News from the Chief Executive

The Chairman and I recently had the pleasure of attending the annual FEGGA conference, that this year was hosted by the Slovenian Greenkeepers Association.

The event was attended by over 70 delegates who represented 18 countries as well as some of the sponsors. The two day conference had a separate theme for each day, one day related to education and the other day dealt with environmental issues.

One of the topics covered was an explanation of the proposed Pan-European Greenkeeper Education Unit and its intended qualification system. BIGGA has been involved with the development of this concept along with the GTC, FEGGA and representation from Elmwood College. The working party has determined the Standards necessary to fulfill three categories of job: Manager, Supervisor and Greenkeeper. These will then be adopted by the Education Unit when it has been formally set up and a European Certificate will be awarded for achieving the required Standard. Individual countries will continue with their own education process but this can be matched up to the European Standard for award purposes. In essence the holding of a European Certificate should give a better appreciation of competency levels when greenkeepers look for employment outside of their native country. At present an NVQ/SVQ qualification may mean very little to an employer, in say Slovenia, however the holder of such a qualification can apply for a European Certificate using his/her N/SVQ as evidence of achievement. Depending on the standards in each country some additional units may need to be studied to match the appropriate European Standard.

In time this should help raise and consolidate standards across Europe as well as bring about a better understanding of greenkeepers individual abilities.

Following the Conference FEGGA held its Annual General Meeting during which BIGGA was elected to membership. Some members will recall that BIGGA was one of the founder members of FEGGA in 1996 but decided to resign several years ago when the Board did not agree with the direction that FEGGA was taking. Time and events have moved on and if greenkeeping is to progress then more can be achieved if organisations work together. To this end the Board is delighted to have become a member once more and look forward to making a positive contribution.

My nomadic life took me to Anaheim, California where I attended the GCSAA's flagship event that has developed into the Golf Industry Show. This is run in partnership with the Golf Course Owners Association and the Club Managers Association of America. In talking with the staff of GCSAA and the Superintendents I quickly realised how similar problems are in our two countries it's just that the scale of operation is different. The Golf Industry Show is always an important international meeting place and British greenkeepers are always talked of with great respect. It disturbs me that there are those among us back home in the UK who almost seem to take pleasure in picking fault when we as an association have a lot to be proud of. Anaheim is eight hours behind the UK and so I was sat there working at 4.30 am, thinking it's mid-day, and very much looking forward to getting back to my own bed and enjoying a proper cup of tea.

John Pemberton