SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

PLUS: THE LATEST NEWS & PRODUCTS FOR THE **PLANT HIRE & CONSTRUCTION SECTOR**

- NEWS
- INDUSTRY
- DEALERS
- TRAINING
- SHOWS
- REVIEWS
- SME DIGEST

November/December 2026



NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Hughes Agri Oswestry is building a new dealership around experience, teamwork and a determination to keep serving their local customers

A FORMULA THAT WORKS

The biggest GroundsFest yet

TRENDS HIGHLIGHTED

Tillage-Live showcases differing directions for sector



Letter from the editor

Steve Gibbs

steve@servicedealer.co.uk



Welcome to the November/ December 2026 edition of *Service Dealer* magazine.

The news that Strathbogie Scotland has branched out with a new venture into a specialist machinery hire service for golf courses and professional sports turf facilities across the north and northeast of Scotland makes for a fascinating lead news story in this issue.

On the face of it, it's the kind of story that we feature regularly in these pages and in our *Weekly Update* – a forward-thinking dealership diversifying into a new area of business. But I think it might also say something more this year. It perhaps encapsulates the notion that progressive dealerships are increasingly seeing a need to widen, or indeed sharpen, their focus. Especially so this year when forced to respond to what has been an exceptionally challenging 2026 trading environment.

After a difficult season, not least thanks to the drought conditions experienced across much of the country, standing still might be described as a risky option. Looking at what your customers need, identifying new opportunities and being prepared to adapt are all going to be important ingredients for dealerships wanting to remain successful in the years ahead.

And that brings me rather neatly to our own **Service Dealer Conference**, which is now fast approaching on December 3rd.

This year's theme is *'Culture: Nature and Nurture In Business',* with business culture very much at its heart. One of the sessions I'm particularly looking forward to is Zoë Thompson's, which will look at how dealerships and their people – especially family businesses - can develop a culture capable of handling change.

There should be plenty of food for thought throughout the day and, more importantly, plenty of practical ideas that you can take back to your own places of work and put into action.

You can find out more about what the organising team have in store for you, starting on page 10 of this issue. The entire *Service Dealer* crew is really looking forward to welcoming as many of our valued dealer readers as possible to Stratford.

And, of course, there is one other important piece of business to attend to while we are all together: finding out who will be taking home this year's coveted Dealer of the Year awards.

I hope to see you there!

THE TEAM

Publisher: Duncan Murray-Clarke

Editor: Steve Gibbs
steve@servicedealer.co.uk

Agricultural Editor: Martin Rickatson
jmr.agriculture@gmail.com

Plant Hire & Construction Features Editor: Dan Gilkes
fullbucketdg@gmail.com

SME Digest Editor: Adam Bernstein
adam@adambernstein.co.uk

Contributors: Laurence Gale
laurence.gale@btinternet.com
Keith Christian
keith@servicedealer.co.uk

Design & layout: Sarah Allen

Produced by: The Ad Plain Ltd
Howbery Park, Benson Lane,
Wallingford, Oxfordshire,
OX10 8BA, UK
Telephone: 01491 837 117

www.theadplain.com

Service Dealer is produced by The Ad Plain on behalf of Land Power Publications LLP

Advertising sales:
Nikki Harrison
nikki@theadplain.com
Telephone: 01491 837 117

The acceptance and publication of advertising in *Service Dealer* magazine implies no representation or warranty on the part of *Service Dealer* or The Ad Plain Ltd (TAP) as to the reputation or standing of advertisers' products or services. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form whatsoever without the written permission of *Service Dealer* and TAP. The information contained in this publication is published in good faith and every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy. The publishers can accept no responsibility for any error or misrepresentation. All liability for loss, disappointment, negligence or other damage caused by reliance on information contained in this publication or in the event of any bankruptcy or liquidation or cessation of the trade in any company, individual or firm mentioned is hereby excluded.

