical usage of most natural grass pitches (three to six hours per week).

Peak usage (whiskers, or vertical lines above a bar chart column) of the carpet-hybrid pitch at Regent's Park in year four was 49.7 hours/week compared with 25.3 hours/week on the natural turf pitch. Between 24 April 2021 and 5 June 2021, mean usage on the Regent's Park carpet-hybrid pitch was 48.1 hours/week, which is comparable to usage levels on some 3G floodlit pitches (Regent's Park is non-lit). Over the first four years of the study, there have been no cancellations due to rain on the carpet-hybrid pitch.

User feedback scores for the Regent's Park carpet-hybrid pitch are significantly higher than those for

the adjacent natural turf pitch (8.9/10 and 6.5/10 respectively), which is positive for a carpet-hybrid pitch in a community setting.

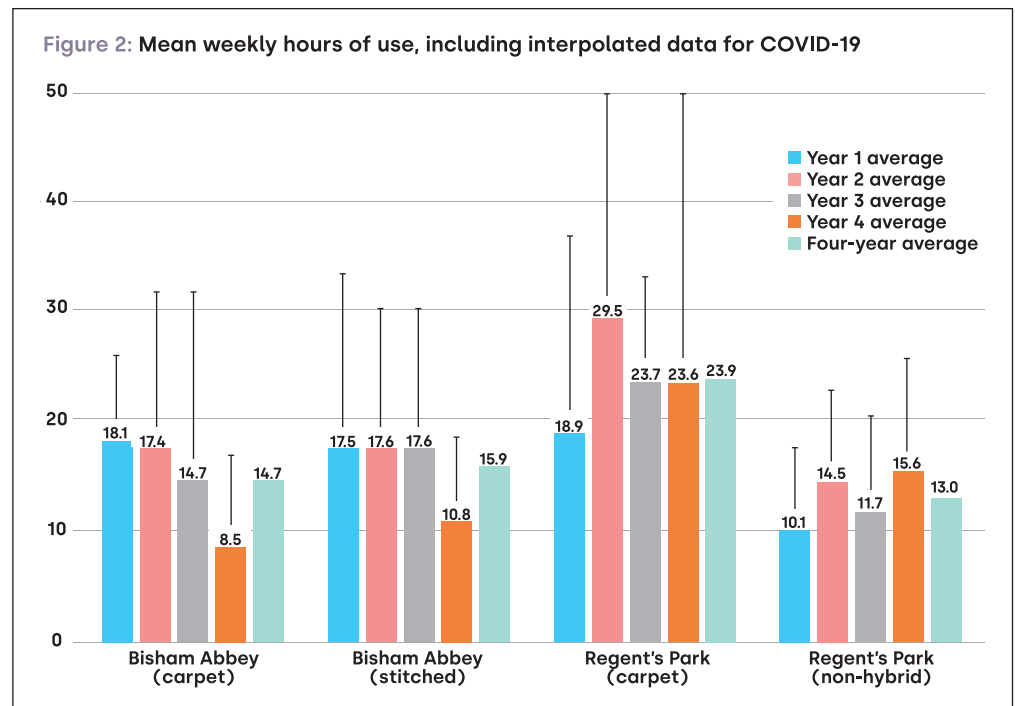
The Performance Quality Standards (PQS) system used in this project was developed for natural turf pitches, so there is strong emphasis on maintaining grass cover. However, an emerging advantage of carpet-hybrid systems is that pitch performance for most of the parameters assessed can be maintained with diminishing grass cover, as

the presence of the artificial fibres compensates for this.

This explains the observation of divergence in measured PQS scores for grass-cover-related parameters versus positive player-perception of overall pitch quality. Over the first four years, the mean PQS score for the Regent's Park carpet-hybrid pitch equates to: "Mid-season elite training facilities with intensive use, very good community facilities, with well-resourced maintenance budget and employed, trained ground staff".

MAINTENANCE AND RENOVATION COSTS

The Regent's Park carpet-hybrid pitch continued to receive a low-input maintenance strategy during year four with a drop in cost compared with previous years due to COVID-19 restrictions. The four-year mean routine maintenance costs for the carpet-hybrid and natural turf pitches are broadly similar (£4,277 and £4,183 respectively). Annual renovation costs for both pitches reduced in year four because of less use due to



COVID-19 (£5,670 and £4,675 respectively). There was only one renovation within the year, compared with two in previous years. The natural turf pitch continues to receive a low-input routine maintenance strategy with a correspondingly low mean annual renovation cost over four years of £7,544, which is £4,599 lower than that for the carpet-hybrid pitch at £12,143 (costs are based on typical industry rates).

In summary, over the first four years of the project, the mean combined routine maintenance and annual renovation cost for the carpet-hybrid pitch in Regent's Park was £16,419 compared with £11,726 and £12,551 for the natural turf pitch and a typical 3G pitch respectively.

