

● Greenkeepers angry at non-golfing industry's plan for BTME spoiler

● BIGGA president

'disturbed' at attempts to establish unnecessary London rival

The English Golf Union stunned and angered greenkeepers on the eve of BTME by announcing its support for P&O Events' rival show next year.

In a press release read out to a hushed gathering of greenkeepers at the National Education Conference, P&O confirmed that the EGU is to become a partner in Landscape & Turf Professional 96. This London-based show will take place a week before the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition and education programme, which will again be held in Harrogate. The agreement between P&O and the EGU makes the EGU responsible for the golf education and training seminars at Olympia.

EGU secretary Paul Baxter said: "We are delighted to become part of the event and recognise the platform that a London-based exhibition will give the industry throughout Europe. Our responsibilities will involve the development and organisation of the education and training seminars. These will be an important and integral part of the show."

After failing to buy BIGGA's goodwill and expertise, P&O secured the support of the EGU by not only offering to pay their expenses in London and pay expenses of speakers, but also give them a stand at the show and an entertainment lounge free of charge.

"It's an offer we've never had before and it's a wonderful opportunity to continue the education work we've been doing for chairmen of green and greenkeepers since 1988," said Baxter.

But the announcement shocked many at the packed BTME.

Among the most surprised was PO Ljung, chairman of the Swedish Greenkeepers Association (SGA), which was there in force. He said: "It is sad that the EGU prefers to co-operate with the non-golfing industry instead of BIGGA, which is a very able and professional organisation that has taken the training of greenkeepers to its heart. We in the SGA and, I venture to say, all the greenkeeper organisations in Scandinavia do hope our sister organisation, BIGGA, will continue with its arrangements in Harrogate as the exhibition, national conference and the seminars are much appreciated by



Viscount Whitelaw, speaking at the Chairman's luncheon, told guests why Harrogate was right for the BTME. Among those pictured above are BIGGA's Neil Thomas, Len Breakwell, of ET Breakwell Ltd, Peter Wilson, of Ransomes, Sims and Jeffries, Steve Mona of the GCSAA, and BIGGA Board of Management member Gordon Moir

Outrage as EGU joins rival show

both greenkeepers and exhibitors.

"It is sad that the EGU does not recognise the professionalism that BIGGA represents. In Sweden, the Swedish Golf Federation with its 360,000 members has recognised that SGA stands for a sound development of golf courses and their maintenance and the co-operation between SGA and the Swedish Golf Federation is very close as regards training programmes and research/experiments.

"I do hope that the EGU will have second thoughts as regards the London exhibition, as it would probably be a disadvantage both to BIGGA and the EGU if P&O chooses to go ahead with their exhibition."

It wasn't just greenkeepers who were surprised by the EGU's move. Brian Carnie, managing secretary at the Broadway Golf Club, said: "It's a shame. It'd be so sad to have two conferences run so close to each other in opposition."

David Golding of the Greenkeepers Training Committee, which is partly funded by the EGU, said the first he'd heard about the EGU/P&O partnership was when conference delegates told him about the press release read out by BIGGA chairman John

Millen. "We have not been contacted about it," he said two days after the announcement. "John Millen told us via 200 greenkeepers." But he added he expects to be at BTME in '96 - as do the vast majority of greenkeepers.

Asked at the BIGGA annual general meeting if they wanted to go to London, the greenkeepers voted unanimously to stay in Harrogate.

Most of the leading turfcare companies are also choosing Harrogate.

Andrew Sunaway, the new sales and marketing director at Ransomes, told us: "We will be in Harrogate supporting BIGGA and we are taking more space next year." In fact they want to double the size of their stand, as do Hardi Sprayers and Lely UK. Other leading companies, including Hayter, Zeneca, Rolawn and Farmura have also promised to be in Harrogate next year.

Viscount Whitelaw, president of BIGGA, summed up the feelings of many greenkeepers and exhibitors during his visit to the show: "I do so enjoy coming to Harrogate and this

show, which has been an enormous success over the years. I spend a lot of time in London and I can tell you Harrogate is much better for greenkeepers than London. I want to see this development continue and expand. I want it to expand further because it's been a great advantage for greenkeepers in Britain and I hope it will become so for greenkeepers all over Europe."

● Letter received from Viscount Whitelaw:

From: The Rt. Hon. The Viscount Whitelaw, K.T., C.H., M.C.

As President of BIGGA, I had the pleasure to attend last month's BTME in Harrogate. It is a tremendous show, professionally organised by BIGGA's staff and loyally backed by companies within the turf industry. BIGGA's programmes are of a high standard and well supported. As such, they do much to advance the greenkeeping profession. I am disturbed to hear of attempts by P&O Events to establish a rival show in London next January, when BIGGA's members have overwhelmingly indicated their commitment to the BTME in Harrogate. I do not believe greenkeepers want a show in London, when the special atmosphere of Harrogate will be lost and expenses will invariably increase both for exhibitors and BIGGA's members. I do hope that this show at Harrogate will continue as at present, because it is valuable and educational for greenkeepers and many others. I have every confidence in the ongoing success of the BTME, which as President of BIGGA has my unqualified support.

Whitelaw