

2024 | EDITION 18

TURF POWER

John Deere's
**ELECTRIFYING
TECHNOLOGY**

A special experience at
TPC SAWGRASS

Training ground and golf course
TRANSFORMATIONS

The latest training in
**PRECISION
TURFCARE**



JOHN DEERE

NOTHING RUNS LIKE A DEERE

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TPC SAWGRASS: a once-in-a-lifetime greenkeeping experience

There can be few greater career experiences for a greenkeeper than to contribute their skills and expertise to the preparation of a golf course hosting the flagship PGA Tour event.

For the successful applicants chosen to take part in the 2024 John Deere TPC Sawgrass Volunteer Programme, that's exactly what awaits them from 12-17 March.

Each year, five members of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association (BIGGA) from the UK, plus one member from overseas, join a member of the Association of Turfgrass Professionals Ireland (ATPI) for the preparation and tournament rounds of the renowned tournament.

The long-standing initiative is sponsored by John Deere to support the team's continual professional development while, at the same time, adding much-needed skilled labour to the TPC Sawgrass team at their busiest point of the year.

Up to 100 greenkeepers from more than a dozen countries and across 18 US states come together to present an immaculate, unique challenge for the world's best golfers.

John Deere's Division Sales Manager for Golf and Turf, Chris Meacock, said: "Management of the golf course varies from club to club and country to country, so there is always something to learn or knowledge to share.

"The TPC Sawgrass programme has been a huge success since its inception. Those who take part get to experience something that so few others will; being part of a team preparing one of the most renowned golf courses on the planet."

"John Deere, BIGGA and the ATPI is extremely proud to be able to offer this opportunity to seven greenkeepers every year."

Chris Meacock, Division Sales Manager for Golf and Turf, John Deere

The 2023 TPC Sawgrass cohort was Alex Brougham, Eddie Irvine, Peter Lewis and Mark Tucker.



"Fantastic from start to finish"

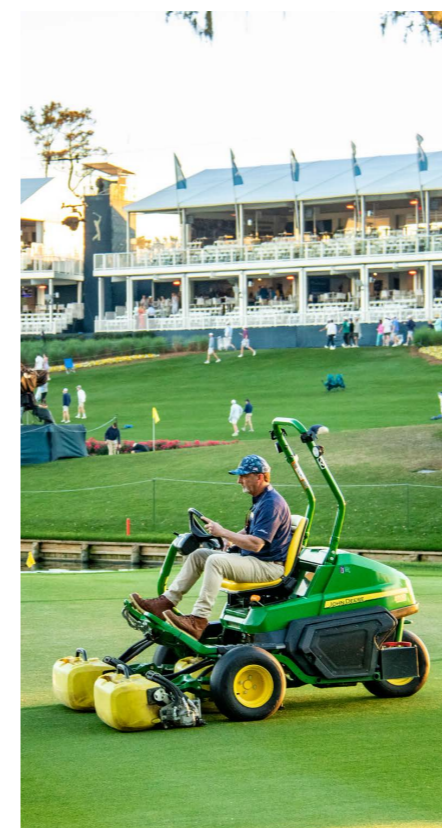
Alex Brougham, the Assistant Course Manager at Trentham Golf Club near Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire, was one of the lucky few chosen to fly to America for the 2023 tournament, which was won by Scottie Scheffler who shot a 17-under 271.

"My trip to Sawgrass was fantastic from start to finish and certainly an experience I will never forget," Alex said. "I was able to gain hands on experience of setting up a course for a world-class tournament and to network with like-minded individuals from the greenkeeping industry on a global scale."

The group arrived at the course on the Sunday before the tournament, collected its uniforms and was allocated the morning tasks for the week.

Alex said: "The work was varied throughout the week. I was on debris sweeping to ensure the course was completely clear from tee to green, including spectator areas and cart paths.

"Having to work behind numerous mowers all cutting several areas of the course at various times, we had to be well organised and communicate frequently to stay ahead of the first tee time. Clearing the back nine holes from debris with a team of eight personnel operating backpack blowers was not a small task by any means."



In the evenings, clearing pine straw and divoting fairways was a big task and one which Alex says demonstrated the attention to detail.

"On Wednesday I carried out my favourite job of the week which was hand mowing rough. In the Florida heat, it wasn't an easy task and it was decided that we would swap machine operators after a couple of holes to give people a break," he said.

"Mowing rough went on past sundown meaning the lights from the John Deere utility vehicles came in very useful, but at times the only source of light was from our head torches. This made things very difficult and highlighted the need for the spotters who scanned the areas for cables and ropes to keep those who were mowing safe."

After the final set up on Sunday morning, the group headed out to watch the golf, followed by a meal and drinks.

Alex said: "During the trip, I learnt a lot by observing the Sawgrass home greenkeeping team and networking with the other volunteers. I left with a better understanding of how the greenkeeping team operates at one of the best championship golf courses in the world. I'm now aiming to utilise as much of that knowledge as possible back at Trentham."

It feels like a dream

After being laid off from work during the covid pandemic, Lorcan Finnegan was sat with his girlfriend watching greenkeepers work and said to her "that's what I want to do next".

Just three years on, he now holds a greenkeeping and mechanic role at Malahide Golf Club in Dublin, has carried out tournament support for two Irish Opens, and now has a place on the TPC Sawgrass Volunteer Programme for 2024.

