

On course with digital technology

Harleyford Golf Club in Buckinghamshire's course manager, Craig Earnshaw, has been using modern technology to aid the team – and it has proved to be particularly beneficial during the pandemic



Harleyford Golf Club. Right: The club's white board in its new greenkeepers' maintenance facility



major leap forward in complementing what he was doing on a verbal, face to face or messaging on a whiteboard basis and harnessing this advanced technology to the benefit of him as a manager, his team and therefore ultimately the club.

To start with, a large screen TV was installed in the club's new maintenance facility and with the use of the digital whiteboard feature, the day's pre-plan activity can be done online and displayed. This is then keyed into the system and displayed on the TV so the whole team can see what has been assigned; any key notes, machinery and stock to be used is also displayed as well as the weather forecast and such important direction of cut details for any area are to be mowed.

"A key to success of this system," states Craig, "has been the staff 'buy in' and them seeing the benefits beyond the traditional whiteboard and pen. It also offers the ability to view the tasks out on the course via the phone and this has not just increased efficiency and productivity, but has been a real game changer during the constraints imposed by Covid-19."

Craig continues, "Using the TurfKeeper system, we have been able to plan and communicate from a far. The team can log onto the system and know what task or activity is required even before they arrive at work, in some cases even before they leave home! Avoiding close contact during this pandemic is a must and by utilising modern technology such as this, we have been able to work around it.



With TurfKeeper, instructions via mobiles can be relayed to all staff anywhere on or off the course

"If I am out on the course and forget to add anything or maybe a new task has cropped up, the web based TurfKeeper technology allows the inputting of a task via the phone and have it appear on everyone else's, including also the jobs board."

The TurfKeeper ethos is directed towards the modern, digital, web-based way of planning, recording and communicating. There is nothing wrong with a paper diary and handwriting, but when you need quick fire information to fan out the

flames, the digital approach delivers with speed and ease.

Craig continues, "Take for example the pre-Covid-19 situation. Seven staff members working 40 hours per week at a total of 280 hours. In a usual year, bunkers need daily raking, greens rolled two or three times per week, emptying bins and ball washers, and moving tee blocks prior to cutting and all that jazz. And oh yes - of course - working around the

half it usually takes to mow most of the areas. Cue now to the inquisitions - do we need that many staff members? Course looks good to me and there are only three of you, what did you do with all those labour hours before?

"These are not unreasonable questions to be fair," comments Craig. "We are lucky in the fact that staff numbers have not been brought into question, but I do get asked how come we can get everything cut with only three staff? The comment was made in a light-hearted manner but nonetheless, that is where the advent of modern technology plays its part. Unlike a traditional paper diary, I can just enter a date range, click a button and then retrieve the data instantly; all the labour hours, costs, effort, stock used and so on.

"Looking through the reports, I can balance off last year versus this year and communicate to the board exactly where all of the hours go, as the reports detail every last task. It's very clear to see how long bunkers took this year versus last year or even identify work that hasn't needed to be done. It really helps to hammer home the facts.

"So to sum it all up, it's quite simple for me," states Craig. "I rely heavily on an irrigation software system, digital moisture meters and various other technological tools to monitor surface performance, so why not also other aspects of the job? TurfKeeper allows me to extend the technological side of management and communication but in addition, the planning, budgeting, stock control, machinery maintenance and reporting. Such a system is a valuable asset and working example of the technology we should all be embracing in the modern age in which we now operate."

Web: www.turfkeeper.com



Craig Earnshaw, accepting the 2019 BIGGA Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year award