Introducing a course policy

I very much enjoyed a short visit to Harrogate, and meeting so many old friends after a number of years. Discussions, debates on generalities and technical subjects over a beer, a coffee or in the dining room left me with the profound impression of a major change in the profession of greenkeeping since I had last been involved.

Now there is so much confidence and total command of the subject and the ability to communicate precisely and convincingly. Much of this has to be due to the educational programme so well run by BIGGA and others. It also owes something to the support of clubs as well, of course, to those who have taken up the challenges which faced them.

We all know that every course and club is different. But I was surprised to see that BIGGA and others have not been taken up as strongly as I had thought. Even in the March issue of Greenkeeper International Chris Haspell from Denmark and Barney Wright both refer to it. I am talking about the Course Policy - Chris calls it a Plan - and although we got it going some ten years ago it has not been executed as widely as I had believed. The adoption of such an approach supported by Committees and agreed by members, are substantial.

- It clearly defines roles and responsibilities of Committees, Secretaries, and Course Managers
- It simplifies communication with members and avoids misunderstandings
- Ensures continuity and avoids piecemeal decisions
- Improves morale and efficiency of greenstaff
- Establishes a code of conduct of all members and avoids piecemeal decisions
- It has absolutely nothing to do with the course and your job is on the line

If you are still not convinced read Chapter 6 of Malcolm Peake's "Confessions of a Chairman of Green".

Duncan McGilvary has made some excellent points which will surely be well taken up as strongly as I had thought. Even in the March issue of Greenkeeper International Chris Haspell from Denmark and Barney Wright both refer to it. I am talking about the Course Policy - Chris calls it a Plan - and although we got it going some ten years ago it has not been executed as widely as I had believed. The adoption of such an approach supported by Committees and agreed by members, are substantial.

Lang gives thanks for Stateside trip

I would like to thank Bernhard & Company and BIGGA for allowing me to be part of the team of delegates that visited Orlando this February. The trip was a great success, it was an experience not to be missed and very educational; it was fascinating to compare golf course in America with those in Britain. I had the pleasure of speaking to many Golf Superintendents from all over the US and it was nice to hear that they hold such high regard for the courses in Great Britain. I have already spoken to a lot of greenkeepers throughout my section telling them of the visit and how beneficial it was.

I have planned some talks at our golf meetings this year and I will be talking to various Course Managers.

Playing with others' lives

I read with interest the letter by Barney Wright in the March issue re: "Respect". Greenkeepers have always had to put up with members knowing better than them, but I have found over the last decade or so that it has become worse.

Our profession must be one of the few which is criticised by everybody. You can go into any clubhouse and there will be a set of members who know just how the course should be run. These members hold court and people tend to listen to them.

Greenstaff take more flack than other golf club staff. You cannot educate these people. If you put on an open night and ask the club agnostic to talk they stay away, but the next day they are back holding court. These people are playing with others' lives.

The job is hard enough without sniping from your own lines. More and more good greenkeepers are leaving the trade every year taking with them years of knowledge but as has been said in the bar many times, "anyone can cut grass".

There are more good members than bad ones, it's just the good ones say nothing.
Legislation is the key

Re Richard Penley-Martin's letter in February's issue. Just a few observations.

I am a manager and you understand the wishes of the committee unconditionally. I have been in greenkeeping for nearly 30 years, and this is tongue in cheek, a 23 at my present club Denbigh. In the past, and this is true in tongue and cheek, a Society's letter, the right approach, duties to share the knowledge we have informed of all legislation etc.

Gone are the days when old Tom can climb a ladder to clean the gutters of the clubhouse and golf clubs now need truly professional people to run the affairs both on the course and in clubhouse who should be paid accordingly.

Which brings me back to my original letter. It will be legislation that forces the way the average members of the club is run, this is why I feel there aren't as many volunteers as before, they are starting to realise where there's blame there's a claim and who in their right minds want to take up a position with out pay that could end up with them on the wrong side of a court case. PS My dad was in the RAF.

