



## David Golding, Education Director, explains how the golf clubs and greenkeepers in Britain really have a 'united' voice and how this is being heard in the various 'corridors of power'.

I recently read in another turf publication an article calling for "a voice" for the turf sector and listed bodies all of whom the author stated "served their members well." but were often not focusing on key issues and bringing about change due to them being "commercial entities".

I cannot speak for the "other side" of sports turf, groundsmanship, as the GTC is specifically designed to represent golf club (employers) and greenkeepers (employees). However I do think we sometimes fail to promote the work we carry out often on behalf of the wider turf industry. It is unusual in golf for representative bodies to show a total united approach, working for the same aims and supporting an independent organisation by funding its work. However, the GTC brings together the following bodies all working towards a common aim.

- The British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA)
- The English Golf Union (EGU)
- The Scottish Golf Union (SGU)
- The Welsh Golfing Union (WGU)
- The Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews (R&A)
- The PGA European Tour

The GTC is funded by contributions from all of the above bodies with the R&A match funding the contributions from the Home Unions and BIGGA.

A per-capita levy is set by the GTC Board annually, which is paid by each golfer in England, Scotland and Wales plus each member of BIGGA, to allow the GTC to operate without the requirement to seek sponsorship from the wider industry. This shows the importance put on greenkeeper education by the major bodies within the sport.

One of the main objectives of the GTC is to ensure that golf clubs and greenkeepers in Britain have education and training options developed within the Government's national and the European approved framework of qualifications. It is only since the GTC reformed back in 1993 that the above objective has been an achievable option for the sector.

All Government frameworks have to engage employer bodies and this is where the Golf Unions play their vital role within the GTC. BIGGA clearly has its greenkeeper membership and the Association not only has full board representation but also has a major influence within the GTC's Technical Committee, which is the engine room when it comes to apprenticeship and qualifications development and review.

It is therefore the GTC's clearly defined role to be involved in any developments relating to sports turf qualifications and training schemes.

The qualifications range from the vocational (work based) to the Masters Degree in Sports Turf Technology and, while these are the formal awards that attract

Government funding, there are also many short courses that benefit both employers and greenkeepers. Certificates of Competence awarded by the NPTC are popular as often these types of awards have legislative compliance attached to them, e.g. pesticide and chainsaw use.

You might think that it is a bold statement to make, however if the content of any approved qualification is proved to be inappropriate or in need of updating the GTC can, through the Lantra Sector Skills Council, make the changes.

Having established a range of formal qualifications and certificates it is the choice of the training provider, that golf clubs often make without contacting the GTC for the most up to date information on the options available. An approved list of training providers has been published by the GTC for many years and this is currently being reviewed.

The development of career literature, including the highly acclaimed Career in Greenkeeping CD, is just one area where the GTC and BIGGA work closely together.

BIGGA is very much a training provider in as much as short courses, often held on a regional basis, covering subjects such as computers, manual handling, first aid and management skills. The Continue to Learn programme at Harrogate each year is supported by the GTC and the level of cooperation between both organisations has never been better.

The promotion of the Association's Master Greenkeeper Certificate and the various high profile competitions, such as the Student of the Year and Environmental Awards, all adds to the number one priority of BIGGA and that is the education of its members.

The GTC has a business plan which is regularly updated to include any new initiatives identified by the technical committee and approved by the Board. You too can have an input by making proposals, either through BIGGA or direct to the GTC, where you think greenkeeper education can be improved and is not currently covered either by the providers or the industry.

By having the lead employer and employee bodies round the same table it really does allow the sector to move forward with an agreed agenda.

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