

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020

Officers, offices,
parts & products

CLAAS Product introductions plus
changes to UK management
and facilities

A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

Dealers on how they fared in 2020 and the
support they have received from suppliers

Opinion

Battery kit manufacturer on keeping the
momentum against climate change

Honda cuts network by quarter

Dealers taken by surprise

SPOTLIGHT ON PARKS

MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC
GREEN SPACES UNDER FOCUS



SHAPING THE FUTURE



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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to November/December 2020's edition of *Service Dealer* magazine.

This is the final issue of a year that has been unlike any other. When one thinks back to that panic and confusion we all felt in March, it seems like an age ago.

Back then, mere survival appeared like it would be atop of everyone's agenda for the year. Grand plans went out of the window when it was not even clear if it was legal for dealerships to open their doors!

As events settled, however, and the months ticked by, it became apparent that the season would indeed offer more than survival. Keeping in touch with dealers throughout, *Service Dealer* has been told that many have at least matched business levels of 2019 – with anecdotal reports that plenty have, in fact, surpassed those figures.

This has been down to adapting quickly to the circumstances, of course working hard as dealers always do, but perhaps most importantly, working smarter. This has frequently meant taking advantage of the new digital tools available to all, to allow businesses to stay close to their customers.

As we neared the end of the year, we began to hear concern though from some domestic machinery dealers, that a trend seen on the high street, of suppliers cutting out the middle man and going directly to the consumers, was being seen in our sector. A stealthy, creeping threat is how it has been described.

Clearly, manufacturers need dealers and they need them to remain profitable. It is not in their interest to cut them out of the equation until there is no one left to maintain their directly sold equipment.

How will this progress in 2021? I suppose, like everything, it needs to at least begin with an open and honest dialogue. If unaddressed, we may see some major changes occur in showrooms around the country.



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INDUSTRY

CEO & BOARD OUT AS BRIGGS & STRATTON SALE COMPLETES

KPS ring the changes

Briggs & Stratton announced on 22 September that KPS Capital Partners, LP through a newly-formed affiliate, has acquired substantially all of the assets of Briggs & Stratton Corporation and certain of its wholly-owned subsidiaries.

In a move which was described as “a somewhat surprising first major business decision” by the *Milwaukee Business Journal*, the new owners moved quickly to replace long-time Chairman, President and CEO Todd Teske with Steve Andrews, who led KPS Capital Partners’ portfolio company International Equipment Solutions LLC.

The report also stated that Briggs & Stratton will have a new board of directors, even though KPS Partners initially indicated it would retain Teske and the current board.

KPS is said to have acquired the assets free and clear of substantially all liens, claims, encumbrances and interests through a sale under Section 363 of the United States Bankruptcy Code. The US Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Missouri formally approved the transaction on 15 September.

With the completion of the sale to KPS, Briggs has successfully exited from its Chapter 11 Bankruptcy proceeding.

The sale to KPS includes all Briggs & Stratton International

Entities, including EMEA.

Briggs & Stratton will now operate as an independent company with what is described as the long-term support of KPS.

The small engine manufacturer is now unencumbered by over \$900 million of its previous obligations, and will now have access to the financial resources required to carry out its ambitious business improvement and growth plans.

According to US trade journal *Rural Lifestyle Dealer*, new President and CEO Steve Andrews had previously led International Equipment Solutions for KPS, which operates 14 manufacturing facilities and employees 2,700 people. KPS Partners sold International Equipment Solutions’ attachments division to Black & Decker in March last year.

Michael Psaros, Co-Founder and Co-Managing Partner of KPS, said: “This is the beginning of a new era for Briggs & Stratton. The Company has a new owner, a new CEO, a new board of directors and a renewed focus.

“Briggs & Stratton launches with a portfolio of industry-leading products sold under iconic brand names, a rock-solid capital structure and access to KPS’ financial resources and expertise.

“We look forward to accelerating



the company’s growth by increasing its already substantial investment in research and development, technology and new product development. KPS will also provide the capital for Briggs & Stratton to pursue strategic acquisitions.

“KPS is delighted that Steve Andrews will serve as President and CEO of Briggs & Stratton. Steve is an outstanding leader with a demonstrated track record of transforming and growing companies. We have worked successfully with Steve in the past and look forward to collaborating again as the new Briggs & Stratton.

Steve Andrews commented: “I’m honoured to lead Briggs & Stratton. Free of any legacy liabilities, and with a strong balance sheet and the company’s world-class workforce, we have an exceptional opportunity to build upon the company’s leading market position.

“I’m also pleased to partner and collaborate again with KPS, a firm that has distinguished itself as a global leader in transforming businesses and is ideally suited for this exciting venture.

“On behalf of the Company, I would like to thank former Chairman, President and CEO Todd Teske for his decades of service and many contributions,” Mr Andrews concluded.

DEALERS

HONDA CUT NETWORK BY A QUARTER

Dealers taken by surprise

Honda are making a significant change to their lawn and garden dealer network - reducing it down from around 200 to roughly 150 retailers, in order they say, to maintain dealer profitability.

The 50 or so dealers who are being cut from the network were informed of the changes on Thursday 1st October 2020 – with many reacting with surprise and anger to the news.

Steve Morris, head of Power Equipment Division at Honda UK, spoke to Service Dealer to explain the reasons behind the changes.

He said, “The reason why we are making this change is twofold. Firstly, it is so we can ensure that our dealers can continue to deliver an outstanding experience for our customers. We do lots of customer research and from that we are being told customers choose Honda because they see it as a premium brand and therefore they expect a premium customer service - and I must say that the vast amount of our dealers are achieving that today. But what we recognise, is the delivery of this is coming at a cost and their profitability is increasingly coming under pressure.

“The second reason, therefore, is that we want to improve dealer profitability, in order to guarantee a sustainable dealer network for the long term.”

Steve explained why Honda believe making this change will add to the remaining dealers’ profitability. He said, “We undertook a large study regarding how we should approach this. Consequently, our customers have been telling us they are happy to travel a bit further to buy our products and receive that premium level of customer service. This means we can have slightly larger dealer territories to cover the UK.

“We also identified that there were a number of dealers who simply didn’t have a high density of Honda customers in their geographic area. This brought us to the conclusion that if we had a smaller network, with larger dealer territories, each dealer therefore has a larger customer



footfall with increased potential for higher profitability.”

When asked how the 50 dealers who have been cut were chosen, Steve said, “The principal for the decision was based on the profile of Honda customers within their territory. We looked at what the pool was like of Honda customers in their area and whether they had the potential to make them viable. So it’s not really to do with dealer performance or dealer facilities, it’s principally related to the marketplace.”

It was stressed to Service Dealer, that this decision has nothing to do with the events of this year and the Covid pandemic. Steve explained, “We have been planning this implementation since the start of the year.”

Service Dealer asked Steve if there’s any regret over the loss of these 50 dealers. He said, “It’s mixed emotions really. We have a relationship with all of our dealers, so inevitably with some of those relationships coming to an end it’s sad - and we thank those dealers, wishing them every success in the future. But I think the irresponsible thing to do would be to not recognise the pressures on our network and react to that.

“We haven’t taken this decision lightly. We have given a lot of in-depth study to it, with the conclusion that for our dealers to be sustainable in the long-term, this is the right thing to do.”

Dealers who were cut understandably reacted with shock and anger, with many taking to online forums, including the Service Dealer website, to vent their feelings. Rodger Bentley of Roger Bentley Power Equipment said, “It’s a shame that after 33 years of selling Honda that no one had the guts to tell us as gentlemen.” Whilst Matt Hughes of Buckland Garden Machinery said, “It would have been nice to have been told, or even consulted on this, before receiving a letter.”

DEALERS

HRN TRACTORS APPOINTED BY KUBOTA

As a full-line dealer for Scotland

HRN Tractors Ltd has been appointed by Kubota (UK) Ltd as a full-line dealer for Scotland across its six depots.

The dealer has featured in *Service Dealer's* news pages this summer, having recently announced its split from John Deere after 40 years.

HRN will now represent Kubota construction equipment for all of Scotland, while its agricultural products will be available for depots north of Perth, with groundcare and professional turf products for the region north of Dundee.

"This appointment reinforces Kubota's commitment to its customers and the market," explained David Hart, Managing Director of Kubota (UK): "As a full-line dealer, HRN Tractors will be in a strong position to make the future investments required in facilities, technology and staff, to actively support our customers across agricultural, groundcare and construction sectors."

HRN Tractors was established by the Barclay family in



1980. In addition to its extensive dealership activities, the family also farms across 2,000 acres of combinable crops and is home to the pedigree Harestone herd. With its head office at Inch, it has depots at Turriff, Kinloss, Muir of Ord, Caithness and Balbeggie.

"HRN is delighted to have received the Kubota franchise," said Hamish Bruce, Dealer Principal of HRN Tractors. "It supplies us with a wide range of agricultural, construction and groundcare products to sell to our growing customer base. We believe that Kubota has massive potential for market growth in Scotland, and that HRN and Kubota have a very bright future together."

INDUSTRY

CATALYST COMPUTER SYSTEMS BOUGHT BY CONSTELLATION SOFTWARE

Owner of Ibcos

Catalyst Computer Systems Ltd, the supplier of business management software to specialist dealers, has announced that it has been acquired by Constellation Software Inc.

Constellation Software is part of the Perseus operating group that is based in Toronto, Canada. The acquisition of Catalyst further expands Perseus's presence in the UK's dealership software market, having bought Ibcos in 2012. Overall, Catalyst marks Perseus's ninth acquisition in the dealership software market, and is now part of the Constellation Dealer Group.

In a statement, Perseus said the acquisition will allow two of the three founding directors of Catalyst – Charles Allison and Les Ward – to retire, while Catalyst's Sales & Marketing Director, Jeff Kingsbury-Smith, will remain in charge as the Managing Director. Catalyst will retain its headquarters in Mountsorrel, Loughborough.

Jeff Kingsbury-Smith said, "Our acquisition by

Constellation Software Inc is a major step forward for Catalyst. We will benefit from a depth of resources previously unimaginable, backed by the financial strength and experience that such a large group can offer. Our plan is to continue to develop and combine forward-thinking software services with the friendly personal service we have always offered."

Catalyst said it will remain an independent trading company and will continue developing software. In a statement the company said its infrastructure and office will be unchanged to ensure minimal disruption. Software development, support, training and upgrades will continue as normal. From a customers' perspective, the firm said, there will be no major changes.

The company added that if dealers have any questions they should feel free to contact it in the usual ways. All contact details are unchanged.



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INDUSTRY



John Deere's SALTEX stand

JOHN DEERE SAYS NO TO SHOWS

Manufacturer will not attend international trade shows in 2021

John Deere has announced that it will not attend any international agricultural and turf trade shows in Europe and the CIS during the company's 2021 fiscal year (1 November 2020 to 31 October 2021).

In an official statement the company said the decision is based on ensuring the safety of customers and employees. It said that as attending shows in Europe and the CIS would require extensive international travel, it will instead, "use a new marketing mix of traditional and digital tools to deliver information to customers".

The manufacturer confirmed to *Service Dealer* that this hiatus of attending shows only applies to Region 2, meaning the company could appear at shows in the US.

For UK audiences, with BTME already cancelled for January 2021 and with Deere yet to appear at an indoors LAMMA, it would be the GMA's SALTEX show which is scheduled to take place on 3-4 March, where the manufacturer's absence would be most noticed.

Denny Docherty, John Deere Vice President Sales & Marketing, Region 2, said, "The pandemic has changed the world and our industry is undergoing a period of great change too. This also applies to our marketing activities."

The company said the need for a new approach to communications with customers has prompted it to reduce its participation in trade fairs for the time being. Its key focus in 2021 will be the change in its operating model, to become a "smart industrial company".

Deere said it is moving towards being "a production system-based organisation", which it said will allow the company to build a more customer-driven and streamlined business. Described by itself as being one of the biggest organisational restructurings in the company's 183-year history, it requires a change of marketing approach and an extended focus on Precision Ag technologies.

"We're also expecting a major change in the exhibition landscape, driven by Covid-19 and digitalisation," said Andreas Jess, of John Deere Director Marketing, Region 2.

"In the medium term, our company would welcome a new timetable to be implemented by the international trade fair organisations, to free-up the show cycle across Europe. However, we will continue to support our John Deere dealers if they decide to participate in their local agricultural and turf shows, always based on the fact that the health and safety of customers and dealers can be ensured."

INSIGHT



AG TRACTOR RESEARCH SUMMARY REPORT RELEASED

Available to download for free

TAP, part of the same group as *Service Dealer*, has released its *Ag Tractor Research Summary 2020 Report*, which is now available for download for free.

Shaun Cooper, Head of Insight at TAP, said, "Following our successful research in 2019, we wanted to see how

the ag tractor market has changed in the past 12 months.

"We launched a survey to ag dealers back in February through *Service Dealer*, and since then have gained responses from 63 individual dealerships.

"During these uncertain times, it is more valuable than ever that we share this research with you, giving you the opportunity to get an in-depth insight into some of the industry's key player market performance levels."

TAP also ran two successful webinars that covered a variety of market insights revealed by the report that you can watch on *Service Dealer's* YouTube channel.

Ollie Belt, Account Executive at TAP, added, "We're happy with the increase in responses to our survey and the general interest in our report. Following the webinars we received positive feedback from dealers and manufacturers.

"We feel that with a greater sample size this year, we have built on 2019's study and have a more robust set of data across each of the tractor brands featured in our unique research."

Download the free report from:
www.theadplain.com/blog

INDUSTRY

ALL JACOBSEN MANUFACTURING TO MOVE TO IPSWICH

Textron shifts production to UK

Textron Specialized Vehicles Inc has announced its intention to relocate all manufacturing of Jacobsen professional turf equipment to its facility in Ipswich.

In a statement the company said the move will begin this autumn and be completed in stages over the next several months.

Textron said this move will "enable the company to focus its investments, skill and improvements in mower production on a single facility, and leverage existing resources and expertise at its Ipswich facility".

The plant, which currently builds Jacobsen and Ransomes mowers, is the oldest manufacturer of motorised lawn mowers in the world, in operation for more than 187 years.

According to reports in the US media, 30-35% of Jacobsen products had been manufactured in Ipswich over the past five years. That figure, however, is thought to have risen to around 50% coming out of Ipswich during the past two years, reflecting a desire by Textron to limit multiple manufacturing locations.

Jacobsen relocated North American production from Charlotte, North Carolina, to Augusta, Georgia, in 2016.

The UK facility will now produce mowers for all regions, including North America. Jacobsen will maintain its sales, parts, and customer-care teams in North America, and its network of North American distributors, to serve its customers in the US and Canada.

"We are excited to establish our Ipswich, UK facility as the worldwide manufacturing centre of excellence for Jacobsen equipment," said Simon Rainger, Vice President, Turf for Textron Specialized Vehicles.

"This move will enable us to operate more efficiently, and expand on the legacy of innovation and quality that our Ipswich plant has built over its long history."

Jacobsen said it is continuing to develop new products to serve its customers around the globe. The brand is due to launch a slate of new mowers in coming months, including the Eclipse 360 ELiTE electric greens mower, powered by Samsung SDI lithium-battery technology, and the new AR530 and AR730 area rotary mowers.



The team at the Ipswich facility

DEALERS

DOUBLE A ACQUIRES
NAIRN BROWN

Assets transferred at the end of September

John Deere turf dealership The Double A Trading Company Ltd, which has its head office in Cupar, Fife, and a second outlet at Kintore, in Aberdeenshire, has acquired Nairn Brown (Glasgow) Ltd, of Busby.

