



News from the Chief Executive

The relationship between BIGGA and the Greenkeepers Training Committee (the GTC) is often misunderstood. The GTC was established in the late 1980's to develop, monitor and maintain a set of national standards, vocational qualifications and associated learning material for greenkeeping, working within a Government approved structure. It is governed by a committee comprised of representation from the English Golf Union, the Scottish Golf Union, the Welsh Golf Union and BIGGA.

Until recently the R&A were also included. From the outset it was funded by way of a levy of 2p per male golfer who was a registered member of a club. The home Unions collected the fee and passed it on to the GTC while the European Tour and BIGGA made a contribution, the R&A then match funded the total sum collected. In 1989 the R&A published a discussion document of British golf course management entitled "The Way Forward" in which it is quoted, "It goes without saying that the 2p levy, while a start, is a totally inadequate contribution from 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."

Where is the GTC 20 years further on? The levy has increased, despite a certain amount of resistance from the Home Unions over the years, to an astounding 11.5p! The R&A will after this year cease to make a financial contribution, instead diverting its attention and resources to developing the game of golf overseas. Let's make no mistake that funding over the years has been significant and has helped the GTC to develop greenkeeper education to a point where it leads the way with British land based training and qualifications, so much so that its learning material is now being sought after by many of the emerging overseas greenkeeping associations.

The GTC in its current format is no longer a financially viable operation and attempts to increase the levy on the golfer, and/or perhaps include female golfers, have been unsuccessful. With a steady drifting away from club membership the Unions are finding themselves under pressure to maintain status quo let alone consider an increase. As the number of members starts to decline so does the income for the GTC.

One of the main questions that no one has yet managed to answer is "How do we get the casual golfer to contribute towards greenkeeper training?" The simple answer would be to apply a small levy to the green fee but it is unlikely that clubs will go along with this. They, I am sure, would see this as an erosion of their own income.

Unless a solution is found to the funding gap of the GTC then it may need to be wound up. Its role could then be taken over by either the EGU, the SGU or the WGU or perhaps somehow incorporated into BIGGA's Learning and Development Department. As a director of the GTC and as Chief Executive of BIGGA I have more than a passing interest in the future of the GTC and will continue to work with the Home Unions and David Golding (Director of Education, GTC) to try to find a workable solution.

John Pemberton
Chief Executive



SCOTTISH REGION - CENTRAL

The Section had a successful evening on August 20, when David Cole, from Loch Lomond Golf Club, gave a presentation on the work involved in preparing and staging the Scottish Open. Thanks once again David and good luck in your new position at Loch Lomond, you have got off to a great start.

Following on from that, on Wednesday, September 10, at 7pm, we have Stan Kostka talking about wetting agent technology. Stan is Director of Research and Development with Aquatrols in the US and is on a visit to the UK. We are very fortunate to be able to attract people like Stan to come and share their knowledge with us and he comes on the recommendation of Richard Windows who recently attended a presentation by him. The event will be at the greenkeeping facility at Elmwood GC.

This is also the venue for the Section AGM which will be held on Monday, October 27 at 1.30pm, in conjunction with a presentation by Martin Heywood of Aquadrop, who will talk on improving the quality of your irrigation water. There are a number of their installations across Scotland, now including one at The Castle Course where we have been able to drop the bi carbonates from over 250mg/l to 150mg/l as well as lowering the ph.

The Committee will be proposing Gordon McKie, of St Andrews Links, as Chairman. Normally, Gordon would spend some time as Vice Chairman before taking the hot seat but with the departure of our current Vice, Alan Sharp, to Essex Gordon won't have the luxury of easing himself into the job.

The Committee is looking for nominations for a new Vice Chairman from October and would be pleased to receive nominations before the AGM. Please contact the Secretary, Andy Mellon.

We would also be pleased to hear of any particular educational events you would like, particularly for late February/early March. The Committee was thinking of staging some management training on items such as Managing people, confidence building, assertiveness and team building.

These courses are expensive to run so we would need some commitment before arranging them. We shall try and get some more exact costs and information and this will be posted on the website www.biggacentralsection.org.uk - where we would also be pleased to hear your thoughts and comments.

The website has been quiet recently but hopefully it will pick up again now the golfing season is passing.

On the move has been Kevin Webster, from Milnathort GC to Leven GC. Kevin also got married in July and used to play off a handicap of one, welcome to the real world Kevin. Chris Ross, of the Dukes Course, also got married in early July and by the end of the month had lost his wedding ring. There's no truth in the rumour that his workmates organised a search party in 'Fat