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A passion for golfever considered a career as a greenkeeper?

Northern Ireland has played host to some of the top golf tournaments, both at professional and amateur level.

While a small country, Northern Ireland is a big player in the world of golf and has attracted attention worldwide. Not only do we have world class professional golfers in Darren Clarke and Graeme McDowell, but the northern region of Ireland has the two top-ranked golf courses in Ireland, Royal Co Down and Royal Portrush.

Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for environmental and land-based industries represents the horticulture, landscaping and sports turf industry, and helps ensure that Northern Ireland has the right skills to keep our golf courses in tip-top condition. David Winn, Lantra's Partnership Manager said: Greenkeepers play a vital role in golf course maintenance and management, and carry out a range of tasks to make sure the course is maintained to the highest possible standard. Golf course maintenance is essential to any golf programme or club, that's why it's important to make sure that the people caring for these courses have the right skills.

Training courses and qualifications are available at all levels to allow ambitious and enthusiastic individuals work towards becoming a greenkeeper. Vocational training and qualifications are available as are more college-based qualifications. There is something for everybody.

David concluded: If the environment is your love, conservation and ecology are at the heart of a greenkeeper's role. Flora and fauna are to be found on golf courses, and as a greenkeeper you will be the custodian of the natural environment. There has never been a better time for a career in the sports turf industry. With approximately 80 golf clubs across Northern Ireland, most employing between 5 and 10 greenkeepers, there are always openings for new staff. It's a rewarding career with a healthy lifestyle, which could also take you across the world.

To find out more about greenkeeping contact David Golding, Greenkeepers' Training Committee on 01347 838640 or the British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association (BIGGA) on 01347 833800. Specific information regarding careers in the environmental and land-based sector can be found at www.afuturein.com and relevant course information at www.lantracoursefinder.co.uk. Alternatively you can call 0845 707 8007 for further assistance.

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ISSUED BY:

Lantra Press Office – Paula Smyth, Marketing, Communications and Project Co-ordinator, Tel: 028 7963 1304 or email ni.media@lantra.co.uk.

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Royal golf course, Portrush

EDITORS NOTES:

" Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for environmental and land-based industries represents the interests of approximately 20,000 businesses in Northern Ireland which employ around 63,000 employees (approximately 9% of the workforce).

" Lantra is an employer-led organisation which is licensed by the UK government to drive forward the skills, training and business development agenda for the 17 industries in the sector. The industries represented are: agricultural crops; agricultural livestock; animal care; animal technology; aquaculture; environmental conservation; equine; farriery; fencing; fisheries management; floristry; game and wildlife management; horticulture, landscape and sports turf; land-based engineering; production horticulture; trees and timber; and veterinary nursing.