

The new Chief Executive of the STRI is a man who combines a fine scientific mind with a keen business brain. He is also well known to a great many BIGGA members...

STRIVING TO BE THE BEST



Gordon McKillop joined the STRI having spent 22 years working for the Central Science Laboratory, in York, the last eight as initially, Science Manager, and more recently the Commercial Business Strategy Manager.

It was during the last five years that he became involved with BIGGA working with Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, in the devising and delivering of a series of Control of Mammals courses throughout the BIGGA Regions.

"I built up a very good relationship with BIGGA and through that wrote sections for books written by Bob Taylor,

sory work or knowing what is involved in winning a research contract, delivering it and following it up afterwards," said Gordon, speaking at a meeting organised to give him the chance to meet some of the local and industry press.

"Having this background gives me credibility with the staff and with the large number of clients with whom we are involved," explained Gordon, among whose accomplishments is the development of grids to prevent rabid rats and foxes using the Channel Tunnel to enter the UK.

His more recently acquired business skills, he gained an MBA from Henley

to a more structured approach to work.

"The way I would see things going eventually is that each area of the STRI's business will be given a strategic thrust. We'll look at what we hope to develop over the next few years. But at the same time having an element of serendipity about the whole thing so that if people see interesting areas that have potential for development they are free to follow them. This would be rather than the other way round with things going forward serendipitously with the odd strategic branch.

"People here are bright and intelligent and know what they are doing and I want to encourage them to seek opportunities that we can develop but not rush off at tangents. We want to do them in a considered manner bearing in mind what the implications would be for the main strategy," he explained.

He is also keen to find out why people go to the STRI in the first place and learn a little more about the Institute's competitors.

"I want to find out what they are doing and how we can differentiate ourselves from them. The advisory areas are becoming much more competitive than they once were."

There will be no quick fixes at Bingley; however, and seasoned observers looking for radical changes in the outward appearance of the Institute in the immediate aftermath of Gordon's appointment may draw blanks.

"I'm worried about bringing in things piece meal and I'd rather take a steady look forward in the way we develop these plans. I'd certainly hope that by the end of the year things are beginning

to develop and it may be more of the same, it may be less of the same. But certainly within that period I'd be looking to make internal changes in terms of improving communications; looking at the way staff are training and looking at the internal links between different parts of the organisation.

"So initially more changes will take place internally affecting the staff rather than externally."

He is hoping that his scientific expertise will not be left to rust and he has already discussed various projects to look at wildlife on golf courses compared with adjoining agricultural land with Bob Taylor, the STRI's Senior Ecologist.

"Golf has a bad image but there is no science to justify it so we are looking at it from an experimental perspective," he revealed.

Gordon's ultimate aim, he calls it his Holy Grail, is to have the research and advisory sides of the STRI working in such a way that they are creating work for each other.

"I want to make sure that the information we get from the "Good of Sport" research, funded by bodies like the R&A and the Football Association, goes out to our advisors and they use it and that the advisors, in turn, see problems and issues arising out on golf courses that could benefit from research and that they come back and advise the research staff who then submit research proposals to the funding bodies. That's my Holy Grail. To make sure that all elements are working together and feeding back to one another," explained Gordon, who is a 48-year-old native of Glasgow.

I think it would be very difficult to do this job without a research and advisory background

the STRI's Senior Ecologist. Thanks to that I got to know Mike Canaway (his predecessor as STRI Chief Executive) and when I considered applying for the job I went to various people to discuss what their perceptions were of the Institute.

"The feeling I came away with was that it had a very diverse business, a very professional staff, it gave value for money and that there was considerable potential to develop the service.

He is confident that his strong scientific background will be a huge asset in his new post.

"I think it would be very difficult to do this job without a research and advisory background — without really knowing what's involved in doing advi-

Management College, enabled him to attract income while at the Central Science Laboratory and he is confident those same skills will be of great benefit in his time in Bingley.

"Having spent my first month getting to know the staff I'm now at the stage of finding out how the business works and deciding upon the various options for developing it. Once we have done this I will develop implementation plans to take them forward in conjunction with staff and those involved in the wider industry.

"I'm looking at sensible controlled expansion," he added.

He is currently working on developing a business plan for the Institute while he is keen to marry staff initiative