

Neil Thomas examines the current situation surrounding the GTC and confirms BIGGA's willingness to make a positive contribution towards its review...

GTC: WHERE NOW?

We have attempted to keep readers informed of developments in relation to the GTC and in the last issue of Greenkeeper International we reported on the establishment of an independent review. A meeting of the GTC planned for 25th February was subsequently postponed and our Chairman made representations that this meeting be held as soon as possible to enable GTC members to discuss the setting up of the independent review.

A meeting was subsequently set for 19th March when it was understood that the findings of the review would be discussed having been circulated to the GTC members for consideration prior to that meeting. This seemed a wholly unrealistic timescale given that the review was only implemented as of 25th February and this was confirmed in a letter from the GTC of 5th March when it was decided that due to the tight timescale for the preparation of the report the meeting would now be moved to 15th April.

It is difficult to deal with facts in an increasingly confused situation but it can be revealed that the review is being carried out by LANTRA, the National Land-based Training Organisation. LANTRA is being commissioned to examine and make recommendations in respect of:-

1. GTC's role in overseeing Greenkeeper training and its cost effectiveness
2. GTC's capability to handle modern apprenticeships
3. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms
4. Financial auditing and checking procedures
5. Roles of Committee members and staff
6. Decision making procedures
7. Procedures for communication between funding partners, colleges,

assessors, internal verifiers and, where applicable, clubs and their students.

BIGGA remains deeply concerned that this review has moved ahead without formal approval by the GTC and without that Committee being given the opportunity to comment on the LANTRA brief. BIGGA would certainly wish to see the brief widened to include an examination of the college system and its effectiveness in relation to the workings of the GTC.

BIGGA also considers that the GTC's Constitution needs review to enable a future structure to be established which would include an effective input from Greenkeepers and experts in the field probably through the establishment of a technical panel.

So much to talk about then but, as yet no opportunity to talk!

We have genuine concerns about the scale of this review and the anticipated time it will take. The timescale seems very short and raises questions over the thoroughness of the consultations which will take place. Experience of such a review would indicate a timescale in the region of four to six months but this one seems to be six weeks from start to finish and has started without any reference to the Committee who will ultimately have to accept or reject it! Time will indeed tell.

I suspect that the reader will be left with a feeling of incredulity. Yet all this is so unnecessary. Accepting that such a review is appropriate after six years of the GTC operating on its current basis, this review should surely have been conducted from within the GTC with its findings circulated to the constituent member bodies. Instead, through the avoidable actions of one of those constituent member bodies, this

matter has now reached the public domain.

Suddenly there are many "experts" on greenkeeper education and training ready to go to press and much jockeying for position within any restructured GTC which may emerge from the findings of this review. GTC affairs become matter for public debate with all the stresses involved for GTC staff who had a right to expect any such review to be conducted within the confines of the GTC with input from the constituent bodies, to whom the findings of the review will ultimately be circulated, and such other persons as LANTRA should determine. BIGGA will certainly be mindful of this as the review process develops.

BIGGA has a responsibility to inform its members fully in respect of this review as much is at stake in terms of their future education and training. This we will do through the pages of Greenkeeper International but given the lack of consultation and until the GTC finally meets and the LANTRA findings are made available, the Association cannot determine its position.

Members can rest assured that our Chairman as our representative on the GTC will strongly defend and promote the interests of our members on all matters relative to greenkeeper education and training within the ambit of the GTC. We have no intention of being bypassed in the present manoeuvrings for position. BIGGA remains ready and willing to participate in and contribute to the review.

We remain hopeful that positive benefits will emerge from this review for the greenkeeping profession. For this to happen, however there needs to be a great deal more openness, consultation and adherence to democratic procedures than is evident at the present time.