The year-four cost for the Bootle FC carpet-hybrid pitch is in stark contrast to that for the Regent's Park pitch, with routine, annual and total combined maintenance costs of £19,588, £20,249 and £39,837 respectively. The combined cost is ~2.4 times higher than that for the Regent's Park

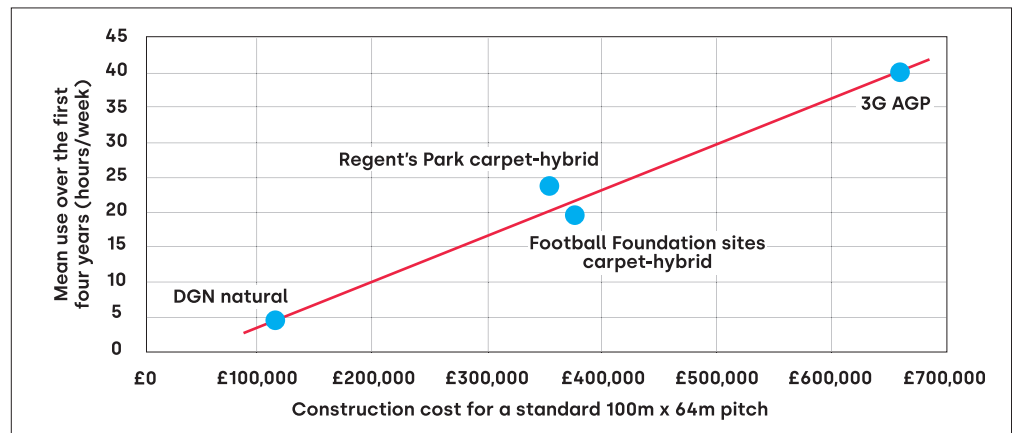


Figure 4: Mean hours of use and pitch construction costs

pitch. This is due to Regent's Park's low-input maintenance strategy, as users don't mind a reduction in grass coverage as long as the pitch is flat and well drained, and there are no cancellations.

COST PER HOUR OF USE EXTENDED

An indication of the cost per hour of use can be developed based on construction, routine maintenance and annual renovation costs, and then modelled against the average annual usage hours for each year (see Figure 3).

For Regent's Park, mean cost per hour of use of the carpet-hybrid pitch over the first four years (£29.65) is higher than that for the natural turf pitch (£23.96), but with user satisfaction scores of 8.9/10 and 6.5/10 respectively. The difference of £5.69 could be bridged by applying a slightly higher hire charge for the carpet-hybrid pitch. The cost per hour of use of the carpet-hybrid pitch (£29.65) is marginally higher than the modelled cost per hour of use for a typical 3G AGP (£26.41).

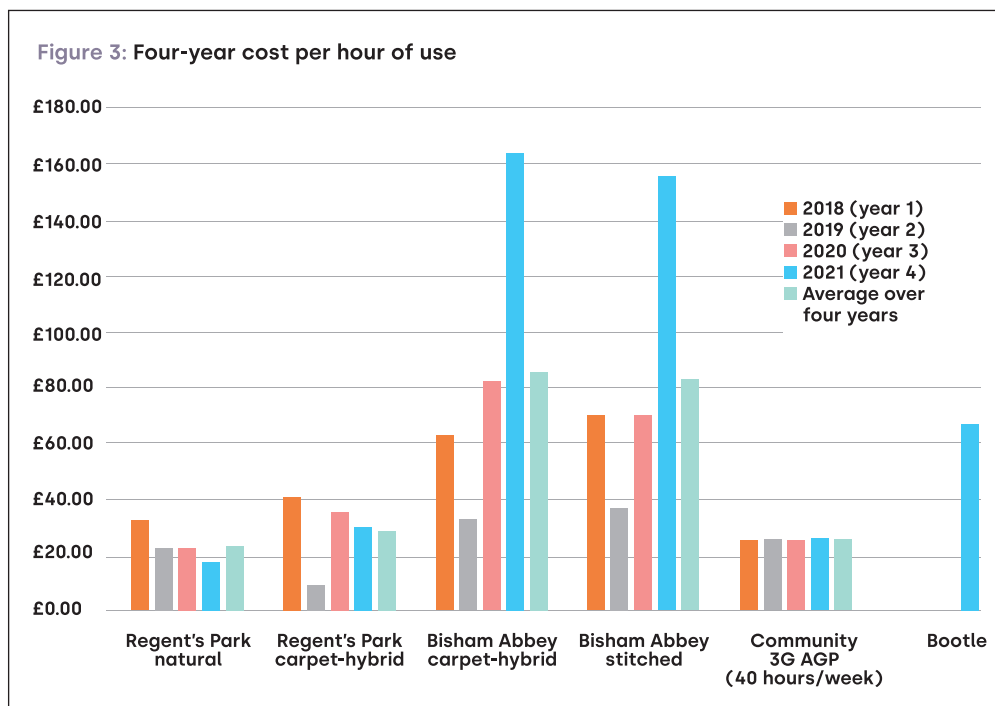
The relationship between pitch construction costs for a 100m x 64m pitch and mean hours of use over the first four years of the project is presented in Figure 4.

