

Developing the shoots

Ideas and projects planted at the Turf Business Summit are growing into solid plans and actionable steps - and it's all thanks to the delegates chipping away behind the scenes.



“ Every step taken, no matter how big or small, will continue to play a great part in the future of the industry. ”

The turfcare professionals taking part from across sporting sectors have been doing more than just connecting - shared concerns and solutions through discuss, teamwork and speaker sessions have been sparking action ever since.

To date, the Summit has brought to light and opened up conversations around issues including recruiting new talent into the industry, staff mental health, a lack of work/life balance, salaries in the industry and the perception of the industry by others.

With only two Summit events so far - at Real Madrid and Quinta do Lago on the Algarve - and delegates have already been positively impacted through the meeting of minds, sharing experiences and ideas over a few days' stay at a major sporting venue.

Delegates have come away from the Summit feeling refreshed, inspired and energised about their industry to create new initiatives that can help change the future of the industry for the better. Essex CCC Head Groundsman Stuart Kerrison spoke of how the Summit has been a great networking event, presenting a much-needed unified voice from all areas of sport.

“ It's important for the Summit never to sit still, keep reviewing its format, stay relevant and, in many ways, continue to reinvent itself. ”

But the Summit is more than just about the event itself - it's about the projects that emerge, the ideas that people bounce around and the background work that's continued afterwards. So, what exactly has been happening behind the scenes since the dawn of the summit, and what have delegates been doing to continue the momentum and put ideas into practice?

Delegates share with us some of the work they've been doing since the 2019 summit.

Initiatives growing

Whilst many long-standing, experienced staff enjoy their work,

delegates found that ongoing skills development, new experiences and promotional opportunities could be created in the industry.

One initiative to help with this has been around how to develop existing talent, as well as help to boost staff motivation, refresh and develop new skills. The idea is a scheme that offers staff opportunities to work at different venues in other sports.

Many delegates have jumped at the chance to get involved in the scheme, offering their venue to invite staff from other sites.

Since the Summit, head groundsman and greenkeepers have come together for brainstorming

sessions and talked in more detail about how the scheme will work and some have already taken the initiative by opening up their venue to new staff.

Head Groundsman of London Golf Club, Lee Sayers, has since welcomed a deputy manager from a local golf club experience three days shadowing his senior staff and an assistant turf manager from a private school to spend a week with them.

“Our golf club is ideally placed to provide hands-on experience to many turf professionals looking to broaden their horizons,” says Lee.

Head Groundsman of Watford FC, Scott Tingley, has also jumped onboard, recently meeting with Stuart Kerrison and Steve Braddock of Arsenal to see how the work placement scheme will work. “We can't wait to reveal the programme and help push the industry forward,” he said.

Another concept has been Turf Team Appreciation Day, which acknowledges and celebrates the hard work that goes into maintaining top level turf. Many turfcare managers have been passionate about taking this idea forward and have been sharing images of turf through social media pages, using the hashtag #TTAD.

Someone else who knows only too well the feelings and inspiration generated from the Summit is Head Groundsman of Devonshire Park, Danny Negus, who says: “For me, this was a golden opportunity to express the changes I'd like to see.

“The Summit has given me a renewed motivation in wanting to help shape this industry that I love so much.”

Stuart Kerrison has already had mental health expert Keiron Sparrowhawk run a workshop for his team about how to support their peers around mental health issues, and Lee Sayers has now started to put the wheels in motion for taking on young people with learning difficulties to gain

experience in land-based industries, after encountering some limited mindsets around hiring people with disabilities.

Through his work, he is optimistic about the future of making the industry more diverse and enabling more people to gain experience and work placements.

What does the future hold?

Projects that tackle issues in the sector will continue to develop and unfold, they'll bring about steady changes, led by leading industry influencers. The Summit will continue to be the bonding point for turfcare professionals, building and growing

each year, identifying new issues and reflecting on what has happened so far.

Scott Tingley highlighted how the Summit is helping turfcare professionals switch their mindset to help shape the future of the industry - which is exciting to be a part of.

“Every step taken, no matter how big or small, will continue to play a great part in the future of the industry.”

A series of small steps can snowball into something far greater, encouraging others in the industry to sit up and take notice and see how they can achieve the same.

Issues around how to recruit new staff, how to achieve a work/life balance and to help make the industry a more

attractive one to begin a career in will continue to be hot talking topics around the tables of the next Summit.

Speaking about the event and the progress being made, co-founder Paul Burgess of Real Madrid said: “It's important for the Summit never to sit still, keep reviewing its format, stay relevant and, in many ways, continue to reinvent itself.”

And with the inspiration generated in one room, it can only be a good thing.

Between now and the next event, the delegates' work to keep talking and planning will bring to life brand new initiatives to the forefront of the industry.