The purchase, which was agreed by Double A owners Sandy and Aileen Armit and by Nairn Brown, sees all the staff and assets of the latter business transferred to Double A.

Nairn Brown Ltd was founded in 1964 and became the first John Deere Golf & Turf dealership to be established in the West of Scotland in September 1996. The company has a long and successful track record of supplying machinery to golf courses, local authorities, contractors and private customers across a large area extending from Argyll to Dumfries and Galloway, containing well over 200 golf courses.

Double A Dealer Principal Sandy Armit and his wife Aileen started their business working from home in 1996 before joining the John Deere dealer network in October 1999. The business initially sold to customers in Fife, Tayside and Clackmannanshire before being appointed to take over the Aberdeenshire area in October 2011.

Double A currently employs 25 people across its two outlets and was awarded the title of UK Professional Turfcare Dealer of the Year in 2011 by *Service Dealer*, as well as the runner-up spot in 2019. In addition to the full John Deere range of professional turf equipment, it supplies a number of other brands including Timberwolf,



Nairn Brown and Sandy Armit

Campey, Tru-Turf, Gianni Ferrari, Reform and Lastec.

"We're delighted to be given this opportunity to extend our sales territory into western Scotland, and look forward to continuing to build on the very successful business established by Nairn Brown, his family and experienced staff," said Sandy Armit.

Nairn Brown added: "Although sad for me to be leaving the industry, I have to say how lucky we have been to have held the John Deere turf dealership in the West of Scotland for 25 years. I would like to thank John Deere for its staunch support and help over this time – it's been a pleasure dealing with them.

"Most of all, I'm extremely proud of all the staff that have helped to make Nairn Brown (Glasgow) the dealership it is today and wish everyone continued success in the Double A team!"

John Deere Limited Golf & Turf division Sales Manager Brian D'Arcy said of Double A: "We're very pleased that Sandy, Aileen and their team have agreed to this expansion into the West of Scotland, and look forward to their continued business growth."

DEALERS



L-R: Joe Flanagan, David Evans and Tony Scambler

SCAMBLERS APPOINTS
LATEST GRASSHOPPER
DEALER

Scamblers has appointed David Evans Agricultural Limited as its latest Grasshopper dealer, covering the Vale of Glamorgan and southern Wales.

Tony Scambler said: "We're pleased to have David Evans on board as they are looking to expand and push harder into the commercial groundcare market.

"After a comprehensive demonstration of the versatility and quality of the Grasshopper product, they too could see the value of the range to compliment their business.

"Their groundcare department is headed up by Joe Flanagan, who has a wealth of knowledge within the commercial sector."

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INDUSTRY



Joe Conrad, President and owner of Mean Green Products, pictured at 2019's GIE+EXPO

DR POWER EQUIPMENT ACQUIRES MEAN GREEN

Enters commercial battery mower market

DR Power Equipment, a division of Generac Holdings Inc, has acquired the assets of Mean Green Products, the maker of commercial, battery-powered turfcare equipment, headquartered in Ross, Ohio.

In the UK, the Mean Green range is distributed by Overton (UK) Ltd, while DR Power Equipment is distributed by AL-KO Gardentech.

Service Dealer spoke to Guy Overton, Director of Overton, who told us that he and his brother Richard had spoken to Joe Conrad, President and owner of Mean Green Products, who had confirmed and reassured them that nothing will change regarding their distribution agreement for the UK and Ireland. "After speaking with Joe we are

looking forward to new electric mowers to come, now they have the investment," Guy told *Service Dealer*.

"Hopefully we will be able to exhibit them at SALTEX next year." Matt Bieber, President of DR Power Equipment, commented: "Entering the commercial turf care category has been a target of ours for years, but we wanted to do it in an innovative and differentiated way.

"Improvements in battery technology have now enabled the electrification of large commercial turf care products and Mean Green is leading the way.

"We have watched the Mean Green team grow and develop new

products and technologies, which led us to proactively pursue them to become part of our portfolio.

"Mean Green products will supplement our expanding battery-powered, core products line-up and support our goals to integrate and develop new battery-powered solutions."

Joe Conrad, President and owner of Mean Green Products said, "We are extremely excited for the opportunity to further expand on our vision to provide consumers with meaningful battery-powered equipment.

"The DR Power and Generac teams are an excellent fit for our company and our employees," he concluded.

DEALERS

BURDEN BROS SELL BUSINESS

To P Tuckwell Ltd

The board of Burden Bros Agri Ltd, John Deere's main dealer for Kent, East Sussex and parts of Surrey has decided to sell the business to neighbouring John Deere dealer P Tuckwell Ltd.

At the time of going to press, both parties were working towards a completion date of the end of October 2020, when the Burden Bros Agri business will join the Tuckwell group and be fully owned and managed by the Tuckwell family. The full terms of the agreement are not being disclosed but the decision by the Burden Bros Agri board has the full support and approval of John Deere Ltd.

This proposed sale does not involve any other businesses in the BB⁴ Group of Companies.

It was expected that all employees will transfer as part of the sale and the three current



Tuckwell premises

branch locations at Stockbury and Ivychurch in Kent and Framfield in East Sussex will be retained.

"I, along with my three brothers are extremely proud of what we, as a team at Burden Bros Agri Ltd, have achieved since establishing the dealership with John Deere in 2007," said joint business owner Dale Burden.

"We've built a strong agricultural and turf business throughout the South-East of England and come a long way in a short period of time. In light of recent announcements from John Deere regarding its European dealer strategy and recognising some of the benefits scale can bring, we felt the time was right to consolidate the business with a fellow local dealer.

"We have a close relationship with

P Tuckwell and share similar values. Whilst it will be difficult to relinquish the reins, we know the business will be in good hands. The combined dealership will be in a strong position to make the future investments required, proactively support our customers, develop our team and continue growing."

P Tuckwell's Dealer Principal James Tuckwell added, "The acquisition shows our total commitment to both the ag and turf industries, and consolidates our standing as one of the UK's leading machinery dealerships. It also enables us to build on BBA's hard work and support our customers, new and old, by delivering exceptional customer experience."

PEOPLE



L-R: Matthew Coleman and Craig Hoare

HAYTER & TORO APPOINT

New sales manager, LCE & Siteworks

Toro has appointed Matthew Coleman as Sales Manager responsible for growing the LCE and Siteworks side of the business for the UK, reporting to Craig Hoare, Sales & Marketing Manager – UK Direct Markets.

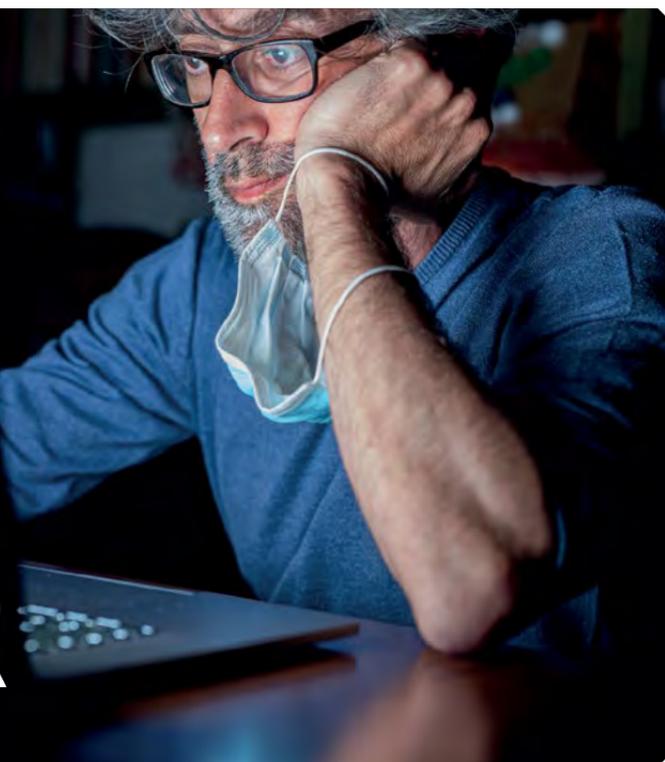
Matthew joins the Toro team from Fuchsia Exhibition Services, a family-run business of 40 years, dedicated to events and exhibitions services within the grounds care and construction markets.

In taking on his new role, Toro said Matthew will be a fresh pair of eyes for its LCE and Siteworks side of the business. His main responsibilities will be to educate the UK market on the Toro LCE and Siteworks ranges and how Toro's equipment in those areas can be an asset in sales growth.

Matthew said, "I'm looking forward to visiting dealers all around the country and becoming a product specialist for the LCE and Siteworks product lines. I've joined Toro at a really exciting and poignant time, when products such as the Dingo have huge potential in the UK. It'll be great to start talking about these products more with dealers."

Welcoming Matthew to his team, Craig Hoare said: "I'm really pleased Matthew has joined the team and this signifies Toro's intent to grow within the UK Landscaper, Arboricultural and Construction markets. Matthew has a wealth of experience, is respected within the industry and will be well placed to manage and support our dealer network, ensuring Toro builds meaningful and successful partnerships in the professional landscaper market."

A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER



We have spoken to a selection of dealers around the country, multi and single branched, domestic, commercial and agricultural specialists, to see how the tumultuous events of 2020 have affected their businesses – and how they view the support they have received from their suppliers.

Editor STEVE GIBBS reports

None of us will forget 2020. It's been a year unlike any other.

Dealers are used to up and down seasons. It's part and parcel of working in an industry so dependent on the weather for its fortunes. But I'd wager no previous season has come close to this for sheer unpredictability and enforced change.

As such *Service Dealer* wanted to take the temperature around the country, from a variety of dealerships of differing sizes and specialisms, to see just how the events of 2020 affected them.

Looking back over the year we were interested in what changes they had been forced to make in store, how their customers reacted and whether the cancellations of shows across the board – both local and national – had made an

impact. And crucially, we wanted to know how they viewed the support they had received through these unprecedented times from the suppliers who they represent.

One phrase that's repeated by multiple dealers when asked how their suppliers have performed this year is that it's been a 'mixed bag'. From what we've been told, some have stepped up to the plate and gone above and beyond – perhaps the smaller players especially – whilst some of the others... well, there have been some disappointments.

One area of genuine concern that has become a discussion point is the concept of 'disintermediation'. This is the idea of manufacturers cutting out the middleman (or dealer) and selling their goods directly to the consumer, often via their own websites. Apparently it is a trend

which has been increasingly seen on the high street during the time of Covid-19 and through interactions we have had with readers via our *Weekly Update*, it is one which many dealers are concerned is finding its way into our sector.

One dealer, who wished to remain anonymous, contacted us with very strong and impassioned views on the subject. They summed up the feelings of many by saying, "if manufacturers want us to be here to service and support their product, they need to make sure that the financial viability stacks up".

Whilst we know the increased use of online by many dealers has been a saving grace this year, getting customers through their doors is still vital to their survival. Any actions by suppliers that actively discourages this, cannot be helpful – to dealers or the wider industry.

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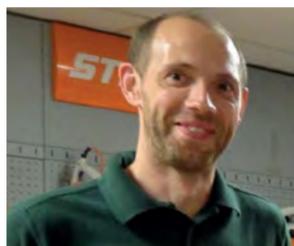
NEXT ISSUE

Our dealer panel look ahead to 2021's prospects

In our next issue, rather than looking back, our panel will be casting their thoughts forward to what they believe 2021 may bring for their dealership.

We will discuss how they view business prospects for the new year, what they think about recruitment and the actions being taken by the industry to encourage fresh blood to start a career in the landbased sector. We will also consider what new technologies they are employing to give their company a competitive advantage.

THE PANEL



Chris Starling
Briants of Risborough,
Princes Risborough



Neale Hopley
Buxtons, Teddesley



Steve Brown
George Browns,
Leighton Buzzard



Chris Gibson
GGM Groundscare, Colne



Gavin Bird
Green Stripe Garden
Machinery, Market Rasen



James Hayes
Hayes Garden Machinery,
South Molton



Simon Holmes
Lloyd Ltd, Newcastle



Anthony Deacon
MKM Agriculture,
Marston Moreteyne



Phil Gregg
Ripon Farm Services,
Ripon



Richard Taylor
RT Machinery, Aylesbury



Pete McArthur
Strathbogie Forest &
Garden, Ittingstone



David Rapkins
TH White, Tetbury



Question 1

What permanent (or long-term) changes have you made to your dealership due to Covid-19?

Chris Gibson, GGM

We've rearranged the depot showrooms to cope with social distancing and found they're actually configured better than previously. We've also made arrangements for more people to work from home as needed. We're also using video much more to promote machines on the website and social media, as well as video conferencing for management meetings. As well as this we've introduced E-sign documents for customer acceptance of orders etc – all of which will continue.

We've also taken the time to reassess a number of business practices that in a normal year we wouldn't have found the time to do. For example, we've made a commitment to IS14001 and are making investments to reduce our carbon emissions. We've also made a substantial investment in new Ibcos modules to improve service and maintenance planning and delivery as well as making many more of our processes paperless.

Gavin Bird, Green Stripe

As yet nothing permanent, but certainly we have had to adapt, like many, to the new way of trading. We've had to adapt our showroom to

create a safe working environment for our staff and for our customers to shop in, however, we're looking at making further changes to improve on our temporary set-up.

James Hayes, Hayes GM

The only everyday change and one that I believe will last, is that machines are washed prior to them entering our premises. This is keeping everything cleaner and tidier all round. We also have our new YouTube channel (HayesMachinery) which we have been increasing our activity on with lots of creative material.

Phil Gregg, Ripon

We still have some staff working from home and will continue to do so at this time. There is still some reluctance across the dealerships to continue with this, but I believe it not only protects the staff at home, but also those at work as there is less risk of virus transference. We have, like most, had virtual meetings, and this has proved not only successful in keeping staff abreast of our achievements, but also made savings in travel time and vehicle costs.

Richard Taylor, RT Machinery

Key changes in our operations have been ramped up since the start of Covid-19. We were already on a drive to develop and bring in our own bespoke operational systems in 2020 to facilitate more autonomy and work from the field or home practices. We were just in time, you could say. The changes and systems are now well proven and working well.

We've also had time to change how we look at the business getting back to the day-to-day and motivating as well as communicating. We've introduced much tighter controls on stock, cash flow and overheads, which are all now reviewed more on a departmental level rather than just the big picture as we did before.

There is a robustness at the sharp end in both our business management and negotiations as well as looking at how regulatory requirements and business

development can be synergised to propel the business forward.

There have been some inevitable structure and team changes too that have reshaped us, but all from a voluntary and considerate point of view.

Georgina Cornock-Evans, Arwel's

We've not had to change much within the business as most staff kept working through Covid-19. Obviously we had to take precautions to keep staff safe whilst working, but farmers still need to renew their machinery as well as to maintain their kit.

We have also had to be proactive in making sure we stock the correct parts that we require. Covid-19 has had a knock-on effect on the ability to source. As this has not always been possible, we've tried to maintain the stock to a certain level in order to help keep farmers going through the busy season, to lessen downtime.

Chris Starling, Briants

We have changed our entry policy to a one-in, one-out process, which although it has consumed a member of staff, has meant that customers get a more tailored service when they get in to the store. Neither the customer or staff member are put under pressure as the queue is out of sight. Because of reduced numbers in the retail area it has heavily limited the opportunity for petty theft as each customer is allocated a member of the sales team.

The Perspex screens on all counters will become a permanent fixture, as will the hygiene stations which are positioned by the entrances, communal and toilet areas. Having committed to ensuring customers visiting the site feel safe and have a hygienic environment, why would we want to go back!

We've also increased our local collection and delivery service considerably, which has been greatly welcomed by customers.

