It is now 10 years since we moved into BIGGA HOUSE and as I reflect over those years I realise how so much has happened to change the Association and to change the industry in which we all work.

BIGGA has continued to establish itself as a key body within golf and through the development of closer working relationships it has grown to become an integral part of the management of the game.

Greenkeepers are at long last beginning to be recognised for their professionalism and their value to the club and, while there is still much work to be done, I would ask you to cast your minds back and look at how things used to be in the so called ‘Good old days’.

The Association has enjoyed a period of growth on the back of the development of golfing facilities and its improved positioning has enabled it to influence conditions of service and the general education of all greenkeepers, not just those of its members.

However, the halcyon days of the early to mid 90’s are over and golf is facing some serious challenges with a changing attitude towards club membership, environmental pressures, the demand by the golfer for better value for money and latterly a sharp decline in the economy to name but a few.

There is no doubt in my mind that some greenkeepers will lose their jobs through redundancy and as long as the employer acts in accordance with the law then there is nothing anyone can do. I also see some golfing establishments closing down over the coming years, there are simply too many golfing facilities in relation to the number of players. There is a drive by the game to recruit and retain golfers but in reality this is not having much effect.

It seems a gloomy outlook for the next 10 years and ‘where do we go from here?’ you might ask. I believe that there still are opportunities for BIGGA and that while there is no doubt that it is not going to be easy, I remain positive in my thinking both for the Association and for its members.

As you will read elsewhere in this issue of Greenkeeper International, the Board has approved draft proposals on the inclusion of groundsmen within the Association that will be put to the members at the AGM in January. BIGGA has come from traditional roots from a very traditional thinking within the Association that will be put to the members at the AGM in January.

As an example of this I am hoping that very soon we will be in a position to announce the launch of an industry specific national qualification that carries the logos of the Association, the GTC and its constituent members.

If the members approve the change in the Constitution then is there any reason why BIGGA and the GTC, working with key industry partners, could not develop Aldwark as the National Centre for Sports Turf?

During the coming weeks you will be reading and hearing much more about the development of the GTC and other new initiatives. As you will read elsewhere in this issue of Greenkeeper International, Working with the Greenkeepers Training Committee, and in fact as part of its Board structure, we have made the greenkeeper education system the envy of many other industries, both in the UK and overseas, and have created a model that they strive to emulate.

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During the coming weeks you will be reading and hearing much more of the proposed changes to YOUR Association and I ask you to consider very carefully the consequences of not embracing a change that your Board sees as being in the best interest of you and your professional organisation.

Your support is vital to the future success of your industry, think back to yesteryear and then hopefully realise that we must move with the times and embrace change not resist it.