The 2024 cohort

Aidan Wright
Deputy Course Manager
Camberley Heath Golf Club

Adam Brackley
Head Greenkeeper
La Grande Mare Hotel

Colin Hopper
Head Greenkeeper
Elsham Golf Club

Ian Kirwan
Course Manager
Chorlton-cum-Hardy Golf Club

David Feeney
Deputy Head Greenkeeper
Prestwick Golf Club

Adam Champion
Superintendent
Bears paw Golf Club, Canada

Lorcan Finnegan
Greenkeeper and Mechanic
Malahide Golf Club in Co. Dublin

He's completed a Level 6 qualification in sports turf maintenance and holds various licences for operating and maintaining all the important equipment on the course.

"When I've done tournament support before I've been advised to spend some time working on a course in the USA to really get an insight into the way things can be done on the golf course," Lorcan said.

"To now have won a place on this trip, it feels like a dream. I've enjoyed everything I've done and learnt so far as a greenkeeper, but this is going to be on another level."



Do you want to go to Sawgrass 2025?

Scan this QR code to go to the BIGGA website.
Applications for the 2025 programme will open in March 2024.

DEALER ACQUISITIONS STRENGTHEN JOHN DEERE'S TURF PROPOSITION

Growth for Stephen W Moore in Northern Ireland



The acquisition of Johnston Gilpin & Co by Stephen W Moore LTD in Northern Ireland means customers can expect a simplification of all aspects of parts and service in the region as a result of the move, which is in line with John Deere's Dealer of Tomorrow strategy.

The expanded dealership now offers the full range of John Deere agricultural machinery, as well as domestic and professional turf care products, supplying farms, homes, sports venues and golf courses with the same quality equipment and aftersales service they received under the previous structure.

Dealer Principal Stephen Moore said: "This is an exciting time as we prepare to nearly double the size of our business with the next stage of our evolution."

Stephen W Moore has been a John Deere dealer since 2008 in Coleraine. It is known for its strength in supporting farmers and contractors in the region, offering the full range of forage harvesters, combines, small, medium and large-frame tractors, sprayers, mowers and balers.

John Deere's Division Sales Manager, Brian D'Arcy, said: "The acquisition is a great fit for our dealer network and the new, larger business – backed up by the support from John Deere – is an extremely strong proposition for our customers in Northern Ireland."

Ben Burgess buys out JW Doubleday



In August 2022, Ben Burgess announced that it was to acquire JW Doubleday, enabling the business to be better placed to support turf sales and service in the area.

While the deal went through at the end of October 2022, trading continued under the Doubleday name at branches in Kings Lynn, Holbeach, Swineshead and Old Leake until early 2023.

Branding has now been updated and rolled out across all the former Doubleday outlets trading under the new ownership.

Founded in the early 1970s by John Doubleday, the business remained family-owned, successfully growing for over 50 years and becoming a core part of the agricultural community.

The company employed 54 staff and has built an enviable reputation for serving customers across Lincolnshire and Norfolk.



Ripon Farm Services adds professional turfcare to its business

In early 2023, Yorkshire-based John Deere dealer Ripon Farm Services extended its range to include professional turfcare machinery and servicing through the acquisition of FG Adamson & Son. With depots at Swanland near Hull and Langworth near Lincoln, FG Adamson & Son was established over 75 years ago and has sold and serviced John Deere machinery for more than 25 years.

Geoff Brown, Ripon Farm Services Managing Director, said: "This will be the next stage in the evolution of our business as we offer our services to the professional turf market for the first time. FG Adamson & Son is a hugely respected business with a strong reputation for excellent customer service, and we know that the high standards set by the staff for more than seven decades will need to be continued."



Working as a JOHN DEERE APPRENTICE

After embarking on a three-year John Deere Turf Tech apprenticeship course with Ripon Farm Services, Jack Bolton is on the path to becoming a fully-qualified technician.

Jack got his first taste of John Deere machinery when he left school and started helping his dad with mowing football pitches. As he became familiar with the John Deere brand, his interest in turf machinery grew and he knew he wanted to work for one of the biggest machinery companies in the world.

The 19-year-old, who is originally from Leeds, West Yorkshire, started his apprenticeship last year and has had the opportunity to work on a variety of machines, from mowers to gators, doing everything a fully-qualified technician would do, including servicing machines, carrying out repairs and keeping products in the best possible condition for their owners.

Jack says: "What I've learnt so far is that when working on these machines, communication, concentration and taking your time are all really important."

Jack completes a variety of jobs both with his mentor, who guides him through anything that he is unfamiliar with, and on his own, usually on machines he has prior experience with, such as walk-behind mowers.

"I always feel a sense of accomplishment when I finish a job as well. The opportunities that the apprenticeship presents are great, I get to go to different places on jobs, like football pitches and golf courses, and the constant learning from working with the machines is great too," Jack says.

Apprentices also spend a lot of their time in the classroom learning about the theoretical side of being a technician, which is just as important as the practical.

Jack looks forward to the rest of his course, as he looks to gain more independence in his work.

He says: "I think down the line I'll be working on some more electrical-based jobs, especially as John Deere moves more into electric machines. I'm not too sure what to expect for the rest of my course, but I'm looking forward to getting stuck in."

