

A SEASONAL MESSAGE

In this month's GTC feature, David Golding attempts to cheer us all up with a seasonal message that is steeped in history and looks positively to the future during difficult times, including the future for the organisation he has headed since 1993.

I hesitate to go back into the history of greenkeeper education and training, preferring to concentrate on the future, but I feel it is timely to address a question that always seems to crop up, why do we need BIGGA and the GTC?

A fair question and one I will try to answer in as few words as possible so we can move to the future developments for our sector.

BIGGA is the professional body that represents the best interests of greenkeepers employed on golf courses.

The Association is at the very heart of everything the GTC does and there is a very close working relationship between the two organisations that now operate from the same offices at Aldwark Manor near York.

The GTC is an independent body which represents golf club employers in Britain through the Home Unions EGU/SGU/GUW, who represent all golf clubs with a membership, these in turn pay an agreed levy to the National Union on behalf of the male golfers only. From this annual levy the GTC currently receives 11.5p per male club member. The PGA European Tour has also been a great supporter of the GTC making an annual grant while not seeking a seat on the Board.

Having the employer and employee representative bodies around the same table has allowed the GTC access through all the various Government bodies to "control" greenkeeping qualifications.

It is these Government recognised qualifications that attract support funding for training and while there are still some critics of certain qualifications overall the content of both the vocational and academic awards are appropriate. This is all down to the ongoing participation of the GTC at review meetings.

From the 60's we have seen specific qualifications for greenkeeping and sports turf become recognised by the Government and this role and responsibility must be maintained.

The GTC has developed a training manual, learning materials, Health & Safety Guidance notes which are the envy of not only other sectors within the land-base industries in Britain but also throughout Europe and beyond.

So where is this leading?

The per-capita levy introduced back in 1987 commenced at 2p and twenty years on it has risen to 11.5p and while for many years the R&A match funded the levy collected by the Unions, the GTC

Board is now being told that this level of funding "is not sustainable".

Those older readers who like me battled for the golfers contribution, will well remember the R&A discussion document 'The Way Forward' which was circulated to all golf clubs in 1989, stating in the section on the GTC roles and responsibilities that "It goes without saying that the 2p levy, while a start, is a totally inadequate contribution from the golf clubs in terms of a really meaningful impact being made on greenkeeper education. There must be a continuous effort to raise this levy to a realistic figure with perhaps 50p a first target, increasing to £1".

If only Father Christmas was a golfer!

The GTC Board is facing a funding crisis as the R&A has now stopped its annual support to the core funding of the GTC, preferring to consider special projects and thereby leaving the British Home Unions and BIGGA to consider the future of the GTC.

Just like at many golf clubs the financial climate is biting for the organisations that fund GTC, but hopefully the Boards of both BIGGA and the GTC will find a solution to ensure the position I have battled hard for over many years will be maintained.

So where do we go from here?

I have watched BIGGA as an Association develop from day one and hopefully I have played some small part in the position it is in today. I will continue to support John Pemberton, the BIGGA Board and its Membership in their efforts to develop the Association further.

By stating the roles and responsibilities of the GTC it seems that the next stage is to consolidate the position of both organisations by considering the establishment of a National Centre for Sports Turf.

John and I will be discussing this opportunity further with our Boards during December and January and I trust everybody who once saw BIGGA and BIGGA House as a dream will also now agree we are capable of taking the sector to the next level.

GTC is supported by:



We intend to consult with the sector as we look at all the implications of a National Centre but below I list what is already in place.

- **Skill Sets – National Occupational Standards for: Greenkeeper – Golf Course Supervisor – Golf Course Manager.**

Representation at Lantra Sector Skills Council (SSC) meetings to review the above to ensure employers and learners needs are met with Government body. *Note: Funding support only allocated to industry SSC accredited qualifications.*

- **Awarding Bodies partnership – City & Guilds/NPTC & SQA**

Development of qualifications to suit the sector from the National Occupational Standards, e.g. apprenticeship framework, vocational and academic qualifications.

- **Approved Centres and Training Providers**

Maintain a network of approved Centres and private training providers who meet approved criteria.

The criteria are based on quality standards and an Industry – Centre/Provider partnership.

There is much more work ongoing to support the above statements and it is our intention to keep you informed via the GTC website www.the-gtc.co.uk

Q Hotels, owners of Aldwark Manor, are seeking further discussions on the prospect of the Manor developing as a National Centre for Sports Turf and anyone that has visited BIGGA-GTC headquarters will appreciate the facilities both on the golf course and in the hotel do lend themselves for a great partnership.

Complimenting the local BIGGA section and regional events, Aldwark Manor could host courses from design, all aspects of maintenance and management skills.

In summary I believe there are exciting times ahead IF there is widespread support for this development and the GTC continues to receive funding to continue its role on behalf of all golf clubs and greenkeepers.

On behalf of Fiona and I, the GTC Chairman and the Board wish you and your families a very peaceful festive season.

**Please contact us with your views,
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