



Letters to the editor are always welcome. They should be signed and carry the writer's address and telephone number. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, clarity, label and good taste. Please send letters to: The Editor, Greenkeeper International, 13 Firle Close, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HL

■ Greenkeepers' environmental responsibilities ■ Pricey problems

■ Working into the night to save greens from the drought brings home to the greenkeeper what the environment really is and what changes to it can mean. Greenkeepers have to cope not only with members of committees, who vary in their ignorance and inclination to interfere, but with even less controllable elements like drought, downpour, frost and the many ills that grass is akin to. Taken together, greenkeepers look after more than a quarter of a million acres of Britain's open space. A big responsibility and one that goes beyond answering just to the chairman of green at your Club. Yes, you manage a sizeable piece of the environment, our environment.

Even so, I am prompted to ask – is golf doing enough to be green, in image and reality? You wouldn't think so through reading the non-golfing press, which often puts up golf as an enemy of conservation. You may say that they have got this all wrong, but per-

ception is reality to a lot of people. Golf has got to fight back and to start projecting what it is doing to conserve and enhance our environment.

Greenkeepers are, aren't they? BIGGA have included conservation in their training syllabus. Seventy four Sites of Special Scientific Interest are maintained on courses in England. English Nature (successor to the Nature Conservancy Council as the government body for nature conservation) has issued to every Club in the country a booklet on conserving golf's natural heritage, along with advice on how to prepare a conservation management plan.

Well, I know this and you know this, but who else is aware of the efforts being made? Probably not even your own members, who complain about that scruffy bit of long grass which, for them, is just a black hole for golf balls but which, come spring, will show a glorious display of flowering meadow plants and you don't

intend to cut the grass until the plants have set seed.

The message needs to be got across at all levels. And greening can extend into all sorts of areas beyond the management of rough and fairway, for example in the use of environment-friendly materials and the economical use of heat and light in the club house. The literature on a green policy for business exists (as does a British Standard – BS7750) and the industry that is golf and the individual businesses that are golf Clubs can implement a green policy. This will not only win golf friends – it will be truly helping the environment.

I suggest that the R&A and the Home Unions put together a guidance note on green management of golf towards meeting BS7750, for implementing as circumstances dictate by golf Clubs. Let's also start at home by having a regular feature in Greenkeeper International on greening golf. A good example is worth publishing – so let's hear stories about what individual greenkeepers are doing for the environment. These can be added to by articles about greening in general. Together we'd be contributing to a sustainable future – for our game and our environment.

Governments and governing bodies can and should lead – a message given at the Earth Summit in Rio. But Rio also gave the message back: that individuals and their actions matter too. Ultimately, they matter most.

IAN DAIR

Director of Communications and Corporate Affairs, English Nature

■ In the June issue, Sam Morrison expresses an understandable and quite justifiable complaint when he wrote about his difficulty in acquiring up-to-date prices to assist him in preparing annual budgets.

As distributors, we offer what we feel are the main reasons for his problem.

1 First and foremost, cost. Any company producing a catalogue detailing products offered would be unwise to quote prices alongside them. In recent years these have altered too frequently for the printed matter to remain accurate and the wasting of existing catalogues and the re-printing of new ones becomes impossibly expensive.

2 A price list accompanying a cat-

alogue is a way of helping this situation, being cheaper to reprint, but again several up-dating reprints in a year would be required for it to be as accurate as possible.

3 The products sold by distributors to the Sports and Amenity trade cover a very considerable range from numerous manufacturers and producers who historically have altered their prices at differing times of the year – well known ones in January, April, June, July, September, October and November. That pattern of change presents a considerable problem to the distributor when an attempt is made to produce an up-to-date price list.

The only way Mr Morrison could obtain the information for producing his budget would be to telephone for prices, but even then, for planning a budget a year ahead, the prices are just not available from the manufacturers until much nearer the time of supply.

As a compromise between offering an expensive catalogue and a separate price list, our small company produces a combined product and price guide. The most recent, although up-to-date in March, alas now requires numerous amendments.