CONTENTS

4 **News**
Latest industry developments

10 **Conference & Awards '26**
What to look forward to this year

14 **Opinion**
Building markets, backing dealers, embracing change

15 **Dealer Profile**
With Hughes Agri Oswestry Ltd

20 **Tillage-Live '26 report**
Trends highlighted

24 **Q&A with EGO**
Tab-less is more

28 **Plant hire & construction machinery**
Dealer developments in the sector

32 **GroundsFest '26 roundup**
A formula that works

38 **Business monitor**
Franchises held survey results

40 **View from across the pond**
With Sara Hey

41 **Diary of a season**
With Buxtons

42 **SME digest**
Information for small business

46 **New products**
Coverage of new equipment to hit the market

52 **In my view**
With the Sprocket

54 **Events**
Shows and industry events update

News

DEALERS

Strathbogie expands with new hire venture

Launches new specialist manufacturer partnership



Pete McArthur, director of Strathbogie Scotland and HRN Group's groundcare sales director, Wilson Morrison

Dealership Strathbogie Scotland, with support from Redexim and its Scottish dealer partner HRN Group, has launched a specialist machinery hire service for golf courses and professional sports turf facilities across the north and northeast of Scotland.

Pete McArthur, director, says the move reflects Strathbogie's changing direction. While the business has long been established within forestry and groundcare, its focus is increasingly centred on professional turf management.

"We're focusing much more on professional groundcare now," explained Pete. "Whether it's sports pitches, golf courses or any formal turf surface, that's where we're heading. But our core clients, who have sustained the business for nearly 50 years, remain a hugely important part of what we do and will continue to be. This is about developing our business for the 21st century, and our traditional customer base blends perfectly with our growing professional turf clientele."

The decision to invest in Redexim equipment wasn't one made overnight, says Pete. It began with a conversation almost two years ago between him and Redexim's area sales manager for the North, Allen Whellans.

"When speaking to greenkeepers and sports turf managers, Redexim was always the name that kept coming up," Pete said. "I started asking people I trust, including greenkeepers at some very prestigious clubs, about the equipment and the feedback was consistently excellent."

Those conversations ultimately led to Strathbogie investing in a fleet of Redexim machinery, including a Verti-Drain 1513, Speed-Seed 1100, Speed Brush, DS800 Top Dresser and Tool Carrier, supplied through HRN Group.

Pete says the investment supports his wider vision of helping clubs that may struggle to justify purchasing specialist equipment outright. "There seemed to be a gap in the market, particularly in the north of Scotland," he explained.

"Not every golf club or sports facility can afford to buy these machines but hiring them makes perfect sense. It gives them access to the right equipment when they need it without the significant capital investment. Some of these machines are only needed a few times each year, so buying them can be difficult to justify. By offering hire, we're helping clubs maintain high-quality playing surfaces while keeping costs under control."

The investment also complements Strathbogie's growing expertise in robotic mowing technology. Rather than replacing greenkeepers, Pete believes automation and specialist machinery allow them to focus on the skilled work that really matters.

"Looking after the health of the turf is where the real expertise lies. Greenkeepers have incredible knowledge of agronomy and turf management. If technology can free up some of their time, it allows them to use those skills where they add the greatest value.

"We're trying to change the way people think. Just because something has always been done one way doesn't mean it's the best way. Technology is moving quickly and the turf industry has a fantastic opportunity to embrace it."

Pete concluded saying he believes Redexim's values align closely with those of Strathbogie Scotland.

"I value heritage. Redexim is a family-owned business and that means something to me. We don't go looking for entry-level machinery. We'd rather invest in specialist equipment that's proven, reliable and respected within the industry."

DEALERS

J E Lawrence & Sons hand notice to New Holland



Relationship that began in 1954 ended

J E Lawrence & Sons based in Pembrokeshire have announced that they have handed their resignation to New Holland, ending a relationship which began in 1954.

In a statement on their Facebook page, the dealership said, "Our first priority is to look after those customers who have been loyal to us. We will be able to supply parts and machines and carry out warranty work until September 2027 as we are now in a 12-month notice period.

"We will now be able to completely focus on selling JCB tractors throughout our JCB territory and we will also be able to make the most of new opportunities."

