



# IN THE OFFICE

**W**HEN I started out in greenkeeping, I was pulling gang mowers with a tractor, or walking around behind a wheelbarrow, and many golfers think that's still the case. However, it couldn't be further from the truth, and you'd be surprised about how much of my job takes place within the office, away from the course.

## LEGISLATION

The massive increase in legislation, across so many areas of golf course maintenance, now means we need to ensure we have the correct paperwork and records are kept efficiently. Take health and safety, for example. A course manager is usually also the health and safety officer, dealing with the implementation of policy and completion of forms. He must risk-assess things such as the tasks carried out by the greenkeeping team, the areas golfers will go, and the actions a golfer will take that may affect the staff or other players.

COSHH assessments are also required for every

chemical and substance that is used in the greenkeeping department, from fertilisers and pesticides all the way down to the air freshener in the toilet.

## KEEPING DATA

When your greenkeeping team is out spraying a chemical on the course, whether to make it healthy or to make it grow, records must be kept by law. Keeping records of fertiliser inputs is considered good practice, in addition to being a legal requirement.

As the job has become more scientific, collecting measurable data on a regular basis has become the norm. Soil moisture, green speed, volumetric water content, clipping yield, soil temperature and surface firmness, smoothness and trueness can all be measured, recorded and analysed. In years gone by, this may have been done annually with a visit from an agronomist who provided a technical report. However, the modern course manager is highly-qualified and more than capable of collecting and analysing the data and producing a technical report.

## BUDGET

Whether a small 9-hole course with two staff, or a

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54-hole complex with 50 staff, every course manager has a budget that he must work to. In increasingly testing times, these budgets are often being squeezed at courses all over the country, and a course manager must keep track of any expenses, while considering efficiencies and deciding which aspects of course maintenance and improvement can be prioritised.

Take water for example, just one of the many regular expenditures that go into the preparation of a course. When asked, a course manager will be able to give you a very precise answer as to what has been used and how much it cost – water can be one of the biggest expenses on a course, especially if it is drawn directly from the mains network.

But a course manager will also be able to tell you how much water is already in the soil profile and what the weather will be like over the coming weeks, as they will spend hours each week analysing data and records that have been kept for a number of years.

### PLANNING WORK AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

Whether you have a two-man team or dozens of staff, the most important part of the job is planning all the work that needs to be done so the golf course is at its

best as often as possible and specifically for all the key events in the calendar. Alongside general work plans, it is vital to properly plan renovation, improvement and construction projects, often for the winter months to ensure the course continues to improve year on year.

### MACHINERY & FLEET MAINTENANCE PROGRAMMES

Mowers, tractors, utility vehicles, grinders, aerators and sprayers are all expensive pieces of equipment that need to be maintained. In addition to ensuring they are maintained to the correct standard and at the correct intervals, your course manager will keep records of the work being carried out. Keeping service records up to date is an essential way to ensure equipment is kept in full working order and will maximise the lifespan of any machinery. The ordering of parts and keeping an inventory of necessary stock is also important to reduce any machine down time, without wasting money.

These are just some of the things your course manager will be dealing with in the office, without even taking into consideration the management of individual staff, sickness and holidays, writing reports, time-keeping and attendance and meeting with members and officials. ♣