



MOVING WITH THE TIMES

John Pemberton, BIGGA's Chief Executive, outlines proposed changes to the Constitution that are to be put to members at the AGM in January

Setting the Scene

Some while ago the then BIGGA Board of Management recognised the need to develop the Association beyond greenkeeping into sports turf generally. Over the years, working with the GTC in particular, BIGGA has developed the formal training and education of greenkeepers and has successfully become a training provider in its own right. Much of what has been achieved has a natural synergy with the role of the sports turf groundsman and this led to talks in 2007 between representatives of the BIGGA Board and the IOG Board, regarding a possible merger. The basic concept being that one united organisation would be better placed to represent and develop the interests and education of those working in the maintenance and management of sports turf.

Merger talks sparked off a great deal of industry debate and speculation, some of which became very passionate at times. The trade companies embraced the notion with open arms and a great number of people, members and non-members in both camps, welcomed the suggestion recognising that perhaps a unification should have taken place years ago. The more the two organisations talked the more administrative hurdles came to light but never were the BIGGA Board discouraged on the grounds of a mis-match

between greenkeeping and groundsmanship. Sadly the potential operational problems ruled the day and the IOG withdrew after 10 months of in-depth discussions.

Moving Forward

Following the collapse of the merger talks, the Board were even more convinced that greenkeepers and groundsmen had a great deal to share and that the way forward for BIGGA and the sports turf industry would be for the Association to embrace groundsmen as members on an equal footing to greenkeepers, at an equal rate of subscription. To this end a working party has, over the last six months or so, been looking at how this could be achieved, what the consequences would be for existing members, which key industry partnerships could be developed and how administratively the changes could be achieved.

At its latest meeting on October 14, the Board approved draft proposals for changes to the Constitution to allow sports turf groundsmen to become members together with a draft simplification of the membership structure. The fundamental governance of the Association would remain unchanged; it would remain an organisation for its members, run at the highest level by its members. Nothing, however, can progress

without the backing of the members at a General Meeting and consultation will take place over the next two months prior to the AGM in January at Harrogate.

The Board is not of the opinion that if the proposed Constitution is approved by the members that there will be a sudden influx of groundsmen, who will then seek to take over the Association. There will be a systematic recruitment programme that will include attractive offers to the larger golfing/sports turf establishments where membership is currently under represented, coupled with a drive on individual membership. Rest assured that the proposals protect the rights and benefits of current members who have a great deal to gain rather than much to lose.

Some of the strengths and advantages of the proposed development include:

- A unified voice for sports turf employees
- A better chance of having impact at Government level
- Enlarged local representation enabling 'new blood' to come into the administration and management of Regions and Sections
- The opportunity for greater support for Region and Section activities
- Improved influence over the development



of the structure and content of national qualifications

- An enlarged membership base would increase the Association's buying power thereby providing the opportunity to improve member benefits
- Improved financial stability through new commercial opportunities
- Better provision of short training and education courses on a local and national basis
- The opportunity to develop a National Centre for Sports Turf based at Aldwark Manor

Next Steps

Members can obtain a copy of the proposed Constitution upon request from the following sources:

- Headquarters
- Regional Administrators
- Section Secretaries
- Any member of the Board of Management
- The Members' area of the BIGGA website (Downloadable Forms)

If you wish to discuss the contents of the document then please do not hesitate to contact either myself, a member of the Management

Team at Headquarters, a member of the Board of Management or a Regional Administrator. The views of the members are important and I would hope that any concerns will be addressed before the AGM. While there will be an opportunity to debate the draft Constitution at the AGM I would hope that prior consultation will keep this down to a minimum, so that the matter can be dealt with in a professional way. During November I, together with Tracey Maddison (Head of Membership Services), will be attending the conferences of both the South West and South Wales Region and the South East Region. We will also attempt to visit some of the Section events and will try to keep members advised of our plans through the Bulletin Board on our website. By the time that you read this I will have started a discussion forum on the Bulletin Board where I will respond to Members as openly as possible.

I have detailed, in the section on the right, the main proposals for the revised membership Categories that form part of the draft Constitution. In the Board's opinion the Association must accept that change is inevitable if BIGGA is to develop. We are all aware of the changing face of golf and unless we are proactive in managing the change then we are in danger of having to contract. Your Board needs your support please think carefully about the consequences of not giving it.

REVISED MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

1 Full Member

Any person employed in the maintenance of sports turf at a sports facility.

Split into: -

Category A = Manager

Category B = All other greenkeeping or grounds care employees who have gained a minimum qualification or who hold a minimum of three years continuous relevant experience.

**(Incorporating: Category A - Course Manager, Head Greenkeeper. Category B - Deputy Course Manager, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, First Assistant, Greenkeeper aged 21 years and above, Greenkeeper aged 20 and under and Mechanics)*

2 Associate Member

Any person employed in the maintenance of sports turf at a sports facility and is not eligible to be a Full Member.

(Incorporating unqualified aged 21 years and over and unqualified aged 20 and under)

3 Life Member

At the discretion of the Board of Management any Full Member recognized as having contributed in an outstanding manner to the Association or profession.

(Proposals for the election of a Life Member shall be made only by the Board of Management following Regional Board nomination and the election shall be by the Association in General Meeting.)

4 Retired Member

Any Full Member who has been a member for a minimum of 5 consecutive years and has retired from work.

(Incorporating Retired Member (full) and Retired Member (limited benefits)).

5 Student Member

Any person studying full-time towards an appropriate qualification in turf management.

(Incorporating full time Students).

6 International Member

Any person employed in maintenance of sports turf outside the UK.

(Incorporating International Course Manager and International Member).

7 Affiliate Member

Any person who does not come within the provisions of categories 1-6 above.

(Incorporating Associate and Corporate categories of membership).

8 Honorary Member

At the discretion of the Board of Management any persons recognized as having contributed in an outstanding manner to the Association or profession.

** notes in italics are to clarify changes to the present structure*