New students are enrolled each year, and the standard programmes include on-the-job training and assessment as well as up to eight weeks each year at the John Deere Apprentice Training Centre in Nottinghamshire.

A John Deere apprenticeship is a fantastic opportunity for anyone who is looking to start their career in the turfcare machinery sector. Since it was established in 1992, the John Deere apprenticeship programme has helped over 1,000 apprentices start their careers.

By partaking in one of the prestigious courses that John Deere provides, an apprentice will learn the valuable knowledge and skills they need to secure a career anywhere across John Deere's worldwide dealership network.

John Deere's apprenticeship programme trains students in **engineering, electronics, hydraulics, diagnostics, communication skills, computing, sales and marketing.** Turf Tech and Ag Tech candidates study towards the Land-Based Service Engineering Technician qualification (Level 3).



LANDSCAPE TEAMS CLIMB NEW HEIGHTS

at UK theme parks



A sprawling site filled with white-knuckle rollercoasters may not be the first location that springs to mind when considering the importance of professional groundscape and maintenance.

But at two of the UK's most-visited theme parks – Chessington World of Adventures Resort and Thorpe Park Resort – a huge emphasis is placed on presentation.

That responsibility falls on two lean teams with different challenges in terms of the make-up of their sites, but with a shared objective to ensure visitors experience a pristine, imaginative and diverse landscape all year round.

To help them, both parks have invested heavily in new John Deere machinery over the past six months in order to maximise output.

Chessington World of Adventures

On the outskirts of south-west London, Chessington is home to one of Britain's biggest theme parks, as well as a zoo and hotel resort which attracts up to 14,000 people a day in peak season.

The site management team, led by Nick Burch and Tom Beith, is responsible for over 200 acres, including 60 acres of ancient woodland.

Priorities change massively throughout the season and the many events the site holds – including seasonal events such as Mardi Gras and 'Howl'o'ween' – requires creative thinking and fast turnarounds. On top of day-to-day landscaping challenges, the team is integral to ride installations, such as the all-new Jumanji Land which opened in May 2023. This involved a significant planting scheme that the landscapes team was responsible for.

"We always have to think ahead about what we can do differently to enhance the guest experience," says Nick. "A lot of the time these events can come around quite quickly, and we are limited on the amount of time we can work in the park before our guests arrive."

"We start at 6am, but as all vehicles must be off the park by 8.45am, it's a very limited window. We might have to plant lots of borders, hang lights in trees, or move materials around the site – all of which comes on top of our regular schedule of work to keep the park looking its best."

Besides Nick, the Site Management team is made up of three full-time gardeners and two seasonal team members.

Getting around and working with the diversity of operational requirements means the team relies heavily on its machinery.

Chessington's new John Deere fleet, which is supplied on a three-year operating lease by Farol, is made up of two HPX 815E Gators, a 1570 front rotary mower and a 4066 compact utility tractor. A further five gators are already in place with other teams on site.

"Upgrading the fleet was down to the age of the existing equipment," says Tom. "Repair costs start to go up with the machine's hours, and we are getting more challenges on site, so we need machinery that's reliable and consistent. We were happy with what we had, so we went for like-for-like replacements."

The new 4066 tractor is proving to be a particularly wise investment as it has enabled the team to mulch on-site, saving tens of thousands of pounds on bought-in materials.

"The mulcher driven by the tractor is huge for us," Nick said. "Before, our green waste was skipped and then recycled at a huge annual cost. At the same time we were buying mulch in. We got the mulcher for all our green waste and animal waste, and now it's spread all about the site."

Tom estimates the change of strategy is saving Chessington around £30,000 a year, while also offering the site an enhanced environmental profile.



Thorpe Park Resort

Twenty miles away, another Merlin Entertainments attraction – Thorpe Park Resort – is dedicated to maintaining a perfect theme park for its hordes of visitors.

Thorpe Park's Site Manager, Andy Plumbly, has been working at the park for 23 years, and oversees a four-strong team who are responsible for maintaining 160 acres of land.

"It's been incredible to see the evolution of the machinery," says Andy. "When I started at Thorpe Park it was quite basic, but now you have the option of adding all these bells and whistles. It's incredible and with the changing scale of the park these machines have been essential and really the backbone of our workforce."

Andy runs an almost identical fleet of mowers and Gators to the Chessington team, which was also recently upgraded by Farol's Area Manager Dave Searles. He also has a higher horsepower 5M Series tractor to work with.

"These machines are very reliable, and you always know what you're getting with John Deere," says Andy.

"During the season, we're hamstrung by time. We only have a few hours on the park each day, so having machinery like Gators to get around and get everything done is essential to the job."

Andy recognises that the job of a site team at a theme park is quite different to that of a typical groundscape unit.

"I suppose the big difference is that we're living in an entertainment world. We're doing everything that a landscape team would do, and then we're pulled into wild marketing projects, which change every year," he said. "It's crazy sometimes but it's good fun."

The development of John Deere technology has further helped make the work at Thorpe Park easier and more efficient, with Andy being particularly impressed by John Deere's digital readout technology.

