



# Chairman's Word

Andrew Mellon, in his second month as National Chairman, shares his views

## A productive first month

**My sense of relief after Harrogate Week, in respect to believing I might get a short rest, was very quickly replaced with a sense of foreboding as I considered my schedule for my first month as Chairman.**

Finding time to sit and reflect on the month and share that with you in this column has been one of the many challenges, as well as ensuring I spend enough time with the team at Elmwood, and the team at BIGGA HQ.

I know find myself with the Editor on my back chasing me for copy, and I'm writing this in the early hours of the morning in my hotel room at the Golf Course Superintendent Association of Ireland's Conference, in Trim, Dublin.

My first visit was to the Golf Course Superintendent Association of America Conference in Orlando. As well as the obvious benefits of the networking opportunities and education available, Sami and I met with GCSAA Education directors to share experiences and explore opportunities to enhance our Continual Professional Development programme.

We also met with the GCSAA Board to continue negotiating a Strategic Agreement which could advance both our missions and promote cooperation and goodwill between our Associations. This has triggered further discussions with other national Associations who all recognise the benefit of such cooperation.

I met with Michigan State University, who have agreed to digitalise fully all BIGGA publications, past and present, into searchable online content within their "Turf Grass Information File".

This provides an extensive resource for research and education. We are negotiating access rights for our members and this will bring a significant additional member benefit to you.

I took the opportunity to visit the renowned Sawgrass TPC. Unfortunately the Scottish weather had followed me, much to the disgust of my playing partners. I can claim however to have had a 3 at the famous 17th, unfortunately with my fourth ball!

Back home for a few days and I enjoyed a good night's entertainment at the Scottish Golf Awards, hosted by the SGU. BIGGA

plays its part in the Scottish Golf Education Group, alongside SGU and other golf bodies to ensure we make our educational opportunities accessible to all relevant stakeholders, and avoid duplication. A similar group is now formed in England. More to follow!

Back at work I had an interesting meeting with Steve Isaac and Stig Backen, from the R&A, and further discussions with Jonathan Smith, from GEO.

Both organisations are committed to working with BIGGA in order to ensure that resources are made available to help Golf Courses and Facilities manage more sustainably.

The controversial "sustainable" word rears its head again, but please do not jump to conclusions, ie "fescue", and consider the true meaning of the word. Evidence of this cooperation should soon be available through the website, and in future editions of Greenkeeper International, and at future seminars.

I attended an excellent evening seminar from Headland Amenity at the Central Section combined with a committee meeting and spent some valuable time with my family, and then it was off to Iceland for the FEGGA conference and International Summit.

I did not know what to expect, but I was impressed by the commitment shown by the Icelandic Association and the evidence of the cooperation between them and all their Golf Bodies to ensuring the success of golf in their country.

Their enthusiasm and commitment to education was infectious and I returned far more optimistic about the future of the Golf Industry providing we can embrace some of that philosophy.

In Iceland 10% of the population play golf, and this is a huge achievement for such a young golfing nation. The fact that the Country's President saw fit to talk at the evening reception shows the respect afforded to them as part of that collaborative group.

Dean Cleaver and FEGGA are working hard to ensure that across Europe we have a closer understanding and sharing of good practices.

An example of this is the consistent standards for education developed through the European Greenkeeping Education Unit, which should ensure that developments in education match the agreed needs of the sector.

The Scottish Conference, organised by Regional Administrator, Peter Boyd, was a resounding success, not only in attendance, but the excellent technical talks combined with presentations from Chris Kennedy, Jim McKenzie and Chris Haspell.

I was proud, as BIGGA Chairman, to see such professional and engaging presentations, on outstanding achievements from our members.

## Collaboration within the golf bodies will ensure that the important input the Greenkeeper can bring to the sustainability of each golf operation is recognised and valued

Straight off to Edinburgh Airport, and I'm now at the Irish Conference, which from what I've seen today reinforces a common theme from above.

They face the same difficulties we all do in golf, they have a sense of urgency, and they recognise that collaboration within the golf bodies will ensure that the important input the Greenkeeper can bring to the sustainability of each golf operation is recognised and valued.

A shortlist has been provided from over 40 applicants for the CEO position and the Board will shortly commence the interview process.

Well it's been a very busy month, which I hope will be productive going forward for the Association. I'm partial to a small Guinness and I think I'll now indulge in a small nightcap with the others downstairs.