The natural turf pitch data is based on Sport England standard costs, with three to six hours of use as per the Sport England Design Guidance Note: Natural Turf for Sport. Hours of use for the 3G AGP are modelled at 40 per week. The relationship is broadly linear, with carpet-hybrid pitches lying between natural turf pitches at the lower end of the scale and 3G AGP pitches at the upper end.

SUMMARY

Over the first four years, the Regent's Park carpet-hybrid pitch has accommodated average weekly usage of 23.9 hours (with no cancellations) compared with 13.0 hours on the natural turf pitch. Nearly twice the weekly usage has been achieved on the carpet-hybrid pitch, with user feedback scores of 8.9/10.

So can carpet-hybrid pitches support 20–25 hours of use per week and maintain reasonable playing quality at a reasonable cost, with good user feedback? From the research study, the answers are: over the first four years – yes; in the medium term – very likely; in the long term – to be confirmed.



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Water resource regulations

There is a growing shortage of water to satisfy the UK's increasing demands, particularly in the sports and leisure sectors. Tony Hanson explains why effective water management is essential

BY TONY HANSON, ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS INTERNATIONAL LTD

The opportunity to discuss the UK's changing water resource availability with SALTEX Learning LIVE delegates – together with Dr Robin Price, director of quality and environment at Anglian Water, and Dr Owen Turpin, water resource regulation manager at the

Environment Agency – was an important milestone in sharing our joined-up approach to effective water management across the sports and leisure sectors.

Within this session, we worked together to highlight the concerning fact that there is simply not enough water

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to satisfy the UK's competing and growing demands. We also shared information about Environmental Solutions International's two-year project, funded by the water companies of England and Wales, which was set up to help the sportsturf and leisure sector transition towards the use of sustainable water sources in the face of climate change, population growth and high consumption (per capita).

RUNNING SHORT

Our combined session covered concerning findings from the Environment Agency's recent National Framework for Water Resource (NFWR) research project, which reviewed water use and the impacts of longer drier weather patterns, more intense rainfall events and the increasing needs of growing populations in areas already experiencing 'water stress'.

Indeed, planning applications for housing developments around Horsham in Sussex, for example, have already been halted at the request of Natural England due to the development's potential impact on river basins regarding the need for increased abstraction. This example is proof that new housing developments in some areas are now required to achieve 'water neutrality', highlighting the importance of water availability as a limiting factor for many

WE COULD EXPERIENCE A WATER AVAILABILITY SHORTFALL OF UP TO FOUR BILLION LITRES PER DAY BY 2050 IF WE DO NOT TAKE ACTION NOW

ALAMY



Above: Pitch irrigation improves playing conditions



Left: Grounds staff attempt to ameliorate the effects of waterlogging

lifestyle activities. Horsham was the first area to restrict planning in this way, but this could be the shape of things to come as we have to satisfy the demands of population increase, record consumption and climate change.

The Environment Agency's NFWR research findings also highlight the fact that we could experience a water availability shortfall of up to four billion litres per day by 2050 if we do not take action now.

CHANGE OF FLOW

In his address to Learning LIVE delegates, Dr Turpin highlighted the UK's changing weather patterns, which are causing more frequent droughts and floods. These

are leading to challenges in supply, which are having an impact on river flows, reduced groundwater levels and water quality – particularly during heatwaves. Heavier rainfall events are leading to increased surface water flooding.

To help solve this issue, in 2021 the Environment Agency consulted on changes to the Abstraction Licensing System, which moved away from open-ended or common-end dates and incorporated abstraction into the permitting system. This will also allow the granting of permits to link to river basin management plans and help to achieve the requirement needed to

improve water quality. Both these targets – outlined in the Environment Act 2021 and the Government's 25-year Environment Plan – will be challenging ambitions for the agency.

The outcome of this NFWR research led five regional water resource groups, covering England and Wales, and gave them responsibility to create regional water resource plans that fitted within the NFWR projected water availability and demands.

The groups' remit was broad, allowing consideration to demand a reduction in usage; water reuse; increased storage; the creation of water networks (taking water from areas where there is surplus as source for areas with excess demand); aquifer recharge (water that moves from the land surface or unsaturated zone into the saturated zone); and reverse-osmosis plants (the conversion of seawater to

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- prior Grounds Person experience
- be capable of working well individually or as part of a team
- hold a valid driving license
- behave excellent communication/customer service skills.
- Horticultural and arboricultural experience would be beneficial.

Further details and an application form may be found at <https://www.stjos.co.uk/our-community/job-vacancies> or by contacting the HR Officer by email (careers@stjos.co.uk) or telephone (01473) 690281.

The closing date for applications is Midday on Friday 03 March 2023. The College reserves the right to interview prior to the closing deadline, so early applications are encouraged.

St Joseph's College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The successful applicant will be required to undertake child protection screening appropriate to the post, including an Enhanced Disclosure via the Disclosure and Barring Service. Please be advised that applications cannot be accepted unless they are on the College's Application Form. References will be taken up and will be carefully checked. DBS charge payable by applicant.