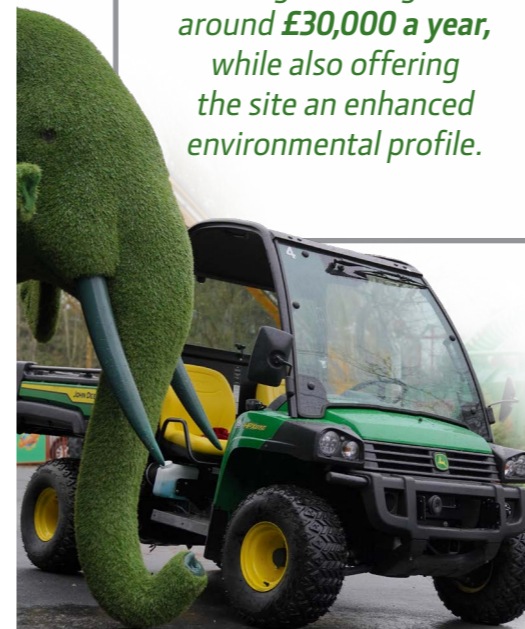
"Having the digital readout means that we'll always have a rough idea of how our machines are performing and what issues there might be," says Andy. "When I first started, it was just a simple dial and that was it. Having technology like this makes everything so much easier."

Reliable machines are essential, as is the right team.

"I'm lucky to have these guys on my team," says Andy. "They are professional, really driven and they're always looking to improve."

"Thorpe Park has a really bright future, and our relationship with John Deere contributes to that."

Andy Plumbly, Site Manager, Thorpe Park





MILITARY HIRING PROGRAMME

set to strengthen turf technician recruitment

John Deere's new UK initiative for ex-military personnel will attract experienced and highly trained technicians to UK dealerships.

John Deere has announced a new training programme offering career opportunities for ex-military personnel in agricultural and grounds care engineering.

Responding to the global shortage of qualified technicians, members of the armed forces have been identified as the ideal candidates to bring their skill sets and experiences to UK and Ireland dealerships.

It follows the successful launch of the company's Military Hiring Programme in the United States, which attracts more than 1,000 new recruits each year.

"We are passionate about finding a way to give back to those who have served our country," says Allan Cochran, John Deere Branch Training Manager.

"The armed forces produce people who are highly skilled, motivated and extremely competent, and many already have the engineering skills needed to become qualified technicians.

"It's the perfect fit for John Deere – we are able to play our part in supporting those resettling following careers in the armed forces while also attracting a different pool of people into the business."

As part of its commitment, John Deere has signed the Armed Forces Covenant; a pledge to ensure those who serve, or have served, in the armed forces are treated fairly, along with their families.

Recruits to the scheme will use the latest automation, artificial intelligence and guidance technologies to ensure customers get the best performance from their machines.

"Those who have served are experts at working under pressure and logically solving problems in order to keep a machine operational," Allan says. "These are the skills John Deere dealerships need to keep the wheels turning."

Those taking part will be offered free technical training to help them apply their skills to the John Deere product range, with more than 70 courses available.

"Everyone who signs up will be assigned to an employee from the John Deere network who has served in the armed forces who will be there to support them during the resettlement process," Allan added.



Those interested can go to www.deere.com/JDMHP and fill out a contact form. They will then be put in touch with an individual from the John Deere network.

Dave Hughes: from missile launchers to mowers



Finding a suitable new career when transitioning from military life to Civvy Street is hugely important to those individuals making the switch.

Dave Hughes, the Head Mechanic at Wentworth Golf Club in Surrey, faced that challenge in December 2014. He served for more than 20 years before being diagnosed with a brain tumour in 2013 which eventually led to a medical discharge.

"Anyone leaving the forces just wants to be in a new job from day one," Dave says.

His 'day one' was at Preston Golf Club where he spent his military leavers' training fund learning how to become a greenkeeper – a path which took him to Royal Lytham Golf Club, and eventually Wentworth.

He feels that military leavers – particularly those who have a similar Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) background – have the perfect skill set to work in the professional sports turf industry.

During his time in the forces, Dave worked at bases in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Norway, Germany and Poland. A large part of his military career was spent repairing and maintaining tracked combat vehicle reconnaissance (CVR(T)) machines across Europe.

While the machines may be different, the importance of keeping them in operational condition, ready to work at a moment's notice, is key.

"Regardless of what workshop you work in – be it in the army or in the turf industry – that hierarchy and structure is there," says Dave. "You'll be reporting to someone on your team, your day will have a structure to it, and that familiarity makes the transition that much easier."

At a management level, Dave's job now is almost exactly the same as the job he held in the army, from the actual day-to-day work of repairing and maintaining complex machinery to the management in the workshop.

The skills people learn while in the armed forces make them more than suitable to work in the turf industry.

"It's not just the practical and mechanical skills that you learn that are transferable, but also our skills in communication and discipline are fit for working in this industry," Dave said. "The ability to change and adapt with an evolving industry is also important for this job."

Wentworth Golf Club likes to be at the head of innovation in the sector, and as a result Dave has been able to see some of John Deere's latest technologies in real-life conditions before they are brought to the market.

Dave is also looking to the future at Wentworth, and he is doing this through a trainee programme at Wentworth's workshop which he set up himself. The programme already has one apprentice with a second due to start soon.

