The show goes on

Having considered all relevant factors, the Board has decided to continue with the BTME at Harrogate for the foreseeable future


BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

There can be no doubt that in the past year one of the most dominant themes in discussions amongst greenkeepers and members of the trade has been the future of industry shows. The future of the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition has been at the forefront of those discussions. To recap a little, discussions started in earnest in May of 1993 when BIGGA was invited to attend a meeting convened by the Agricultural Engineers Association who through their Outdoor Power and Equipment Council represent the interests of the major manufacturing companies in our industry.

At that meeting both IOG and BALI were represented in addition to BIGGA. The meeting had been convened to convey with a view to BIGGA being at the forefront of the new show. Discussions with P&O Events during that time had been held where the emphasis shifted away from IOG and BALI with a view to BIGGA being at the forefront of the new show. Developments accelerated in March this year when the AEA invited P&O Events Ltd to take the lead in establishing the new show. BIGGA continued discussions with P&O Events during which it became clear that the new show would be held at Olympia in London and whilst September 1995 had been the originally planned date, P&O Events moved this to January 1996 when it became clear that September was not a suitable date for greenkeepers to attend. BIGGA indicated to P&O Events its intention to survey its members on this extremely important issue to ascertain their views. This survey was conducted independently during August and September by the Golf Research Group and will be reported on in detail in the November issue of Greenkeeper International.

Having considered all relevant factors, the Board has indicated to BIGGA not an international centre in the show sense. This is not a view prevalent in other industries who use Harrogate as the location for their shows. It is clear, therefore, that the Association, together with the Harrogate International Centre, must seek within the industry to change current perceptions and thereby enhance the status of the BTME as an international event. In the marketing of the BTME there will need to be a much greater emphasis on the excellent infrastructure at Harrogate and the improving communications particularly in respect of the Leeds/Bradford airport. Many of the companies who support us at the BTME are concerned at the need to further penetrate the growing European market which becomes ever more accessible with improved transport links. We believe that through a partnership of Association and industry and with the committed backing of the Harrogate International Centre, the opportunity is there for the BTME, at the centre of the country, to continue to develop as an international show as it has not only by our excellent educational seminar programme but now also by BIGGA's National Education Conference. Careful consideration needs to be given to the sectors of the industry in which the BTME will seek to expand and as has happened since the first show in 1989 there will be ongoing consultations with the industry. One of the strengths of the BTME is its Steering Committee and the Association remains appreciative of the commitment and support it receives from Steering Committee members. It is an opportune time to acknowledge the support of those companies represented ie Ransomes, Zeneca, Farmura, Supaturf, Lely (UK) Toro, Hardi, Hayter, Kubota, Sisis, Jacobsen, Rolawn, Rigby Taylor, John Deere, Massey Ferguson and Gem Professional.

It has been a difficult period and there are many varied views within the industry on the need for shows, the number of those shows and their location. BIGGA will continue to consult and listen and remain open-minded as to the future. It will also seek to ensure that the BTME remains the pre-eminent show for our industry with all roads, including those from Europe, leading to Harrogate each January. The 1995 show is eagerly anticipated. We at BIGGA are greatly appreciative of the industry's continued support and we look forward to January and a show which all the indicators suggest will be bigger and better than ever.