Our online presence has also grown considerably and is on a continued upward trend. The convenience of

offering product availability around the clock, seven days a week has become ever more apparent. Covid-19 has only accelerated this area of the business and we don't see any reason to believe it will subside, so we'll continue to develop and resource this area of the business accordingly.

Simon Holmes, Lloyd

We've increased our online presence, added online chat to our website and will most probably keep these going as they've been successful. Social media has been a key means of getting our message out there too.

Steve Brown, George Browns

Online presence and virtual marketing methods are critical to getting

through Covid-19 safely, sustainably and with growth. We've decided to invest in technology to improve our customer care and the ability to first time fix on our service side. Our online presence/website is being upgraded to give a better online experience, with improved data tracking.

Pete McArthur, Strathbogie

We have been maintaining a clean and well laid out showroom floor with appropriate signage to inform and keep customers safe.

We will also look at how we can communicate more effectively with customers through virtual methods or site visits to keep the personal touch, which I believe our business has been built on.

David Rapkins, TH White

We have done more online team meetings and training instead of travelling for face-to-face.

Jennifer Park, McDougall

Not much, only minimal changes to showroom to accommodate Covid-19 safety measures.

Anthony Deacon, MKM

None, Covid-19 has suited our trading style. If anything, it has reassured me that our approach to business is the correct one.

Neale Hopley, Buxtons

Not many, just our cleaning regime and use of hand driers instead of towels.



Question 2

How do you view the support you have received from your manufacturers/suppliers as we've moved through 2020?

Gavin Bird, Green Stripe

I feel most of the suppliers we deal with have made good efforts to deal with the situation that was sprung upon us all. However, it has not been without its problems, but we are all learning and adapting to our own business issues and needs. I still believe we're not all in the same boat, but indeed we're all in the same storm. Different business models need to adapt in different ways to

others, so however frustrating it may be that suppliers are seeing shortages and supply chain issues, most of the industries in the world are facing exactly the same problems.

Chris Gibson, GGM

In a word, limited. Thankfully we've been very fortunate and we haven't needed it but I feel some have missed a real opportunity to lead the industry though the pandemic and encourage and support the dealer network to keep trading, selling and supporting customers in a socially-distanced manner.

Perhaps I'm being too harsh, but my anecdotal view is that many seemed to see the offer of furlough as a means of minimising their own operating costs rather than attempting to proactively engage with their dealers.

Jennifer Park, McDougall

All in all, excellent support, especially in delaying winter stock payments etc. Doing what they could with reduced staff was appreciated. We were working with minimal staff so trying to keep up with day-to-day running and then admin was a challenge and many suppliers were accommodating if bills weren't paid on time during the

lockdown period due to lack of administration time.

Richard Taylor, RT Machinery

It's been a bit of a mixed bag really. There are one or two star performers who really proved their worth in their support – being there through the crisis stage and demonstrating commitment from the top down with their will to help and their ability to maintain support and stock/parts supply right through.

It's certainly strengthened relationships and identified where our weaknesses are in other cases. Generally, we have had good support. We choose our partners very carefully. It's interesting how the trade reacted in different measures and it has shown the fragility of some and strengths of others. I do like to consider that we, as some of our suppliers did, took a pragmatic, sensible and safe approach to trade. Throughout this we have found our way through with a resolve, team spirit and commitment that has strengthened our team and relationships with suppliers.

We jointly need to keep up our strengths in customer service and customer experience too. The push in the high street into what's termed



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the border. By the end of August we were starting to see it hit the trade somewhat more and were unable to get hold of some machinery due to factories closing through Covid-19. This obviously affected production, creating a backlog in the system meaning orders built up.

Neale Hopley, Buxtons

Honda were very good, with options to defer winter stock payments and supplying floor stickers and banners to increase awareness of Covid-19 rules. We're suffering at the moment from poor stock availability and long lead times from most suppliers.

James Hayes, Hayes GM

Given the circumstances it could have been a whole lot worse. But in general, very good. It's been the smaller suppliers who have managed to keep a good flow throughout with few issues, whereas larger suppliers are the ones who've had a few more issues, probably due to red tape, middle management and lots of meetings before decisions could be made. It all depends how each supplier is geared and how they run their individual businesses. Well done to them all though, for doing what they have to keep us all going.

Steve Brown, George Browns

Covid-19's timing couldn't have been worse as we were fully stocked ready for the season, so the pressure on both dealer and supplier was intense. We're lucky enough to have built some strong relationships over the years with all our key suppliers, so we've all managed to get through it sensibly.

David Rapkins, TH White

Support and collaboration has been good. I feel we have all adapted well to the evolving situation.

Phil Gregg, Ripon

A mixed bag really. Some great and some not so great.

Simon Holmes, Lloyd

The suppliers have done what they have had to do due to Covid-19, but some have got back to a more normal service a lot more quickly than others. Stock levels have been an issue.

Anthony Deacon, MKM

The support has been great. The only fault I could find is that some of our manufactures decided to furlough key members of staff during an extremely busy period, which didn't help. It's been a little like turning up to a World Cup final with no one on the side-line. To have their support at the other end of the phone would have been reassuring.

Pete McArthur, Strathbogie

Immediately after lockdown we had discussions with our main suppliers which were all very understanding, and they were at the end of the phone if required. They also gave reassurance to work with us and kept in touch throughout the lockdown period. The only issue experienced now is stock. I have never seen our showroom so low in stock!

Georgina Cornock-Evans, Arwel's

I must be honest, our suppliers have been very good throughout the period. They have worked with us in trying to make sure parts get to us within the specific timescale, as well as supplying us with machinery – whether it has to come from across

'disintermediation' (the manufacturer going directly to the consumer), demonstrates that we need to firmly hold on to our position of being important to both the customer and the manufacturer. Relationships, trust and customer experience through those brand interactions and commitments need to be firmly supported.

Chris Starling, Briants

This is a very mixed bag and has varied considerably throughout both in terms of communication and product supply. We can't criticise any supplier though as the world is going through an extreme challenge that is affecting organisations very differently.

In communication terms, some suppliers were very quiet to begin with, while others reacted very quickly and vocally. Product supply is and has been a complete lottery. Some suppliers had a torrid time early on but have improved considerably as time has passed, while others were holding good stock early on but are now struggling to meet orders as supply of parts dries up.

As the year has progressed suppliers/manufacturers are generally keeping us well updated and are embracing the fact they'll need to approach us differently. With winter stocking fast approaching, most are asking how we prefer to be met. We're not keen on having unnecessary visitors on site so most seem open to Zoom calling or similar.



Question 3

Has the cancellation of local and national industry events and shows affected your dealership?

Simon Holmes, Lloyd

We don't believe so, in fact, it's probably saved us money which has been welcome. Although it's always been good for customers to be able to see a wide range of machinery in one place, they've now been happy to come and visit our showrooms. It is, of course, a shame for the shows themselves and they're an important part of our local communities, so we're proud to be able to support them when they can restart.

Gavin Bird, Green Stripe

To present, we have not missed anything that has affected us. We stopped doing the local shows a couple of seasons ago and, to be fair, this released a lot of tension and pressure that is caused by doing them in the height of season. Also, financially we are better off for not doing them.

I will miss the industry manufacturers' showcase events, as they are always good social occasions to meet up with other dealers and we look forward to viewing next season's offerings. It will be interesting to see how manufacturers overcome this hurdle this year in getting the information in front of us, to promote the new products.

Pete McArthur, Strathbogie

There have been no adverse effects of show cancellations for us, but I do think having a year off may give the management teams of the events a chance to look at their shows and see how they can improve them to bring in a new audience.

Personally, I think shows are a little out of date with so many ways to market products. I think the utilisation of AR (Augmented Reality) is a vital component for future shows and potentially could show off what our industry is about to the outside world.

Phil Gregg, Ripon

We attend over 30 shows a year, and whilst this has affected the sales of merchandise, overall I think it has had little impact. The national events that have been cancelled have also made no impact to my knowledge, although long-term the ability for staff and customers to view new technology will undoubtedly be a concern.

Neale Hopley, Buxtons

We've had three major shows cancelled which has inevitably affected our turnover and profit for this year.

David Rapkins, TH White

We have not seen significant impact, but it has taught us to be resourceful and creative. For example, arranging smaller, socially-distanced demo events or online product walk-arounds, which have been successful.

Anthony Deacon, MKM

Looking at our sales figures, no. However, I will never know what would have happened this year if there was no Covid-19.

Chris Gibson, GGM

Yes, it's actually given us more selling time in the field and given us a substantial saving in cost. I think going forward we will revisit our approach, certainly to local agricultural shows.

Steve Brown, George Browns

Trade shows are always a positive for building relationships and seeing faces both new and old. However, we're all being forced into new, modern marketing methods so I'm excited to see how the trade adapts to this with virtual launches, video conferences, digital showrooms etc.

Richard Taylor, RT Machinery

To be honest, no. It's been a relief to the business in a strange sort of way. We need the opportunity to showcase and meet up, but it must be safe and respectful.

We run our own annual RTM Show that we were disappointed to put off until next year. However, the time and resources we have gained by not planning and arranging, has been well spent in other areas.

I also feel we may all have been doing what we do, a little for the sake of it. Stepping back and looking at other ways of working, contacting, engaging and marketing our business was perhaps overdue.

Georgina Cornock-Evans, Arwel's

To be honest no, not when it comes down to selling machinery, because these days you don't tend to sell

much at a local show – it's more of a shop window for farmers and contractors. The main showcase for agricultural machinery is LAMMA and this is not due to take place until January 2021. If this is cancelled then there may be a knock-on affect for next year's sales, who knows?

We have missed the shows though, as it is an ideal opportunity to socialise with your customer base and gain new customers. The best show for us is always the Royal Welsh Winter Fair and this not taking place this year will most probably affect our overall sales.

Chris Starling, Briants

We've never been big on shows so it

hasn't had any direct affect. We stick with a few choice manufacturers and take on most of their models.

The only forthcoming downside we foresee is that we won't be able to pick up or view the new models in advance.

James Hayes, Hayes GM

On a personal level, yes, it's a lot less stressful without having to do local shows and manage staffing and logistics. Everyone has been in the same boat though.

Hopefully, we will see them again one day.

Jennifer Park, McDougall

No, it has not affected us.



Question 4

What has the attitude of your customers been this year?

Georgina Cornock-Evans, Arwel's

Farming still goes on and food still needs to be put on peoples' plates. As a business owner, I much prefer to be busy and working with people, plus being a farmer's daughter I totally understand the need to still be up and running.

Farmers have worked with us and we have tried to work with them. Some way or another I think we have been able to source 95% of the parts and machinery asked of us.

Our staff have worked extremely hard to achieve our goals and maintain the level of service our

customers have come to expect.

Phil Gregg, Ripon

Overall, very good, with most observing the safety rules and notices. We have had some discussions with those who blatantly disregarded anything, but they were in the minority. Many, of course, have seen little change as their working lives are predominantly spent lone working or in smaller groups.

Steve Brown, George Browns

In a word, 'cautious'. There's a huge amount of uncertainty on the horizon and no-one wants to make the wrong decision, so customers are exploring all options to get the best value for money, which includes looking at different purchasing methods, such as deferred payments, contract hire and leasing.

James Hayes, Hayes GM

If managed correctly, then they have been fine. You will always get the odd annoying one, but we all get them anyway!

Neale Hopley, Buxtons

Very mixed. Some are understanding but some are just ignoring the rules and don't understand the issues

that are facing dealers.

Jennifer Park, McDougall

Very disappointing, but perhaps the stress of the situation has meant that the bad customers have stuck in my mind! Very selfish, impatient, rude people with absolutely no regard for the situation the whole world has been facing. Many customers were understanding as well. My opinion of people as a whole has reduced somewhat since March!

Gavin Bird, Green Stripe

When we first locked down, we made the decision to remain partially open as we do supply some key essential services and felt we could do this safely with a behind closed doors policy. This indeed worked great, customers were very understanding and really appreciated our help. We had very few issues, and we found most people did understand the business needed to run on a very skeleton staff with limited services. However, from the moment that lockdown started to release, all hell broke loose and people were back to their normal status. But thankfully that has now calmed, and people seem to be getting used to the new



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normal (how many times have we used that comment?!).

Richard Taylor, RT Machinery

We have a fabulous customer base and their loyalty and support through this has been amazing. I can't think of one client that hasn't been working their way through in one way or another. From the personal phone calls of support and thanks, to the continued business and orders we have received, their stoic attitudes and support have been a credit to our industry.

We know we have some unsung heroes and dedicated, hard-working customers out there, but each and every one deserves a pat on the back for the way they have kept our green spaces, industrial sites, schools, sport facilities, care and retirement homes and OAP gardens safe, managed, maintained and ready for use.

Pete McArthur, Strathbogie

Mixed. Initially the customer response was this whole Covid-19 incident was not going to affect them, but slowly over the months, this has changed. Others have taken it very seriously, for example by switching to telephone ordering and asking us to take items

outside for collection to save any interaction within the showroom. Overall, most have been happy with these new working conditions, spending more time with family and appreciating their home and garden, with investments being made in new machinery and landscaping.

Chris Gibson, GGM

Largely very grateful of the support we have offered during a very challenging period and a number have commented on how pleased they've been to see how seriously we've taken new precautions in terms of hygiene standards and social distancing.

David Rapkins, TH White

Our customers have been very appreciative and grateful for our efforts and service despite the added complexity and challenges. They've also been very respectful in observing our safety practices and measures implemented to protect them and our staff.

Simon Holmes, Lloyd

During lockdown the majority of customers were very good and understood the position we were in but that does seem to have waned

and the customers' expectations are just as they were before.

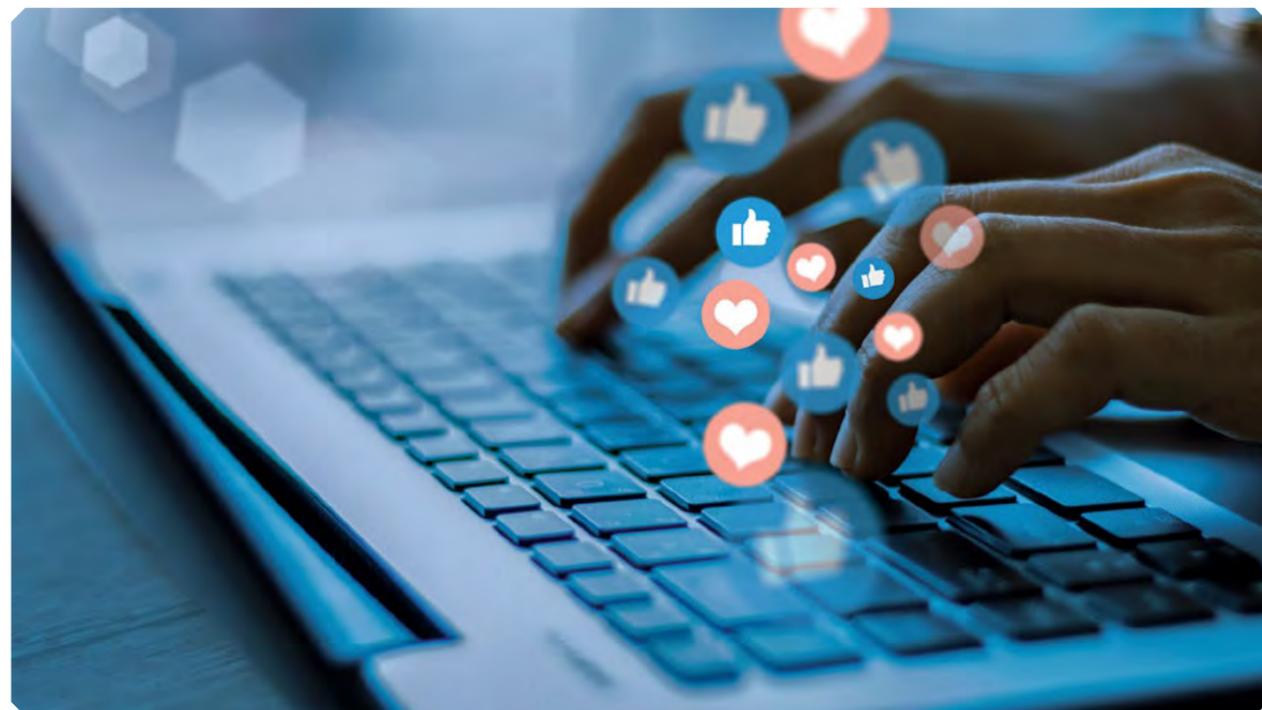
Anthony Deacon, MKM

They all seem happy and willing to spend money. There was some panic buying at the start of the pandemic but once we all worked out what the new temporary 'norm' was to be, it became apparent that we are in a fortunate industry that was to be relatively unaffected.