"I set up the trainee programme because I want to invest in the future of the workshop," Dave said. "Obviously no one is going to be working here forever and so training someone and having them rise up the ranks – like they would in the army – ensures that there will always be a fully trained mechanic in the workshop."



"The turf industry is an ever-changing arena and it's evolving towards better technology, towards autonomy, electrification and, of course, towards sustainability. It's a big change and it's very interesting to be a part of it."

Dave Hughes, Head Mechanic, Wentworth Golf Club



Pitch renovations mark start of NEW ERA FOR COVENTRY CITY'S GROUNDS TEAM

Championship play-off finalists Coventry City have recently completed a major overhaul to their Sky Blue Lodge training ground, marking an extraordinary transformation in the first team's practice facilities.

Following a buyout earlier this year, significant investment has funded two new pitches, plus a fleet of John Deere machinery and accessories to help Head of Grounds, Dale Gregory, and his team prepare Premier League-quality playing surfaces.

For Dale, joining Coventry in 2022 saw him come full circle, returning to where he started his career.

At the age of 17, and while completing a diploma in horticulture at Warwickshire College, he took a work placement offered by John Ledwidge, who is now with Manchester City.

"Since then I've done greenkeeping in three countries, including participating in the Ohio State Programme and working at UK courses," Dale said.

"But I always wanted to get back into football, and I am lucky enough to have worked at Reading, before moving to Birmingham City with Andy Lee (now at MK Dons)."

A move to Leicester City reunited Dale with John Ledwidge, and within 10 months he was appointed Pitch Manager of the King Power stadium.

"I was there for three years before the opportunity to come back to Coventry came up," Dale said. "I'm from Coventry and I'm a fan – it's my club – so I was really keen to get the job."

That was April 2022, and things have changed enormously for his seven-strong grounds team that is responsible for maintaining the two first team pitches at the Sky Blue Lodge, and the youth team facilities at the Alan Higgs Centre four miles away.

"When I came in the Lodge site had been let go, which was understandable given the financial difficulties the club has had," Dale said.

"The money wasn't there for investment in the pitches or the machinery fleet. The kit was old and broke down a lot, which prevented the team from being able to do what they wanted with the training pitches."

But Dale didn't have to wait long for change.

In January, Midlands businessman Doug King was confirmed as the new majority owner of the club. All debts were cleared, giving Coventry a fresh start, and providing Dale with a new objective.

"By the end of January the manager and the owner were asking me what pitches we needed, and by 6 March the diggers were in," Dale said.

"We found bricks just 50mm below the surface, and it quickly became clear why the grass wouldn't grow in certain areas – it just couldn't aerate properly.

"I specified a stitched hybrid grass pitch.



Instead of digging down, we built up, creating a formation layer and into that we put drainage, six-metre laterals and then a gravel carpet, new irrigation system, and a complete rebuild of the roots from the surface. In some places, we had to build over a metre to get the levels, because they were that far out before."

The pitch is almost identical to the team's home ground – the Coventry Building Society Arena – except for the lack of undersoil heating.

Pitch one was ready for pre-season training, with the second pitch due to be played on for the first time in October, meaning the whole renovation has taken just seven months.

"Everyone seems really happy," Dale said. "The pitch is being used pretty much every day, but I'm pleased with how it looks and plays. It shows that as a club, we're moving in the right direction. We were close to getting into the Premier League last year and we're now making everything feel much more like a good football environment."

Dale's team will now turn its attention to other parts of the Sky Blue Lodge site.

"We need to widen the access to site, improve the driveway and the building," Dale said.

"It was built in the 1980s and bits have been done ad-hoc over the years, but we've outgrown it now. The owner is fully aware and that's next on his agenda."

Dale Gregory, Head of Grounds, Coventry City



John Deere joins the team

The final piece of the jigsaw for this first wave of training ground improvements was a new fleet of machinery, purchased from John Deere through Farol Depot Manager, Mike Wheeler.

"I said to the manager and the owner, it's great we're spending all the money on the pitches, but we have to look after them right," Dale said. "There's no point in buying a Ferrari and looking after it like it's a push bike.

"Having good kit builds morale. When you have equipment that works, you know you can get the job done faster. We work our machinery hard like everyone in the industry does."

Dale says all the new machines will play an important role at various points of the year, but the fleet that he has invested in gives him flexibility to work quickly and cope with the four seasons.

"The 3039R compact tractors are important because we're a training ground which requires a lot of stuff to be moved around or pulled about – the trailer for grass and sand, the brush, the spreader, the seeder – we've got a large area that needs to be covered," he said.

"We only bought one implement where we can share it over the two sites, but otherwise the two teams have the same kit. The X950 is great because, even though we like to cut with a pedestrian mower, the ride-on can do a quick clean up ready for the next day's training, or a quick nip off the top of the grass."

All the machines have a five-year warranty and are covered by a maintenance package for servicing and repairs over the same period.

"Not everyone has the luxury of having a mechanic on site, so it's vital for us to have the experience of Farol just down the road or at the end of the phone," Dale adds. "We got quotes in from other manufacturers but the after-sales care was a key part of the decision-making process."

Dale says there is still plenty to do at the club, but he is pleased with the progress he's been able to make in the past 18 months.



