

## Introducing a course policy

I very much enjoyed a short visit to Harrogate and meeting so many old friends after a number of years. Discussions, debates on generalities and technical subjects over a beer, a coffee or in the dining room left me with the profound impression of a major change in the profession of greenkeeping since I had last been involved.

Now there is so much confidence and total command of the subject and the ability to communicate precisely and convincingly. Much of this has to be due to the educational programme so well run by BIGGA and others. But it also owes something to the support of clubs as well, of course, to those who have taken up the challenges which faced them.

We all know that every course and club is different. But I was surprised to hear of so many common problems. And yet one of the tools to overcome many of these problems has not been taken up as strongly as I had thought. Even in the March issue of Greenkeeper International Chris Haspell from Denmark and Barney Wright both refer to it. I am talking about the Course Policy - Chris calls it a Plan - and although we got it going some ten years ago it has not been executed as widely as I had believed. The advantages of such an approach supported by Committees and agreed by members, are substantial.

- It clearly defines roles and responsibilities of Committees, Secretaries, and Course Managers
- It simplifies communication with members and avoids misunderstandings
- Ensures continuity and avoids piecemeal decisions
- Improves morale and efficiency of greenstaff
- Establishes a code of conduct of all on the course which enhances safety

If you are still not convinced read Chapter 6 of Malcolm Peake's "Confessions of a Chairman of Green".

Duncan McGilvary has made some excellent points which will surely be followed up. If the implementation of a Course Policy needs a little help Ed McCabe or myself are available if contacted at our club, Brokenhurst Manor GC.

Arthur King, Lyminsteron

Email your news, views and letters to:  
**scott@bigga.co.uk**

## A right to reply from Denmark

Having just read the February issue of Greenkeeper International I feel I need to reply to three of the letters written in the magazine.

I would first of all like to thank Alex McCombie for his kind words regarding the article that I wrote in the January issue of Greenkeeper International and also the positive reaction I received from colleagues at Harrogate. It appears that it has made people realise that the future is not about green is beautiful but the grasses that we are trying to grow and our goal must be to achieve greens that can survive with limited fertiliser, water and no chemical control. This will become the reality in the UK in the near future and if you have 100% Poa greens you should start worrying now and make that change.

Alex is right in that Education is the key if golf members are to understand what needs to be done to ensure quality greens in the future when you have no chemical control.

Imagine the scenario. You have poa greens, no fungicide and it is October. It has been raining for two weeks and is 14 degrees. You have a serious outbreak of fusarium. What can you do? The answer is nothing except watch as 50% of your green is taken out by the disease. Now who will be blamed for the poor state of the greens? You of course and your job is on the line as your greenkeeping abilities are questioned.

The above scenario is the reality now here in Denmark except through educating and communicating with

our members they accept that the greens will have problems until we eliminate the poa. Are your members ready to accept the same?

I should also like to thank Richard Penley-Martin, Secretary, Stoneham Golf Club, for his comments and making me aware that the Secretary is responsible for running the whole company and not just one part of it. This is not the case at many clubs today.

I am however happy to say that outside of the UK European clubs are run differently and that Course Managers are allowed to solely manage the golf course which is the reason they are employed in the first place and at our club the Club Secretary has absolutely nothing to do with the running of the golf course and I answer directly to the Board of Management.

I would like to make Richard Penley-Martin aware that after years of ex RAF employees taking on the Secretary's role at golf clubs it would appear that at forward thinking clubs experienced Course Managers who have also gained management skills through education courses put on by BIGGA are now taking over the running of golf clubs as General Managers which can only be good for the future of any golf club having an expert in golf course management communicating to members on a daily basis.

Finally, I have to thank the Happy Head Greenkeeper, Leslie Howkins of Cleethorpes Golf Club, for his let-

ter. I am sorry to hear that the attitude of people like myself and Duncan McGilvary bring on problems ourselves because we stand up for what we believe in and what is in the best interest of our profession. I am afraid that I must be working in a different profession to Leslie. If you go back to Duncan's original letter he talks about, "Don't rock the boat" and "Take the salary and do as you are told" and here is a greenkeeper who readily accepts these statements and says he is happy.

Remember that we are custodians of our golf courses for only a short space of time and it is our duty to manage and leave that golf course in the best possible condition for the next generation of golfers and also the next Head Greenkeeper. But who would like to take over after Leslie?

"If they want slow, bumpy greens that they can stop the ball on with a driver and don't aerate them as it makes them miss so many putts who are we to argue."

Leslie goes on to tell us that this is where all his skill, knowledge and experience is used and then tells us that he accepts that the course is not aesthetically pleasing or that he is not producing a good golf course and we are accused of bringing problems on ourselves!

Here is the perfect example of one man being led and not leading.

Ian C Tomlinson, Course Manager,  
 Rungsted Golf Club, Denmark

## Ian gives thanks for Stateside trip

I would like to thank Bernhard & Company and BIGGA for allowing me to be part of the team of delegates that visited Orlando this February. The trip was a great success, it was an experience not to be missed and very educational, it was fascinating to compare golf course in America with those in Britain. I had the pleasure of speaking to many Golf

Superintendents from all over the US and it was nice to hear that they hold such high regard for the courses in Great Britain. I have already spoken to a lot of greenkeepers throughout my section telling them of the visit and how beneficial it was.

I have planned some talks at our golf meetings this year and I will be talking to various Course Managers

when I go to assess their lads involved in their NVQ's.

Please also pass on my thanks to all the team for the co-operation that went on behind the scenes between Bernhards and BIGGA.

Well done everyone.

Ian Willett, Course Manager,  
 Thorpeness GC

## Playing with others' lives

I read with interest the letter by Barney Wright in the March issue re. "Respect". Greenkeepers have always had to put up with members knowing better than them, but I have found over the last decade or so that it has become worse.

Our profession must be one of the few which is criticised by everybody. You can go into any clubhouse and there will be a set of members who

know just how the course should be run. These members hold court and people tend to listen to them.

Greenstaff take more flack than other golf club staff. You cannot educate these people. If you put on an open night and ask the club agronomist to talk they stay away, but the next day they are back holding court. These people are playing with others' lives.

The job is hard enough without

sniping from your own lines. More and more good greenkeepers are leaving the trade every year taking with them years of knowledge but as has been said in the bar many times, "anyone can cut grass".

There are more good members than bad ones, it's just the good ones say nothing.

K. Heslop, Head Greenkeeper,  
 Brancepeth GC, Durham