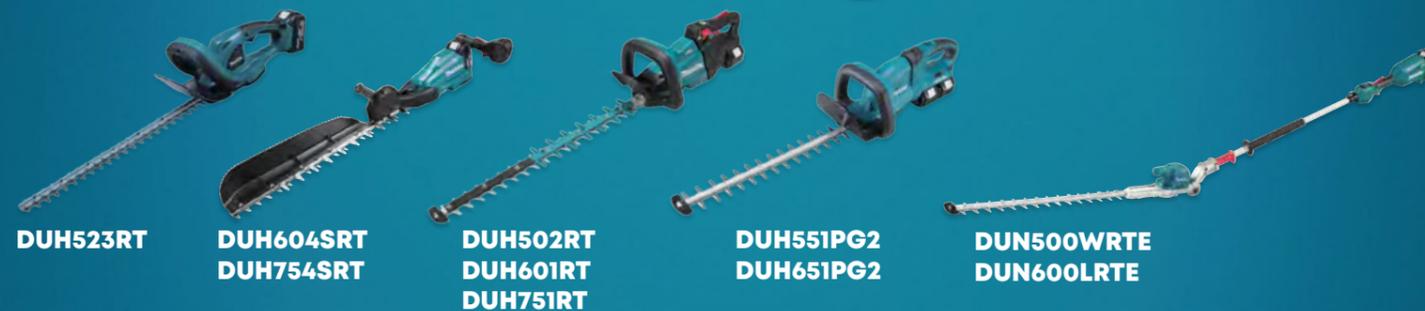
Chris Starling, Briants

Most have been very adaptable to a changing situation. We've continually offered a safe environment which the customers are appreciative of, many making a point of giving feedback saying as much. The pace of life has slowed somewhat (for the customers at least). They've embraced the fact they will have to be patient and queue where necessary or wait for products to come back into stock.

All customers are asked to wear masks, as in any other retail environment, which once it became the new norm, was easy to tackle. The staff also wear a mask when in close proximity so it avoids any 'you're not wearing a mask, why should I' encounters.



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OFFICERS, OFFICES, PARTS & PRODUCTS

Those are among the 2021 headlines at Claas UK, with the firm announcing tractor, combine and materials handler news, opening its new administration and spares facilities and revealing management changes.

MARTIN RICKATSON reports

Although the first phase of the complete new Claas UK premises was occupied by staff in early 2019, the official opening of the new facilities, marking the completion of the major second phase of the project, took place in October 2020.

While coronavirus put paid to major celebrations, company Chairwoman Cathrina Claas-Muelhaeuser opened the new development officially via an online event. The new buildings, which have completely replaced the old Claas UK offices, parts and training facilities, plus the adjacent Manns dealership and nearby used machinery centre, include a new parts warehouse, Technoparc showroom area, reception, offices and conference centre.

Where parts storage was previously spread across five buildings, the new 4,336m² facility provides 42,000m³ of storage, capable of accommodating the 47,000 line items or 850,000 individual items held in stock by Claas, with space to spare for future expansion. For larger items there is now 45m of cantilever racking, while

the amount of bulk racking has been doubled, and a mezzanine area holds 70% of the total contents of the previous warehouse over three levels. All parts are identified/located using a scan/bar code system, and a new Serpentine row system provides improved pick-rate accuracy and efficiency. The goods-in area is 60% larger, while packing area has been doubled and the dispatch area is 40% bigger. The secure customs area for airfreight to Ireland has also been doubled. This all comes on the back of significant expansion at the global parts logistics centre at Hamm in Germany.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT CHANGES

Following the appointment as Western Europe Senior Vice President of Trevor Tyrrell, who remains Claas UK CEO and oversees the French, Spanish, Italian, Greek and neighbouring markets, plus Oceania, there have been further Claas UK management moves.

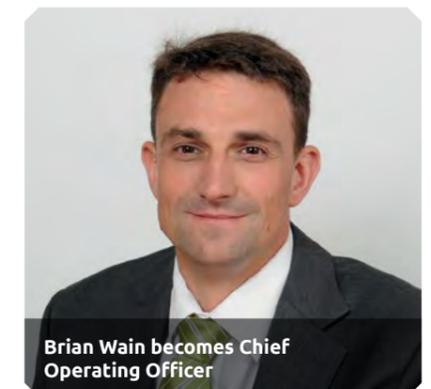
Jeremy Wiggins takes up the new role of Chief Customer Officer



The first phase of the new Claas UK premises was occupied in early 2019, but an official opening, marking the completion of the project was held in October 2020



Jeremy Wiggins is now Claas UK Chief Customer Officer



Brian Wain becomes Chief Operating Officer



Stage V upgrades for Axion 800 series tractors mean new styling, more low-down torque, a new 205l/min hydraulic option and updated seven-plate PTO clutch

Axion 800 CEBIS models gain the latest CEBIS Touch terminal with integrated ISOBUS UT, as established on the Arion 500/600 series

(CCO), overseeing both the sales and marketing function and logistics and business services. He leads a new senior sales management team comprising John Haines (Logistics), Bob Townson (Business Development) and Steffan Kurtz, who assumes the new role of Product Marketing Manager.

Based from the Claas Ireland office near Dublin, from where he also retains a regional product support role, David Thornton is now tractor and materials handler Product Manager. He works alongside Saxham-based Michael Ives, who also looks after these products.

Meanwhile, Brian Wain has been appointed Chief Operating Officer, with after-sales and parts responsibilities. He heads a new senior after-sales management team comprising David McEwen-Smith (Parts), Alex Day (Technical Service), Andrew Dunne (Academy) and Rob Fillingham (Head of Tractors and Connected Systems). Finally, Oliver Holscher has been appointed Claas UK Chief Financial Officer, replacing Thomas Spiering, who moves to Senior Vice President for Middle Europe.

AXION TRACTOR UPDATES

For 2021, power outputs stay the same across the five Axion 800 series tractor models, from the 205hp Axion 800 to the 295hp Axion 870, but Stage V upgrades mean the engines under the newly-styled bonnets produce more low-down torque. There are new leather steering wheel and Grammer EVO Dual Motion heated/ventilated seat options, and as standard on CEBIS models the latest CEBIS Touch terminal with integrated ISOBUS UT, as established on the Arion 500/600 series. It includes a USB socket, facility to view camera feeds, wheelslip display, more implement settings storage and more customisation features. There is also a new 205 l/min hydraulic option in addition to current 110 and 150 l/min options, plus an updated seven-plate PTO clutch.

Stage V Axion 900 series tractors (325-445hp) get the same seat/steering wheel options, and can now be had with the Claas CTIC tyre pressure control system, also available on Axion 800 and Arion 500/600 models. Incorporating a 2,800 l/min auxiliary compressor,

the CTIC 2800 can inflate 600/70 R28 and 710/70 R38 tyres from 0.8 to 1.8 bar in 1min 20sec. The system is fully ISOBUS-capable, with operation integrated into the CEBIS terminal. After programming, field and road pressures can be switched at the touch of a button. For trailed implements it's now possible to integrate regulation of all tyres on all axles/wheels.

Also new is an optional CEMOS system for Axion 900 wheeled tractors equipped with CEBIS. This actively monitors the tractor and explores the potential for improvement before transmitting suggestions to the driver, who can either accept/confirm them or instruct CEMOS to investigate alternative optimisation possibilities. This is said to significantly enhance efficiency compared with manual tractor and/or implement adjustment, with Claas claiming potential double-digit savings in diesel consumption during cultivation operations, or increases in area output of a similar magnitude, while emphasising that a balance of the two is also possible. Data for different implements can be stored as required. CEMOS also makes

it possible, via CTIC, to adjust tyre pressures during work, in co-ordination with the above parameters.

NEW WALKER COMBINES FOLLOW HYBRIDS

Following last summer's launch of Lexion 7000/8000 hybrid cylinder/twin-rotor combines to replace the Lexion 700 models, for 2021 Claas has announced new Lexion 5000 and 6000 walker ranges, succeeding the 600 series.

There are four six-walker 6000 and three five-walker 5000 models, replacing the former three six-walker and two five-walker machines. Inside, all lead with the APS Synflow development revealed on the hybrid models, bringing together the APS accelerated crop flow with a new additional 600mm separator drum after the threshing drum. The latter is the new 755mm diameter unit introduced last year on the hybrid Lexion 7000/8000 models, and is 26% larger than the 600mm drum on superseded machines. Fitted with 10 rasp bars, its larger diameter means it runs at a reduced speed, which is infinitely variable via the CEBIS terminal from 330-930rpm, synchronised across all four drums

Bigger diameter drums mean shallower wrap angles for the associated concaves of 132° and 116° respectively, claimed to result in improved straw quality, lower threshing drum load, reduced power requirement and less fuel consumption. The shallower angles also mean a big increase in main concave area. At 1.3 sq m, the 1,420mm-wide unit fitted to the five-walker Lexion 5000 models now has a larger concave area than the former largest six-walker combine, the Lexion 670 (1.22 sq m). On the new six-walker models with 1,700mm-wide drum, concave area is 1.55 sq m.

The pre-concave, threshing concave and separator concaves are infinitely hydraulically adjustable via CEBIS in parallel and synchronised fashion. There is also an additional hydraulically-engaged pivoting concave bar between the pre-separation and main concaves for difficult-to-thresh crops.

New is Jet Stream cleaning, previously only on Lexion hybrid combines. This uses six or eight fans, depending on model, venting through a dual straw-walker step and a long airflow equalisation channel. Also new is the latest Quantimeter yield measuring system, which uses a

pressure cell in the grain elevator delivery point for high accuracy and a once-a-year calibration requirement. Grain tank capacities span 9,000-13,500 litres

Power comes from MAN or Mercedes-Benz engines from 313-507hp, with Dynamic Cooling and new Dynamic Power system, which automatically adjusts fuelling/power to load. A new drive system, similar to that in Jaguar foragers, uses fewer belts and results in smoother and more positive drive system engagement and reduced power loss, says Claas. Top travel speed is 40km/hr on all machines, and there is a Terra-Trac option not only for six-walker models but also, for the first time, on a five-walker machine, the Lexion 5500 range topper.

TELESCOPIC WHEEL LOADER

While it has established itself in the wheel loader market since the signing of its material handler development/supply agreement with Liebherr, which also covers conventional telehandlers, until now Claas has not had a telescopic wheel loader. That changes with the launch of the Torion 738 T Sinus. Equipped with a Z-type



The 4.96m/3.8t Torion 738 T Sinus is the first wheel loader from Claas with a telescopic boom

kinematics boom, it has a maximum loading height/tipping load of 4.96m/3.8t. Maximum reach is 2.69m, while hydraulic capacity is 93 l/min, with an optional high-flow pump offering a further 28 l/min for external implements. Maximum operating pressure is 230 bar.

The Sinus steering system combines articulated and rear axle steering for a maximum 30° articulation angle. The rear wheels are directly connected via two steering rods to the front section, providing synchronised steering capability on turning of the articulated joint to a maximum 25° wheel angle. Inside turning radius is 1.49m.

An optional Smart Loading package includes programmable lift height and lowering depth limit, automatic bucket return, dynamic load limit, and display of telescopic boom and implement carrier operation on a 9in touchscreen terminal. Further features include automatic telescopic boom retraction in combination with automatic bucket return and transition to the lowest lowering depth limit point.

FORAGE DEVELOPMENTS

Among forage kit developments for 2021 is a new ISOBUS-compatible CEMIS 700 universal terminal for operating Cargos forage wagons equipped with the Business equipment configuration, replacing the Communicator II terminal. The 7in colour touchscreen display includes backlit hard keys and a rotary/push switch, camera input for real-time images from one/two cameras and ISO 11783 compatibility, plus Aux-O and Aux-N and UT1/UT2 functions. Meanwhile, the Cargos 8400 dual-purpose wagon can now be had with optional side extensions, boosting loading volume by 2.5m³ to 38m³.

In maize, Claas has renewed the top model in its Orbis header range for Jaguar harvesters. During

folding/unfolding, the optional fully-integrated transport protection with warning stickers and lighting automatically pivots into the appropriate position for road/field. Folding takes 30 seconds, the operator need not leave the cab, and it can be begun when the machine is travelling at 2-7km/h. To stay within a drive-axle load of 11.5t, an integrated transport system is available, deployed automatically when road travel mode or oscillation damping is activated.

Claas has also introduced two new rear mower ranges – Disco 10 and 100 – with a centre-of-gravity side mounting system. The seven 2.2-3.4m models replace the Disco Inline and 50 series, with the smaller machines (2.2m Disco 24, 2.6m Disco 28, 3.0m Disco 32) incorporating the Max Cut mowing bed previously only available on wider models.

The mounting system ensures the mower bed, much like mowers with centre pivoting, exerts uniform contact pressure over the full working width, says Claas. The large suspension spring engages in the middle of the machine frame, with the spring's line of force running through the mower unit's centre of gravity.

Max Cut mower beds are made from two pieces of bolted pressed steel plate, said to give high torsional strength with less risk of cracking from welding heat stresses.

A waved-shape leading edge allows the cutting discs to be mounted close to the front of the bed which, combined with new specially-formed discs, provides greater blade overlap.

The Disco 360 (3.4m cut) and 320 (3.0m) are straight mowers, superseding the Disco 3150 and 3450. A new double-acting hydraulic ram folds the units to 105° for transport. The Disco 320C and 280C (3.0m/2.6m) are mower conditioners with full-width steel-tine conditioners, and fold to 95°.

Meanwhile, Claas and Sauter have jointly developed a hydraulically-swivelling front lower links system for use with front mowers, designed to address the strip of grass typically left when negotiating bends and mowing on slopes that then is partially crushed by the tractor wheels. The new hydraulically-swivelling lower links mean the front mower swivels inwards on bends, cutting all standing grass and reducing the risk of the swath being run over. When mowing on slopes, the offset can also be compensated for by swivelling the lower links.

Replacement link arms slot into standard lower link holders, and the kits are pre-fitted for use with Claas Disco mowers. They can be used not only with Claas Axion 900/800 series tractors, but also with Fendt 9/8/700 models. Linkage swivel is up to 30cm left and right. A double-acting hydraulic service is required.



New Lexion walker combines feature similar threshing system updates to those on the hybrid 7/8000 models, and a track option for the five-walker flagship

DEERE TARGETS TOP-END OF ARABLE SECTOR

During the past year John Deere has launched two significant new machines for arable businesses – its 8RX four-tracked tractor range and X9 flagship combine line. MARTIN RICKATSON attended the UK unveilings of both

Previewed at Agritechnica 2019, John Deere's X-Series combines take the firm into new territory beyond the capabilities of its S700 Series flagships, which remain in its range.

