

Greetham Valley wins top Environmental Award!

THE GOLF ENVIRONMENT AWARDS



Greetham Valley in Rutland has been crowned 2017 Environmental Golf Course of the Year at the prestigious national Golf Environment Awards ceremonial dinner in Harrogate last week, hosted by the Sports Turf Research Institute.

To be considered for the finals, Golf Clubs are shortlisted for a site visit, with four nominees from each category selected to attend the awards dinner. The categories are: Environmental Golf Course of the Year, Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year and Outstanding Environmental Project of the Year. Long term sponsors of the awards include Farmura Environmental, Ransomes Jacobsen, Syngenta, Tillers Turf, Wiedenmann and BIGGA, whilst none other than English golf professional and Olympic champion Justin Rose is the Awards' Ambassador.

Greetham Valley was awed to be a joint finalist in their category with none other than Carnoustie Golf Links, The Carrick on Loch Lomond and Whitley Bay Golf Club. The Environmental Golf Course of the Year award recognises venues which demonstrate environmental best practice, enhancing their own local ecology and improving habitats whilst maintaining the very best in playing surfaces. All the finalist venues were showcased on the evening and the outstanding efforts all had made were clear.

Adi Porter, Greetham Valley's Course Manager, said "We knew we had done very well to be in the final but really thought we didn't stand a chance, with such prestigious golf courses, known for their excellent ecological projects, being strong contenders. The owners, Robert and Dee Hinch and I were just thoroughly enjoying the atmosphere of the ceremonial awards dinner in exalted company – when we were announced as the winners of the main award of the evening, we were totally shocked and overwhelmed! And what we greatly appreciated were the genuine congratulations from everyone at the ceremony, many of whom seemed as delighted for our outstanding achievement as we were!" Robert and Dee were keen to pay tribute to the whole team at Greetham Valley, saying "We all work together to tackle and achieve environmental best practice and we are absolutely delighted to have this recognised at such a prestigious awards ceremony."



*L-R Bob Taylor STRI Senior Ecological Consultant, Robert Hinch and Dee Hinch
GV proprietors, GV Course Manager Adi Porter, Sophie Vukelic STRI Ecological Consultant*

STRI ecology consultant, Sophie Vukelic, said: “For 22 years the Golf Environment Awards has highlighted the biodiversity value of golf courses around the UK, rewarding the people who manage the land as sustainably as possible, for both golf and wildlife. Greetham Valley greatly impressed the judges with their whole team’s initiatives in creating an environmentally sound, sustainable golf resort, implementing innovative techniques in their determination to promote ecological best practice throughout the venue. Huge congratulations to the winners and finalists of this year’s awards, you truly are the future of golf course management.”

Aiming to reduce the carbon footprint and increase biodiversity across Greetham Valley, staff in all departments – greenkeeping, kitchen, housekeeping, administration, F&B, maintenance – all play their part in numerous ‘eco-projects’ as does the long-term sustainability investment by the Hinch family.

Course Manager Adi Porter has implemented many of the ecological initiatives which helped win the award, including: greatly reducing chemical usage by introducing an integrated management programme for the control of pests, disease and weeds using holistic techniques, creating an improved habitat for wildlife; becoming part of Operation Pollinator – “the golf industry’s chance to save UK bees” – creating wildflower meadows and a solitary bee tower; erecting a series of nesting boxes for birds and bats; constructing a reed bed and 17 new ponds, populated with fish, which have attracted a diversity of flora and fauna; building wildlife-friendly drystone and log walls and a bug hotel for hibernation and shelter; erecting birdfeeders, feeding towers and bird hides, creating a floating bird island.

Some of the Hinch family’s long term environmental investments include the installation of two huge biomass boilers, powered by woodchip, which provide heat and hot water for most of the complex. Since 1990 over 26,000 trees have been planted across the estate; all felled trees are re-used, by chipping the brush for pathways, splitting logs for the woodburners in the Clubhouse and the holiday cottage; some chippings feed the biomass boilers. In addition, a 40kwh solar panel power system has been installed and LED lighting is fitted throughout the complex. Rainwater is recycled into the irrigation system, more sustainable and efficient sanitary equipment has been installed in public areas, whilst the machinery wash-down system is an environmentally sealed recycling loop. The resort’s holiday Lodges were purchased from a company which sources the timber from sustainable Norwegian forests.

Across the complex, cleaning and housekeeping supplies are eco-friendly; vegetable food waste from the kitchen is composted along with grass cuttings and leaves from the golf courses and grounds and the wood chip ash from the boilers - this rich crumbly compost is then used by the greenkeepers across the estate; two thirds of rubbish produced is recycled including glass, plastic and paper, as is engine oil from the workshop, fryer oil from the kitchen and ink cartridges and paper from the offices. Truly a team effort in sustainability and the Environmental Golf Course of the Year award is very well deserved!