



## NEW ERA?

As we move into a new year it can be argued that greenkeeping and golf clubs are moving into a new era! Says David Golding, GTC's Education Director.

The GTC, for its part, will endeavour to ensure that training and qualifications keep learners and employers well served, as there are many issues on the horizon, which must be addressed.

We will work with all the specialist experts to ensure the training courses are available through our approved training provider network but we also need employers and greenkeepers to address the issues, rather than hoping they might go away.

I will mention a few of the issues which have been brought to my attention and so, recently, the GTC's Technical Committee and working groups have been looking to ensure they are covered in all the turf qualifications and courses offered to complement both vocational and higher education awards.

Climate change - drought orders - drainage - water storage and use - course presentation - the sustainable golf course - pesticide use et al.

You might say there is nothing new there and you may well be saying that there are more urgent issues we need to address, fine, but as I mentioned in the GTC article in the December GI magazine, I honestly feel we as a specialist sector are at last working together to address many of the issues facing the sport.

Certainly all the British Home Unions as part of the GTC, the R&A and BIGGA are committed to ensuring greenkeeper training is not found wanting when it comes to having competent qualified staff available to maintain and manage golf courses.

There is so much support available to golf clubs and greenkeepers but there does seem to be a very difficult period ahead for some clubs.

The GTC, having lobbied the Government for years to ensure funding is available to support its apprenticeship and qualifications framework, has some good news for employers and learners.

A more common sense approach to funding is currently being discussed and a pilot programme will soon be offered by training providers where bite-size learning (formally called the Qualifications and Credit Framework) will be tested to see if this is the right approach to improve employer and learner uptake in training.

I for one believe that this must be the way forward rather than assuming all staff need full qualifications and the GTC also will be involved in the development and evaluation of this programme.

In simple terms training courses will be offered on a unit/module basis as well as full qualifications and funding support should make these short courses attractive to employers.

While the new framework above is currently for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) are also involved in the

pilot programme development meetings.

The programme could see an increase in the popularity of the NPTC's Certificates of Competence, which the GTC has promoted as ideal awards and while often specific, can also be appropriate to meet employers staff development needs.

There are many short courses offered by professional bodies including BIGGA, BTLIA (irrigation), STRI, which should, following this pilot scheme attract Government funding.

We are very aware of the level of Government funding directed to further and higher education and these establishments will also welcome the latest test and trial programme for bite size learning so we can all look forward to working together to provide our sector with quality courses and qualifications it requires.

While the Government are looking to direct funding to industries supporting the Skills Agenda we should not expect all courses to be free and this is a very thorny subject when greenkeepers are looking at their personal development.

As this is a subject of debate all on its own, I would suggest that any enlightened employer could have all their greenkeeping staff on continued professional development (CPD) programmes without it costing thousands of pounds.

Course Managers, as part of their day to day work, should know their staff development needs and a programme designed and presented to the committee or owner should be seen as beneficial to both the business and staff moral especially when linked to salary negotiations.

Trained staff has to be the way forward if we are going to address all the issues facing our sport and the GTC will ensure greenkeeping training courses and qualifications look to address all of these issues.

For all up to date information on the GTC visit: [www.the-gtc.co.uk](http://www.the-gtc.co.uk) or contact David direct on: 01347 838640 or email: [david@the-gtc.co.uk](mailto:david@the-gtc.co.uk).

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