Deere's bold claim for the larger X9 1100 – there is also an X9 1000 version – is that it can produce 100t/hr workrates in wheat at less than 1.0% grain loss. X-Series combines feature the widest elevator on the market, feeding a new dual rotor separator – most recently the firm has focused on a single rotor format at the top of its range – and the industry's largest cleaning shoe.

The X9 1000 can be measured against the established S790, but the X9 1100 puts the firm into a new output class, says Deere, quoting advances in threshing capacity (up by 45%), separation capacity (80%) and cleaning area (36%).

From the elevator, which is 23% wider than on an S790 and incorporates a new reverser, Deere uses a chevron-design accelerator said to give an even feed to the X-Series Dual Separator (XDS), around which the crop passes in nine revolutions. Beneath the XDS are the largest active threshing and separation areas Deere says it has ever offered.

The 3.51m-long XDS rotors incorporate dedicated threshing and separation sections, with the separation area featuring a finger design to maximise grain extraction. Claimed to be the largest

in the industry, the 7m² Dyna-Flo XL cleaning shoe has 36% more cleaning area and delivers 45% more cleaning capacity than the S-Series, courtesy of a new fan system.

Residue management is taken care of by a new 3,000rpm chopper with 124 dimpled knives, which process straw and chaff. A Powercast spreader has two mechanically-driven discs for distribution up to 15.5m.

Grain tank capacities are 14,800/16,200 litres (X9 1000/X9 1100), with maximum unloading rates of 186 l/sec. Folding unloading augers with an adjustable spout are available in various lengths.

Up to 700hp is provided by a new John Deere PowerTech 13.6-litre six-cylinder engine, said to provide 20% better fuel and DEF efficiency. The X9 also features HarvestMotion, the belt-drive system established on 9000 Series self-propelled foragers, which delivers 20% lower fuel consumption and 30% more torque, says Deere. The 1,250-litre fuel tank can be refuelled in under 2.5min via a new Fast Fuel System, providing filling speeds of up to 550 litres/min.

Power is put to the ground via a new ProDrive XL transmission that produces 30% more

Where an 8RT twin-track machine provides 3.5sq m of ground contact, some 1.5sq m more than a wheeled 8R, the 8RX adds a further 1.0sq m of footprint



torque than the ProDrive, with a 40kph top speed and engine speed management. It uses an industry-exclusive double pump technology system which engages both pumps immediately on starting, for maximum torque availability. As forward speed increases and torque demand decreases, the second pump output is reduced, decreasing power and fuel requirements to enhance on-road efficiency.

A new cab is available in three specification levels, Select, Premium and Ultimate, and can be fitted with established John Deere technology including AutoMaintain for loss and grain quality, Active Terrain Adjustment for wind speed and Active Yield for yield monitoring calibration. JDLink telematics is available free on both models for two years, allowing machine-to-machine and machine-office/office-machine communication. With John Deere Connected Support, owners can benefit from Expert Alerts, which allows dealers to detect issues which may cause potential downtime, allowing them to be resolved before this can happen.

Deere is backing its claims for the X9 with the X-Series Challenge, where £25,000 (€25,000 in Ireland) is offered to anyone who can beat the X-Series combine for output in the field using any production combine on the market. Registration is via John Deere's country websites. List price for the X9 1100 is £734,908, which compares with an S790i at £577,000. A 12m/40ft HDX draper header to fit costs an additional £124,000.

NEW HEADER LINE-UP

John Deere has also expanded its combine header range by introducing new HDX hinged drapers, HydraFlex drapers and a BP15 belt pickup. Each is compatible with the new John Deere X-Series and most S-Series, T-Series and W-Series combines.

Designed for European conditions, 10.7-13.7m (35-45ft) HDX (Hinged Draper Extended table) drapers have a new hinged frame to follow land terrain, and are claimed to offer twice the wing range of a MacDon FD1 FlexDraper. Wing tip travel is up to 300cm, while the belt depth of 1,200mm is claimed to be 12% more than the nearest competitor. Deere says the HDX is the first draper it has tested in oilseed rape that outperforms an auger header in rated capacity and maximum throughput.

For farmers growing little or no oilseed rape, also new are HDR (Hinged Draper Rigid knife) headers from 10.7-15.2m (35-50ft).

Deere has also launched new RDF (Rigid Draper Flex knife) HydraFlex drapers, based on the 700FD model, compatible with the new X-Series plus S-Series, T-Series and W-Series combines. They are also compatible with models dating back to 2012. RDF models feature a new two-speed centre feed section that allows operators to slow down the feed drum and centre feed belt by 20%.

Lastly, for those harvesting swathed crops, there is a new BP15 belt pickup.

Each of the new drapers, auger platforms and the belt pickup comes with a header control unit (HCU) that

communicates with the combine, saves header-specific factory calibration settings and collects and sends header width information to the combine for accurate yield mapping. It also detects and reports header specific diagnostic codes and tracks hours of use and maintenance intervals.

8RX COMES TO THE UK

Earlier in the year John Deere took the opportunity to introduce to the UK market the 8RX four-tracked format for its new flagship conventional 8R tractors, with a press day held at dealer Doubleday's Holbeach branch in Lincolnshire, following the Agritechnica 2019 global launch. While the likes of Claas, Case IH and New Holland have chosen to stay with a wheeled front axle for steering their rear-tracked tractors, Deere says it believes there is a market for a four-tracked format with conventional steering, particularly with customers such as vegetable growers who have to travel on fields regardless of ground conditions in order to meet harvest/delivery schedules. It also suggests that retrofit tracks from external suppliers can result in sub-optimal tractor performance and potential resistance from each supplier to accept liability should problems occur with the tractor/tracks combination.

The first production conventional tractor fitted with tracks up front as well as at the rear, the design shares cab, engine and transmission with its 8R wheeled cousins, but otherwise features a heavily re-engineered front axle and rear end. The four-track format will be available alongside the established wheeled (8R) and twin-tracked (8RT) variants, with four models from the 310hp 8310RX to the 410hp 8410RX.

Where an 8RT twin-track machine provides 3.5sq m of ground contact, some 1.5sq m more than a wheeled 8R, and relies upon differential steering, with its associated headland drawbacks and tracklayer licence requirements, the 8RX adds a further 1.0sq m of footprint, and requires no H-licence as it steers conventionally. This configuration also means 8RX

models benefit from fitment of a diff-lock.

Ground pressure is 0.48 bar (7psi), while the conventional steering and redesigned front-end results in a 10.5m turning circle, which is less than an 8R wheeled equivalent and similar to a 6215R.

Deere says that while the price premium for an 8RT over an 8R is 18%, the figure for an 8RX over an 8RT is 3.5%.

Positive front drive units, with two mid-rollers, are made in-house, while tracks are sourced from Camso. The heavy-duty front axle is a specially-built unit, and incorporates a strengthened steering arm to handle the stresses imposed by turning the front tracks. At the rear, to accommodate the final drives there is the biggest one-piece casting Deere has ever produced in-house. All this results in an unladen weight of 18.7t – about 3t more than an 8R – and with a maximum permissible weight of 24t, 8RT models have a maximum 5.3t payload.

Rear track units, which transmit 60% of the tractor's power, are a smaller version of those on 9RX tractors, with three mid-rollers suspended beneath the drive wheel. Front and rear tracks pivot 10° in either direction. Although there is no front axle damping, with Deere saying one reason for this is to ensure maximum traction from the front tracks, the operator is insulated from shocks by options of either four-point cab suspension or, for those doing less road work, an active seat. Multiple track options are available, but Deere says it expects a combination of 24in (front) and 30in (rear) to be most popular. With a little workshop time, it's possible to alter track widths across a 72-120cm range.

Transmission options consist of Deere's e23 or, on all except the flagship model, the Autopowr CVT, with both providing the same 40km/hr top speed as 8RT models. With the latter transmission comes the option of the Command Pro joystick

Deere dealers had secured 26 orders for 8RX tractors by March for autumn delivery, with customers coming from twin-track and, to a lesser extent, wheeled machines, says the firm. It quotes list prices approximately 20% higher than for the equivalent 8R wheeled tractor.

“THERE ARE SOME DEFINITIVE MARKETS FOR A FOUR-TRACKED TRACTOR WITH CONVENTIONAL STEERING”



New HDX hinged draper headers are available in sizes from 10.7-13.7m (35-45ft), with wing tip travel of up to 300cm



A new cab is available in three specification levels, Select, Premium and Ultimate, and can be fitted with technology including AutoMaintain, Active Terrain Adjustment and Active Yield



John Deere suggests the X9 1000 can be measured against the established S790, but that the X9 1100 takes it into a new output class



John Deere says it believes there are some definitive markets for a four-tracked tractor with conventional steering

KEEPING UP THE MOMENTUM ON THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE



EGO's Steve Roskell

How could the worldwide fight against Coronavirus be the start of a climate change revolution? Steve Roskell, EGO's Marketing Director for Europe who is heading up the manufacturer's strategy for Challenge 2025, the pro-battery campaign for gardening and landscaping, discusses

If the outbreak of Covid-19 has proved one thing, it's that when confronted with a situation which has the potential to change people's lives forever, we can come together, united by a single vision.

As part of the global response, we've shown that we have the strength and resolve to make significant changes to our daily routines to protect our health. Moving forward, shouldn't we be applying the same strength to protect ourselves, our communities and our planet from the effects of climate change?

IMPACTFUL CHANGE

With less movement around the world as a result of local and national lockdowns, the increase in levels of air pollutants has slowed this year, according to recent figures recorded by the Mauna Loa observatory. Although the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has still risen overall – reaching an all-time high – this slight reduction against anticipated levels of emissions demonstrates that the collective actions of individuals can create change.

It is thought that, during the height of Covid-19, daily emissions fell by 17% around the world as a direct result of changing habits enforced by lockdown.

As industry quickly goes back to normal, however, and people return to normality, it won't be long until the world is on the same pre-lockdown trajectory when it comes to climate change, with research already confirming that the lower emissions seen during lockdown will have no effect on climate change.

To reduce emissions over the long term, research by Nature Climate Change which has studied critical data from 123 countries, suggests that green initiatives will be instrumental in saving around 0.3°C of future warming by 2050.

While lockdown wasn't easy – for people or for businesses – the outcomes regarding emissions demonstrate that it is possible for every one of us to contribute to an environment where pollution is managed and air quality improves, for the health and benefit of all.

MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM AND PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

The lessons learned as a result of our response to Covid-19 show how important it is to ensure that we do everything we can to keep emissions as low as possible. That doesn't mean staying at home forever, limiting our social contact and never getting in a car again. But it does mean making considered changes to our daily routines which will have the potential to make a difference.

In recent years, policy makers have been pledging to make our environment greener by introducing schemes such as clean air zones in cities, preventing high-emission vehicles from adding to the pollution in densely populated areas. As part of a long-term strategy, the EU aims to be a carbon-neutral economy by 2050, creating net-zero greenhouse gas emissions – something which is recognised as being a collective effort in which all economic sectors must play a part.

As major consumers, public authorities are also able to create significant change through their collective purchasing power. By choosing environmentally-friendly goods and services, they can contribute towards sustainable consumption and production. Known as Green Public Procurement (GPP), or green purchasing, this voluntary approach has a vital role to play in creating greener and more efficient economies.

Individuals are also taking steps to reduce their carbon footprints in their everyday lives. Switching energy suppliers to greener alternatives; utilising smart controls to more effectively heat their homes; having meat-free days; driving less and walking or using public transport more. These are all lifestyle changes which are easy to make and have the potential to make a great impact.

Through Challenge 2025, we've been raising awareness of



another way that individuals can make a difference: moving away from petrol-powered gardening equipment and switching to electric by considering battery power as a true alternative to petrol tools.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR FOR OUTDOOR SPACES

In the same areas which are beginning to breathe clearly once again thanks to lower levels of air pollution, other sources of emissions are still highly prevalent. Outdoor power tools are a case in point and represent a stark contrast to how other sectors are reducing emissions.

Designed to improve our environment – those green spaces we've enjoyed so much during the Covid-19-enforced lockdown – many of these petrol-powered tools actually produce noxious emissions that damage the very environment they are trying to enhance.

Alarmingly, a 2011 test between a V8-powered pick-up truck and a standard four-stroke leaf blower found that the garden tool's tiny engine produced 5.8 times more nitric oxide than that of the truck, and 13.5 times more carbon dioxide. Since then, new European Union standards have been introduced that require small petrol engines to conform to euro 5 emissions standards – but this was only last year, so many high-emission tools will still be out there being used.

Perhaps even more worryingly, while these tools are still commonplace in people's garden sheds, they are often

still used to maintain school grounds, acting only to negate the efforts some local authorities have made to ban cars from school surroundings and protect youngsters from the harmful impacts of emissions, so while we're all coming together to take petrol and diesel off the road, let's remove it from our gardens and outdoors spaces too.

If we want to benefit from a cleaner environment over the long term, we must act now. Some cities, including Berlin, are already switching on to this by banning petrol-powered leaf blowers, and further afield we see places such as California considering a state-wide ban on petrol-powered gardening equipment.

But there is more we can do. We can make the change from petrol and switch to electric for all of our outdoor equipment – be it lawnmowers, hedge trimmers, leaf blowers, or anything in between.

For commercial grounds maintenance teams, through to discerning home gardeners, we can all make a difference. We just have to make the choice to take our foot off the gas and put our finger on the trigger of battery-powered tools. While the actions we take individually might not make a huge difference, when they're done collectively, the impact can be colossal.

Discover more about **Challenge 2025** and find out how you can get involved at: Challenge2025.eu

SPOTLIGHT ON PARKS

Ex-parks manager, Green Flag judge, TurfPro Editor and Service Dealer contributor, LAURENCE GALE has always championed the value of parks and open spaces. This year more than ever it's been proven these public resources need proper funding in order to maintain their vital machinery requirements

In my role of Editor of *TurfPro*, coupled with being a member of the newly formed Parks Management Forum and the Midlands Parks Forum, I am afforded the opportunity to promote the essential work being carried out to maintain our invaluable parks and public open spaces.

Decades of cuts have seen these services decimated. There are over 27,000 parks and green spaces across the UK, with 80% managed by local authorities. Work has been done to look at alternative models of management and funding, and in certain cases there are examples of good practice. However, the one model that has worked since the inception of parks, is where they are managed by local councils, accountable to local people.

Good parks are vote winners. People love their parks and the pandemic has shown this with the hordes that have spilled out into them – and sadly evidenced by the mess that was left by a minority!

A number of recent reports which have been highlighted by Paul Rabbitts, Chair of the new Parks Management Forum, go a long way to explaining the importance and value of these remarkable assets.

Reports by Friends of the Earth on *England's Green Space Gap*; The National Trust on *The Need for Urban Green Space*; Fields in Trust's *Green Space Index*; and The Landscape Institute's *Making Parks Count* – all have provided evidence

of the need for significant funding for those who manage parks and green spaces. They also make it clear the massive savings these will offer long-term to the health and wellbeing of our local communities, the help they provide in tackling climate change, community cohesion and how they can improve biodiversity.

I strongly believe parks should be at the heart of any properly funded green recovery plan. One would also like to hope the true value of our public parks will now be recognised by government ministers post Covid-19, meaning we see a change in government valuing these national assets. If so, we might finally begin to put in place adequate funding and support for these essential spaces.