"What's happened here has been amazing, the owner and manager have been an integral part in what we've built. They have had an interest all the way through the process to ensure it's right for everyone and for the training environment. It's been great for the rest of my team to see it all happen from the construction phase all the way through to completion. They have worked tirelessly to ensure the rest of the site has been maintained while the project has been going on," he said.

European Deere dealers explore ADVANCES IN PRECISION TURF TECHNOLOGY

More than 50 John Deere dealers have been given advanced training on how greenkeepers can make the most of the latest technological innovations developed by the company.

Held at Golfpark Kurpfalz – a renowned German complex largely maintained using John Deere machinery – the event saw representatives from across Deere’s European network of dealers trained by experts from across the golf and turf division.

Chris Meacock, Division Sales Manager for Golf and Turf, said: “Our innovation pipeline looks to improve every aspect of a machine’s performance and that covers many facets of a product.

“What’s changing fast is the opportunity to use technology and data to make the process of using a John Deere product more efficient and productive for our customers.

“This event was a chance for the dealer network to see all our precision turf technology in action, working together to demonstrate the advantages of GPS-driven accuracy.”

The training centred on the direct impact precision applications can have on reducing inputs while increasing accuracy and productivity through efficiency gains.

Dealers were shown how mowers and compact tractors equipped with John Deere’s satellite-steering AutoTrac technology can reduce overlaps and fuel consumption. HD200 GPS precision sprayers demonstrated their ability to place fertilisers and herbicides in exactly the right place, avoiding spraying non-target areas.

Sessions were also run on how OnLink – the cloud-based golf course management software acquired by John Deere in 2019 – automatically synchronises any machine and operator working anywhere on the course, allowing course managers to remotely create and assign tasks and meticulously manage equipment and labour costs.

“This training sets up our dealer network to be able to work even closer with golf courses that are looking to take their maintenance and management to the next level,” Chris added.

The advantages of accurately mapping a course’s tees, greens, fairways, bunkers and paths were presented using StarFire GPS receivers and dealers were given further training on how the data produced could be accessed and tailored for course managers using the John Deere Operations Center™.



Satellite-steering with AutoTrac

One of John Deere’s key strengths is its ability to adapt technology from other areas of its global business and implement it in professional grounds care.

GPS steering in agriculture has been hugely popular for over 15 years, but its application on golf courses and sports pitches is now starting to develop.

The John Deere AutoTrac system used on fairway mowers and compact tractors has the potential to deliver huge benefits.

Assisted steering leads to less operator stress and reduced overlaps or gaps, which positively impacts fuel consumption and productivity.

Laser-straight lines and cut patterns are also easier to achieve by removing operator inconsistencies, even in low-visibility conditions.

“Boundaries and guidance lines can be stored in the John Deere Operations Centre too, allowing the next operator to follow the same pattern,” Chris adds.



Spraying with more accuracy

The cost of protecting turf from pests and diseases, and nurturing it with sufficient fertiliser, is a significant cost for golf courses.

Clubs are also under increasing pressure to ensure that chemical applications do not have any detrimental impact on the environment.

It’s been 20 years since John Deere launched its HD200 sprayer, which works in tandem with a Progator utility vehicle, but its relevance to today’s turf care profession has never been greater.

Equipped with a Starfire receiver the machine can automatically turn on or shut off individual sprayer nozzles across the boom according to its position on the course – spraying around watercourses or the fringe of a green, for example.

Accuracy can be measured down to 2.5cm.



