



# Chairman's Word

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

**Over the past 12 months we have seen many factors at play that affect golf and ultimately our livelihoods.**

The end of the booming economy did not come as a complete surprise to me having seen a similar pattern in the early 1990's recession when many new clubs suffered. This time round the downturn in the economy has affected a much broader range of clubs. Household disposable income to spend on leisure is bound to come under pressure during these hardened times and corporate spending on golf is unlikely to return to previous levels until balance sheets are rebuilt.

The Association is affected by the change in the state of the economy and has already had to face up to some harsh realities that resulted in the loss of three positions at HQ in 2009. Many clubs are no different in having to review their operations and shed jobs to try and make ends meet including

the economy will drive everyone to adopt a healthier approach and before making decisions ask themselves - is that really necessary? To my mind this is no bad thing for the golf industry and its future.

Helping members to work through the current difficulties by improving their skills that are needed to tackle some of these challenges is a cornerstone of learning and development. There are numerous opportunities at Harrogate and up and down the country throughout the year to brush up your skills and network with others to discuss these common issues - sharing problems is a much easier way to find the best solution. Professional, up to date, experienced greenkeepers will always be in demand from clubs that continue to need the best people available to help their businesses develop - so make sure you are one of them.

I have often heard the word apathy



## Learning and Development for All

some greenkeeping staff. While the politicians would have us believe that recovery is just round the corner we all know that the ongoing impact of the recession is far from over. All businesses will have to continue to adapt and make changes to remain viable, working through the difficulties, meeting the challenges head on and finding ways to progress.

Organisations will emerge leaner, fitter businesses having stripped out wastage and the unaffordable to place themselves in a stronger position going forward. Many new clubs built in the boom period of the late 1980's including my own, went through a change in ownership and adapted their business model following the previous recession. The result was much more focus on marketing to target golfers, making course improvements a regular continual process and finding ways to maintain high standards at a lower cost. Having played my part in this sometimes painful process of transforming an unsuccessful business into one that now thrives, the learning experience has proved invaluable.

Much more emphasis on both financial and environmental sustainability is resulting in lowered inputs to operate golf courses with the return to previous levels looking increasingly unlikely. This correction in

mentioned when we ask why some members don't attend seminars, golf days and Harrogate Week. This is far too general and simplistic an answer. Time is undoubtedly a factor, travelling distances, subject matter/content of training etc. Thank you to all who returned the recent learning and development survey - your replies will help us to understand and tune courses that meet your needs.

If you didn't receive the survey by e-mail then please make sure your e-mail address is up to date. E-mail is the most environmentally friendly way of communicating with members, reliable and cost effective.

Getting back to Learning and Development opportunities it is particularly important that we engage with assistant greenkeeper members, they are the future Course Managers. Many seminars regionally and at Harrogate are well attended by senior staff but considering that assistant greenkeepers make up the larger part of the membership they are under represented on these days. My own thoughts are that we should ensure that there are sufficient regional training days that are specifically aimed towards assistant greenkeepers held regularly but only during the winter months from November to February to ensure good attendance levels.

It is far easier for Course Managers to send their assistant greenkeepers to regional days in winter and while some assistants may be afforded the opportunity to go to Harrogate Week it is beyond the pocket of many clubs and often they can't send multiple members of their teams all on the same day. Assistant greenkeepers rely on their managers to send them on these days and I ask you all to consider whether your guys are getting the right opportunities to learn.

My year as Chairman draws to a close this month - it has been a honour to represent BIGGA both at home and abroad and I look forward to offering my full support to Paul Worster, as Chairman in 2010, working with him and the rest of the board to benefit all the membership. In Paul, I know we have someone with drive, energy and enthusiasm and who is equally keen to see learning and development as the cornerstone of BIGGA.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the BIGGA staff for their hard work and wish everyone a Happy New Year.

**Peter Todd  
National Chairman**