THE SPORTSTURF SECTOR COULD USE RAINWATER FROM HARD STANDING OR FRENCH DRAINS, OR FILTERED GREY WATER IN PLACE OF STANDARD MAINS SUPPLY OR ABSTRACTION



Climate change is wreaking havoc on our sports surfaces, ranging from extreme drought (main image) to more frequent flooding events (left)

drinking water), which are very energy intense and expensive.

Dr Price also shared the water companies' perspective, which includes the collaboration between each water company and regional water resource groups during various consultations within the development of regional water resource plans.

SOURCING SOLUTIONS

Many of the water companies have traditionally sourced their water from abstraction – either surface or ground water – resulting in the need to work within the emerging supply plans, so consequently the water companies have developed their water resource management plans to align with the emerging regional water resource plans.

ALAMY

As the need for changes to water use becomes more important, water companies are also seeking opportunities to find alternative water sources for certain usage needs, including regular irrigation of sports playing surfaces. The water companies refer to this water use as 'discretionary', which means the supply doesn't require mains drinking water, so less-treated alternatives could be used instead.

The Water Resilience Project has highlighted the multiple water supply

options to suit the needs of the sportsturf industry. For example, this sector, and indeed many areas of the leisure sector, could use rainwater from hard standing or French drains, or filtered grey water in place of standard mains supply or abstraction.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Environmental Solutions International is working on water-company-funded projects that will help to highlight the use of alternative sources of

irrigation water – including motorway runoff and surface water runoff, which create problems with combined sewer overflows and sewage discharge; and naturalised onsite water storage and filtration. These integrated water management measures reduce demand conflict, flooding, mains water and unsustainable abstraction – and, importantly, improve water quality, biodiversity and ecology.

From a sports facility's point of view, having full control of your water usage will become essential in the coming years to reduce the impact of Temporary Use Bans, Non-essential Use Bans and section 57 notices that will increasingly be used as demand increases and the climate continues to change.

■ For more information, the water companies have provided a solution for the leisure sector via the Leisure Operator Water Charter. Visit: forms.office.com/r/tZV2Duks16 to get access to the Water Resilience Plan template, which will guide you through the process of finding alternative water sources in your area to help protect your sports facility's future.

Water management solutions

How water and its management could impact the design, construction and operation of sports facilities now and into the future

DR CHRISTIAN SPRING, STRI GROUP PRINCIPAL SCIENTIST



Often our focus when we are designing, building and managing sports surfaces is on their form, function and performance. However, resilience of the playing surface to usage and environmental conditions have also always been important considerations – and recently they have become increasingly critical.

With the significant challenges of tightening legislation, climate change and financial pressures, the need for sports facilities to meet these changes to ensure their continued operation is vital. We should therefore see them as opportunities and perhaps remove the shackles of convention to enable us to look at novel and innovative solutions.

INTEGRATED APPROACH

Water and its management will impact the design, construction and operation of sports facilities now and into the future, as water is vital for plant life and is essential for producing safe and effective playing surfaces.

How sports facilities source and use water is coming under increasing pressure, and our industry needs to act now to prevent long-term and systemic issues. The good

news is that this is happening, but the pace of roll-out needs to be increased.

When developing sports facilities, drainage has often been seen as the priority, the aim being to shift water as quickly as possible away from playing surfaces and into the existing drainage network. Over the years, there have been greater restrictions on the volume of water and how it is discharged from sites. This has meant that, as an industry, we have had to look at a more integrated way to manage water on our sites. Drainage is important, as is irrigation supply.

Our sports facilities not only involve pitches, they often have to integrate playing surfaces, buildings and car parks into a wider urban environment. How we deal with the water on our facilities is a cornerstone of flood prevention. This is because the surfaces at these facilities offer the opportunity to attenuate water and maximise natural infiltration into groundwater. They can also be used to store rainwater, as well as take other wastewater, such as pitch drainage and grey water, for reuse in, for example, irrigation water. Some treatment may be

needed, but in periods where there is prolonged dry weather and water scarcity is increasing, water use efficiency is essential.