Following this announcement, New Holland announced an update to its dealer network in South West Wales. From September 2026, Gwili Jones has expanded their territory to the South West covering the county of Pembrokeshire and will become the exclusive New Holland dealer in this area from September 2027.

Gwili Jones, an established New Holland dealer since 1985, will continue to provide sales, service and parts support to customers across both its existing and expanded territory. To further strengthen its local presence, the dealership will open a new depot in the Letterston area, increasing support and accessibility for customers throughout Pembrokeshire.

David Rapkins, commercial business unit director for UK and ROI, said, “We would like to thank J E Lawrence & Sons for their important role played in representing the New Holland brand over the years. As this transition takes place, our focus is to ensure customers in South West Wales continue to receive the high level of support they expect. As a well-established New Holland dealer, Gwili Jones is ideally placed to extend its trusted sales, service and parts support to New Holland customers into the new territory.”

DEALERS

Haynes Agricultural relocates operation

With transfer of Ernest Doe depot



Haynes' Uckfield premises

Haynes Agricultural is expanding its agricultural machinery network in the South East with the transfer of the property, assets and trade of Ernest Doe Power's Case IH agricultural business at Ringmer, East Sussex, to Haynes Brothers Ltd, the holding company of Haynes Agricultural.

As part of the move, Haynes Agricultural will relocate its existing Uckfield agricultural operation to the more modern Ringmer facility on 6 November 2026.

The company says the move will bring together the expertise and resources of the two operations, creating a stronger base to support agricultural customers across East and West Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Kent.

The development is part of Haynes Agricultural's wider strategy with CNH to create a stronger and more integrated CNH dealer network across the South East. Alongside the recently dual-branded Great Chart depot, and planned dual branding at its Wrotham Heath and Horsham sites, the network will give customers access to both CNH brands - New Holland and Case IH - alongside JCB, supported by Haynes' established sales, parts and service teams.

Haynes has expanded its agricultural operations in recent years, including the integration of Ernest Doe Power's agricultural business at Woodchurch, Ashford, and the acquisition of the Mike Garwood Ltd agricultural businesses in Alton and on the Isle of Wight.

James Broadley, managing director of Haynes Agricultural Ltd, said, "The acquisition of the Ringmer business will be the final part of the jigsaw in creating the business we have been working towards for several years. It completes our dual-branded CNH strategy and gives us a strong, sustainable platform for the future. The agricultural industry continues to evolve rapidly, and this investment ensures we are well placed to continue adapting, investing and supporting our customers for many years to come."

Adrian Woods, director of agricultural operations at Haynes Agricultural Ltd, added, "The Ringmer facility will give us an excellent opportunity to bring together experienced people, resources and product expertise in one location. Customers will benefit from access to both New Holland and Case IH agricultural machinery, as well as JCB, supported by our established parts and service teams.

"While the Uckfield site will close as part of the move, our commitment to our customers in the area remains exactly the same. In addition, we look forward to working with the existing team at Ringmer to help build on their success and also, most importantly, to welcoming customers to Ringmer and to further strengthening the relationships we have both developed in the area."

INDUSTRY

Cramer name to disappear from Europe

New chapter as Greenworks Commercial to commence

Cramer is to be phased out as a brand in Europe, with its professional equipment business becoming Greenworks Commercial from January 2027

The move is being described by the manufacturer as a new chapter for its professional battery-powered equipment operation, bringing its expertise under a single global brand.

John McGrady, country director UK & Ireland, told Service Dealer, "Just to be clear; we are still Globe Technologies, but we are transitioning the brand Cramer to our other brand Greenworks."

The transition will take place progressively, with Cramer and Greenworks Commercial co-existing during the changeover to ensure business continuity for dealers and professional users. The company says full product availability, existing warranties, technical support, dedicated sales contacts and customer service will continue throughout the transition.

It has also stressed that the change will not alter the foundations of the existing Cramer offering, with Greenworks Commercial products continuing to be built around the same engineering standards, battery technology, manufacturing quality and service support.

For dealers, the manufacturer says the move will bring an enhanced package of commercial and marketing resources. These will include international marketing campaigns, expanded social media and digital content, lead-generation initiatives, enhanced commercial support and access to shared international marketing resources.

