

Chairman's Column

AN INTRODUCTION...

Twelve month's ago Kenny Mackay introduced me as Vice Chairman and following completion of his year in office as Chairman he handed over the baton at last month's Harrogate Week.

With the support of my club and team I am both honoured and delighted to accept the role as your new Chairman. My position as Golf Courses Manager at The London Golf Club demands the delivery of high standards in a very competitive business environment, including preparing for this year's European Open. I look forward to working with your Board of Management and the BIGGA staff in an equally challenging year ahead, concentrating on finding ways of further developing our Association to the benefit of members.

Kenny's commitment and efforts to promote BIGGA this past year have often taken him away from his family and his every day role at The Belfry. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking him for giving up many hours of his time to meet the needs of this demanding schedule. As Past Chairman, Kenny will continue to sit on the board and I welcome his continuing input during the year ahead to help us in making progress.

I would like to introduce and welcome the new Vice Chairman, Paul Worster, Course Manager at Minchinhampton Golf Club. Paul is well known to many of you and brings with him strong environmental credentials.

We live in a dynamic environment with change happening all around us, constantly demanding our attention. Assessing where we are now and where we are heading in the current climate is something we are all facing. Maximising opportunities requires vision, careful thought and often involves the right timing. As Course Managers we are often asked for the cost of making changes and required to budget for them. How often are you asked what is the cost of doing nothing? Making no improvements and leaving things just as they were or have always been, often also comes at a price.

Embracing change means being flexible, adapting to the demands put upon us and welcoming the chance to shape the future. Remaining optimistic makes it much easier to see the way ahead and reach the goals we aim for. Whether it is business issues at your club or those facing the Association, the coming weeks and months ahead will be an important time for considering the best way forward.

The move to proxy voting at the recent AGM was a very positive change to the constitution and will allow all members the opportunity to vote on future proposals without requiring them to travel to meetings, including any proposals to include groundsman as members.

The ongoing healthy discussions to consider allowing groundsman, managing turf from other sports, the opportunity to join BIGGA is welcome and a subject that was raised at the AGM. Before the advent of NVQ's I studied City and Guilds in Sports Turf Management for which I was required to learn about turf for all sports. No doubt it was realised at the time that there was a considerable overlap between these turf professions and it made both educational and economic sense to combine classes. Along with others from our industry I recently attended an educational seminar at The All England Club Wimbledon and, not for the first time, enjoyed the benefit of listening to Head Groundsman Eddie Seaward give a talk. With fellow greenkeepers I have twice been to Wembley to the old stadium to meet Head Groundsman Steve Tingley and at the new, to learn from Steve Welsh and his experiences. More recently I have developed relations with



Peter chats with exhibitors during the Show

those closely involved with both local and county cricket in Kent to look at and discuss a broad range of subjects including water recycling, turf maintenance, machinery and logistics for large events.

Along with many other greenkeepers I have valued and enjoyed the close ties we have developed with these turf professionals over many years with plenty of experiences to share and learn from. Indeed some of my own colleagues had previously worked on cricket, football and tennis turf surfaces before bringing that broader experience to our team. I firmly believe that by welcoming fellow turf professionals to BIGGA they would strengthen our education programmes, learning opportunities, our association and their inclusion would bring benefits to all our members.

Before signing off I have to return to the subject of Harrogate Week where the highlight of the week for me was listening to George Brown, speaking after receiving his Lifetime Achievement Award. His recollection of push biking to work and push mowing early in his career perfectly illustrated the sweeping changes in technology and expectations over more than 50 years. His modest manner, dry sense of humour and words of wisdom have won him much respect and many friends in the industry. Many congratulations George.

Our industry enjoys something unique that is often described as a family atmosphere and this is always very much in evidence during Harrogate week, with many opportunities to catch up with colleagues and friends. Make an effort to get along and meet new faces this year at seminars and golf events in your part of the country - take advantage of the network of people who are interested to hear about your club and what you are doing on your course.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible during the year and hope we can all enjoy some much needed summer sunshine this season.

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