



Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Tony Smith, gives his thoughts for the month

All roads lead to Muirfield

I was glued to the coverage of the US Open this month and was naturally delighted to see a British player claim the crown.

The moment I saw Justin Rose deservedly lifting the trophy, I realised that all eyes now turn to Muirfield for the next major and started to get excited about The Open.

Other than BTME, I feel The Open really is the year's highlight for us and our best chance to showcase the Association as yet again dozens of our members from across the UK and the world have the unique opportunity to work on the Support Team.

I know from experience how valuable the Team's work is and I'm sure that once again they will provide hugely professional, committed support for the venue's existing greenkeeping team.

It's an extremely intense week, with some incredibly tired members around by the Sunday night, but it's so rewarding on both a personal and professional basis. It's these sort of opportunities that I've repeatedly mentioned as one of the huge benefits of BIGGA membership.

From my point of view, as well as getting involved with the Support Team, it's my chance to meet countless other industry bodies, turf professionals and all manner of old friends and new faces who will be attending – I can't wait.

It will also be a proud week for me as it marks a year in my post as Chairman – which has flown by – and that neatly brings me on to some news regarding the board. Regrettably, Gary Cunningham has resigned from his position as Board Member for the Midlands Region due to his current employment status.

I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank Gary for his terrific commitment, energy and enthusiasm whilst on the Board and wish him all the very best for the future.

I'm sure he will continue to be a prominent and well-respected figure in the industry. Steve Mason, Course Manager at Stocks Golf Club in Hertfordshire, has taken his place on the Board and I know Steve will be able to bring similar enthusiasm and vigour to the role. I look forward to working with him.



BTME aside, I feel The Open really is the year's highlight for us, and our best chance to showcase the Association

After 12 months in the role as Chairman I feel it's the perfect time for me to reflect. It has been a busy time including the conclusion of a difficult restructure at HQ and the implementation of our Business Plan.

With the right team at BIGGA House now in place and our business affairs in a more robust state the Board has the opportunity to focus more on the long-term future of the Association, delivering better benefits to membership and really making the industry stronger for the next generation of greenkeepers.

The last few years have been a big challenge for the Association and whilst there are still some major issues for individual members, some of which are worsened by the volatility of both our climate and economy, we have laid the foundations for a more successful future and feel that we are on track towards our ultimate aim of becoming a must-join Association.

I know this is not the case for the whole of the UK, but generally I sense the weather is behaving itself with not only dry spells but also some of the sunshine that was so sadly lacking last year.

The courses that I've seen recently seem to finally be growing and flourishing and we can only hope this signals the arrival of a proper summer.

You could argue it's been six or seven years since the last summer worthy of the name.

Next month I hope to be reflecting on another super Open as the sun sets on the stunning links at Muirfield, although I remember wet and blustery conditions the last time we were there in 2002 so I'm not counting my chickens just yet!

Contact details

Tony Smith / 07988 838956 / tony.smith48@ntlworld.com