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## Eton College hosts the latest Question Time

In early July, Turf Business was pleased to host the first pre-Summit event of the year, Question Time, which was held at the prestigious Eton College. Here, Sinead Morgan reports more on the day and the discussions that ensued.

The day followed the same Question Time format as the 2019 event at The FA's St George's Park, and 2020's event at The Belfry. Joining Turf Business' Martin Smart in Eton College's Jafar Hall was West Ham's Dougie Robertson, RFU Twickenham's Jim Buttar, Eton College's Lee Marshallsay, and London Golf Club's Lee Sayers.

A handpicked audience across a variety of sectors incorporating education, football, golf, equestrian,

rugby, cricket, tennis, and representatives from industry organisations were personally invited to be involved. The key issues, opportunities and challenges facing the industry as a whole were addressed, and these discussions will help shape the agenda for the Turf Business Summit in Barcelona this year.

Members of the audience were encouraged to ask questions to our panel either in the room or submitted

anonymously via our Turf Business Events App, which also allowed attendees to participate in live polls.

A discussion in the room centred around whether joining or creating a union for sportsturf professionals as a platform to negotiate pay, working hours and conditions for the majority of the workforce is a good option.

Another point discussed was the practicality of a reuse scheme for lower league/disadvantaged clubs. Ideas were also thrown around relating to how to measure job satisfaction/happiness within the various elements of the sportsturf industry.

Another question fired at the panel was one that is possibly the biggest issue facing the industry as of late, with the difficulties in recruitment of experienced and skilled grounds persons and greenkeepers. How are we going to retain and attract new people into the industry?

The important subject of mental health was also touched on, with the audience asked to vote on whether a suitably trained person to deal with stress in their workplace has been designated. The results of which sparked an interesting conversation,

one that we need to continue to be having in order to break the taboo and stigma around mental health.

An interesting point that those in the room voted on was the key areas where BIGGA and GMA could work together to benefit the sector. With both Jim Croxton, Geoff Webb and Jason Booth all in the audience, the results of this question were discussed and addressed directly. Many individuals in both the audience and on the panel agreed they'd prefer one dedicated turf trade show, as opposed to having both SALTEX and BTME.

However, both Jim and Geoff did confirm this is something that isn't on the cards any time soon, despite the fact the two organisations do work closely together for the benefit of the industry.

Sponsors and attendees also enjoyed a tour of Eton College, hosted by the Eton Grounds Team. Being an educational establishment steeped in so much history, this was gratefully accepted and proved to be a real eye-opening and insightful few hours for all.

Some of the highlights on the tour included seeing the first ever Eton classroom, the chapel, the legendary

location of the 'Wall Game,' and the world-class sports-turf facilities which span many acres.

A variety of intriguing questions and points were discussed and debated during the Question Time session, which continue to help pave the way in moving the industry forward. As well as beginning to work out how to tackle

certain issues and industry-wide concerns.

Denis Bloomfield, Grounds Manager at Cranleigh School commented on the day, saying: "I had a really enjoyable time, obviously the venue was blinding! But the Q&A was very thought provoking as it gave me plenty to feedback to my line manager.

Especially in terms of the recruitment/retention problems and how this issue is not necessarily limited to Cranleigh School, but industry wide. Even more reason to look after the staff we've got!"

We would like to extend our thanks to Lee Marshallsay, Grounds Manager at Eton College, as well as the rest of his

team for being so accommodating and helping to make the event a success, and also our sponsors, as without them events of this kind would not be possible.

The full Question Time session will be available very soon to watch on our Turf Business TV YouTube channel, so keep your eyes peeled!