The rebranding will also coincide with an expansion of the professional product portfolio, with entirely new product categories planned for 2027 and 2028. The company says it will increase investment in research and development as it continues the transition towards 100% battery-powered professional equipment.

Artificial intelligence, robotics and connectivity are also identified as areas for increased investment, while the Greenworks Pro PowerAll 24V professional power tool range will be expanded.

The company says bringing its professional expertise together under the Greenworks Commercial name will allow it to coordinate its international offering more effectively and provide dealers and professional users with a broader range of products and applications.

Commenting on the move, founder and chairman Yin Chen said the decision was about more than a change of logo, describing it as a way of strengthening the company's ability to innovate, invest and support its partners worldwide.

The manufacturer says its objective is to ensure a seamless transition for dealers and professional users, while building Greenworks Commercial into a global professional brand.



DEALER TOOLKIT



Potential of AI Agents explored for dealerships

In new free module

***Service Dealer* has launched a new free digital Dealer Toolkit module exploring how the emerging technology of AI Agents could potentially be used within independent dealerships.**

The new module follows the popular AI sessions presented by Neil Wilkins at the last two Service Dealer Conferences but takes the subject a step further by looking beyond individual AI tools and considering how autonomous AI agents could assist with everyday dealership operations.

Service Dealer owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke said of the new module, "It's incredibly difficult for a smaller business to navigate all the changes that are happening so rapidly. I am delighted that we are adding a second AI module to our Toolkit, helping the machinery dealer community to stay on top of this important topic and make sensible business decisions.

"This Toolkit is a free resource to support the dealer community, and we will continue to evolve the content. So please do register."

The Toolkit considers what an agent-based dealership could look like, how AI automation might be used to handle repetitive and time-consuming tasks, and the potential business value of combining smart, data-driven responsiveness with the personal service that remains a key strength of independent dealers.

The new free Dealer Toolkit is available now on the Service Dealer website (www.servicedealer.co.uk). If you've accessed a Toolkit before, use your same log-in, or if visiting for the first time you can register for free.

DEALERS

Double A celebrates 30 years

Milestone supplying professional equipment

Double A celebrated 30 years of supplying equipment to the Scottish groundcare industry this summer.

The dealership says the first franchise they acquired was the Groundsman Aerator range, and Sandy Armit, now Double A managing director, says he spent many days demonstrating this pedestrian machine to golf courses and bowling clubs across Scotland.

The company grew steadily in the late '90s, adding Lastec mowers and Timberwolf woodchippers to its range before being appointed as John Deere turf equipment dealers for Fife, Clackmannanshire and Tayside in 1999.

They built their headquarters in Cupar, Fife, in 2001 and, from there, has steadily grown to become John Deere's largest independent turf equipment dealer in the UK, employing 56 staff across three outlets in Scotland.

Double A are also main dealers for some other top brands in the groundcare industry, still selling Groundsman, Lastec and Timberwolf - but say they are very much looking to the future at the same time.

Sandy Armit explained, "As technology becomes increasingly integrated into machinery, Double A continues to evolve. Technological advances help greenkeepers and grounds teams manage their facilities more effectively, maximising the efficiency of people, machines and chemicals, while Double A's sales, support and technical teams continually develop our expertise to ensure customers get the most output from their machinery and technology."



Sandy Armit

DEALERS

Howardson Group extends reach across Scotland

Expansion of partnership with Thomas Sherriff & Co

Howardson Group Limited has extended its reach across Scotland with the expansion of its partnership with groundcare dealer Thomas Sherriff & Co Limited.

Having already stocked Dennis mowers and Sisis equipment for over 20 years, Thomas Sherriff's enhanced partnership with Howardson Group will allow it to offer products from the two brands to customers in Midlothian, East Lothian, West Lothian, and the Scottish Borders. As a result, the East Lothian-based dealer will now be able to offer Dennis and Sisis products across its full territory, operating across six sites in North East England and South East Scotland, reaching from North Yorkshire to the Forth Bridge.

