As Chairman, my duty is to steer the ship for 12 months until the Vice Chairman takes over the helm. There are two essential things you need to know when steering a ship. One is where your destination is and the other is the best route to get there. I am rapidly finding out that our destination is not at all clear in all aspects and that 12 months is not long enough to find the best way to reach it.

My task over the rest of my Chairmanship will therefore be to try to get a better picture of where the membership would like us to go and for the Board to lay down markers as a guide for the future. To this end we are reviewing current policy in an effort to have specific aims and objectives for the next five to 10 years for the Chief Executive and his team to fulfil within the specified timescale. Rather like at the golf club, if there are no aims, objectives and policy or they are not adequately reviewed then much resource will be wasted by ever changing committees and personnel.

Up until now, our main goal has been to raise the profile of greenkeepers and our Association within the industry to gain recognition and respect through the education of committees and personnel.

There are extremes of opinion on this matter and I have my own personal view. These are not the views that matter however. The views that matter are the majority views of the bulk of the membership. My responsibility, as Chairman, is to try to satisfy as many members as possible, while readily acknowledging that it is impossible to satisfy them all.

Another responsibility as Chairman is to stimulate debate so that a consensus view can be arrived at. To this end I would like to briefly outline my own philosophy on just two of our many pressing concerns. I stress that these are personal opinions and are not to be taken as any indication of policy. They are merely a starting point for debate and, though I am sure they will ruffle a few feathers, I am secure in the knowledge that a Chairman who did not occasionally ruffle a few feathers never achieved anything.

Having said all that, I believe that our Association will do well. I would put my main priority at the moment as the need for greater support for core greenkeepers at local level. I do not see Master Greenkeeper as the best title for any future Course Manager qualification. The MG scheme was brought in to enable individuals to improve their performance and gain recognition. It also resulted in standards of training and staff welfare on MG run courses being driven up and so benefited other greenkeepers. It has much to commend it and as an MG myself I have much admiration for those who have achieved it.

My own opinion is though, that 15 years on, the title Master Greenkeeper is less than helpful. It sounds archaic and does not have any qualification. Rather paradoxically this will bring in to enable individuals to improve their professional image. While we have a stipulated NVQ Level 2 designation as a qualified greenkeeper member, we do not have any specified certification for a Course Supervisor member or a Course Manager member. I would like to see, at some stage, separate categories of membership for each progressive stage in our careers, with defined qualifications and subscription rates to match.

It is very noticeable that you cannot practice as a golf professional unless you are a qualified member of the PGA. Currently anyone can operate as a Golf Course Manager without any qualification. Rather paradoxically this will begin to work against those who are technically gifted and can produce fantastic golf courses but have no formal qualification.

They will be the ones who are more likely to miss out, as formal qualifications in all industries become increasingly the norm. I would consider such a trend as a sad loss to the profession as a whole. Making all members certified through a standard minimum qualification would level the playing field and improve the professional status of us all.

Incidentally, just to throw in a current topic of debate, I do not see Master Greenkeeper as the best title for any future Course Manager qualification. The MG scheme was brought in to enable individuals to improve their performance and gain recognition. It also resulted in standards of training and staff welfare on MG run courses being driven up and so benefited other greenkeepers. It has much to commend it and as an MG myself I have much admiration for those who have achieved it.

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Kerran Daly
Chairman