



Chairman's Word

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

A frantic and fruitful February

It's been a whirlwind few weeks for me – as soon as I returned from BTME I was making preparations to attend the Golf Industry Show in San Diego.

As well as the exhibition itself, which impressed me greatly with its size, scale and the range of exhibitors on display, I dipped into a few of the educational seminars.

If there was a time when we were playing catch-up with American education, I believe that time has passed and we're now on an equal footing with them.

Education is taken extremely seriously on both sides of the Atlantic – it's great to see, and it's about time.

The International Briefing I attended during the Show was valuable, particularly as I'm now lucky enough to look at it from a Chairman's perspective.

I quickly got the impression that we're not alone with our problems in the UK - various Associations from all corners of the world share similar challenges relating to the economy and also retaining and increasing membership.

We made plans to host an international gathering during BTME 2014, which is a really exciting opportunity.

I also attended meetings with the American and Australian Associations and also with GEO over environmental issues – in particular we focused on sustainability.

We will hopefully see real long-term progress as a result of these meetings.

I also spent a lot of time with the BIGGA Delegation sponsored by Bernhard and Company, and they were equally enthusiastic about the week.

They represented a really good cross-section of our membership with a diverse mix of Course Man-

agers, Deputies and Assistants and I know they got a lot from the week.

There was a particularly good mix of ages and characters and I know this experience will stand them in good stead as they progress in their careers.

The delegation were taken round the fabulous Torrey Pines and La Costa courses and said it was unbelievable – another world.

One major difference was, of course, the weather – their winter is similar to our summer! I was also fortunate enough to see these courses and they were truly stunning.

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I also spoke to the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Tom Flavelle who's clearly learning a huge amount from his time in the States.

He's there for a little while longer and I know he'll be appearing in a future edition of Greenkeeper International informing the membership about his experiences.

One thing he said which stuck in my mind was "I wish I could bottle all this up and dish it out to all the young greenkeepers in the UK".

Another highlight was the BIGGA Reception we held on the Monday evening which was a gathering of our members who had travelled to San Diego, and it was so successful we're looking at making it a regular fixture.

On my return from America the Board of Management met which gave us a timely opportunity to review BTME 2013 and put plans in place for 2014 and beyond.

Feedback from visitors and

exhibitors alike has generally been really positive and momentum is already gathering for January 2014.

Towards the end of February the Federation of European Golf Greenkeeper Associations (FEGGA) held its Annual Conference in the picturesque but snowy city of Zurich.

It was fascinating to listen to the challenges faced by the many other Greenkeeper Associations across the continent and realise that they are so similar to those that we face in the UK.

Economic pressure, lack of awareness and appreciation of the profession, legislative/regulatory

issues and environmental challenges were the repeated themes, clearly all Associations need to stand together to help the whole profession overcome them.

During the conference Paul Worster, BIGGA's 2010 Chairman, was elected to the FEGGA Board of Directors, Paul has recently completed a four-year term of office on the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist FEGGA in their goal to properly represent the profession of greenkeeping at a European level.

Congratulations Paul, you certainly have my support in your new role.

I'm well aware that it's been far from an ideal start to 2013 weather wise.

However, spring is finally just around the corner so let's hope it improves, there's no more snow and we get the dry spell we so badly need.

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