



Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Andrew Mellon, gives his thoughts for the month

A wonderful support network

As I finished my last column, I was off for a nightcap with some colleagues at the Irish Conference.

As you might imagine their hospitality, was very generous, and I also enjoyed the company of George Brown who had so many great and amusing experiences to share from a lifetime in Greenkeeping and Golf circles.

We sat discussing our profession and putting the world to rights for quite some time.

On reflection it reminded me of how fortunate I am that I have been able to build a support network within my profession to which I can turn for advice, or even just for a good old chat to cheer me up.

Our profession is not immune to the impact of the worldwide economic crisis and it is having an impact on employment and budgets throughout the country.

At such times our network can be very useful in sharing good ideas, and offering support to colleagues facing difficult times. I've heard of many cases of the greenkeeping teams taking action to ensure they make a positive contribution, as part of the overall team to the difficult challenges clubs are facing.

It struck me that although I am able to access this and we have a large Association with over 6000 members not everyone is as forthright in accessing such support.

I would like to encourage members to make contact with their Section Secretaries and offer their support, in whatever way they can, or to seek support.

You can make a big difference to the Association as a whole, but more importantly it may be that you have advice or experience you can share with your fellow members which will make a huge difference to them.

I would also include our many retired Greenkeepers, who have a lifetime's experience to share, and encourage them to stay involved were possible.

Local meetings can be great for sharing and developing positive ideas to support one another. This goes back to the very roots of why our "Association" formed and why it grew so successfully.

If anyone has any ideas on this they would like to see developed please get in touch at the email address below or by calling me.

As we go to press, I am heading off to be involved in interviewing the shortlisted candidates for our Chief Executive position.

We have an excellent selection of people and I look forward to finding someone with the commitment and drive to continue to grow the Association and build on its strengths. Ensuring that it remains member focussed will be a priority, but also the ability to develop a commercially sustainable business model for the long term future.

At our recent Board meeting we continued to progress some of the work on fostering collaborative efforts with other Golf and Industry bodies.

There is a lot of good potential benefit in this work and we will keep you informed in due course through the website and the magazine.

We also took the opportunity to continue some of the work on strategic planning for the future of BIGGA. The Regional Administrators and all the Staff and Board were involved in discussions which were very useful in gaining a better understanding of where the Association currently sits and in the different perspectives of the members and staff.

We intend to further this work by engaging more with the Regions and Sections to learn more about how you want to see the future of BIGGA, and what you want it to be. Establishing a clear, achievable vision of our future will ensure that we can task the Board, the Chief Executive and staff with developing the correct strategies to deliver that vision.

We have many strengths as I have already said, but the time is right to ensure that we know exactly where we are heading and

that we align our resources in the best way to achieve that.

I have continued to meet with the IOG and the Agricultural Engineers Association and have had discussions with several other companies to date to discuss the subject of trade shows.

We started this process at Harrogate last year and we received very useful feedback which we are keen to develop further.

We are reforming the Trade Member Forum to allow us to gain a better insight into the requirements of our trade customers who support the Association.

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We want to ensure that our decision making processes are based on good information, direct from our customers. It is difficult to be all things to all people, but we need to deliver a good service to the trade if we want to continue receiving their support and this research will be a vital part of ensuring we adapt as required.

Harrogate 2012 is looking very good with bookings already well underway, and the team at HQ are already compiling an exciting Learning and Development programme.

Back at Elmwood our team has been hard at work taking advantage of the fine Spring weather and it has been good to feel the sun on the back again. Roll on summer

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