

FEGGA's key role

Having recently received a copy of the January edition of Greenkeeper International, I must say how disappointed I was with the reporting of the recent Valderrama and FEGGA Conferences, and the implications of this on the future involvement of golf in environmental management.

The Scottish Golf Course Wildlife Group contributed to both Conferences which were equally constructive in different ways. The Valderrama Conference established Committed to Green as the most influential and important tool that golf in Europe has as a means of pulling together and disseminating its environmental concern.

At the FEGGA Conference there was a great deal of support for the principles of Committed to Green, and an endorsement of how it can be broken down to Clubs and made achievable through national projects such as our own. Indeed there was a more positive reaction to Committed to Green from the delegates than either of the articles suggested.

Obviously there are some issues to be ironed out, but I think this can be achieved if FEGGA get the correct representation on the new Committed to Green Foundation. FEGGA are a vital body in this because they can coordinate the communication with national Greenkeeping Associations and ultimately help unlock much interest and enthusiasm from greenkeepers. At present it is through FEGGA that the various national Greenkeeper Associations have their voice on the Committed to Green Foundation. FEGGA have been represented on the former European Golf Association Ecology Unit for some time. It is up to FEGGA to demonstrate that they have the ability to carry out their projected role of coordinator and disseminator of information to national Greenkeeper Associations.

I suppose there may well have been some opportunities missed in terms of maximising the effectiveness of debate with national Greenkeeper Associations, but these are things which can be discussed and put right. The key issue is that FEGGA have had representation. I question whether such strong terms as those used are the best way to progress, particularly when such strong terms could undermine the positive situation that many people,

including greenkeepers, have worked hard to establish.

These comments take us back to a period of suspicion and mistrust which distract us from the greenkeeping profession's substantial efforts to learn and adapt to environmental issues.

With regard to the current level of advice available within the golfing sector, golf is in a stronger position as a result of having its own, internal advisers, who without exception are finding a huge amount of enthusiasm from Clubs, Local Authorities and Greenkeepers. However, it should not be assumed that this limited resource is sufficient to allow golf to become inward looking in relation to the environment. One of the most important things golf can continue to do in the future is maintain discussion with environmental groups at European, National and Local level to ensure all good work receives recognition. Indeed, a key strength of our Scottish Initiative is that we have widespread support and contact from across the golfing and environmental sectors, including funding from the Scottish Golf Union, R&A, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Greenbelt Foundation. This is proving to be an excellent platform for constructive dialogue, which includes input from greenkeeping organisations and greenkeepers. Such positive debate is benefiting clubs when they approach environmental organisations locally.

No doubt the outgoing Chairman of BIGGA wanted to leave an impression and stimulate thought, but it is perhaps unfortunate that in so doing he has partly undermined BIGGA's, a large number of greenkeeper's and many others excellent work relating to the environment. I only hope that greenkeepers throughout the country appreciate that their efforts are well valued, and increasingly recognised by the environmental sector, and that the best thing they can do is to continue to seek advice, learn about the environment, increase their understanding, plan their ideas and then take action. This will ensure that golf continues to command respect as one of the UK's most enlightened and environmentally sound land-uses.

Jonathan Smith
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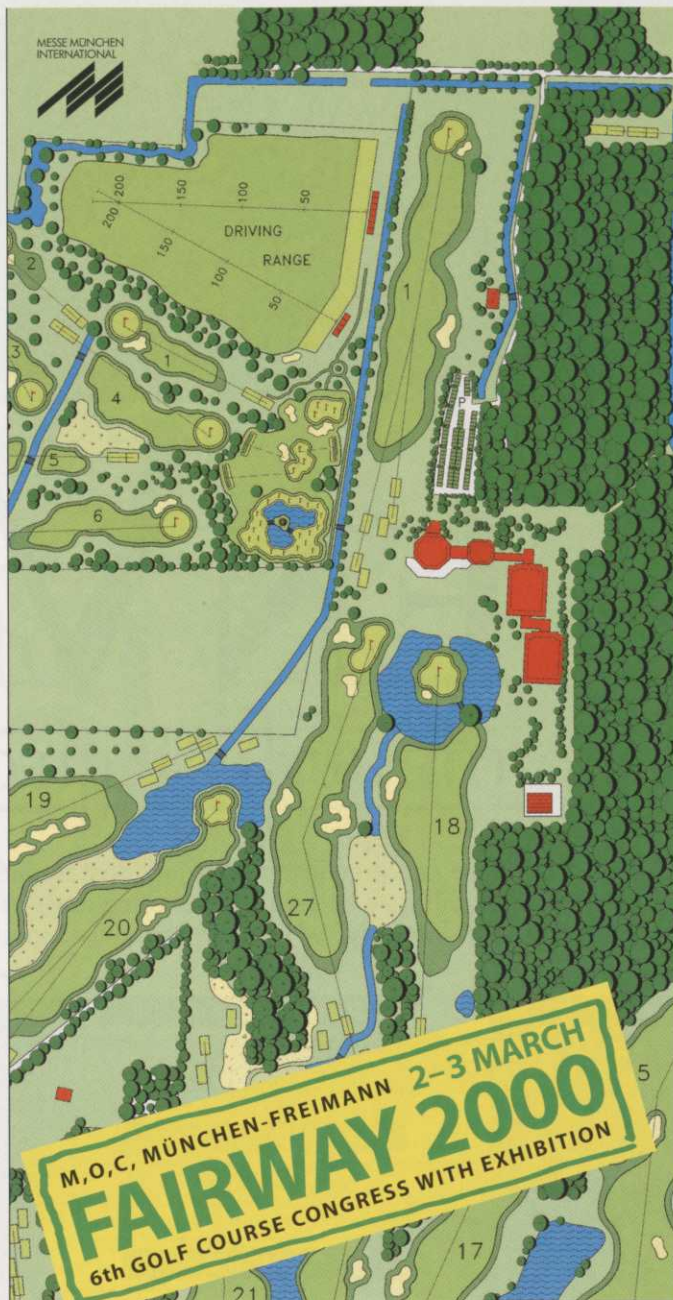
Praise for BTME2000

May I take this opportunity to thank everyone who was involved in making my week at both the education conference and BTME such a memorable one. With the invaluable sponsorship from Textron and the hard work from both the BIGGA staff and the speakers it is easy to see how the week seems to get better and better every year, long may it continue! On a personal note may I thank Frank Newberry and Brin Bendon for a superb two day workshop and an excellent careers clinic. Anyone

who has not attended any of Frank and Brin's workshops have missed out on a great opportunity to develop themselves into modern managers. It is easy to see why Frank and Brin are leaders in their field as their enthusiasm in moulding us into modern managers made the workshop an unforgettable two days.

Once again many thanks, here's to 2001.
Alex McCombie, Deputy Course Manager, Parkstone Golf Club

Via email



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