



## FASHIONABLE PHRASES

David Golding, GTC's Education Director, reflects on the recent 'buzzwords' that have hit the national media and sports turf sector.

**As we approach the end of another strange year for greenkeepers, let us look at some of the 'terms', which have entered our vocabulary during the last 12 months. Is there something we have missed in years gone by?**

Carbon footprint – Climatic Change – Thematic Strategy – Sustainability – Disturbance Theory, to name just a few!

Since I started as an apprentice greenkeeper back in the sixties, I have seen many changes in greenkeeping and through education and training, golf course standards have improved, especially when golf clubs have supported the professional greenkeepers with the resources recommended to improve the playing surfaces.

Working with an unpredictable climate is a skill even the oldest greenkeeper had and a skill even today's best educated course managers still have to gain through experience – working with nature - so let's call it, 'Climate Change'.

This year the majority of Britain had a mild spring, a very pleasant April to really kick start the growing season, followed by the best part of four months of wet weather and a late mild autumn.

Did greenkeepers cope? Of course they did. What is in the stars for 2008? Who knows, but one thing is for sure, greenkeepers will be prepared for every eventuality.

We read about the down turn in the number of golfers and that golf clubs with waiting lists are now in the minority. With reducing budgets greenkeepers are still expected to provide the standards to attract members and visitors – No pressure there then!

The sustainable ladder, the disturbance theory, best practice, they are all over the turf press and websites. The need for saving water, the importance of aeration and the reduction of fertiliser are all tried and tested principles since Adam was a lad or Jim was an agronomist!

The European Parliament has, and will continue to debate, the use or non-use of chemicals and we all know that if in Britain, as has already happened in other EU countries, pesticides eventually disappear, greenkeepers will adapt because that is the nature of the "beast!" Oh sorry nearly forgot, let's call that the 'Thematic Strategy for the Safe Use of Pesticides!'

You would expect the GTC to promote greenkeeper education, training and qualifications because we believe these are the answers to the above issues and time has proved this to be the case.

The education process started years ago with the Greenkeeper Association evening lectures, which still prove to be successful - albeit they are not just in the winter evenings any longer! Workshops, seminars, even

golf days prove to be vital learning events. The formal City & Guilds – Scotec qualifications and courses of the sixties have become employer/greenkeeper agreed sports turf standards now branded as Vocational Qualifications, Higher qualifications and even a Masters Degree. There are also Certificates of Competence to cover legislation.

Short courses from organisations like BTLIA, STRI and SGEG with their specialist staff, are ready to assist our GTC Approved Training Providers with Health & Safety, management and environmental information when no in-house expertise is available.

The English, Scottish and Welsh Golf Unions, the R&A and of course BIGGA – Are all major organisations promoting the importance of greenkeeper training and hosting a variety of education and training events.

In 1988 the R&A produced and widely circulated 'The Way Forward' and for those of you who never got to see a copy, I would highlight one key message I thought ran through the document - For all golf organisations to look at their roles and responsibilities and improve their particular specific functions which in turn would support and assist golf club employers who were also left in no doubt they had to seriously consider changing their committee structures, to become more streamlined and effective.

During the 1990's we saw many more golf courses built following another R&A document 'The Demand for Golf' and enter the Proprietary Golf Club with a totally different outlook on the game and the customer. A more business approach to running golf courses started to ripple across golf clubs and with the Golf Club Managers Association (formerly the AGCS) and the PGA offering formal qualifications for their members, we must be able to look forward to having qualified "professionals" employed to run our golf facilities.

Qualified course managers, secretary managers, PGA professionals forming a management team at golf clubs and all working to an agreed owner/club policy?

Well, that is my letter to Father Christmas sorted, what about yours?

On behalf of the GTC may we wish you and your families a very enjoyable festive season and we hope to see many of you on our stand at BTME next year (January 22-24).

[david@the-gtc.co.uk](mailto:david@the-gtc.co.uk) Tel: 01347 838640

**GTC is supported by:**