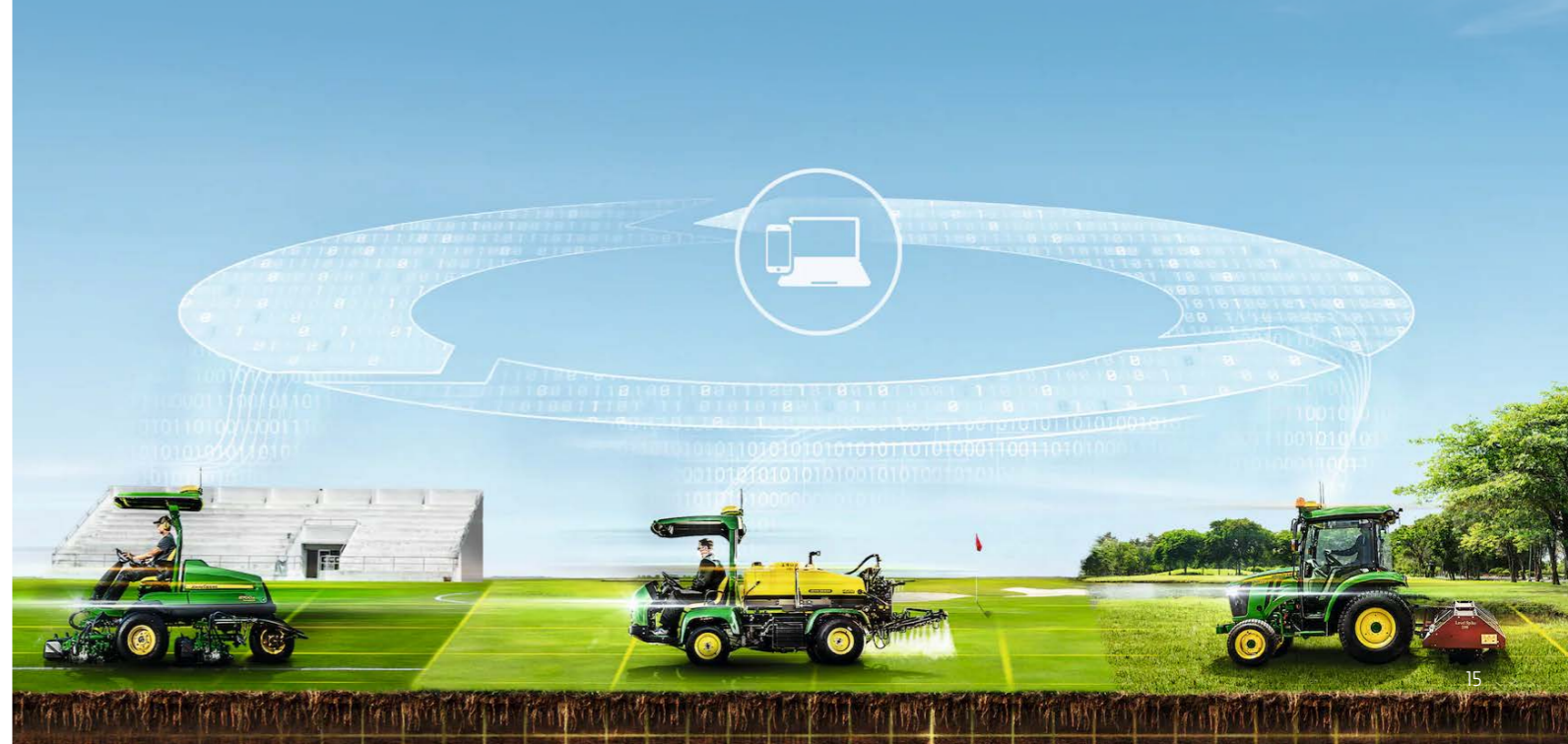
Remote management with OnLink

OnLink technology delivers two clever modules; OnEquip which provides a real-time feed on the machine’s activity, such as run time, servicing intervals and idle periods, while OnLabor schedules work and assigns it to members of the team.

OnLink connects machines to the Operations Centre so data gathered can be used to plan and improve operation efficiency – each machine’s working hours can be balanced across its life cycle to reduce the cost of ownership. Mowing patterns, reducing the time required to complete work, can also be managed.

Alerts flag when maintenance is required and owners can set geofences and curfews to stop the machine working outside of set locations or hours, increasing its security profile.

In the future, the app-based OnLink hub will offer owners the ability to plan for weather conditions, track the speed of greens and monitor soil moisture while also creating accurate budget forecasts.



MODERNISATION AT MORPETH

The 117-year-old course has changed its structure, strategy and machinery.

With new leadership and investment across the site, Morpeth is focused on attracting customers to the clubhouse, restaurant, pro shop, simulator, events space and personal training facilities, as well as its flourishing 18-hole golf course.

A more positive and profitable future is being spearheaded by General Manager, Chris Liddell, and Course Manager, John Scurfield, whose new strategy has included a significant investment in new course machinery from John Deere.

"If everything around the course is doing well, we have the budget to ensure our greenkeeping team gets all the tools it needs to keep the place looking great," Chris said.



**Machinery investment
Kit list Morpeth Golf Club**

8000A E-Cut hybrid fairway mower

HPX 815E work utility Gator

2550 E-Cut riding greens mower

HD 200 precision sprayer

2030A Gator



Chris joined the club in January 2023 to develop the bar and catering aspect of the business. In addition to being a former Regional Director for branded hospitality groups such as Pizza Express and TGI Friday's, Chris has also been a member at Morpeth for 20 years.

"Where I feel I've been able to add a bit of value to the club is bringing in big company principles such as implementing budgetary processes and more structure in how the club is run," said Chris. "What will be pivotal in growing the club in the future is not only appealing to our current membership, but also broadening our appeal to the wider community. A part of what we have to do here is appeal to every demographic."



Morpeth has 650 playing members, with over 20 more joining since the New Year. Chris predicts the club could have around 750 members by the end of the year.

One aspect he wants to rejuvenate is the junior golf initiatives by developing an academy membership to help young golfers progress.

"In recent years I've seen that golf clubs have taken a hit in the number of junior memberships and that is something I want to change," said Chris. "I want to start getting more juniors into golf because I remember having such great days here when I was a junior member myself."

To maintain the club's growth, the stunning parkland course must be maintained to the highest standard, which is supported by Morpeth's long-standing relationship with John Deere dealer Thomas Sherriff & Co.

Course Manager John has been working at the club since he left school and has always used John Deere machinery. It's a course he knows better than most – holding the record with a six-under-par 65.

Morpeth's latest investment includes an 8000A E-Cut hybrid fairway mower, a HPX 815E work utility Gator, a 2550 E-Cut riding greens mower, a HD 200 precision sprayer and a 2030A Gator. All the machines are on a five-year finance lease with John Deere.

With only a five-person greenkeeping team, a busy playing membership and a course dedicated to staying open all year round, there are challenges. But John has taken to visiting other clubs to see how their teams manage.

"By volunteering at various clubs including Royal Cinque Ports and Royal Liverpool Golf Club, I went to see what I could bring back to Morpeth, even though we're worlds apart from those bigger clubs," said John. "One thing I brought back was that staff morale is so important. Despite these guys starting at 4am and working all day, they never stop laughing and joking around with each other and they have a real team spirit."