The move forms part of Howardson Group's strategic growth plan, which aims to bring the company closer to its customers through the improved availability of local sales, servicing, and after-sales support across the UK.

Ewen Wilson, area sales manager for Howardson Group, said, "The East of Scotland is a key region for us as a business, so we're thrilled to be enhancing our support for our customers there through Thomas Sherriff.

"The partnership between our two companies goes back over 20 years, and Thomas Sherriff really is a household name in the area, so their team was very much the natural choice for the job. With Thomas Sherriff, I'm confident that the next few decades will be just as successful as the last, with our partnership growing even further."

Harry Pattinson, turf development manager at Thomas Sherriff, said, "Combined with the support of the excellent people behind them at Howardson Group, bringing Dennis and Sisis to the Lothians and the Scottish Borders really was a no brainer. This represents an important step in strengthening our capabilities, aligning and enhancing the products and services we provide to our customers."



L-R Jack Lyall, Harry Pattinson, Ewen Wilson and Steven Foster

News in brief:

Read these stories, and more, in full at: ***www.servicedealer.co.uk***



AEA appoints

The AEA say they are pleased to welcome Anand Dossa as their new agricultural economist, bringing more than 15 years' experience in economic analysis, market intelligence and policy across agriculture, automotive manufacturing and renewable energy. He will be taking over from Stephen Howarth, who will retire at the end of the year.

Toro strengthens professional focus

Toro UK have announced the appointment of Rob Read as their new territory manager for the South West of England and Wales. Having started his career in the ground care industry at Devon Garden Machinery, Toro says Rob will be working closely with their dealer network and customers across his territory.





Groundcare manager welcomed back to DOE

Dan Palmer has been welcomed back to Ernest Doe as their groundcare general manager, based at Ulting. The dealership says he returns with a wealth of experience and knowledge across groundcare, golf equipment and machinery sales and that they are excited about the future of their groundcare department's development under Dan's leadership.

Placing culture at the heart of your dealership

Nature & nurture in business to be discussed at December's Service Dealer Conference

Taking place on Thursday 3rd December 2026 at the Crowne Plaza, Stratford-upon-Avon, the Service Dealer Conference has as its theme this year, *Culture: Nature & Nurture In Business.*

Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke summed up what the day will be about, saying, "Culture can be the thing that makes a good dealership great, but it can also be the thing that stops a business moving forward. This year is about looking at how we nurture the right culture while still having the courage to challenge what we do and adapt when the world around us changes.

"We've got some fascinating speakers lined up for this year to help us do just that. We can't wait to share the day with our amazing dealer delegate friends."

Keynote

Our keynote, **Cally Beaton,** is certainly no stranger to change. A broadcaster, performer, entrepreneur and best-selling author, she has held senior positions with major media companies including ITV and Paramount. Her session, *Stand Up, Stand Out: Change, Ambition & Reinvention,* will look at why embracing change can be an opportunity rather than something to fear.



Cally Beaton

Cally will explore ambition, creative disruption, human connection and the importance of being prepared to step outside our comfort zones. For dealers operating in a rapidly changing marketplace, there should be plenty to think about – including whether we sometimes need to get a little better at failing before we can succeed.

Insight sessions

We have two insight sessions this year.



Frankie Allen MBE

Firstly, we'll hear from **Frankie Allen MBE,** a Paralympic rowing champion, four-time World Champion and 2024 Paralympic Gold medallist. Frankie's remarkable sporting journey is a story of determination, teamwork and overcoming obstacles, but her message will go beyond her achievements on the water.

She'll talk about the importance of culture and how a team can work towards the same end goal even when its individual members have very different motivations and reasons for being there. A relevant message for any dealership team.



Colonel Julian Salusbury

We'll also learn from **Colonel Julian Salusbury** (late Welsh Guards), who has served as an Army officer for more than 27 years, with operational experience in Northern Ireland, Iraq, Afghanistan and the wider Middle East, alongside senior staff roles across Defence and the Ministry of Defence.

