



Chairman's Word

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

Changing seasons

Well, winter is officially here, and already we have had a few frosts to contend with. When you read this, the clocks will have changed, and the daylight hours drastically reduced. Going to work in the dark, as usual, but coming home in it also, is not far away.

The changing seasons add variety to the job, and every year throws up something new for us to deal with. Last year was the prolonged snow and ice, what is it going to be this year? It's good at this time of year to reflect on the season past, and learn from what went well, and what didn't.

In some ways in the UK we are fortunate with the climate we have to operate in, with less of the pests, diseases, temperature and drought extremes which they suffer elsewhere in the world. But it is not without its disadvantages. We do, on the whole though, manage to produce decent playing surfaces for the majority of the year, some with more difficulty than others due to their soil types, drainage, resources, etc.

As the weather worsens the demand for play drops, thankfully, and there is a task to be done protecting the course from damage by spreading wear and protecting all the fragile and wetter areas. The skills demonstrated by our members in dealing with these challenging circumstances allow golfers to continue to enjoy golf in areas, which would normally resemble flood plains.

However, we are not miracle workers, and as many of you will no doubt experience, there is a limit to what can be done. Many courses will experience very wet conditions, and extreme difficulty in doing anything about it.

Hopefully your members/owners will understand that you are doing everything with the resources they provide. It's not easy, but communication to them at these times is crucial, backed up with evidence and information, so they understand what the limitations are. You can also propose solutions, again backed up with evidence, costs etc, which allow them to make the decision on whether investment is worthwhile for what they desire.

These challenges are not new, and Greenkeepers have always had to deal with this,

but it is becoming more difficult as golfers' expectations now are much higher, even while we face this difficult economic climate.

If you are uncertain about how to deal with such a situation, or need any help or advice, I'd encourage you to seek support from your fellow members. Use the bulletin boards on the website, talk to other Head Greenkeepers nearby, and share your experiences.

Congratulations to our new National Champion Jason Hunt, and to the other prize winners who took part in the National Championship at West Lincs.

I was unable to attend due to other commitments, but I'm reliably informed it was a closely fought contest on a great course, and enjoyed by all.

Many thanks to John Muir and his team for their efforts, to the club for hosting the event and to the sponsors, Kubota and Charterhouse. Also to our staff who helped organise the event so well.

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The CEO, Jim Croxton, has been working hard with the team on the Strategic Review, and is starting to share his findings with the Board. This review cannot be done alone and we require the co-operation and assistance of the section committees. We shall be contacting them to help in this process.

If you look back at how the Association formed, it was by like minded individual members seeking out help and advice from colleagues, understanding that collectively they could achieve and learn more than in isolation.

In a similar way, we would like to ask the sections to support us in learning more about the members we have and how the sections are functioning. You will be doing your Association a great service by helping in any way you can with this work.

As the Association has grown, and the workload increased, we have relied more



Photography by Adam Turner

heavily on the work of our employed staff. However, there are elements of being an Association which rely heavily upon you - the member - playing a part, which will make it stronger and of more benefit not only to you, but to every Greenkeeper.

Please, if asked, do what you can to

help. In my greenkeeping career I've been fortunate to say that I have never had a Greenkeeper refuse me help. Not many professions would be able to say that, and that is why we are such a strong Association.

I hope to see as many of you this year at Harrogate as possible.

The Chief Executive and the Board will be presenting some of the plans for the future of your Association, based on the findings of the Strategic Review. It would be good to hear your initial feedback and any further views at that time.

Meantime, please feel free to contact myself or any Board member if you wish to discuss these matters further.

My best regards,
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