"When handpicking new people to work with us, I've learned to base the decision more on their character than their skillset because team morale is so important."

John's team are all now experienced in using the John Deere machinery, and are proud to do so, being particularly impressed by the reliability and efficiency of the mowers that they use.

"Before they came here to Morpeth these guys hadn't really had much experience with John Deere machines at the previous clubs they worked at," John said. "So when they came here and started using the John Deere mowers, they straight away said that it's top notch. It's always a good sign when your team are proud of what they're working with."

With regards to developing and maintaining the course in the future, John is interested in John Deere's GPS technology and exploring how it could further increase efficiency while maintaining the grounds and helping keep costs down.

"We've had this partnership with John Deere for about 30 years, and the investment in the machinery has been necessary,"

said John. "As the number of golf clubs in the area increases it dilutes the market, so we have to provide the best possible standard to keep our current members and attract future ones."



Course development crucial to

RING OF KERRY'S NEW IDENTITY

As is the case for many great Irish courses, attracting international golfers is key to the future success of Ring of Kerry Golf Club.

A new owner took on the picturesque 18-hole enterprise in County Kerry last year, and from day one there has been an ambition for continuous improvement.

Located just outside Kenmare, the club was acquired by Dr Stanley Quek in October 2022 and, after years of a substantial lack of investment in the course, the site is finally getting the investment it deserves.

Head Greenkeeper Tim Crowley has been in post for less than a year, but he and his six-man greenkeeping team have already overseen a lot of change and improvement to the course.

"Ring of Kerry is an amazing site, but it's never lived up to its full potential," said Tim. "The golf course was first built in the 1990s so all the facilities over time have started to break down and degrade, and with the lack of investment it simply wasn't being replaced or improved. "We're really starting with a clean slate."

Since the new owners and shareholders have come in, around €1.2million has been invested in renovating the clubhouse, while Tim has been able to order new John Deere machinery to maintain the unique course.

Tim became familiar with John Deere kit during his time working on courses in America, including the Robert Trent Jones Golf Club just outside Washington D.C. The skills and greenkeeping knowledge, including operating John Deere equipment, that Tim learnt during his time in America has been invaluable since he arrived at Ring of Kerry.

"I feel like John Deere are slightly ahead of everyone in terms of advancements in their machinery. The quality of cuts on their cylinder mowers is one of the best, if not the best, I have found," he said.



The new machines, which will arrive piece by piece over the coming months, will replace tired mowers and utility vehicles which currently cost the team time and money.

"When I first started here it would take 45-75 minutes for my guys to just get everything out of the shed," says Tim. "Every time we had to fill the machines with oil or reinflate the tyres, something always went wrong."

Tim has ordered two 2030A ProGators, one of which will be fitted with a HD200 GPS sprayer, and a 2750E hybrid mower with a conditioner and rear roller power brushes to cut the greens. In the shed Tim already has a 1600 Turbo Series wide area mower and a 7700A PrecisionCut fairway mower.

All equipment has been purchased from Seamus Weldon which has been loaning the club equipment while it awaits delivery of the new kit.

Tim now finds his job a lot easier with the new equipment, especially as everything works and operates as it should.

Ring of Kerry has its own on-site mechanic so they are able to carry out most of their own maintenance, but should they need it assistance from Seamus Weldon is always available.

"There has been a massive lift in morale since the new owners came in, especially with the new machinery arriving. The longest-serving guy on the staff has been here for about seven years so he's seen everything from rock bottom to new shiny John Deere machines coming in."

Tim is also very impressed with John Deere's OnLink Golf Course Management Solution, which has helped him and his team balance their workload more effectively, simplify their fleet maintenance and manage their equipment better. All these features, including the on-board GPS, means there is one less thing for Tim and his team to worry about on the job.

Tim and his team find the on-board GPS particularly useful, especially when a machine breaks down or has an issue on the course as it makes it so much easier to find. It also helps the newer members of Tim's team, who may not be fully familiar with the layout of the course, meaning no one gets lost.

Ring of Kerry only has a small membership base, with just over 80 playing members. But, since improvements at the club began, Tim has already seen a difference, especially with the number of international guests, particularly from America, visiting the course.

This has recently been boosted by international tourists, particularly American tourists, visiting the nearby Sheen Falls Lodge, a five-star hotel in nearby Kenmare which is also owned by Dr Quek. Following the recent renovations to the course, Ring of Kerry is now in a position to accommodate more players while also maintaining their small local member-base.

Renovation work forced the course to miss almost an entire season, but recent months have been positive, particularly September when the number of members and guests slowly rose once again.

The clubhouse has been a primary focus of the renovations, with a new café created by reducing the size of the oversized locker rooms. They have also increased the size of the upstairs restaurant and hope to make it available for private functions.

There are also plans in place to expand the course's driving range, which is currently too small for purpose at only 250 yards long.

While the club is already in a better state since the new investment, there is still a lot of work to do.

"We're constantly trying to bring everything up a level. We've already made huge improvements to the golf course, but we want to make it even better."

*Tim Crowley, Head Greenkeeper,
Ring of Kerry Golf Club*



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