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Chairman’s Word

National Chairman, Andrew Mellon, gives his thoughts for the month

Planning ahead for a new term

It seems like only yesterday we were coming out of a long cold winter and looking forward to summer, and before you know it I’m looking at my diary and we are approaching September, and trying to plan and implement all the autumn maintenance.

While the growth slows and we get more time for other activities, at Ecosolve we move in to a very busy period as our students arrive looking to learn all they can about Greenkeeping and Golf Management and Performance.

Since the beginning of the 2010/2011 academic year, Ecosolve has successfully trained a number of new students who have already started work on our facilities or are on site working alongside our existing students.

Numbers have grown steadily over the years, and while it’s useful having extra hands about the place for some types of work, most of the students on the entry level greenkeeping course are raw recruits, who need to be taught everything from scratch, and there are a lot of them, so planning and control are very important. As many of you will know, you can get great satisfaction from successfully training a new member of staff, but it is not without challenges.

Imagine having 75 of them every week. We have a busy programme planned for them and it will be good to see their excitement and enthusiasm as they start their careers.

We also have over 100 students studying performance golf, many of them excellence plus handicappers and they place a heavy demand on the golf facility, and on the turf, at a time when recovery is very limited through the winter, but the challenge is to manage that to the best of our ability and try and ensure that all the students get a worthwhile experience.

Education is a constant as far as I’m concerned, and you will find elsewhere in this magazine information about the upcoming Harrogate event and the education on offer there.

I’m looking forward to it, and hopefully I’ll get some time out with my duties as Chairman to benefit from some of what’s on offer.

I believe that in any line of work, in order to be the best you can be at the career you have chosen, you must constantly develop and, “Continue to Learn.”

You will also see within our news section that we have been working with other Associations within the UK sector and have a number of students volunteering to work with various companies to gain real experience.

Our School of Agriculture has also expanded and we have an offer of study and practice in this area also. Students can gain qualifications and experience working with farming organisations and in numerous small businesses.

South West of China where the climate was more temperate and similar to the UK.

The different grass types and management techniques required were very interesting to see and the standard of presentation on all the courses was very high.

While I toured seven courses, witnessing the different grasses, I also visited Forsythia, Creeping bent, Ryegrass and Poa. They face many of the challenges we do, and while it was useful having extra hands about the place for some types of work, most of the students on the entry level greenkeeping course are raw recruits, who need to be taught everything from scratch, and there are a lot of them, so planning and control are very important. As many of you will know, you can get great satisfaction from successfully training a new member of staff, but it is not without challenges.

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While sitting in a group meeting it dawned on me that the group actually had over 100 years experience between them and were able to give each other advice and help with many of the problems they have. Sometimes we fail to recognise how useful something is.

I know that in my time in greenkeeping BIGGA has been the best source of information and contacts for me to meet and seek advice.

Whether you are a single Greenkeeper working alone at a 9 hole course, or a Course Manager running a multi course facility you will find someone in BIGGA who can share their experience with you, and lighten the load.

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That is of value not just to the individual, but to owners and employers and ultimately the golfer in ensuring staff get the necessary support to fulfil their potential.