

WHATEVER THE WEATHER

As I write we have just had the first two weeks of good weather in May... and about time as it has been a long time coming! We're never happy though, as now we're complaining about keeping up with the grass. There's always something to moan about. Hopefully this is the start of things to come and when you read this I hope we will be experiencing a good start to the summer through June, after the cold spring. I don't want to contemplate a similar June to last year as sailing was more appropriate than greenkeeping.

I attended the R&A Conference at St Andrews last month and it was more of an environmentally aware themed conference, as opposed to just sustainability and grass species. When I did a presentation for the Canadian Greenkeeping Association, in Calgary, I realised just how much more the environmental issues impact on golf and ultimately our professions as greenkeepers – much more that we would have given thought to a few years ago.

At St Andrews we had two presentations, firstly from Nick Hanley, of the EU Commission, about where his views on where golf sit in Brussels with regard to water and pesticide use, as well as overall environment management, the impact of EU law and its enforcements going forward. The outcomes were that we have a long way to go to convince our counterparts in how we are perceived outside of the golfing industry. The powers at the EU think we can improve our position going forward - this was mirrored by Gordon Shepherd, from the World Wildlife Fund, as he put it across with a much stronger viewpoint resulting in a great presentation. Asked if the WWF would take on golf and its goals he said that we all had a long way to go to convince his organisation to thinking we are as good as we think we are!

Two good presentations and a bit of a wake up call. Although we are convinced within the industry that we have some great initiatives it is not always the same viewpoint from the outside. This reminded me of the summit meeting of the World Greenkeeping Associations in Calgary earlier this year. Although the Greenkeeping industry is pro-active in all the above areas we are not getting this message through to higher bodies or getting any recognition for them. It was in Canada that we listened to a fine presentation from the French Federation which is working within the



golf related industry to allow the government to back the game of golf and look upon it favourably in the future, should restrictions apply. In Europe there is also a lot of environmental certification across the Federations which is confusing and I think Golf Environment Europe has a big role to play in bringing all this work under one banner so that it can then be recognised in Brussels.

Back in St Andrews we then had a presentation from the R&A and the launch of its benchmarking tool on the website for golf course management. A fantastic initiative and one which helps us all put our records into one template which, in years to come, will be an excellent document in terms of how environmental friendly and how good the game of golf and associated industries are for it. Ultimately we are all fine guardians of the land.

A good conference with plenty of thought for the future.

I would like to wish my Vice Chairman, Peter Todd, and his team, best wishes at The London Club. They are hosting their first main Tour event, the European Open, 3-6 July.

I hope you have all read John Pemberton's article last month, and understand the procedure for the Vice Chairman 2009, it is a great honour and if your club is committed then we would like to see as many applications as possible.

Kenny Mackay
Chairman



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