A SEASONAL MESSAGE

In this months GTC feature, David Golding attempts to cheer us all up with a seasonal message that is steeped in history and looks positively to the future during difficult times, including the future for the organisation he has headed since 1993.

I hesitate to go back into the history of greenkeeper education and training, preferring to concentrate on the future, but I feel it is timely to address a question that always seems to crop up, why do we need BIGGA and the GTC?

A fair question and one I will try to answer in as few words as possible so we can move to the future developments for our sector.

BIGGA is the professional body that represents the best interests of greenkeepers employed on golf courses.

The Association is at the very heart of everything the GTC does and there is a very close working relationship between the two organisations that now operate from the same offices at Aldwark Manor near York.

The GTC is an independent body which represents golf club employers in Britain through the Home Unions EGU/SGU/GUW, who represent all golf clubs with a membership, these in turn pay an agreed levy to the National Union on behalf of the male golfers only. From this annual levy the GTC currently receives 11.5p per male club member.

The PGA European Tour has also been a great supporter of the GTC making an annual grant while not seeking a seat on the Board.

Having the employer and employee representative bodies around the same table has allowed the GTC access through all the various Government bodies to “control” greenkeeping qualifications.

It is these Government recognised qualifications that attract support funding for training and while there are still some critics of certain qualifications overall the content of both the vocational and academic awards are appropriate. This is all down to the ongoing participation of the GTC at review meetings.

From the 60’s we have seen specific qualifications for greenkeeping and sports turf become recognised by the Government and this role and responsibility must be maintained.

The GTC has developed a training manual, learning materials, Health & Safety Guidance notes which are the envy of not only other sectors within the land-based industries in Britain but also throughout Europe and beyond.

So where is this leading?

The per-capita levy introduced back in 1987 commenced at 2p and twenty years on it has risen to 11.5p and while for many years the R&A match funded the levy collected by the Unions, the GTC Board is now being told that this level of funding “is not sustainable”.

Those older readers who like me battled for the golfers contribution, will well remember the R&A discussion document ‘The Way Forward’ which was circulated to all golf clubs in 1989, stating in the section on the GTC roles and responsibilities that “It goes without saying that the 2p levy, while a start, is a totally inadequate contribution from the golf clubs in terms of a really meaningful impact being made on greenkeeper education. There must be a continuous effort to raise this levy to a realistic figure with perhaps 50p a first target, increasing to £1.”

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