

## **Institute Of Groundsmanship Prepares Its Industry Strategy For Olympic Take-Off**

A major strategic plan that signposts the future direction of the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG) in the build up to the 2012 Olympic Games will be unveiled later this year by Geoff Webb, IOG chief executive.

The IOG report - the first of its kind focusing on the grounds care industry and the role of the IOG – will be founded on "modern and forward thinking" and will embrace every aspect of the IOG and its services. In particular, it will also address:

- The image of the grounds care profession and how the industry itself can help change public perception;
- Training and education, to ensure that deliverables meet the increasingly varied needs of grounds professionals;
- Industry pay scales, with particular emphasis on entry level bands; and
- Research and development, to ensure the IOG remains at the forefront of discussions and comment on issues such as climate change and the natural turf-artificial surfaces debate.

Speaking at the IOG Annual Conference, Geoff Webb revealed the IOG's intentions to ensure the Institute and its members establish themselves in the public domain as the Olympic preparations gather pace.

"The IOG is actively considering the future and is aiming to challenge modern misconceptions," he continued. "Many may think the IOG is out of touch. Not anymore, not from today. A consultation process is well underway and we are reviewing every aspect of the organisation.

"That will embrace a complete review of our education and training programmes – we are, for example, already in discussions with universities and other agencies; taking a fresh look at industry pay scales – which at entry level are sadly adrift; and we will be re-addressing research and development issues, since it is clear that industry needs to adapt to change.

"Importantly, too, at a time when many eyes will be focused on the skills and aptitude of grounds professionals, the IOG is positively looking to improve the overall professionalism of the industry. Indeed, improving our image is something we can all play a role in - practising professionals, lecturers, students and retired members included."

Addressing a full house of delegates at the Hilton Hotel, Watford, Geoff Webb also confirmed that while the IOG SALTEX exhibition will remain an annual show

– over 330 companies have so far signed up for this year's event, and many have increased their stand space – the IOG has in response to industry demand resurrected the regional IOG Groundex events. The Ricoh Arena, Coventry, will this year play host to the first new-look IOG Groundex on 23-24 October.

"The fact that IOG Groundex has been re-established as a two-day educational-based event, complemented by a small regional expo, adds further weight to the IOG's stated intention of delivering relevant education and training at every opportunity.

"IOG Groundex is designed to attract a regional audience and to satisfy local needs, and it is very much an extension of the highly successful one-day IOG In Action events," he said.

In his keynote 'The Legacy of Sport' address to the IOG Conference, Stephen Baddeley, Sport England's Director of Sport and interim Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, also made reference to the need for ground professionals to consider their image and profile. Full details of his speech will be reproduced exclusively in the May 2006 edition of the Groundsman