

The future of our profession and organisation

1. Over the last three years your Board has been very concerned about the future of our profession as a result of the most challenging times that our industry has faced including: -
 - major cuts in the funding to maintenance budgets for community, local authority and schools playing facilities.
 - a rising age profile of the people working in the grounds maintenance sector.
 - increasing difficulty in attracting enough young people into the profession.
 - increasing pressures on professional ground staff to deliver playing surfaces of even higher standards with reduced resources.
 - falling standards of pitch maintenance at grass roots level, due to reduced funding, impacting on the facilities for young people and communities, despite the efforts of the volunteers.

2. To counter these trends the Board has implemented a number of actions:
 - (i) As part of our '**Grounds for Sport**' initiative a campaign was started to seek to underline how the improvement and maintenance of natural turf and the maintenance of artificial turf surfaces are vital to sport nationwide. Our Campaign is targeted to give natural turf provision the re-boot it needs and will work to create:
 - **Better pitches**
 - **More investment**
 - **More and better trained and qualified groundstaff**
 - **Raise the status of the profession**

 - (ii) During 2019 we carried out extensive research into the profession. A nine-month study entitled '**Groundsmanship: Sport's Vital Profession**' revealed a number of direct challenges to our future. To enable the best possible opportunity to future proof the profession we have set about addressing the recommendations of the research.

 - (iii) We have conducted detailed research involving focus groups and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, sports governing bodies, government and users as well as individual members across all categories, and people who had not heard about the profession or our organisation. We talked with volunteers in sports clubs and a range of people from diverse backgrounds as well as looking closely at age ranges.

As part of the process we looked at the important question of attitudes to our existing name.

 - (iv) The results of the research revealed real concerns:
 - no one is standing up for our profession and the skilled nature of the work.
 - grounds management is not seen as an important part of sport.
 - there is a lack of understanding of the skills needed.
 - the profession has little appeal to young people.

- the profession is not seen as inclusive – it is the domain of “older white males”.
- our members feel generally that we do not support them or deliver what they want.
- what they want is an organisation that truly supports them and champions our profession.
- it is seen as old fashioned and the name adds to this image.

Planning for the future

3. As a result of the research your Board drew up a long-term strategic plan which was approved by members at the AGM last September.

(i) Part of the implementation of that plan involves the change of our name from:

The Institute of Groundsmanship.

To

The Grounds Management Association.

Some will recall that up to 1969 we were called the ‘National Association of Groundsmen’. It is interesting to see now the connection between the new name and our history.

We firmly believe that now and, in the future, the recommendation to change our name will enable us to appeal to a wider and more diverse membership and wider audience. From discussion with stakeholders we know that the change recommended will also attract more inward investment, partnerships and support.

(ii) In designing the new proposed logo, we have also considered our heritage but looking as well to a vibrant new look and feel as we enter this new decade. We have to take a progressive approach to attract new recruits into the industry and to promote the great work carried out by individuals and teams, as well as promoting the innovation, technical expertise and the companies who provide the products and services that puts the turf sector in the UK at the pinnacle of global understanding of the profession and sector.

4. In making this recommendation your Board understands the need for the change and the rationale behind it. The Board unanimously voted at the November meeting to change the current name and we ask that you vote “yes” to this proposal, so that your professional body can deliver what is needed for all our members and the wider profession for the future.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors of the IOG



Geoff Webb

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David Carpenter

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