MACHINERY IS ESSENTIAL

Local authority work practices have considerably changed over the past 20 years. We have seen vast alterations in management structures and how they go about their business of maintaining the landscape, either with in-house or contractor-led workforces. Either way, the workload can only be achieved by effective planning and having the right resources in place to cope with the ever-demanding workloads. These can be complicated by many external influences, such as funding and budgets, weather patterns, political agendas and the general



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Laurence Gale



Parks' seasonal maintenance

public. For me, however, the essential requirement is to have the appropriate machinery and staff on hand to deliver the expected standards.

In recent weeks I have been investigating how councils have been coping with Covid-19, especially in light of procuring and maintaining their large fleets of machinery required to maintain these spaces.

Over the years, and mainly due to budget cutbacks, many councils have had to reduce staffing levels in their parks, often becoming reliant on more efficient ways of working. One of the biggest changes seen in local authorities has been in grass management regimes.

Twenty-plus years ago, most local authorities had a 25-30 seasonal cutting regime, essentially cutting their grass areas on a weekly basis. This frequency of grass mowing has come down dramatically in recent times, with many councils having reduced it by half per season. This has been coupled with reducing the size of these areas by introducing wildflower meadows and rough-cut policies which sees some areas of grass only cut five times a year.

The net consequence of all this is that most councils have had to invest in different types of machinery to cope with the longer grass policies. Over recent years councils have moved on from owning a large fleet of cylinder mowers to a more robust fleet of rotary and flail mowers – plus they have purchased cut-and-collect machinery.

In the past many local authorities had their own repair workshops and were able to maintain their own fleet of

mowers and equipment. Due to financial cutbacks, however, many of these workshops are now closed, and this has left the door open for local machinery dealers to both sell to and maintain the fleets of machinery the councils have come to rely on.

LOCAL AUTHORITY CUSTOMERS

Speaking with dealers and end users recently has enlightened me as to how they have been coping and working together through this pandemic.

Yes, at the beginning back in April, there was close to a complete shutdown of operations on both sides, but once everybody got to understand the rules and regulations, new ways of working began to come to light.

As I have said on many occasions, the grass never stops growing! There was a need to maintain the landscape where possible and work within the restrictions.

A lot of local authorities set up skeleton staffing regimes to undertake essential tasks such as emptying bins, cutting grass areas and maintaining school grounds and sports fields. It was only when the restrictions lifted that councils were able to return to full capacity and could try to catch up on missed work.

Having spoken to a number of machinery dealers, they are all optimistic in retaining good relations with their local authority customers, albeit they must change some working practices to accommodate their requirements.

From anecdotal research I have gathered, there seems to

be a 50:50 split between councils, with some deciding to refrain from buying any new equipment, while others want to make sure they secure new machinery before their budgets are frozen.

As for demos, once both parties had agreed a way forward in conducting a socially-distant means of working, some have started to take place again. I have had many dealers tell me they have been pleased with the outcomes and sales of new machinery. James Sharrock, from Sharrocks, for instance, said he has been pleased with the way things are working out, especially on the parts and servicing side of the business. These, he said, have surpassed his expectations during the pandemic,



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Local businesses are retaining good relations with their local authority customers

particularly from his ever-growing list of local authority customers.

James also said the company had conducted a number of bespoke, virtual demonstrations of machinery that had also gone down very well with his customers.

During lockdown many will have seen David Withers, MD of Iseki, conducting several demonstrations of this kind himself, which have become popular on social media. Having spoken to David, he said he really enjoyed the challenge of doing them and that it also helped him keep busy while at home. Most importantly, though, he said he had received a great response from customers.

LOOKING AHEAD

Many councils are now looking at ways they can do the right thing environmentally. This will no doubt influence many of their working practices and will include looking at ways to reduce noise, pollution and their reliance on petrol and diesel-powered equipment.

Many councils are now looking at battery power to help them comply with new initiatives and council policies on climate change.

The opportunity to change to battery-powered machinery is one seen by councils to be moving in the right direction – it is a cleaner, less polluting product, which over time is more sustainable.

I am sure the new Stage V power emission restrictions will have a dramatic effect on many businesses, while going forward with ever tighter controls on emissions and noise levels, I suspect we will see the second-hand machinery market fall from favour with councils. Dealers may well see less activity here with their local authority customers, but

this should be counterbalanced by an increase in interest in cordless products and robotics.

Parks have proven themselves to be an oasis of calm during this tumultuous year. Hopefully the message has been received by the holders of the purse strings that the green lungs of our towns and cities need to be properly maintained by trained professionals – crucially, with access to the latest fleets of machinery. Fleets which will always need to be supplied and maintained by a network of specialist experts.



Driving to keep the parks pollution-free



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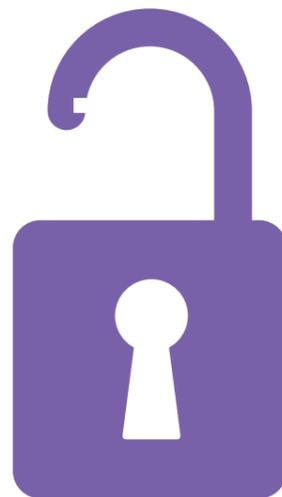
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3 OVERLOOKED SALES SECRETS



Sara Hey, Vice President of Operations and Development at Bob Clements Inc, the dealership development company based in Missouri, shares the insights she offers US dealers with Service Dealer's UK readership every issue.

This issue, three skills to fine tune your sales techniques

There is still time to tune-up your selling skills before season slows down. Here are three overlooked secrets that can have a big impact.

1 Greeting

The first few minutes of your initial contact with a customer are crucial.

Like building a house on a cracked foundation, it's a lot more difficult to have a positive sales experience if you don't start out on the right foot. Based on the initial moments of the greeting, impressions will be formed quickly, a tone will develop, chemistry will or won't develop, and the foundation for the rest of your interactions with the customer will be established. Keep in mind that we all form almost instantaneous

subjective judgments about people we meet; once they are formed, they are hard to change. This is bad news if your first impressions are weak. But it's great news if your first impressions are strong. As customers enter your

dealership, your goal is to create an environment that makes them feel comfortable. **Comfort is the key to creating a strong, positive first impression.** Don't approach customers too quickly. Let them have a moment to acclimate themselves to your showroom and then approach them and say something like, "Welcome to our dealership. My name is Sara. I work here. If you have any questions or I can help you in any way, just let me know. I will be over here." Point to the spot or area where you will be, pause for a moment, and give them a chance to respond. If they say "thanks," leave them alone for a while – they are not ready to interact with you. Give them time to settle in.

2 Ask the right questions

The best approach to selling is asking good questions and then listening intently to the answers. Selling is not about talking well, it's the ability to gather information, consolidate it, and provide a helpful solution. Customers want to talk! They want to tell you about their 'world,' their 'unique' problems, and themselves! Even if you've heard it a million times before and you know what they are going to say before they say it, let them talk. **Customers buy from you based more on how well you listen than on how well you talk.**

3 Use brochures

Of all the tools you have at your disposal in sales, one of the most overlooked is the lowly brochure. Most dealers have a wall or rack that is packed with beautiful, expensive brochures that are drooping over from lack of use. That's because most salespeople have never been shown how brochures are actually supposed to be used.

When customers come to your dealership to look at equipment, one of two things will happen: they are either going to buy or they are going to leave. There is absolutely no middle ground. I don't care how good you are as a salesperson, it happens to everyone all the time. That's where your brochure comes into play. It becomes the tool you use to jot down notes, highlight, or draw on as you work with customers through this phase of the selling process. If the customer decides to buy from you, then you can toss out the brochure – no harm, no foul.

On the other hand, if the customer decides to leave without buying, you have created a customised take-home sales piece, highlighting the key points both parties agreed on. **When the customer goes home or talks to other dealers, your brochure serves as a reminder about you, your dealership and the equipment.**

A YEAR TO GO DOWN IN HISTORY

In his final diary entry, Pete McArthur of Strathbogie Forest & Garden reflects on a turbulent year which, despite everything, saw success for the business



Pete McArthur

Our final diary entry for 2020 and I really can't believe that the year is nearing an end! Finally the season looks to be winding down, with the leaves now starting to fall, dark nights rolling in and the phone easing up on mower repairs.

Certainly it's been a year that will go down in history and as a dealer will never be forgotten. From the initial euphoria of the start of another season which had signs of being a record breaker, hosting open days, attending local shows, demonstration kit getting polished ready for another season, to within a few weeks all of us locked down and plans thrown out the window! How could we turn this around?

I'm happy to report that to date we're slightly ahead of last year, which was one of our best, and bearing in mind that we had to close the shop for a period of 10 weeks, I ask myself: how did we manage that? I put it down to great teamwork and thinking outside the box, which has made me feel we're missing out on many opportunities to gain new customers and interact with present ones.

With the dust settling on 2020, and looking at our stock levels, I'm now happy to have conversations about 2021 PSO, which no doubt

will be a little different from previous years. Products of interest in 2020 have included Automowers, battery products and walk-behind lawnmowers – with battery products performing the best in recent months. Conversations with customers seem a little different from normal, with battery products not being frowned upon, and I personally feel that the next few years will see exponential growth in this area.

The workshop has never been so busy. We normally see a little dip at the end of summer but this never materialised, with continuous enquiries for servicing and repairs of all brands – but sadly we have to inform them that we only carry out repairs on the brands we sell, which sometimes results in an awkward conversation. Automower winter servicing kicked off recently with our last install for 2020 happening on the same week. It's strange to be picking machines up when a customer is just starting the journey. The only issue with winter servicing on Automowers is trying to handle 100+ machines and get winter PSO into a congested store. Why did we not build the store larger?!

Looking forward to 2021, I do wonder if the suppliers will perform better with logistics and how many

finished products/spare parts will be out of stock? Speaking to other industries, this seems to be a common issue with production lines now having to be socially-distanced and components not being available to complete the finished product lines, all causing supply issues. I do feel there will be price increases across the board to subsidise these issues, which now appear not to be temporary measures.

This being my final diary entry, I had visions of writing about developments in our company and the industry as a whole, but instead it has been all about survival, and not just in business, but more importantly in life. Covid-19 is looking like a fixture within the world and our lifestyle needs to adapt to the measures required to survive, with facemasks, social bubbles and sanitisers now being the norm.

I hope you have enjoyed our diary entries and hope that some form of normality resumes in 2021 where we can all meet up and discuss the last year's trials and tribulations over a nice glass of malt!

Lastly, thanks to Steve Gibbs. It was an honour to be asked to take part and I look forward to reading the thoughts of the next diarist. Roll on 2021!

BUSINESS MONITOR

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DEALERS FARE WELL IN UNPRECEDENTED CIRCUMSTANCES

Many report increases in business during 2020



The results of our Autumn 2020 Dealer Survey revealed what we had been hearing anecdotally throughout the season – that despite the unprecedented events of this year, many dealers have fared quite well.

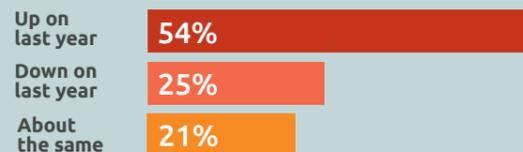
In response to the key question of how your overall business has compared with 2019, 54% of respondents told us business was up. This answer of an increase in sales rose to 62% when asked specifically how your whole good sales have compared with 2019.

In the other two key areas of the dealership, parts sales and the workshop, the majority of respondents told us that things had pretty much stayed as last year. Interestingly though, those reporting a downturn in activity in both those areas were very much in the minority.

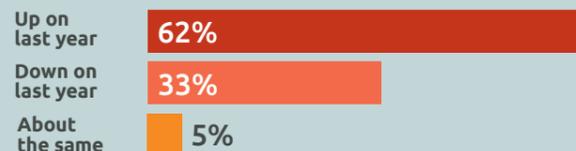
When asked about staffing levels in 2020, often seen as a sign of a healthy, growing business, most of our respondents (62%) told us they had kept at 2019 levels. Perhaps of some concern though, is the 33% who answered the survey saying they had reduced their team this year.

Finally, we were interested in whether readers had felt the impact of disintermediation on their business in 2020. Encouragingly, half gave a categoric no as their answer, with the rest fairly evenly split between telling us they had suffered and saying perhaps they had.

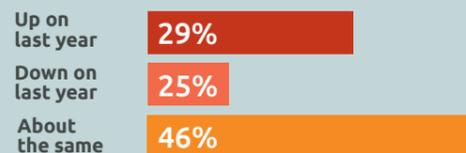
How has your overall business compared with 2019?



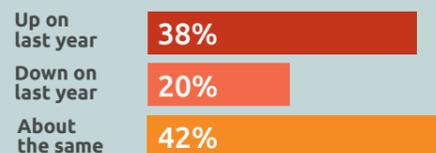
How have your machine sales (whole goods) performed this year against 2019?



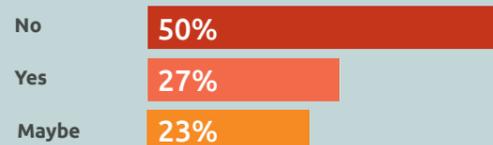
How have your parts and accessories sales performed this year compared with 2019?



How has your service department/workshop performed this year compared with 2019?



Do you believe the concept of disintermediation (suppliers going direct to customers) has impacted your business in 2020?



YOUR SAY...

We asked, with all that has happened in 2020, how do you feel your dealership has fared and how confident for your company are you heading into 2021?

- In the circumstances, we have fared well. On a like-for-like basis (ie same dealer policies as 2020) I feel reasonably confident for 2021. However, it is already apparent from the policies that have been issued that (yet again) the manufacturers are expecting more in the way of winter stocking than ever before. But, what the manufacturers won't do is tell us what their plans are for the season or the longer term. This brings in the concern of disintermediation. We are expected to stock heavily, yet face the real possibility of having sales taken from us. By stocking heavily, I feel that with some manufacturers we are now feeding the mouth that's biting us. I see 2021 being another year of some manufacturers chipping away at our market and our margins by competing with us. So, in summary, I am as confident as I can be for the season (bearing in mind Brexit and longer-term effects of Coronavirus) but much less confident of dealers being able to make decent margins from the demand.
- Up until the end of June we were on parity with last year. Extremely dry weather through July and August, coupled with the end of lockdown, has caused a slump in sales and service work. It would also be worth noting a lack of stock in the supply chain has also lost sales, however in some cases these have been deferred until the new year. 2021 will see tough economic issues and the hangover from this year may reduce spending. Conversely, travel restrictions and property renovation may work in our favour. But at least Brexit will be done – or not!
- I think overall 2020 has gone much better than we thought it might because at the end of March it looked like the end might be nigh. Strong domestic machinery sales, albeit mostly lower-end stuff, have balanced out the slightly slower service demand throughout the lockdown period leaving us pretty level year-on-year. I've little confidence for 2021 with the virus still at large, Brexit still to be settled and the country possibly on the edge of massive recession, but at least the grass will keep growing! Hopefully.
- We fared surprisingly well and don't believe (at this time) that we will be impacted more next year than we were this year. Fingers crossed.
- Our dealership has fared very well considering how many days we have lost. 2021 is set to be an exciting year with new product offerings from Atco and having Kress robotic mowers added to our showroom.
- We have adapted well with a website set up in March for whole goods, with local delivery, so we can continue to serve our community. A drop in footfall throughout lockdown and reduced footfall since has affected walk-in, add-on and accessory sales. Despite this, due to increasing our delivery and collection services, we have continued to grow in our second year of business. Manufacturers going direct has positives and negatives, like everything. On the whole it has been a positive experience and a kickback from a manufacturer with a customer we can now service is great. 2021 is going to bring its own challenges of stock levels, winter stocking and an uncertain economy with redundancy and unemployment sure to rocket over the remainder of 2020.
- Fairly confident that 2021 will be on a par with 2020 but don't think records will be broken. What will be interesting is the momentum of the internet sales and new ways to the market. 2020 has been a roller coaster and performed much better than anticipated whilst very intense for all involved – the last quarter will be interesting to see if it is the icing on the cake or a struggle over the line!

