



# Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Peter Todd, gives his thoughts for the month

**For months I had been looking forward to going up to The Open Championship but breaking my leg in June put paid to that and I had to make do with watching the action on television and reading the sports pages in the newspaper.**

However, despite not being able to tread the hallowed Turnberry turf, the course looked magnificent on television and the golf kept me glued to the TV all day on Sunday.

The final round started with so much anticipation of what might happen. Tom Watson, Ross Fisher, Lee Westwood - the crowds were eager to see one of them win and then just when all was going in Watson's favour the tide turned and Stuart Cink emerged the victor.

Listening to the BBC commentary acknowledge the work of the BIGGA Support Team and seeing George Brown in the presentation ceremony receive much deserved recognition for all his years service at Turnberry was great to hear. Well done

gear to distinguish him from the rest of the staff. According to the article, last September a tribunal agreed that the person had suffered unfair dismissal and disability discrimination and damages were awarded.

The lack of understanding shown to this disabled employee was inexcusable but in some ways I was not totally surprised. My eldest brother is registered disabled with Asperger's Syndrome and has also had to put up with ignorant behaviour at work and poorly trained management.

It is not uncommon for people with slight disabilities or learning difficulties to work in our field and the wider scope of horticulture. I have come across many people who excel at practical greenkeeping but



## Welcome world-wide publicity to our industry

to George, Euan, all the greenkeeping staff and BIGGA volunteers who worked so hard to make the event such a success.

High profile events like The Open and venues such as Turnberry bring welcome world-wide publicity to our industry and can only create more interest in the game and encourage more to participate. Television coverage has such a powerful influence on the viewing public that what they see at these events shapes their perception of golf courses in general. After television, newspapers also generate images and stories that can influence the public and over the past year golf has attracted a range of articles including some less than desirable ones.

After picking up the sports supplement in The Daily Telegraph on the weekend of The Open Championship and enjoying reading all the coverage I turned to the main part of the paper. Before long my eye was drawn to a headline "Autistic greenkeeper forced to wear red hat awarded £78,000". My heart sank as I read the detail which referred to an autistic person enduring constant bullying at work, including being told by the Head Greenkeeper to a wear red head

struggle sometimes with reading, writing and numeracy. More help may be needed in these areas, particularly when being trained.

All golf clubs need to make sure supervisory staff are adequately trained in personnel management, making them fully aware of the pitfalls of discrimination. The adverse publicity this club received in a national newspaper was a public relations disaster as well as a costly exercise in how not to treat staff.

Increasingly golf attracts media attention related to environmental issues, particularly land and water use. There are many good stories to tell but the media will jump at the controversial ones such as the opposition to the so-called 'Donald Trump' golf development in Scotland which attracted nationwide media coverage.

Golf clubs and greenkeepers need to be seen by the public as a good custodians of the countryside and act accordingly. Clubs will need to make more effort improving and promoting their environmental credentials to get across a positive message, highlighting factors such as good habitat management

for wildlife, water recycling schemes etc.

The Golf Environment Organisation launched its new website in May to provide knowledge and guidance on environmental issues to help industry professionals and a certification programme. It's well worth taking a look as it provides lots of ideas and pointers to assist you in your job and improve your performance in this important area.

Whenever you turn on the television you are bombarded with talk of green energy, carbon neutral, organic, climate change etc. The subject of sustainability is here to stay so the quicker we review work practices and take proactive action, the less likely we are to make the wrong decisions on the course and for golf's future.

**Peter Todd**  
National Chairman