

What does FEGGA mean to you?

Newly elected FEGGA Board Member Paul Worster takes a look behind the scenes at FEGGA

Until recently, I was aware of the existence of the Federation of Golf Greenkeeper Associations or FEGGA, but like many had little idea what it did, what its mission was, and who ran or participated in it.

However – all that has changed now as I'm a newly elected Member of the FEGGA Board and I would like to share the aims and ideas of the organisation with you.

FEGGA was formed in 1996. It actually augmented, and eventually replaced, a 'European Greenkeepers Association'. Dean Cleaver - former Course Manager at Gay Hill GC and BIGGA Chairman in 1996 - was the first FEGGA Chairman, and is currently the organisation's Executive Officer. FEGGA is registered in Sweden and currently has 23 members.

"Only 23?" I hear you ask. That's correct - because it is the actual Greenkeeper Associations that are the members, and those 23 member associations represent the interests of around 13,000 greenkeepers in Europe. Impressive by any standards.

So what does FEGGA do exactly? Well – we in BIGGA are perhaps spoilt. The UK has 2,500 golf courses which is by far the highest density of golf courses anywhere in Europe. We have our own very strong association which now employs 17 people. No other European country has a similar number of courses, and their greenkeeper associations are virtually all volunteer-led, and volunteer-administered - not many other European Greenkeeper Associations have any paid employees.

So, FEGGA, with its links to GTC, EGEU (recently rebranded to Greenkeeper Training - Europe), GEO and the EGA (European Golf Association) brings training, education, development and encouragement to the greenkeeping profession in the smaller golfing nations where in some cases there are actually very few golf courses. Of course, despite a low number

of courses, well educated, well led, and well motivated staff teams are a primary requirement, and there is the familiar pressure to improve and develop.

Now I'm still learning, but already I've discovered that there are at least three different scenarios within FEGGA. There are the Northern European Courses, for example in Scandinavia where some people actually have two jobs. They have a summer job when the golf course is open, and a winter job somewhere else when the golf course is frozen over and closed.

In general the Superintendent and his Deputy are retained, but most other staff are released to go to other jobs. Many return to greenkeeping year on year and often to the same facility. Compare that with Southern European greenkeepers, whose courses are open all year round, but of course face extremes of a completely different type in mid-summer when heat and drought are significant factors. Then there are courses in the mid-zone which are more akin to the UK. So, a pretty broad canvas on which to base training aims and objectives.

Don't underestimate this - countries such as Slovenia, Slovakia and Bulgaria have only a handful of golf clubs - less than ten perhaps. But this doesn't stop the greenkeepers and Superintendents from being hugely keen to learn and very proud of their achievements. These people are part of our community, part of our profession. They deserve our support and our input. In giving support and making connections, the BIGGA Board and I firmly believe that by helping FEGGA and getting involved we can also open doors and create opportunities for our own members to find advancement within Europe, which is why I am so pleased to be working with the FEGGA Board.

Work on this Board is very different. Firstly there is the language issue. All meetings have been conducted in English as are the conferences. I am really impressed with



the command of English displayed by the vast majority of people I've come across so far.

Currently we are working to update the Constitution of FEGGA (the rules and regulations that give the framework for business). After that review, the business plan will be upgraded to map out how to meet revised aims and objectives (as outlined in the new Constitution).

FEGGA holds an annual conference which incorporates the AGM. This is sponsored by patron members and is an opportunity for Member Associations to meet with sponsors and carry the sponsors' message back to greenkeeper members within their own countries. I spoke at this year's conference in Switzerland, the opening day of which was held at Syngenta's European HQ in Stein. Stein was a fascinating place showing the tremendous research into the development and safety of pesticides for use in golf and agriculture.

Next year the FEGGA Conference is in Girona (in the Catalonian region of Spain) and the learning subjects will appeal to a broad cross-section of greenkeepers.

In short – FEGGA has much to offer greenkeepers in Europe and, through supporting it, can help make opportunities in Europe more available to British greenkeepers. I'm supporting FEGGA – I hope you will also.

Visit our Website – www.FEGGA.org and become a friend of FEGGA on Facebook.

about the author



Paul Worster is Course Manager at Minchinhampton Golf Club and a former BIGGA Chairman. He is now a director of FEGGA and believes in strong Greenkeeper Associations preparing and equipping their greenkeeper members for management