

Firm ground for the future

As world cup fever continues to captivate the nation, many followers eagerly wait with baited breath to see who will make it through each round and ultimately to the final in Johannesburg on 11 July. Unfortunately Scotland did not make it to the competition, but perhaps we should stop and think about the pitches on which teams practice faithfully week after week, and those who work every week of the year to ensure our sports grounds are looking, and performing, at their best.

As Willie Ferguson, Lantra's National Director for Scotland explains: To turn out a top quality pitch, in spite of everything the weather throws at us in the Scotland takes some doing and requires real skill.

Chief Executive of the Institute of Groundsmanship, Geoff Web said: Keeping a pitch playable, especially in extreme conditions, requires an excellent understanding of the science of soil, the right equipment, good preparation and skill. The right training can lead to a rewarding lifelong career, and as Scottish groundsmen are renowned throughout the world for their expertise, some very exciting opportunities are available.

John Gillan Lantra's Scottish Chairman and Landscape Contractor said: We have the perfect conditions for growing grass; however it is only through the training, skill, knowledge and dedication of the individual groundsmen that we are able to turn this into world class playing surfaces.

A new Level 2 Modern Apprenticeship (SCQF Level 5) in horticulture is now available; this qualification is a great platform for developing a career in horticulture, encompassing parks and green spaces, historic and botanic gardens, landscaping, sports turf and production horticulture.

Willie Fergusson concluded: Industry research has revealed there is a real need for more new entrants in this area of employment. With training courses and qualifications available at all levels to allow ambitious and enthusiastic individuals work towards becoming a groundsman, there's something for everybody.

Scotland hopefully will make the finals of the 2014 world cup, but it's only four years until the next one, so if you want to be a part of the hopes and dreams of 2014, then why not become a groundsman!

If you would like to learn more about groundsmanship and careers in the environmental and land-based sector, Lantra can help. Please visit www.lantra.co.uk or call 0845 707 8007.

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EDITOR S NOTES:

" Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector, is licensed by the UK Government to drive forward the new skills, training and business development agenda for the sector.

" Lantra represents 17 industries and 1.5 million workers and volunteers in agricultural crops, agricultural livestock, animal care, animal technology, aquaculture, environmental conservation, equine, farriery, fencing, fisheries management, floristry, game and wildlife management, land-based engineering, landscape, production horticulture, trees and timber and veterinary nursing. For more information see www.lantra.co.uk