News from the Chief Executive

Having had the approval of the membership at the AGM to convert the Association to a limited company the Board have tasked me with organising the legal work necessary. I have had preliminary meetings with solicitors and accountants to establish what needs to be done, by whom and by when. It is going to be an immense task but one that perhaps should have been done some while ago.

In the past the main deterrent has been the lease on the land at BIGGA HOUSE that is held by myself and a Past Chairman in favour of BIGGA. Once incorporated, then BIGGA can hold the lease in its own right but past owners of Aldwark Manor, in whose grounds BIGGA HOUSE sits, would not approve the changes. The current owner, Q Hotels, has taken a much more positive view and has sanctioned the changes. It is likely that BIGGA Limited will commence trading on 1st July and in conjunction with the accountants I am looking at the viability and advantages, if any, of splitting the commercial activities from the membership based activities and perhaps applying for status as a charity. We are hoping to maximise the revenue and minimise the tax burden!

The Board at its next meeting in March will be looking to fix a date for an EGM with a view to progressing its proposals for the better integration of sports turf groundsmen into BIGGA. Now that the Constitution has been changed to allow for voting by proxy everyone will have the opportunity to influence the future of their Association. We all acknowledge that there are still a great many greenkeepers who are not members and this we will attempt to address over the coming months. It is a matter of fact, however, that a lot of these non-members will never join for a variety of reasons. They have no interest in belonging to a professional association, they do not value being a member, they do not play golf or, perhaps, they are not interested in the more formal training and education that helps career development. It is also a matter of fact that in a commercial world it is numbers that count and BIGGA needs more members to be able to progress.

Let us not get carried away with the notion that greenkeepers are potentially going to be swamped by groundsmen. If BIGGA widens its base to cater for sports turf in general, just as the lOg has always done, then I would see a gradual influx of groundsmen taking place over a number of years. At the moment there are many, many groundsmen who do not belong to the lOg and so perhaps we can be of greater appeal. It’s not about challenging the lOg more about offering a second choice that could help secure a better future for the Association and the industry.

We have tried the merger route and that failed but it did highlight how much greenkeepers and sports turf groundsmen have in common. Let’s wake up to this fact and try to capitalise on it. If BIGGA does not embrace this concept soon then I have genuine concerns that another organisation will enter the membership arena and that is the last thing we need in today’s economic climate. Golf is going to be hit hard by the recession in 2009 and will enter the membership arena and that is the last thing we need in today’s economic climate. Golf is going to be hit hard by the recession in 2009 and will enter the membership arena and that is the last thing we need in today’s economic climate. Golf is going to be hit hard by the recession in 2009 and will enter the membership arena and that is the last thing we need in today’s economic climate. Golf is going to be hit hard by the recession in 2009 and will enter the membership arena and that is the last thing we need in today’s economic climate. Golf is going to be hit hard by the recession in 2009 and will enter the membership arena and that is the last thing we need in today’s economic climate.

The plan is to have a friendly, yet competitive, match, some lunch and refreshments in the clubhouse then possibly into Ayr for further refreshments and an honest explanation of where the West lads got their tactics wrong!

Denis Tweddell