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Edited by
Adam
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LEGISLATION

BREATHING SPACE FOR FIRMS

The government introduced new insolvency measures via the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act; its purpose is to minimise the economic fallout post COVID-19

The Act is, as Paul Taylor, a partner at Fox Williams LLP, notes, “the most significant piece of insolvency legislation since the Insolvency Act 1986”. He adds that “it includes a number of temporary and permanent measures which are designed to provide businesses with the flexibility they need to continue trading during this time”.

While the majority of provisions came in on 26 June 2020, most of the temporary measures were rolled back to 1 March 2020.

Temporary provisions

The first change Taylor details is “the suspension of wrongful trading provisions which can lead to potential personal liability of directors if companies trade past the point at which there is no reasonable prospect of avoiding insolvency and directors fail to take measures to minimise losses to creditors”. The Act brought in a temporary suspension of these provisions from 1 March 2020 until the end of September 2020; this removes the threat of personal liability on directors for any financial losses

during this period. Taylor warns that directors’ duties to creditors continue and claims can still be brought against them for breaches.

The Act also introduced measures to restrict aggressive debt-recovery actions during the pandemic. As Taylor explains, “this means that statutory demands served between 1 March 2020 and the end of December 2020, unless further extended, cannot be used in support of winding-up proceedings commenced on or after 27 April 2020 – these statutory demands will essentially be void and cannot be used as a debt-recovery tool”.

At the same time, the Act prevents follow-on winding-up proceedings from being commenced by a creditor from 27 April 2020 to the end of December 2020, unless further extended, “if,” as Taylor explains, “it has reasonable grounds for believing that coronavirus has not had a ‘financial effect’ on the company; or the grounds which exist to wind-up the company would have existed even if coronavirus had not had a financial effect on the company”.

Permanent provisions

While some changes were temporary, a number were permanent. The first, a company moratorium, gives firms 20 business days of breathing space while they explore restructuring options or seek new investment. Taylor says that “to obtain the benefit of the moratorium, the directors must state that the company is, or is likely to become, unable to pay its debts”. He adds that the directors remain in charge and can extend the initial moratorium for a further 20 business days without creditor consent, but “any further extension beyond 40 business days will require the consent of the creditors or the court”.

Taylor also points out that lenders to a company in a moratorium are not put in a super-priority position in any subsequent insolvency process.

On top of this is a new procedure to allow a company, in financial difficulty, to propose a restructuring plan that compromises certain creditors or classes of creditors if conditions are met.

But a key change for Taylor affects termination clauses in supply contracts. He outlines that “where a

company has entered an insolvency or restructuring procedure and obtains a moratorium, the company’s suppliers will not be able to terminate or vary the contract”. They can, though, insist

on payment for further supplies.

Finally, businesses registered at Companies House will get more time to file accounts; filing deadlines will be updated automatically.

These new provisions give companies increased options when dealing with distressed situations, but only time will tell how these measures are used in practice.

EMPLOYMENT LAW

A TALE OF WORKLOADS, CONTRACTS AND DISCRIMINATION

It’s well known that workload can cause stress, but to what extent can employers become liable when an employee suffers? asks Gareth Edwards, partner in the employment team at VWV

A recent case – *Aylott v BPP University* – illustrates the risks; the Employment Tribunal found that a failure to address workload concerns may amount to breach of contract and discrimination claims.

The tribunal held that a sequence of failings by the employer relating to workload and mental health, when viewed cumulatively, amounted to a fundamental breach of the employee’s employment contract and discrimination arising from disability.

The case

Mrs Aylott was employed as a lecturer by BPP University from 2013 until her resignation in 2019. During the course of her employment, Aylott applied for a senior role and as part of a health declaration informed her employer that she suffered from anxiety, depression and chronic back pain. She also suffered from Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASM) which remained undiagnosed until after her resignation.

The University was aware that Aylott was experiencing some significant challenges in her personal life. Her husband passed away suddenly and her teenage son was diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis. However, there was a ‘long hours’ culture among the management team and Aylott worked in excess of 60 hours per week, including weekends and evenings. In early 2018, she advised her line manager that she was experiencing symptoms of anxiety and was taking antidepressants. She cancelled holiday to accommodate the leave of a colleague and by September 2018 she was described as ‘manic’ and ‘frazzled’.

At this time, a complaint was made by another department that Aylott was pushing back on requests made

of her, citing the pressures of her workload, and that the tone of some of her responses had become abrupt. She was distressed by the complaint and its handling. She confided in her line manager that she was not coping and was self-medicating with alcohol. She provided a medical certificate to work reduced hours and although it was widely acknowledged by her managers that she was struggling and that her health was suffering, no steps were taken to refer her to occupational health, despite her request.

As a result of low mood, Aylott was signed off work by her GP in late 2018. Following the expiry of her entitlement to 15 days contractual sick pay, the University did not exercise its discretion to provide any further sick pay, even though it had provided discretionary sick pay to other employees in the past. She raised a grievance in relation to workload and treatment. She claimed that she was being treated less favourably because of her mental health conditions, which amounted to a disability. At the grievance meeting, there was no real attempt to address her concerns and she was offered an exit under a settlement agreement.

It also came to Aylott’s attention that a colleague had referred to her as “mad as a box of frogs, but a good worker”.

She resigned and brought a claim for constructive unfair dismissal, unfavourable treatment arising from disability, direct and indirect disability discrimination, harassment relating to her disability and failure to make reasonable adjustments.

The tribunal decision

Dismissing the latter claims, the tribunal found that Aylott had been constructively unfairly dismissed

on the basis that the University’s conduct had undermined trust and confidence. It was also held that an occupational health referral for Aylott was not arranged in a timely manner, and there had been a rush to secure her departure from the University as a result of stigma arising from her mental health. As this stigma arose from her disability, the unfavourable treatment she received in being offered a settlement agreement, rather than a resolution to her grievances, and the lack of occupational health support was discriminatory, and she was entitled to compensation for financial loss and injury to feelings.

Best practice

Mental health issues in the workplace are increasingly being recognised. Demanding workloads over sustained periods can cause or exacerbate mental health challenges. In order to maintain an effective workforce and promote the wellbeing of staff, it is important that managers understand their duties and fulfil their legal obligations in relation to the mental welfare of their employees. Employers should be vigilant for signs that may indicate a potential mental health issue. They should engage with employees at an early stage to discuss whether any reasonable adjustments can be made to accommodate their needs. Where appropriate, various options should be explored to enable the employee to continue in their role and a timely referral to occupational health should be made to benefit from medical advice. Managers should receive training to help them identify and actively support staff with mental health conditions to reduce stigma and help avoid costly discrimination claims.

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PRICING

MARGIN & MARKUP... HOW SHOULD YOU PRICE?



Pricing is a professional discipline. Setting the correct prices for goods is not at all a straightforward matter, writes SME Digest Editor, Adam Bernstein

A perfect pricing policy is not one which results in the most sales, or the highest possible rate of conversion from enquiry to sale.

The best pricing policy is the one which earns the highest possible level of profits from existing capacity or goods. The difference is crucial, since many businesses still price to either get the job or make a sale rather than to make it financially worthwhile. In fact, a cutthroat pricing policy can make earning a decent living almost impossible.

While larger firms are able to undertake market research to understand what the market needs and what price customers are prepared to pay, smaller businesses cannot do this. By understanding the difference between margin and markup, however, they can improve their earnings and profitability.

Key differences

What is the difference between the two terms? While they are similar, they are not interchangeable. Margin is, simply, the cost of sales less the actual cost of goods sold. Markup, on the other hand, is the extra cost placed on the cost of a product to create the selling price. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that pricing goods through misuse of either of these methods can be financially catastrophic through lost sales and profit. And through the law of unintended consequences, it might even alter the market share a business has; it can give rivals a pricing advantage or lead to overtrading of the business itself where it cannot cope with the volume of business because its prices are so keen.

Let's use examples to illustrate how margin and markup differ:

- **Margin** – As noted earlier, this is the difference between the cost of what is being sold and its sale price. If for example, a product sells for £100 but costs £80 to buy in, the margin is £20 or 20% (margin divided by sale price multiplied by 100).
- **Markup** – Again, as before, this is the amount added to the cost price of the item. Using the example above, adding a £20 markup to an £80 cost price item yields a selling price of £100, or expressed as a percentage, a markup of 25% (markup divided by the product cost multiplied by 100).

Basically, to earn a given margin the seller has to markup cost by a percentage that is higher than the margin. Why? Because markup is based on the item's original cost.

It's all in the calculations

It is easy to see where an employee could get into trouble calculating prices if there is confusion about the meaning of margins and markups. Essentially, if you want to derive a certain margin (say 20% on an item sold for £100), you have to markup a product cost by a percentage greater than the amount of the margin (in this case, a markup of 25% of £80 – £20 – to sell at £100).

In time, using markup will more likely lead to price changes than a margin-based price, precisely because the buy-in price of the item sold is more than likely going to vary.

At the risk of over-doing the maths,

but in the name of driving the point home, to earn a 10% margin, goods must be marked up by 11.1%. For a 20% margin, the markup percentage is 25%. A 30% margin requires a markup of 42.86%, a 40% margin needs a markup of 66.67%, and a 50% margin necessitates a markup of 100%.

To work out other markup percentages, calculate by dividing margin by the cost of goods. Therefore, if an item costs £33 and a margin of £17 is needed, the calculation would be £17 (the margin) divided by £33 (item cost), giving a markup of 51.52%. Now multiply £33 by a markup of 51.52% and the required margin of £17 will deliver the target price of £50.

To make things easier, there's a great online calculator at: www.omnicalculator.com/finance/margin.

If others in the business are involved with price setting it might be worthwhile checking on their understanding of the two terms and the processes they employ when pricing – take a sample set of products and cross reference it against sales information; take action if necessary.

It certainly won't hurt to tell staff more about the differences between margin and markup and, by showing them the link above, the impact that getting this right can have on profitability and ultimately, their jobs.

To finish

The point is simple – while understanding the differences between margin and markup it's also worth having an eye on demand; there's no point getting the pricing 'right' if no one wants, or can afford, to buy what is on offer.

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DOMESTIC

COBRA EXPANDS LAWNMOWER OFFERING

And introduces an electric hedgetrimmer



Cobra HT550E hedgetrimmer



Cobra MX-534SPCE mower

Cobra has expanded its range of lawnmowers with the introduction of the new MX534SPCE mower.

The petrol-powered mower is self-propelled, has four speeds and the option for both mulching and side discharge.

With a 21" cutting width and a grassbag with a 65-litre capacity, the mower is designed for medium to large gardens, up to approximately 600 m².

The machine benefits from a four-stroke Cobra petrol engine and an electric starting system.

Cobra has also recently introduced the new HT550E 600W electric hedgetrimmer.

The model features a 55cm double-sided blade, rotating handle and 20mm tooth spacing.

The hedgetrimmer has a 10-metre cable length and weighs 3.4kg.

COMMERCIAL

INFINICUT SWITCHES ON NEW BATTERY MODULE

Offers a run-time of up to 390 minutes



Infinicut 60Ah battery

Infinicut has announced the introduction of a 60Ah battery module.

The new power unit joins the company's line-up, alongside the 30Ah option, to offer extended run-time and more power. This new, larger 60Ah battery offers a run-time of up to 390 minutes (dependant on machine, set-up and conditions) and supersedes the current 40Ah module option, giving the operator the opportunity of

matching battery capacity with the specification required to deliver desired work patterns.

The 30Ah and 60Ah module units are standard and interchangeable across the entire Infinicut range – including the floating-head and fixed-head cylinder mower collection, and SM34 Rotary model – to give consistent performance with the option of purchasing further interchangeable battery modules as required.

AGRICULTURAL



Fendt 1100 Vario MT

FENDT VARIO UPS THE HORSEPOWER

1100 Vario MT series

Fendt's tracked tractors are joining the 511hp to 673hp power range with the new Fendt 1100 Vario MT series.

The company says this gives the 1167 Vario MT the highest horsepower of any tracked tractor with a stepless transmission on the market. With four models, the series expands its power range from 511hp to 673hp (according to ECE R 120)

The tractors feature Fendt's VarioDrive powertrain for maximum traction performance and efficient fuel consumption

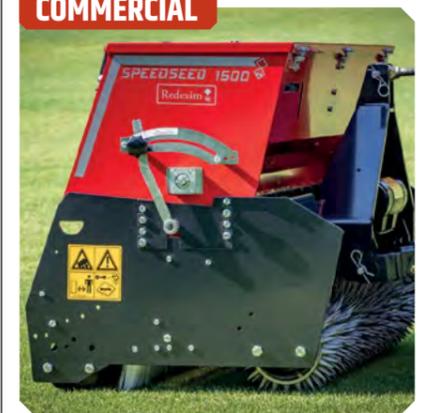
The gearbox is similar to wheeled tractors in how it works. The only difference is that both hydromotors act on the rear axle, in the absence of a front axle.

The Fendt 1151 Vario MT, Fendt 1156 Vario MT and Fendt 1162 MT models feature a MAN six-cylinder

engine with a cubic capacity of 15.2 litres. The Fendt 1167 Vario MT holds a MAN six-cylinder engine with a cubic capacity of 16.2 litres and a maximum power output of 673hp. This engine's size suits the high power class of the high-end model of the Fendt 1100 Vario MT series. The top-end model 1167 Vario MT is designed for applications with demanding auxiliary consumers, such as the high hydraulic output of an air seeder. The larger engine ensures operational safety and performance for any task.

Both engines meet the European Stage V emissions standard with exhaust gas recirculation, diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC), diesel particulate filter (DPF) and familiar SCR (Selective Catalytic Reduction) technology. The service interval has been extended to 500 hours.

COMMERCIAL



SPEED SEED FEATURES FOUR WIDTH OPTIONS

New from Charterhouse Turf Machinery

The new Redexim Speed-Seed from Charterhouse Turf Machinery features a remodelled variable seed rate calibration system, making it suitable for overseeding large or small areas.

The range of dimple seeders has been extended to feature four width options: 1.1m, 1.5m, 2m and 2.3m. It utilises a spiked sarel roller, to create 990 holes per m², and a rear brush which sweeps the delivered seed into the mass of holes down to depths of up to 20mm, leaving a groomed finish. An optional second spiked roller can be equipped to double the number of pockets created.

In addition to the new sizes and styling of the machine, the key introduction is a new seed calibration system. The metering sections make ratio adjustments simple and accurate, while a new mixing bar and individual seeding elements ensure even distribution and less wastage.

The seed system is fed by a tray with a maximum capacity of up to 337 litres (in the 2.3m width variant), and all four models offer a seeding speed of 7.5mph.



Polaris Sportsman 570

NEW GENERATION OF POLARIS ATV

Sportsman 570 upgraded

The new generation of Polaris Sportsman ATVs features a modern design with new features and product improvements.

The Sportsman 570 is available with or without electronic power steering (EPS) and is also offered in a premium SP trim with upgraded 14-inch alloy wheels, painted bodywork and dual A-arm suspension on the front.

Polaris also presents an additional four special edition models: Hunter Edition, Black Edition, Agri Pro Edition or Öhlins Edition – all with unique features.

Improvements to the models include the new handlebar-mounted pod with an integrated LED work light and

built-in battery charging port. There are LED headlights with integrated turn signals, and all-new body shape with sharper, more aggressive lines.

New features also include intuitive and easy-to-use operation – one-touch, True On-Demand all-wheel drive, in-line shifting, and single-lever braking allow for simple and effective user control.