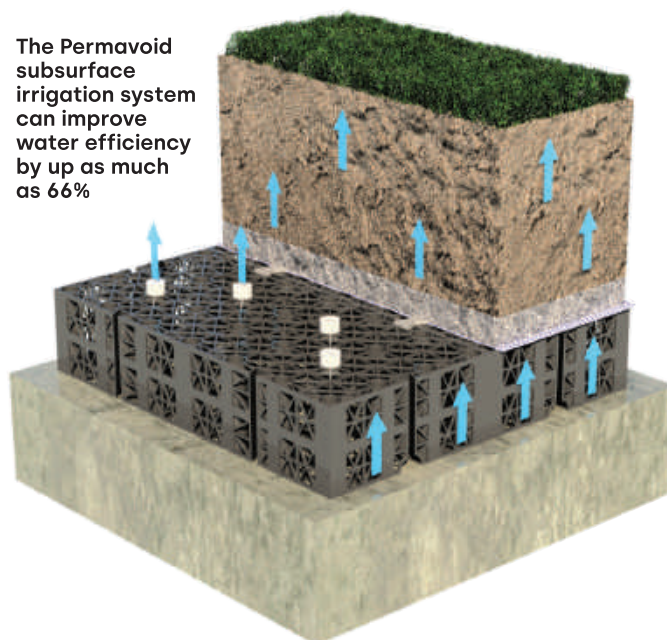
IMPROVING EFFICIENCY

There are various solutions that are already in existence and used in other industries that can help with integrated water management. Over the past eight years, research at STRI Group on a subsurface passive irrigation system using a geocellular crate called Permavoid has demonstrated that it can be effectively integrated into pitches.

Research has shown that this closed-loop, passive irrigation system under drought-prone, warm-season turf can improve water efficiency by on average 33 per cent and up to 66 per cent in dry spells. When linked with water capture and reuse, it has to be part of the future.

When managing our turf surfaces, how water is applied and getting the maximum value out of every drop is critical. Making sure irrigation systems are working effectively is a big part of this, as is ensuring that we are applying water in a way that allows plants to get maximum benefit. The use of wetting agents well

The Permavoid subsurface irrigation system can improve water efficiency by up as much as 66%





Managing water on our pitches must be on our sustainability radar

HOW WATER IS APPLIED AND GETTING THE MAXIMUM VALUE OUT OF EVERY DROP IS CRITICAL

in advance of dry periods to help maximise water storage can be highly beneficial.

Making sure the soil/rootzone is ready to accept water and that it won't run off when rain does come is just as important.

Solutions don't have to cost the Earth, but they do have to be effective and scientifically proven. Yes, it is sometimes easier to integrate solutions into a site during

design and construction, but retrofit renovation work can also be highly effective. Relatively small changes can make big impacts.

FINDING SOLUTIONS

No solution is going to be cheaper in the first instance than doing nothing. However, doing nothing is not a sustainable option. If grass does not have the correct level of water supply,

it will not survive – and consequently the sports surface will not be viable.

Climate change and its impact on not only water supply and rainfall patterns, but also on the length of the growing season and plant demand, are real and are already being felt.

It is essential that we plan now and implement solutions to ensure that our facilities can continue to operate and be financially viable, while safeguarding the ability to allow everyone to play sports now and into the future.

■ **If you want to understand the impact of climate change in your location and water management solutions that may be relevant for your facility, take a look at: golfcourse2030water.com. This has been produced as part of the R&A's Golf Course 2030 programme and while the focus is on golf courses, the implications of climate change and the solutions available are relevant for all sports facilities.**

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Maintaining sports grounds across the UK

Three organisations explain how they utilise industry products and services to ensure their grounds and facilities are kept in top condition

MERCHANT TAYLORS' PICKS ISEKI

Richard Ayling, grounds manager at Merchant Taylors' School in Middlesex, has praised his new fleet of ISEKI tractors for helping the grounds team maintain 300 acres of estate.

"We try to give the boys the best experience we can in whatever sport they want to enjoy," says Richard. "We have over 80 acres of sport areas within 300 acres of estate, which is why we need to invest in the best machinery."

Until recently, Richard was tied into a five-year contract hire for the school's larger equipment. That was coming to an end and he began to research the market. "My plan was to raise the standard of the equipment and I was impressed with the demo from RT Machinery, especially the IQ transmission, which was one of the main reasons we purchased the ISEKI tractors."

Richard bought two ISEKI TG6507s and a TG6687, which both benefit from the dual-clutch IQ gearbox. Specific to the IQ range of TG tractors, the Headland management controls are also perfect when working with turf maintenance tools.

He also purchased the ISEKI TH5370, for areas where lightweight machinery is required, and uses this on the school's synthetic sports pitches.



Richard shows off his ISEKI fleet

■ Find out more at: iseki.co.uk

Euroflor's Flora Fleece creates stunning, wildlife-friendly areas



EUROFLOR MAKES DAZZLING TRANSFORMATION AT WORTH PARK GARDENS

Seeds from the Origin Amenity Solutions (OAS) Euroflor range have transformed three meadow areas within Worth Park Conservation Gardens as part of Crawley Borough Council's wider conservation project. With the aim of increasing plant diversity and providing habitat and food for pollinators, the wildflowers were introduced by head gardener Stephen Peters using OAS's biodegradable Flora Fleece, which delivers maximum visual and ecological benefit with minimal impact on the environment.

The 8.5-hectare park has undergone a restoration over the last few years. "The objective of the wildflower project was to provide an essential food source [nectar] for pollinators, and demonstrate that making a healthier ecosystem that benefits both humans and wildlife does not need intensive preparations with harmful chemicals," says Stephen.

