



Chief Executives Report

It is 10 years since I was appointed CEO of BIAC and it is time for me to retire. Personal commitments mean that I am unable to commit the time to BIAC that I would like however, I will remain a Fellow and continue with the Foundation Courses.

I have enjoyed my ten years as CEO and I will miss my involvement. In my opinion the role of the CEO is one that should be passed on periodically to allow others to bring in new energy and enthusiasm. When I was appointed I set myself two targets, to raise the profile of BIAC within the industry as well as increasing the number of young consultants joining BIAC.

A lot has changed in 10 years. Not only has BIAC changed but the industry that we work in has changed giving new opportunities particularly to young consultants.

The history of a farming that is subsidised can be traced back for 200+ years. The landmark event being the Corn Laws of 1815. The second world war identified the UK's reliance on imported foods and resulted in the formation of a funded advice service with the back up of experimental husbandry farms. NAAS, the National Agricultural Advisory Service, was formed as part of the 1944 Agriculture Act later to be rebranded as ADAS before being privatised. Specific sectors developed their own advisory support notably the Milk Marketing Board and then industry supply trade developed advice as an aid to sales, notably ICI as part of the sales of fertiliser. All advice had the primary purpose of increasing output. That remained the objective when the UK joined the EEC driven by a fear that the population was outgrowing food production. The CAP brought the opportunity for farmers to apply for and receive significant production grants. The forms were complicated with the choice of grants eligibility requiring the completion of annual returns. In order to facilitate the grant aid labelled as the Farm and Horticultural Development Scheme ('FHDS') grant aid was available not just on the completion of the grant application but also in completion and filing the annual monitoring documents, forms MA1, MA4 and MA9. BIAC was formed in the early 70's meeting the needs of independent consultancy meaning that the advice could genuinely concentrate on profit rather than output.

Consultancy determining profit inevitably meant business advice but other valuable services soon became required, technical advice, planning and legal type advice relating to tenancies, succession etc became additional services.

Today the BIAC consultant needs to think outside of the box and assist farming clients to farm the environment with the farm being the backbone of the same. Climate change is seen as a threat but it also brings opportunities. English wine is now recognised as a quality product and there is investment into growing new crops given increasing temperatures. Haricot beans have been grown at field scale for the first time and other crops are being trialled.

SFI and other grant schemes allow consultants to challenge their clients. The industry no longer needs a reporting exercise it needs consultants to share best practice and look at the opportunities to farm the land, buildings and the environment. However, advice relies on experience and that is something best shared. It is great to be able to revert to face to face meetings within BIAC and other industry organisations. BIAC's three main conferences, Wales, Business Management and Rural Planning have returned to the calendar together with Foundation courses I and II. While we got used to not attending meetings there is no substitute for face to face meetings. While these take time out of the diary they allow interaction as well as education! I ask all consultants to take the advantage of face to face meetings recognising BIAC as a prime supplier of the same.



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As I leave my role I hope that all BIAC consultants get as much pleasure out of their role as I have. This has been enhanced by my role as CEO of BIAC, a role that I have enjoyed .

As ever I am indebted to Victoria, Carrie, Alex, Helen and Lucy from Fortis9, previously Cooksley & Co for their support and assistance. Finally I would like to thank all of Council for their valued support particularly to, Simon Britton, Tony Kernon and Adrian Cannon who have worked hard in the name of BIAC over the last 12 months.

Mike Greetham February, 2024