His session, *The Importance of Character in Leadership*, will explore how character is built through our everyday actions, revealed when things go wrong and strengthened by how we respond to adversity. Drawing on his military experience, Julian will examine the behaviours that build trust and how setbacks and disappointment can help shape us into better leaders - lessons that are just as relevant to running a dealership and leading a team as they are to military life.

Breakouts

Our popular, smaller-grouped breakout sessions also return, again breaking down their subjects to a practical level for application in your dealerships.

Nick Elston, an award-winning speaker and transformational speaking coach returns after his popular session in 2025. Tackling communication with *Find Your Voice: How to Truly Be Heard in Life and Business,* he'll look at why we sometimes hold back from saying what needs to be said and provide practical tools for communicating with greater clarity, confidence and impact.



Nick Elston

Also **Zoë Thompson,** who spent 20 years in the police service before becoming a leadership consultant and coach, will explore *Nature, Nurture and Nerve: Building a Culture That Can Handle Change.* Her session will look at what shapes a business's culture, what we inherit and what we actively create – and how businesses can move from having change forced upon them to taking the lead.



Zoë Thompson

So, this year's Conference isn't just about culture in the abstract. It's about people, leadership, communication, change and the everyday decisions that help shape the businesses dealers are building.

Charlie returns to host, with hilarious support from Tom Wrigglesworth

Back by popular demand *(it says here)*, dealer-favourite Charlie Baker returns once again to host our gala Awards dinner in the evening following the Conference.

Charlie's versatile talents as a stand-up comedian, actor, and highly acclaimed jazz singer have seen him earn a reputation as 'a superior take on the modern showman' *(The Guardian)* and he will certainly, once again, add that special sparkle to our prestigeous event. On-screen, he has starred in countless shows including The Last Leg, Harry Hill's Tea Time, Comedy Central at the Comedy Store, The Great British Bake-Off: An Extra Slice, Never Mind The Buzzcocks, Richard Osman's House of Games, Edinburgh Comedy Fest Live, The Dog Ate My Homework and Channel 4's Comedy Gala. Charlie also starred in the leading role in Harry Hill's Tony! The Tony Blair Rock Opera at London's Park Theatre, receiving four stars from *The Times*.

He is also on Talksport every Saturday for the Game Day Warm Up as well as Wednesday and Thursdays on Hawksbee & Jacobs. He's also a regular on The Football's



Charlie Baker



Tom Wrigglesworth

On and The Premier League Show.

Joining Charlie for the always enjoyable and unpredictable stand-up spot this year, is **Tom Wrigglesworth.** The Sheffield-born comedian, radio and television presenter, and award-winning storyteller first came to prominence after winning Channel 4's So You Think You're Funny? competition in 2003. Tom has since established himself as a familiar voice on BBC Radio 4, writing and starring in several series, including Tom Wrigglesworth's Hang-Ups and Tom Wrigglesworth's Open Letters, the latter earning him a Sony Radio Academy Award.

Tom's comedy combines a warm, engaging delivery with sharply observed stories and a talent for finding humour in everyday frustrations. His stand-up has earned him the Chortle Best Show Award, while his television work has included BBC programmes Electric Dreams and Engineering Giants.

With a reputation for blending quick-fire gags with brilliantly crafted tales, he should provide an entertaining end to a day of discussion, insight and networking.

Conference running order first look

The first look at the schedule for the day's running order at the Service Dealer Conference has been released. Please be aware details might be liable to last minute alterations.

Welcome Duncan Murray-Clarke

Keynote Cally Beaton

COFFEE BREAK

Insight Frankie Allen MBE

BREAKOUT SESSION 1

A: ***Find Your Voice:*** How to Truly Be Heard in Life and Business

B: ***Nature, Nurture and Nerve:*** Building a Culture That Can Handle Change

LUNCH, NETWORKING & SPONSOR SHOWCASE

BREAKOUT SESSION 2

A: ***Find Your Voice:*** How to Truly Be Heard in Life and Business

B: ***Nature, Nurture and Nerve:*** Building a Culture That Can Handle Change

COFFEE BREAK

Welcome back
Duncan Murray-Clarke

Insight Colonel Julian Salusbury

Conference close
Duncan Murray-Clarke

2026's Dealer Of The Year awards

Entries are in and judging is in full swing

The categories that you, our dealer readers have been entering this year are:

