



Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Paul Worster, issues a challenge

2010: The Year of the BIGGA Volunteer

My year as National Chairman got off to a flying start at the AGM* where I was delighted to get the mandate I needed to be able to build on the fine work of all my predecessors.

The mandate I sought and got was to work (as National Chairman) with the Chief Executive, the HQ team and BIGGA's magnificent army of volunteers to build a shared vision of the best Trade Membership Association anywhere in the UK.

Whether in boom times, or a recession – the best anywhere.

Whether in our membership services or our social activities – the best anywhere.

Whether in our magazine or our website – the best anywhere.

Whether in our trade show or our CPD – the best anywhere.

Whether in our training of greenkeepers or the development of course managers - the Best Trade Membership Association anywhere.

I have stated before that our association must lead our profession forward. Currently only a relatively small minority of our members are getting the fullest benefits of membership – particularly advice, training and development.

If this low take-up of great membership services is not turned around soon we will continue to see the forward movement of only the (rightly ambitious) minority only, and not necessarily the profession as a whole.

We are not simply an Association for Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers alone.

BIGGA is dedicated to enhancing the professional reputation and well-being of all golf greenkeepers, as well as assisting Groundsmen.

In my view we can only move our profession forward if (among other things) we get much greater engagement of our members at local levels.

To achieve this I believe that it is essential that, as National Chairman, I provide positive leadership and support for all our volunteers, so that they can support our members.

Volunteers. At the moment it is often the BIGGA volunteers (committee members and helpers at section, region and national level) who are getting the most from their membership of the Association.

Their selfless work for BIGGA provides them with many 'memorable membership moments' that bring them great meaning and satisfaction.

I speak as one who knows both the wonderful feeling that comes from seeing a section education day be a success, but knows also the irritation that follows the unfair criticism from someone who is keen to judge, but not necessarily to help.

If we are to take the whole profession forward at every level, we volunteers must take our work to the next level.

This 'next level' needs to accept that in a profession like ours most of our members are not known for eloquence, but still have feelings and concerns that need to be expressed and understood.

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These strong feelings are fundamental to the advancement of our profession.

If we as volunteers can recruit other volunteers, particularly those that are more typical of the majority of our members we will succeed in increasing engagement and moving the profession forward.

For example - if we can get the younger ones to help out at events - to give lifts, to greet people at the door and so on, on they will become more involved and they will be exposed to their own 'memorable membership moments'.

I have seen this first hand. My now First Assistant greenkeeper Adam Matthews, as an ordinary greenkeeper and Section member, ran a South West Section event for me, at very short notice, two years ago.

From that moment on – he blossomed into a senior member of my staff, and has now followed me onto the South West Section Committee as Secretary.

If we at National Board level can motivate those at regional level and those at regional level together with our experienced team of Regional Administrators can motivate those at local level then this association will move the profession forward.

At HQ level we have a team of professionals who can and will help volunteers to help themselves.

For example, not so long ago, as a member of the SW section committee I attended a BIGGA Seminar on 'How to Increase Attendances at Local Events' (ran actually by our very own Frank Newberry) which was short and sweet and very effective – and was a complete watershed moment for me.

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The attendance at our next local event (which was not a particularly controversial topic) had an attendance of two and a half times the previous one!

Let me move on now to the need for us all to share concerns and 'best practice'. It will assist me greatly to get support - to the members and volunteers who need it - if I get direct and speedy feedback on 1) situations of concern and 2) successes worth drawing to the attention of others. I get great feedback at Board meetings but we do not have Board meetings every week - fortunately!

To help me find out much quicker - I need you (yes you - the reader) to copy me into what you are trying to do, (or perhaps not succeeding in doing) for yourself and your fellow members, so that I can get an idea of how things are moving forward.

You can tell me directly about your 'situations and successes' by emailing me at talktopaul@hotmail.co.uk. I stand

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for openness and transparency so I will want to pass on your thoughts to others.

Please be assured that I will not stand for volunteers being openly criticised. Let us not fall into this trap. What is needed are proposals rather than put-downs.

Let me be clear that I also want to hear your strongly felt opinions. Without constructive criticism there can be no progress for our profession.

In the meantime as we move to expand our volunteer base into age groups and levels currently under-represented, particularly the younger ones, let me extend an open invitation right now to semi retired and retired greenkeepers.

Please join the volunteer force in the area that you live. You have a legacy to pass on to all our mem-

bers. If you know other retired or semi retired greenkeepers please join me in extending this invitation to them. Get them to contact me on talktopaul@hotmail.co.uk if you think that would help.

Now in the last few sentences of my first column as National Chairman, I want to come back to our development as an Association and the consequences for our profession.

I am optimistic that we can take this profession forward, even in a recession. I am optimistic because we 'know ourselves' much better now, we know our history and we know what we are capable of achieving.

I am optimistic because since the establishment of this association and over the past 20 plus years BIGGA members have gone on to become businessmen, educators, consultants and experts in many fields.

Our employers expect us to be excellent, and likewise we can

expect BIGGA itself, the HQ staff, the Regional Administrators and the volunteers to strive for excellence. I will certainly strive. I know I will make mistakes and I hope I will always learn from them. However, I will not stand for mediocrity in our association or in our profession.

Will you help me and all the volunteers and the HQ team to build the best Association anywhere and advance this great profession? I sincerely hope you will.

Why? Because we as an association cannot do this without your personal support - and that's the truth.

**Please note there was an informal 'show of hands' during the new Chairman's acceptance speech at the AGM. You can obtain a full transcript of Paul's acceptance speech by emailing: talktopaul@hotmail.co.uk*



Each step seemed to take a lifetime

New Chairman Paul Worster shares the thoughts he had during the final moments before he became BIGGA National Chairman 2010.

Isn't it funny how time seems to slow in certain situations?

I have a vivid recollection of my many & varied thoughts at the 2010 AGM.

Here are a few of them taken from the moments straight after Peter Todd introduced me as National Chairman.

I walked across the arena towards the lectern and microphones.

Each step seemed to take a lifetime.

Peter handed me the 'Chairman 2010' badge.

I noticed immediately how crisp and sparkly it was.

I had been intensely proud of my 2009 Vice Chairman badge.

But how suddenly faded and grey that now looked in comparison.

How much better this replacement was!

I glanced across at Peter and John for support - Peter already seemed five years younger - and John five years older (sorry John - and I do mean that).

The room was crowded - yet strangely empty.

Just me and the microphones - waiting in anticipation.

So here I go - my first speech as Chairman...