Dave Goodridge, Denbigh Golf Club

Sharing the knowledge

I have been reading the letter from Mr T. A. Smith in this month's magazine 'In defence of NVQs' and I feel it deserves some sort of response.

I could not believe the comments Mr Smith made about keeping information from the club members on how we maintain the golf course and mocking record keeping and report writing, indicating for those greenkeepers to get out on the course and do some work, then finishing the statement with the comment 'if they don't ask then don't tell them'.

Is this the year 2002 or is it 1802? These comments and attitudes are out dated, untrue and have to change or greenkeeping as a professional industry will never be taken seriously. Science and industries can only progress with the sharing and understanding of knowledge. I feel it is our duty to share the knowledge we have with not just people in our industry but help the golf course maintenance side of things. I am paying the customer.

The comment stating that a little information in the wrong hands can be dangerous is perfectly true. However, it is our responsibility to educate the uneducated in such a way that they understand what the hell it is we are talking about. At the golf course I work on we have an information board (The greenkeepers' world) which gives a quick walk around the golf course with the lecturer pointing at the weeds and telling 25 students what it was - and that was it... or the level 4 which consists of one visit a year from your tutor to see how you're getting on, where's the training? This letter is not about putting down the NVQs or any other type of training but I would like to state that they are not the be all and end all of further education and that for an organisation such as BIGGA to point out the HNC student may not be able to do the job a fair statement. This is also unfair to the student who has undoubtedly studied hard for the course.

I have completed NVQ training and I have also completed the HNC and found both of them to be extremely worthwhile while courses. At this moment in time I am one year into my MSc in Sports Surface Technology at Cranfield University. I decided to go for the MSc rather than the other courses on offer because of the high level of teaching and the fact that it is recognised worldwide as a top qualification.

The fact that this high standard of qualification even exists in our industry is a huge step in the right direction for our industry.

This profession is moving forward, lets all start singing from the same hymn sheet and recognise that all the different qualifications on offer to the greenkeeper have their benefits and this industry does not revolve around just one. There is a qualification out there to suite each individuals' career aspirations be it NVQ, HND, HNC or MSc, all of which have their own merits and all will undoubtedly increase one's knowledge and understanding of the job to what ever level you feel you can handle. Gaining knowledge and sharing knowledge surely can only be a positive way forward for us.

If we do what we have always done we will get what we always get - lack of respect. Let's move on.

Ian Chenery, Assistant Course Manager, Woodbury Park Hotel & GCC

Huge thanks to well wishers

At 9am on the 22nd January this year I had two appointments, one with a surgeons' office, and the other with the makers of the BTME. It seemed ironic that both should be exactly the same day and the same time as each other. I had always said that I would never miss a BTME, but on this occasion I had little choice. However, as days went by I became very much aware of another aspect of BIGGA membership, that of camaraderie, and the bond that runs through greenkeeping and our Association. I received so many cards, letters and phone calls from members and staff wishing me well, that I lost count, but I can assure you that every one was very much appreciated, as was the run from Devon and Cornwall Section, and the box of fruit from the South West & South Wales Region. I wonder how they knew what to send.

I would like to thank everyone of you for the kindness shown, you will never know how much it meant to me and Marion to know how many of you took the time and trouble to send your best wishes. I am getting fitter by the day and will soon be back among you all. Thanks again.

Gordon Child, Churston, South Devon

Textron thanks

On behalf of myself and all the others who attended the GCSAA Show in Orlando Florida this year, I would like to extend a big thank you to Textron. The show was very enlightening especially for those of us who have never had this opportunity in the past. The hospitality, accommodation and indeed everything else during our stay was second to none. The group focus meetings were interesting and helpful to both Textron and their customers and I am sure will go a long way to ensuring more improvements and innovations in the future.

Ross Wilson, Course Manager, Porosampia Golf & Country Club

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