



News from the Chief Executive

It is Sunday morning and the sun streams through the window of the waiting lounge in Brussels airport where I eagerly await the 'plane to take me home, a much nicer day than the one that greeted me on Thursday.

For the past three days I have been networking with our European colleagues who have all come together to represent their countries at the annual FEGGA Conference. Just like at Harrogate there is a great camaraderie between delegates, despite cultural and language differences, and it's not long in any gathering before the talk turns to greenkeeping and golf club life. The conference delegates were presented with an excellent education programme including talks from Golf Environment Europe, the R&A, Frank Newberry and the key sponsors.

The main theme revolved around environmental issues and of particular personal interest was a presentation on the workings of the European Parliament that explained very clearly the process through which legislation is created and the recent draft paper on pesticides was used as an illustration. There is little doubt in my mind that tighter legislation is just around the corner and while I do not envisage a ban on chemicals I do think that eventually there will be much stricter control over the purchase and use of such products, including the domestic consumer. Upon closer inspection however it is clear that the UK leads the way in control and use of such products however we cannot afford to relax the pressure on Brussels through participation in such groups as the Amenity Forum.

With the sun in mind I am conscious of a recent meeting with representatives of the Karen Clifford Skin Cancer Charity that has been established to raise the awareness of the risks of over exposure to UV leading to skin cancer. It seems that the incidence of this illness is on the increase and it is only a question of time before the courts try test cases against employers who have a duty of care under health and safety legislation. If you wish to learn more then visit www.skcin.org and more on this will be featured in coming issues of Greenkeeper International and the BIGGA website.

At BIGGA HOUSE we seem to be getting more calls or e-mails than usual from golfers regarding the policy of course closure due to adverse conditions. We treat these with extreme care and usually suggest that the enquirer communicates better with the greenkeeping staff at his or her club. Any members needing help should not hesitate to contact a member of staff here at Aldwark and please remember that the Legal Helpline facility covers Health and Safety advice as well as a myriad of other legislation. I can confirm that the service is completely free and members should contact their Regional Administer if they feel that a face-to-face friendly chat with someone would help.

There is no need to feel isolated when help could be provided, usually all for the cost of a 'phone call. After all that's part of why people join associations such as ours.

John Pemberton



SCOTTISH REGION – AYRSHIRE

Hello to you all, hope you're in good health and have managed to get some winter renovation and maintenance work done in between the horrendously wet and windy weather we've been bearing the brunt of!

The date for the Spring Outing to be played over the Portland Course at Troon has been confirmed and will be Tuesday April 15. Derek will be sending out the invites so be sure to get them in promptly as I'm sure places will be in high demand. Remember the outing also serves as the first leg of the Daval-sponsored Harry Diamond Memorial Jug.

I was fortunate enough to get down to Harrogate for a few days and thoroughly enjoyed it! No, not just to get a break from a mundane home life or to escape the horrendously wet and... (you get the picture), well ok maybe a wee bit of that! but mainly because it was great to see old friends and hopefully made new ones. It gives you the opportunity to find out the hot topics in the profession and to take in seminars that are of interest to you.

I had a beer or two with Kerr Rowan and Ian Smith, a couple of local lads selected for the Bernhard-sponsored trip to the GCSAA show in Orlando, so I'm sure they will of had a good time of it over there.

In closing I would just like to wish my pal and ex Turnberry workmate Brian Aitken all the best as he embarks on a new challenge with his lawn care business.

Denis Twedell

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CENTRAL

Harrogate week seems like a long time ago now but it was a good week by all accounts. I was unfortunately unable to attend this year but those I spoke to certainly got a lot from it. The Section pass on our (belated) congratulations to Walter Woods on receiving his Lifetime Achievement Award, which was very much deserved. I often bump into Walter when he is out practising on the courses at St Andrews and he never mentioned it, which is typical of his self-deprecating style.

The season will soon be upon us and hopefully the weather will have improved from the time I'm writing this. The Section are still hoping to arrange a visit to the Barenbrug mixing plant at Falkirk followed by a presentation before the end of March. Details of the date and directions to the Warehouse will be posted on the website, www.biggacentralsection.org.uk as soon as they become available so keep a look out for that.

Also, your committee will be considering whether to stage a social function some evening as has been suggested on the website, clay pigeon shooting, go karting or similar. Again, log onto the website and go to the new forum page to give us your suggestions on that or any other items that interest you. The forum on the website has been very