Flora Fleece consists of 50 per cent jute, 25 per cent cotton, 25 per cent brown wool, and hessian scrim that acts to suppress weeds and provides an ideal seedbed for wildflowers before biodegrading. "I just roll out the matting, lay three or four inches of soil over the top and sow the seed," Stephen explains.

The Euroflor mixtures include annuals, bi-annuals and perennials for a rich source of nectar, along with maximum colour and diversity. Stephen sowed them in mid-March and growth started six weeks later.

■ Find out more at: originamenity.com

VFL WOLFSBURG WOWED BY DENNIS ES-860

The head groundsman at Germany's Bundesliga football club VfL Wolfsburg, Peter Sauer, is delighted with the new Dennis ES-860 battery-powered mower.

When he first heard that Dennis was developing a range of battery-powered equipment, Peter flew to England to find out more. "I first got to see the ES-860 cylinder mower in action at Derby County FC," he says. "It was great to see it working on a pitch, as it gives you a better idea of how it will perform. Dennis then brought it over to Germany, we tested it and we knew it was going to be a great machine."

The ES-860 is a 34in, battery-powered turf management system that delivers maximum versatility, while its 13 interchangeable cassette options provide solutions for cutting, scarifying, brushing and verticutting.

Traditional G860 cassettes will also fit into the ES-860, meaning that Peter will not have to buy additional cassettes. "I have the brush cassette, the spiker, the spring tine rake and a couple of other cassettes, so it is a big bonus," he says.

"The battery life is incredible: we can comfortably mow up to two-and-a-half, maybe three pitches on a single charge," says Peter.

■ Find out more at: dennisuk.com



The ES-860 is a great addition to Wolfsburg's arsenal



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SPRING OPERATIONS

The GMA's seasonal maintenance guide to help you keep your sports surfaces in top condition all year round

Bowling greens

- Drag brush or switch to remove morning dew, and monitor disease pressures and earthworm activity.
- Ensure all machinery is serviced and ready for the demands of the season ahead, test irrigation equipment, and clear and refresh ditches and perimeters along with any other odd jobs.
- As the weather improves and temperatures rise, increase cut frequency in line with growth, gradually reducing the height of cut.
- Apply a suitable spring fertiliser to maintain and encourage optimum growing conditions for the grass plant.
- Once the threat of harsh frosts passes, perform planned spring renovation tasks. These can include top dressing, light scarification or verti-cutting and overseeding.
- Increasing cut frequency will assist in

Gradually reduce the height of cut on bowling greens over the spring



ALAMY



Increase the frequency of mowing cricket outfields

- firming the surface, but introduction of a specific rolling programme might be needed – if so, increase weight gradually, roll in multiple directions and ensure profile moisture levels support this.
- Aeration operations will assist in improving the quality and performance of the surface. Some greenkeepers will transition to solid tine aeration during this period to prevent slits opening later in the season.

Cricket squares

- Continue dispersing morning dew and inspecting for any signs of disease – monitor or treat as required.
- Take time to repair ends that may have sparse coverage or isolated low levels – covering with

- germination sheeting will accelerate establishment, but be mindful to regularly check the activity underneath.
- Rolling and consolidation of the cricket square should be a priority as the weather changes. Begin rolling when conditions allow with a relatively light roller and gradually move up to a medium weight unit or increase ballast. Look to carry out even roll coverage in a 'Union Jack' pattern.
- An application of a suitable fertiliser will help to kick-start desired growth rate and optimum growing conditions for the grass plant.
- Gradually reduce the height of cut in line with cut frequency, but be aware of any potential change in the weather.
- A light verti-cut may be possible once growth is reasonable, but be

careful not to overdo it too early on.

- Ensure that the square is correctly set out with the corners being at exact right angles, and that the pitches are correctly marked and numbered according to the pitch plan for the season ahead.

Cricket outfields

- Regularly check for damage, especially if used for winter sports, and make repairs when conditions allow, paying attention to bowlers' run-ups.
- Cut the outfield as growth demands, gradually increasing frequency and slowly reducing the height of cut ahead of the season beginning.
- Drag brush to disperse worm casts before commencing cutting to avoid blunting newly sharpened mower blades.
- If budgets allow, spring overseeding and an application of a controlled-release fertiliser will improve the coverage and surface aesthetic.
- Monitor the outfield for weeds and make plans to apply selective herbicide when growth is strong and conditions allow.
- If conditions allow, aeration or

decompaction early in spring could improve the quality, performance and drainage potential of the outfield for the season ahead.

Football pitches

- Continue to brush the pitch to open the sward and stand the grass back up when cutting is not required.
- As conditions improve, increase cut frequency and gradually reduce the height of cut to a desirable level to thicken the sward.
- An application of a controlled-release spring fertiliser will assist in promoting growth and enhance recovery.
- Keeping the pitch safe and playable is essential. Make repairs as the weather improves and divot the pitch to ensure the surface remains safe. Make isolated light sand dressings, and seed and spike in thin and bare areas.
- Decompact using solid tines, or spike rather than slit at this stage if soil conditions permit in early spring.
- Plan end-of-season works as early as possible – book renovation operations to take place and order required materials.