The 570 also has a larger, more powerful 18AH battery that delivers 78% more cold cranking amps. The battery has been relocated underneath the front rack for easy access for maintenance, and there's a battery charging port located on the pod.

There have also been some major improvements to the engine braking

system (EBS) on applicable 2021 models, which the company says now delivers a smoother and more controlled riding experience regardless of the terrain type. EBS-equipped models also receive a new clutch for smooth engagement at low speeds.

All new 570 models include steel front rack extenders as standard, increasing strength and including updated tie-downs for more versatility when hauling heavy loads. They also feature larger, more durable 25-inch Carlisle tyres on all standard models.

Towing capacity is increased to 680kg, there's 29.6cm of ground clearance and a total payload capacity of up to 232kg.



LO REVERSIBLE PLOUGH GAINS MAX SPECIFICATION

New from Kverneland

The on-land, in-furrow fully-mounted LO plough from Kverneland is now available in Max specification.

Max specification brings a pivoting cross shaft to the plough's headstock. This design is one that is capable of pivoting through 45°, so the plough now follows like a trailer when in transport. At the back, a wide-section, 420/55x17 swivel wheel replaces the previous twin-wheel assembly used on the LO.

Road lights are now integrated, using a lightbar that attaches to the rear bodies when the plough is in its butterfly position. This assembly is unplugged and stowed on the side of the plough beam when in work.

To improve the plough's hydraulic system longevity, a cartridge-type oil filter has been integrated into the plough's pressure line, to protect the valve block and hydraulic cylinders from contamination.

Additional specification includes landside knives, skimmer extensions, twin mouldboard stays, a 500mm (20in) rear disc and a frame strengthening kit.

This high-performance on-land, in-furrow plough comes in five, six and seven-furrow builds with hydraulic furrow width adjustment from 30-50cm (12-20in). Underbeam clearance is 80cm, while interbody clearance can be 85cm or 100cm.

COUNTAX ACCESSORISE

PGC+ is the latest addition



Countax PGC+

The latest addition to the Countax range of accessories for their garden tractors is the PGC+.

Driven by the PTO, it's a cassette system which allows the user to quickly switch accessories and transform a Countax C or B Series garden tractor into an all-year-round workhorse. The grass sweeper cassette comes as standard with the PGC+ and there's an optional scarifier cassette for removing thatch and moss.

The manufacturer says that it scarifies and collects the debris simultaneously.

DOMESTIC/COMMERCIAL

EGO'S CHAIN REACTION

45cm chainsaw launched

EGO Power+ has launched a 45cm chainsaw (CS1800E), the latest addition to a range that also includes a 30cm and 40cm chainsaw.

Using a brushless motor powered by 56-volt Arc lithium-ion technology, the chainsaw features a chain speed of 20m/s and bumper spikes to increase control when cutting logs, while a chain brake adds to safe operation. For ease of use, automatic oiling and tensioning features mean there is no tooling and less maintenance on the job, while additional features include an LED light and easy oil inspection.



With a noise rating of 93LpA/104 LwA and a vibration of 5.1/3.5m/s² the manufacturer says it can be used comfortably and safely for extended periods, minimising the risk of RSI and white finger.

Made from robust, weatherproof materials for longer service life, it's also compatible with a choice of batteries, with run times from 40 cuts with the 2.5Ah battery up to 160 cuts with the new 10Ah battery. The unit weighs 4.5kg without batteries.

AGRICULTURAL

KUHN CAN GO AGRI-LONGER

Expands range of hedge and grass cutting equipment



Kuhn AGRI-LONGER GII

Kuhn Farm Machinery has added the Agri-Longer GII to its range of hedge and grass cutting equipment.

Positioned as a compact 'go-anywhere' farmer-owned and amenity sector machine, the Agri-Longer GII has a straight arm format with the main boom structure welded from ultra-high strength steel to guarantee the best flexibility-to-robustness ratio. It is available in two models offering a horizontal reach of 4.3m (4345 ML) or 4.8m (4845 ML).

In addition to the new feature of pendulum link mechanical safety, the key differences between the GII models and earlier Agri-Longer machines include increased hydraulic rotor circuit power (up from 34hp to 40hp) and electric joystick control as standard.

As with earlier models, the Agri-Longer GII hedge cutters have a 1.2m direct drive flail head with 220° flail head rotation. The cutting head, which can work directly behind the tractor wheel, has a removable wear plate and a reversible rotor that can be turned around to optimise lug wear. The rotor has 24 boot flails mounted on 12mm shackles.

Vertical reach for the two models is 5.21 and 5.74m respectively, while maximum hedge height is 3.59 and 3.98m respectively.

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WE NEED OUR 'INFLUENCERS'

This is a dynamic industry, but we need to articulate that much more effectively

It was a 'right Royal' occasion – in both senses of the word. The 2004 Royal Smithfield Show at Earls Court (the last to be staged as it turned out) and the Princess Royal, speaking on the BAGMA stand, enthusing about the "positive and proactive approach of the agricultural and grounds care industry in facing up to the issues of future recruitment".

"Your efforts should be a lesson to many other industry sectors," she said.

The Princess was launching a new stage of the Industry Careers Project, formed two years earlier as a collaboration between AEA, BAGMA, IAgRE and LANTRA, which had raised almost £100,000 as a fighting fund from dealers and manufacturers.

To December 2007, and another milestone as the LTA scheme (Landbased Technicians Accreditation) was launched to a packed house at the British Motor Museum at Gaydon. Modelled loosely on CORGI accreditation for gas fitters – the LTA sign or logo would identify individual technicians with a single industry accreditation of competence, regardless of franchises.

Mind you, the CORGI label was so well-known and widely understood that the gas industry decided to drop it in 2009 in favour of a new moniker, the Gas Safe Register!

Again, there was plenty of love in the room, passionate speeches about the dawn of a new

era, wonderful images of the LTA 'membership' card, and LTA decals alongside the technician's name on service vans. A few months later, six service vans representing different franchises were lined up for a photo-shoot at an agricultural show to demonstrate the strength of this cross-industry initiative.

WEBSITE

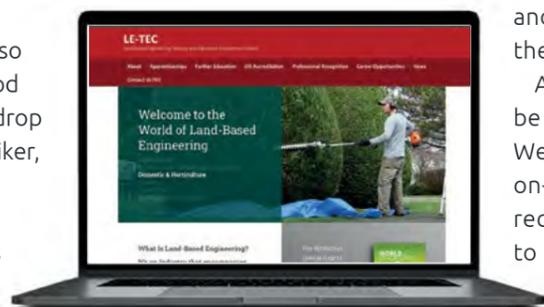
Has the momentum that these two major industry initiatives generated been maintained?

A new website has been launched recently, but the intensity of those two events seems to have evaporated.

That is largely because of the evolving landscape of our industry and the huge changes in communication and technology (not least during 2020). The 2004 Careers Project talked about creating PowerPoint presentations for students and careers advisers.

The LTA scheme is still in place, but its relevance and application remain well below those early enthusiastic proposals.

The new website has been launched by the cross-industry



but clunkily named LE-TEC group (Landbased Engineering, Training and Education Committee). It looks good, is well designed, accessible and contains a great deal of information – but perhaps too much has been crammed in which will always be the case when three organisations are involved.

The website talks about "an exciting and dynamic career" but there is little excitement or dynamism within the website, and references to LE-TEC, or even landbased engineering, are unlikely to get the juices flowing among those who know nothing about our industry.

My point is that to attract attention, particularly among young people, you need to be speaking their language and match their attention span.

In recent times, new careers have been established. YouTubers, Vodcasters and 'influencers' have established themselves as key message carriers to Generation Z. I'm not suggesting that influencers give out grooming advice to technicians, but this industry must have some personable, articulate and enthusiastic under 25s to carry the message through new media.

A last thought: funding cannot be left to individual organisations. We must find a way to fund on-going industry marketing and recruitment initiatives that respond to changing conditions, rather than this stop-go approach.

Status of the events listed below was correct at the time of going to press, but due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we advise checking with organisers websites and social media channels.

NOVEMBER 2020

24-26 CropTec 2020, East of England Showground – Online
www.croptecshow.com

JANUARY 2021

7 Oxford Farming Conference – Online
www.ofc.org.uk

FEBRUARY 2021

3-7 EIMA International, Bologna
www.eima.it/en

7-11 Spring Fair 2021, Birmingham NEC
www.springfair.com

10-11 Executive Hire Show, Ricoh Arena, Coventry
www.executivehireshow.co.uk

MARCH 2021

3-4 GMA Saltex 2021, Birmingham NEC
www.gmasaltex.co.uk

26-11 Ideal Home Exhibition, Olympia, London
www.idealhomeshow.co.uk

20-21 West of England Game Fair, Royal Bath & West Showground
westofenglandgamefair.co.uk

APRIL 2021

13-15 The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC
www.cvshow.com

22-25 Harrogate Spring Flower Show
www.flowershow.org.uk/spring-show-2021

MAY 2021

3 North Somerset Show
www.nsas.org.uk

12-15 Balmoral Show, Belfast
www.balmoralshow.co.uk

18-22 Chelsea Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show/

20-22 Devon County Show
www.devoncountyshow.co.uk

25-26 LAMMA 2021, Birmingham NEC
www.lammashow.com

29-30 Herts County Show
www.hertsshow.com

30-1 spoga gafa 2021, Cologne /06
www.spogagafa.com

JUNE 2021

2-3 Staffordshire County Show
www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show

2-3 Suffolk County Show
www.suffolkshow.co.uk/
CANCELLED

3-5 Royal Bath & West Show
www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show

6 Rutland Show
www.rutlandcountyshow.com

9-10 Cereals 2021, Boothby Graffoe
www.cerealsevent.co.uk

10-12 Royal Cornwall Show
www.royalcornwallshow.org

17-20 BBC Gardeners' World Live – Birmingham NEC
www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com

17-20 Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org

18-20 Royal Three Counties Show, Malvern
www.royalthreecounties.co.uk

22-23 Royal Cheshire County Show
www.royalcheshireshow.org

23-24 Lincolnshire Show
lincolnshireshow.co.uk/

27 Derbyshire County Show
www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk

30-1 Royal Norfolk Show /07
royalnorfolkshow.rnaa.org.uk/

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HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

AT LAST, SOME INSPIRING NEWS!

10-year-old schoolboy restores lawnmower to former glory

don't think I'll be alone in being glad to see the back of 2020. At my age I shouldn't be wishing the years away, but I'm glad to consign this one to the dustbin of history!

There hasn't been much to cheer us lately, so it's rather delightful to round off my columns for the year on a positive, hopeful note for the future.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the 10-year-old schoolboy who has been inducted into the ranks of Honda Power Products Master Technicians after restoring a mower to factory-fresh condition during his holidays. We are forever hearing about how our sector struggles to find the young people to take over from the old codgers like me, so this story warmed the cockles.

Leon Poots, from Essex, completed the comprehensive nut and bolt restoration of a 2004 Honda Izy as a summer project in lieu of typical school holiday activities.

Young Leon said he "wanted to do something different and as my dad repairs all types of lawnmowers, I wanted to know about how an engine works and the various components that make it up. My



Leon Poots' restoration begins



... and with the Izy he restored

dad, Richard, said that if I was really interested, he would bring one home that had been scrapped."

Richard, who works at the Ernest Doe dealership in Sudbury, presented his son with a 16-year-old Izy – what a super dad!

Before the restoration work started though, Richard was careful to outline the all-important safety measures to follow throughout the project. As a result, Leon exercised due care. His first issue was to sort himself out a workspace, which he did by constructing a makeshift bench out of two chairs and a pallet.

Despite being destined for scrap, the Izy's engine showed clear signs of life, according to Leon: "Surprisingly it started, but it was cutting out on low idle." Clearly a remarkable little chap and not shy of getting his hands dirty, Leon then set about disassembling the mower down to its constituent parts.

Starting with the steel deck, Richard welded up some holes, leaving Leon to then prime and prepare the area before applying fresh coats of blue paint. Leon then turned to the engine. With skills that would put most to shame, the budding technician

undertook a complete strip-down that saw internals – such as the flywheel, crankshaft and sump – removed and cleaned along with the carburettor and fuel tank. Taking stock, Leon ordered Honda genuine parts to replace those that could not be restored, before reassembling the mower.

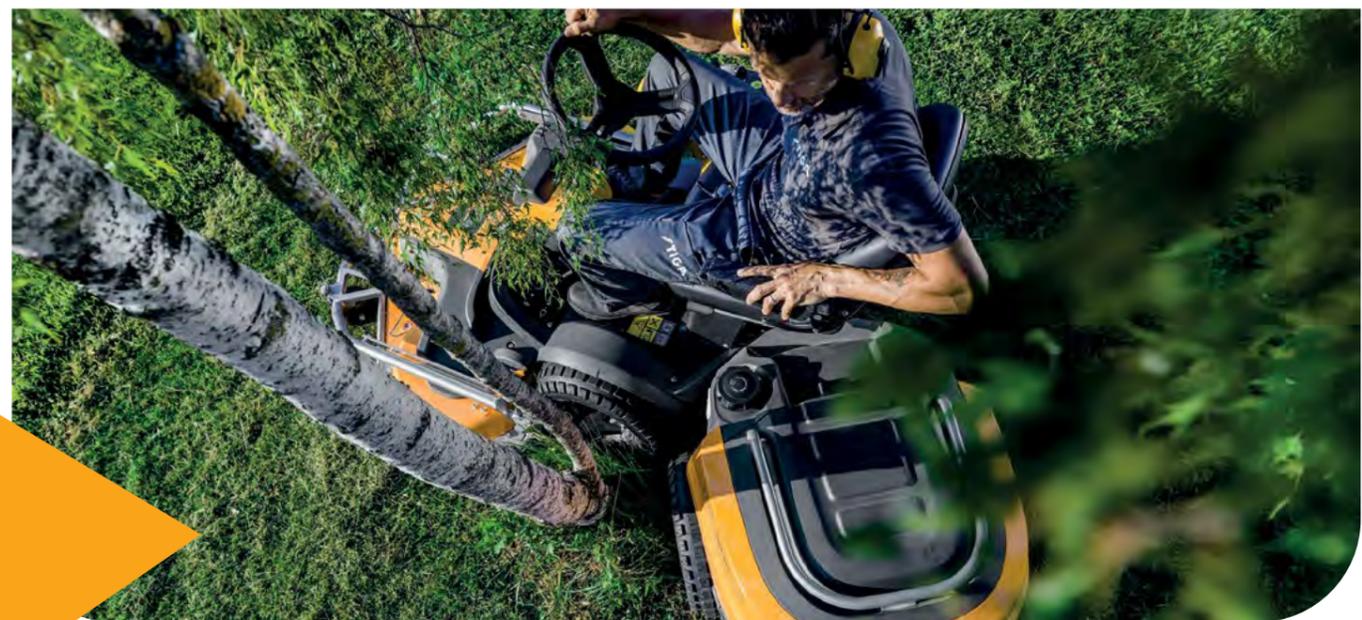
Speaking wise words, well beyond his years, Leon said: "This was a fantastic summer project and I learned a lot about the workings of an engine and the process of dismantling and reconstruction of a lawnmower. It was really enjoyable."

In a lovely touch, to congratulate Leon he was inducted and certified into the Honda Power Products, Master Technician ranks.

When *Service Dealer* ran the news about Leon on the *Weekly Update*, it generated plenty of interest with many readers being just as impressed as I. Commentators remarked on how awesome it was, how Leon should be thanked for bringing us a good news story, while Ron Miller, once of this parish, remarked: "Let's hope there are many more young men who will be inspired by Leon's excellent effort."

I couldn't agree more Ron!

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