J D COLLIER

Collier Turf Care (Distributors) Ltd, Norwich, NR10 4PR

■ I write to express my concern over what seems to be a lack of interest in BTEC's National Diploma in Golf Course and Sportsground Management.

This three year course is demanding and advanced, yet nevertheless all adverts in Greenkeeper International and other trade magazines for available greenkeeping positions make no reference to it. Instead, they require prospective employees to have gained City & Guilds certification and ignore BTEC.

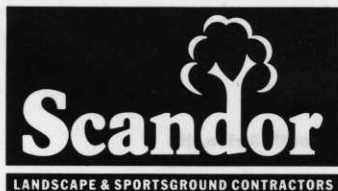
Being a mature student who gave up a good well paid job to gain a position in the golfing industry, I now find myself worrying that the BTEC Diploma is not being recognised and that I have subsequently wasted three years of hard work. Further, in the June issue of Greenkeeper International, the Annual Report makes no mention of BTEC, concentrating instead on the new NVQs and HND/Degree level courses.

Both me and my fellow students

Golf Course Construction

- New Golf Courses
- Alterations
- Drainage
- Irrigation
- Sand Slitting

Our best advertisement is our work



Scandor
Hensting Lane
Fishers Pond
Nr Eastleigh
Hampshire SO5 7HH
Tel: (0703) 692422
Fax: (0703) 601555



■ Is BTEC Diploma still worthwhile? ■ MGC flies the greenkeeping flag

at Sparsholt College would be interested to learn of any response from BIGGA's education committee, as well as the industry at large.

Three years is a long time to (hopefully) gain a worthwhile qualification. I feel BTEC Golf Course and Sportsground Management is being overlooked.

D A MATHIE Farnham, Surrey

■ As someone who has recently successfully completed all stages of the Master Greenkeeper Certificate I feel the need to respond to John Philp's letter (July issue).

I was rather saddened to read, from someone who as yet has not gone through the rigours of the MGC, such a thinly veiled attack on its validity. I was dismayed at an article littered with such derogatory innuendo as 'seemingly worthy qualification', 'concerned about the adequacy of the criteria' and 'a hollow and totally meaningless qualification', all designed to cast doubt on the qualities of current and future MGC holders.

On closer reading it was obvious what the real message implied: Both the time-honoured tradition of relegating the importance of academic qualifications in favour of the skilled application of long-standing maintenance practices, and the equally nauseating contention that true professional greenkeeping can only be practiced on a traditional links type course, anything else being somewhat inferior.

The statement that 'large numbers of greenkeepers can achieve 200 credits' belittles the great effort of those who have done so or are progressing towards it. Ten years of experience will earn 40 credits leaving 160 to be obtained largely by academic achievement. This is something that large numbers will not easily attain and certainly not without the desired aim of greatly increasing the knowledge of future course managers.

The statement that 'no doubt many will possess the capabilities to pass the Stage 3 Examination' was quite frankly an insult, especially to the unfortunate 75% of well prepared candidates who tried unsuccessfully to do so. I am sure they will not thank John for his kind words of comfort.

I for one found it very difficult indeed to acquire the academic qualifications necessary to reach 200 credits, having to gain passes

in the IoG Intermediate Diploma, the EIGGA Diploma in Golf Management, City & Guilds Phase III and IV. I know Laurence Pithie to be similarly qualified and though I do not personally know my two other fellow MGC's I would bet they are equally well certificated.

I think all this disproves the theory that we may have been brain-dead for the last 20 years and have not quite grasped the basic principles expounded by Jim Arthur. To suggest that anyone who has earned the MGC might be simply 'going through the motions of change... with little real commitment and purpose, probably fuelled by a lack of the required understanding to achieve the correct progression' is tantamount to libel and shows a complete lack of comprehension of what the MGC is all about.

If the academic stages are so relatively easy to attain and the only true professionals are those providing fescue or fescue/bent turf, why is it that as yet there is no MGC holder from a links or a major event course. I would suggest there can be only one of four reasons:

- 1 None have reached 200 credits – I would think this highly unlikely considering the experience and technical capabilities of those in charge of our top courses.
- 2 None have passed the course

assessment – Again highly unlikely on such well maintained and professionally managed courses.