Horse racecourses

- Recommission the irrigation system.
- Increase frequency of cut in line with growth to sustain a true surface.
- Continue to carry out repairs after meetings, perform general area maintenance such

Continue to carry out racecourse repairs



as post strimming to maintain good presentation.

- Aerate or decompact as conditions become suitable into early spring.
- Apply the controlled-release spring base feed once growth is regular and temperature stable.
- Apply a selective herbicide to control weed coverage.

Rugby league pitches

- Make timely repairs and divot the surface back true following play.
- As the weather conditions become favourable, overseeding and an application of a controlled-release spring/summer fertiliser can be applied to improve cover.
- Increase cut frequency at a suitable height to encourage growth and sward thickening.

Keep football pitches safe and playable during spring



- Continue regular drag brushing to stand the grass up and improve airflow around the plant.
- Perform aeration or decompaction operations when conditions allow to aid gaseous exchange and root growth.

Rugby union pitches

- Early spring growth could require the pitch to be topped rather than brushed – only gently top off at a suitable height.
- Excessive wear at this time of year may be present, but as spring growth starts to kick in it will assist in recovery of a thinning or sparsely covered surface. As conditions improve, cut more regularly to encourage tillering and sward thickening.
- A controlled-release spring fertiliser will assist in promoting growth and enhanced recovery.
- Keeping the pitch playable is essential and so continue to make repairs and divot the pitch to ensure the surface remains safe.
- Aerate or alleviate compaction using solid tines if soil conditions permit. Do not aerate

just because a pitch might not have had this operation carried out for some time, as it could cause more harm than good if soil conditions are unsuitable.

- The end of season is now in sight, so plan ahead for renovation works and order materials and book in services.

Tennis courts

- Continue brushing to remove morning dew while inspecting for any early signs of disease.
- Shallow solid-tine aerate, or sarel roll if conditions allow.
- Begin light rolling of the courts if ground conditions are suitable. As conditions improve, rolling should become more regular to help firm up the court ready for play commencing.
- Make repairs by overseeding and lightly dressing any low areas or patches of poor coverage.
- Apply a suitable spring fertiliser to encourage sustained growth and allow for light verti-cutting to be introduced.
- Ensure the courts are correctly set out with the corners being at exact right angles so all future operations such as cutting and rolling are in line with the courts.
- Mowing frequency will be gradually increasing in line with growth. At the same time, the height of cut can be gradually lowered from the winter topping height to that required for the start of the playing season.

■ **For more season maintenance tips, visit: resources.thegma.org.uk**

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DS1600 TOP DRESSER DELIVERS YEAR-ROUND VERSATILITY

Promising to deliver enhanced adaptability to top-dressing operations, the new Rink DS1600 from Redexim features improved functionality with all-new electronic controls. The Rink DS1600 disc spreader is ideal for those following the 'little and often' approach to top dressing. Accommodating spreading widths of between 2m and 14m, the DS1600 features a large 1.6-cubic-metre hopper, which means fewer trips back to the shed to refill, as well as enhanced overall efficiency.

A range of parameters including throw, belt speed and spreading thickness can all now be quickly and easily adjusted via new electronic controls accessible from the operator's seat. A digital control unit can be specified as an optional extra, which enables the operator to preset spreading rates – ensuring quick and consistent setup every time.

Four large tyres complete the specification, keeping ground pressure to a minimum and making the DS1600 the versatile dresser for tasks throughout the maintenance calendar.

■ redexim.com

KUBOTA

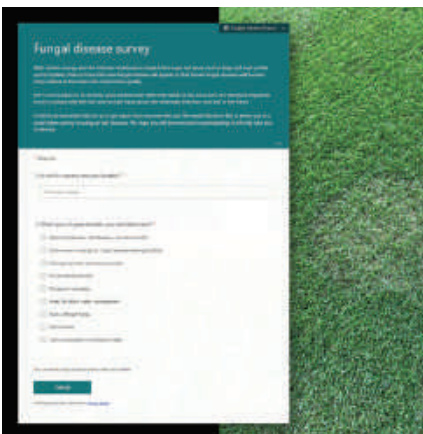
Power and performance assured with new RTV 520 from Kubota

The compact and versatile RTV 520 is the latest addition to Kubota's utility vehicle range, launched in 2022 and debuted in the UK at SALTEX. It combines high performance and comfort with a selection of accessories to customise the RTV 520 for domestic, commercial and grounds care applications. As with all Kubota RTV models, the 520 features a variable hydrostatic transmission (VHT) with one-pedal operation for smooth and powerful acceleration, and great performance over any terrain. The liquid-cooled, two-cylinder 18hp engine provides quiet, dependable power, while the suspension, seat and ergonomic dashboard have also been improved to for an easier and more comfortable operator experience.

■ kubota.com



DLF



JOIN DLF SURVEY TO HELP DISEASE-TOLERANT TURF RESEARCH

As part of its extensive research and sustainable seed programme, DLF is inviting turf managers to participate in a short survey to identify the variety and prevalence of fungal turf disease activity.

