

A FAIR DAY'S PAY...

Scott MacCallum meets Don Bailey MBE, the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Greenkeepers Salaries and Conditions of Employment.



In recent years one of the significant advances in the industry has come in greenkeepers' pay and much of the credit for this must go to the Standing Committee on Greenkeepers Salaries and Conditions of Employment.

Formed in 1998 to give a genuinely independent voice in the minefield of salaries and offer guidance to both employee and employer, the Committee replaced the often maligned BIGGA pay scales.

Now, five years on, following two wide ranging surveys into salaries and a honing of the knowledge these have provided, the Committee is confident that it is on the right lines.

Chairman is Don Bailey MBE, Chairman of Hadley Wood Golf Club, and, in his own words, the one man on the committee who doesn't earn his living from the game of golf.

Apart from Don, the Committee currently comprise two representatives of the Golf Club Secretaries Association, National Secretary Keith Lloyd and Chris Silcox; two representatives of BIGGA, George Barr and Richard Barker and Mark Dobell, the Financial Secretary of the R&A.

"We conducted our second survey earlier this year and I was greatly encouraged to discover that more and more clubs are moving towards the guidelines or adapted them to their own ends," said Don, as we chatted during this year's Saltex Exhibition.

"The old BIGGA rates were useful but were always open to people saying, 'You would say that, wouldn't you.' That was understandable so it was felt that the role should be taken away from BIGGA and given to an independent body which represents all sides of the industry," explained Don, who also stressed that the Guidelines should be seen as a benefit to golf clubs and not a threat.

The Guidelines are there to be an assistance to both golf clubs and greenkeeping staff and not to dictate to them and this is the point Don wishes to emphasise.

"In effect what we are saying is what, at any point in time, the industry is doing, where it is going and the cost to golf clubs.

"We are there to prevent the annual battle between the golf club and the biggest element within the club - the green staff.

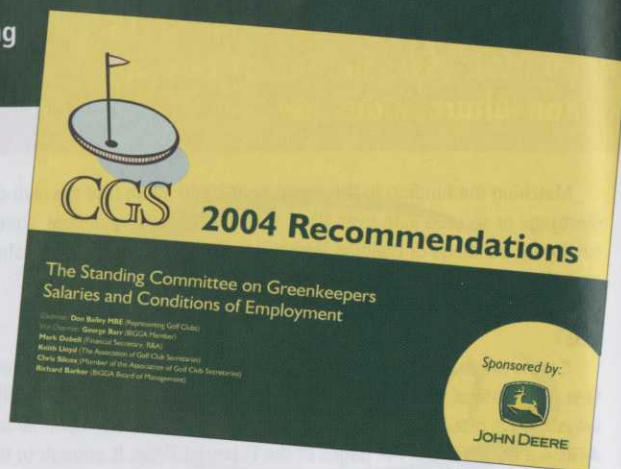
"We like to feel that we could expand our remit if we are invited to cover other areas of club costs. In which case we would invite representation from those bodies."

In addition the Committee would like to continue its desire to be a useful tool to golf clubs by including health and safety documents, information on the Working Hours directive and education and training opportunities within the new expanded Pay Recommendation leaflet and hopefully a CGS Website.

"Of course the information would be known to the Course Manager but not necessarily by the people who set the pay."

On the matter of pay, setting nationally acceptable levels is indeed a complicated business affected by geography, age, experience, qualification as well as other elements as simple as whether lunch is provided; the number of holes at the club; other facilities to be maintained at the club; whether overtime is paid; whether accommodation is included; whether a car comes with the job and whether pension contributions are made by the club.

"It is very much a package and we can't lay down within an area that everyone should be paid the same because so many other things have to be



taken into account, but the figures we give are a guideline and it is up to the club and the individual to set a fair level based on all the elements given."

Initially it had been decided that pay levels would be broken down by county but the first survey highlighted that there was very little variation across the counties.

"So we thought it was pointless publishing a list for every county so we split it into areas and we think we've got the areas right," explained Don, before adding quickly.

"That's not to say that there aren't variations within those regions." One of the more contentious elements within the recommendations is the London rates which are listed as, "All clubs within a 30 mile radius of Big Ben".

"Obviously some big, prestigious clubs are not within the 30 mile limit, but if we were to say 35 miles, there would be clubs outside that as well. On the other side of the coin there will also be some smaller clubs within 30 miles radius who would be saying, 'I'm not paying that sort of salary'.

"We'd like people to look at the guidelines and say 'We are a club of stature and the house prices in our area are comparable with some of those in the London belt so our team should be setting our pay rates to the same level as those within the 30 mile limit'," said Don, who enjoyed a successful career in marketing, before turning his attention to greenkeepers' pay and conditions.

Don readily admits that there are areas throughout the country which could be regarded as quirky and have significantly different issues and costs of living to those around them. For example in Edinburgh, where house prices have risen considerably in recent times due, in no small part, to the arrival of the Scottish Parliament.

"It is a case of people using common sense and coming to sensible conclusions. Clubs must accept that they must pay a level that will attract and retain the quality of staff they wish for their club."

By the same token he also appreciates that in some of the more deprived areas golf clubs are paying well below the recommended guideline level.

"In order to get an average there are lower as well as higher salaries. But if the guidelines can be used to get people closer to the average and better pay and conditions they are of use to both club and greenkeeper at every golf club." And, as the breakdown of the latest survey showed, it is working.

"As I said more and more clubs are using the guidelines to set pay levels and we have also seen an increase in the number of enquires we get."

The latter will be aided shortly by the installation of the CGS's own telephone number of box number thanks to a sponsorship package from John Deere.

"We are grateful to John Deere and one or two other companies with whom we are currently negotiating additional sponsorship, for funding to assist us in our aim, to retain our independence. We don't want to take funding from the trade bodies within the game."

Given the tie in with pay and qualification one of the biggest benefits of the CGS Recommendations is that they emphasise the genuine and exciting career paths that are available to everyone entering the greenkeeping profession.