Plans for BTME & ClubHouse progress with the event approaching at an alarming rate. It seems no time at all since it was April and we were planning the education programme and discussing our marketing strategy with the steering committee.

In June we agreed to host the annual International Summit on Friday January 21 and delegate response to this has been excellent. Demand for space is encouraging, with several exhibitors coming to the show for the first time and others looking to expand their space. Bookings for the extended workshop and seminar packages on offer exceed numbers at the corresponding time last year and the Association feels that is heading in the right direction.

The event, which provides a vital source of income for the Association, continues to grow as we dedicate more resources and invest more and more time and money in it, in an attempt to secure its future well being.

The management team at Aldwark is conscious that the exhibition is not just about making money for BIGGA or providing subsidised education for its members. It has to work as a showcase for the industry where traditional golf course equipment, machinery and maintenance products can be successfully marketed alongside innovative products to an increasingly discerning buyer.

A buyer who is expected to produce a higher and higher standard of facility while at the same time seeing his or her budget being constantly put under pressure. Latterly the rumblings on the horizon by some of the trade regarding the cost of supporting principally two shows, Saltex and our own, has become a black cloud over the future of both these events. Many of the major machinery manufacturers have indicated they can no longer justify exhibiting at both shows on an annual basis.

Clearly this is cause for concern and we must work with the exhibitors to try to resolve the financial pressures that they are also suffering. The Sales and Marketing staff at these companies are not exempt from the same budgetary restrictions that many Course Managers, Golf Club Secretaries and Chairman of Green experience.

How we will resolve the matter remains to be seen. Many exhibitors are adamant that they would support an annual show at Harrogate but the logistics of a compromise are difficult to work out. I am sure it will be the subject of much discussion at Harrogate and for some time into 2005. There is one major factor in the whole equation that must not be over looked and that is the visitor.

All too often we see the same faces at Harrogate, these are the dedicated keen members who take a pride in being a part of what has grown to be a key organisation in the world of golf. Do we have to do get your colleagues along, if only for a day? Perhaps someone might like to respond via the bulletin board or e-mail me at john@bigga.co.uk, Sensible suggestions only please!

At a time when all involved in the industry are working more closely together than ever before the clock is in danger of being turned back through lack of funding.

In the past the trade have been very supportive of the Association and this must neither be overlooked nor taken for granted and much of BIGGA's progress and development would not have been possible but for their help. I hope that the excellent working relationship that exists between the trade and the Association can result in a solution being found that favours all parties.

On a more positive note, I would like to congratulate Scott MacCallum on winning the 'Writing' category in the recent Communications in Business annual competition for journalists.

Finally, I wish everyone a Happy New Year and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible during 2005.

John Pemberton