With the changing climate and altering maintenance practices, there is a fear that new fungal diseases could appear or that known ones could become a more serious threat to turf quality. Therefore, to fully understand the current situation and provide more tolerant solutions, DLF would like to hear your experience of recent disease activity.

The survey should take no more than five minutes to complete and you can access it at: forms.office.com/r/XCHEfvmxT3

The fungal disease survey is just one of several DFL research programmes looking to create high-performance, sustainable seed mixtures that improve turf quality, and are kinder to budgets and the environment without compromising performance or visual merit.

■ dlf.com

PRODUCT SHOWCASE

THE LATEST GROUNDCARE TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES



HUSQVARNA

CEORA robotic mower top pick for large-scale turfcare

The CEORA™ is Husqvarna's newest robotic mower and is changing the game for turfcare professionals.

The CEORA is a virtually silent autonomous machine that can cover the equivalent area of four full-size football pitches, allowing you to trim both time and expense.

The mower is easy to manage, even for newcomers to robotic mowers. It can navigate with a precision of 2–3cm, thanks to Husqvarna's satellite navigation system. This, alongside virtual boundaries, eliminates the hassle of physical wires and makes it possible to select individually defined areas on demand, with different schedules as well as cutting height settings.

By cutting little and often with razor blades, the CEORA will help you to achieve an excellent turf quality that is consistently dense and green, and with deeper grass roots.

■ [husqvarna.com](https://www.husqvarna.com)

WEEDINGTECH

FOAMSTREAM SYSTEM REDEFINES HERBICIDE-FREE WEED CONTROL

As the world's leading organically certified solution for the complete non-chemical control of weeds and moss, Foamstream from Weedingtech is redefining herbicide-free weed control.

Its patented low-pressure process combines hot water and a biodegradable foam, made from natural plant oils and sugars, and is delivered through one of Weedingtech's industry-leading machines. The active ingredient is hot water, with the foam acting as an 'insulation blanket', preventing the heat from escaping and keeping the water in the 'kill zone' (temperatures of 57°C and above) for longer. The heat penetrates the waxy outer layer of the leaf, travels down the stem and into the roots, killing or severely damaging the plant and causing it to die.

As well as eradicating the plant, Foamstream also sterilises surrounding seeds and spores that haven't



yet germinated, helping to reduce future weed growth, and lowering labour and overhead costs.

Suitable for year-round applications, the all-natural ingredients also mean it is safe for applications around people, animals and sensitive environments, including water courses.

■ [weedingtech.com](https://www.weedingtech.com)

COLLIER TURF CARE/OLMIX PLANT CARE

COLLIER TURF CARE AND OLMIX PLANT CARE TEAM UP TO DISTRIBUTE MARATHON® ALGAE ORGANO-MINERAL FERTILISER IN THE UK

Collier Turf Care and Olmix Plant Care have announced their partnership to develop the sequential-release organo-mineral fertiliser Marathon ALGAE on sports pitches in the UK.

"Olmix is delighted with our partnership with Collier Turf Care," enthuses Geert Bakker, Olmix territory manager for the Northern European Turf and Amenity markets. "Collier Turf Care is a fast-growing company with dedicated teams who offer a strong service to its clients, and good

technical and market knowledge. We are happy to team up to introduce the Marathon ALGAE range and set up a long-term relationship."

Collier Turf Care managing director Andrew Harding says: "The new improved granulation of Marathon with added algae offers many benefits to UK sports facilities, and our UK trials have highlighted many positives with great results. We are confident our customers will keep using it."

■ [collier-turf-care.co.uk/olmix.com](https://www.collier-turf-care.co.uk/olmix.com)





Carbon4Grass

Helping you off-set your carbon footprint through grass seed

Carbon4Grass grass seed mixes have been developed to support the industry's awareness of carbon mitigation in sports grounds, golf courses and amenity or landscaped areas. Intensively managed grass surfaces have a considerably higher impact on the environment than typical rural grasslands. The unique mix of cultivars used in the Carbon4Grass range can help offset this impact, whilst achieving outstanding professional results.

- Sequesters relatively more CO₂ than typical grass seed mixes
- Transfers CO₂ from the sward and roots into the soil
- Choice of 10 specialist mixes available for a variety of applications
- Highest quality grass seed



Scan this code to order a Carbon4Grass brochure. To place an order, call **0800 138 7222** or email **sales@originamenity.com**

Our brands:





YOUR WATER YOUR WAY



NEW FOR SPORTS

New SRC Ranger irrigation controller.

Works the way you want it.

Easy to use and highly effective, the SRC Ranger controller is more than just a box on the wall. Sports pitches and training grounds can benefit from straightforward set up and easy operation. And, with scheduling capacity for up to 100 stations and capable of operating up to 12 stations simultaneously, the 2-wire SRC Ranger effortlessly controls your irrigation.

reesinkturfcare.co.uk

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