3 None have passed the stage 3 exam – a slightly worrying prospect.

4 None feel they have anything to prove – a far more worrying prospect.

If the managers of Britain's top courses are unwilling to put themselves forward then they do BIGGA and British golf a great disservice. We need the managers of our best courses to be masters of their profession and fly the flag for British greenkeeping.

I think I break no confidences when I say that a major part of the examination this year was based on the presentation of a links course for a major PGA event. Whilst this would have suited John down to the ground, I have experience of neither and had to draw on my academic knowledge and experience gained at conferences and seminars (some of which were given by John Philp) to formulate an acceptable answer.

When John has reached his 200 credits, laid bare his management systems and practices to the eagle eye of one such as Jack McMillan, and reaches the stage 3 examination as undoubtedly he will, then I hope he is not unfortunate enough to be asked to set down a conser-

vation policy for a chalk downland, a structured financial plan for the development on a pay and play in Surrey or a CCT document for a municipal in Barnsley, all of which are possibilities under the present syllabus. He will no doubt realise that there is more to golf course management than the narrow preparation of a major links course.

I have nothing but admiration and respect for the managers of our Open Championship courses. It takes great skill and courage to work under the intense spotlight and to prepare a course for The Open is the greatest honour any course manager can achieve. To achieve the MGC is, in my view, a close second.

When it is John's turn to host the great event, as no doubt it will, I will wish him and his team every success. When the final round is completed and John celebrates the fact that it's over, I hope he does not pick up the morning paper to find that an ill-informed sports writer has 'voiced concern' over the condition of the course.

If John can imagine this scenario he will have some idea how I felt on reading his article – this after 20 years of effort had culminated in my receiving the Master Greenkeeper Certificate.

KERRAN DALY Course Manager, Salisbury and South Wilts GC.

Health and Safety Executive's new ruling

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has decided to extend indefinitely the period of validity for current approval certificates for respiratory protective equipment (RPE). The majority of these certificates were due to expire on 1 July.

At present, all RPE which is used in the UK to protect workers from substances hazardous to health must be either type-approved by HSE or meet the requirements of standards approved by HSE. However, this is likely to change in the near future with the introduction by the DTI of new Regulations which would implement in the UK the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Directive (89/686/EEC).

The Directive was due to come into force on 1 July this year, which explains the current approval certificates for RPE expiring on that date. However, although the DTI are expected to issue a consultative document soon, their Regulations could not be in force by 1 July. Moreover there are no facilities yet formally available anywhere in the Community

for the manufacturers of RPE, or indeed of any other PPE, to have their products EC type-tested and approved for CE-marking. (The CE mark implies conformance with the Directive's requirements.)

The extension of the validity of current approval certificates will therefore enable manufacturers to continue producing (and employers to purchase) RPE which satisfy the specific approval requirements of health and safety legislation such as the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (COSHH).

RPE already in the supply chain, and in use before the Directive is implemented, can still legally be used after the implementation date as long as it is maintained in good working order and is suitable for its intended use.

Once there is sufficient capacity available to manufacturers to have their equipment CE-marked, HSE intends to cease issuing certificates of approval. However, HSE will still continue to ensure that RPE (and other PPE) give the required level of protec-

tion by enforcing the Regulations which will implement the Product Directive, and the relevant Regulations (such as COSHH) requiring that RPE be properly selected for both the work and the person.

UK-manufactured RPE for which current certificates of approval have been extended by the HSE beyond 1 July 1992 will be listed in the third edition of the HSE document "Respiratory Protective Equipment: Legislative Requirements and Lists of HSE Approved Standards and Type Approved Equipment" due to be published this autumn. It will be available from HMSO.

The reason why the HSE's extension of current approval certificates is indefinite is that the Product Directive allows for a transition period, beginning 1 July 1992, during which all member states must bring in Regulations to implement it. The length of this period has not yet been finalised. When it is, HSE will then issue new certificates with an expiry date set to coincide with the end of the transition period.