- Garden Machinery Dealer of the Year 2026
- Farm Machinery Dealer of the Year 2026
- Professional Turfcare Dealer of the Year 2026
- Forestry Equipment Dealer of the Year 2026
- Plant Hire & Construction Dealer of the Year 2026

There are also special award categories this year:

- Star of the Dealership 2026
- New Technician of the Year 2026
- Leadership Award 2026
- Best New Initiative Award 2026

In addition, each dealership winner will be in the running for the prestigious Overall Dealer of the Year Award.

- Overall Dealer of the Year 2026

Our 2026 Sponsors

The following organisations have confirmed their sponsorship of the 2026 Service Dealer Conference and Awards. We'd like to welcome them on board and thank them for their support and input.

OUR PRINCIPAL SPONSOR

solo by AL-KO / WEIBANG

OUR GOLD SPONSORS

aptean Equipment DMS

ARIENS | CO

CRAMER / greenworks COMMERCIAL

EGO

Husqvarna

ibcos

STIGA

STIHL

TORO

OUR NETWORKING SPONSORS

truetrack

GARDEN TRADER

TAP



COBRA

Choose Cobra. The brand that works for you.

With over 170 products in the range, including lawn tractors, lawnmowers, robotic mowers, 40V cordless machines, handheld garden tools and Fortis cylinder mowers, Cobra is fast becoming a market-leading brand in garden machinery. For 2027, the range continues to grow with new product launches including ride-on front mowers, commercial lawnmowers and a range of petrol rear roller mowers. For more information contact Andy Marvin: 07771 581 296 or call 0115 986 6646.

- Increase your business and bottom line profits.
- Exclusive special offers on selected products.
- Extensive local & national Cobra marketing support.
- An evolving range of over 170 gardening products.
- No unreasonable Cobra stocking commitment.

Powered by Briggs & Stratton / Loncin / EGO Power+ Battery / 40V MAX Lithium-Ion

Cordless Mowers | **Petrol Mowers** | **Ride-Ons** | **Cylinder Mowers** | **Chippers**









Building markets, backing dealers & embracing change

Tony Macer, ex sales director of Kress UK and Ireland, offers his thoughts on the future of the dealer network



After seven years helping to build Kress across the UK and Ireland, I am preparing for a new chapter. It is also an opportunity to reflect on what makes this industry special: the people, the relationships and the willingness to get behind new ideas.

My time with Kress has involved building the dealer network, developing teams and helping customers understand how battery and autonomous technology could fit into their businesses.

Above all, it has reinforced my belief that commercial success starts with understanding the people who sell, service and use the equipment.

Building a network means building trust

A dealer network is much more than a collection of names on a map. Each business brings local knowledge, customer relationships and years of practical experience. Those strengths deserve recognition and support.

Introducing a brand or a new product category requires more than enthusiasm. Dealers need a clear commercial proposition, confidence in the equipment and a manufacturer that listens.

Taking the plunge with new technology

For an established dealer, investing in battery tools or robotic mowing can feel like a significant step.

My view is that technology should be seen as another revenue stream to run alongside the existing business. The knowledge, service standards and customer relationships that dealers have built over generations provide an excellent foundation for making it work.

The financial case needs to work for both sides. For dealers, the opportunity extends beyond the initial machine sale. Batteries, chargers, accessories, site assessments, installation, servicing, winter storage and ongoing support can all contribute, depending on the product and the service offered.

However, those opportunities need to be properly priced. A healthy business model recognises the value of expertise, with clear warranty arrangements and reliable manufacturer support behind it.

Making the benefits meaningful for customers

For customers, the conversation should begin with the job they need to do.

Battery tools can offer quieter operation, less vibration on some equipment and no exhaust emissions at the point of use. Their benefits should be explained accurately.

Robotic mowing brings another dimension, particularly where staffing is stretched. When suitable for the site, it can reduce the time people spend on repetitive mowing and allow skilled staff to focus on presentation, repairs and other grounds maintenance tasks.

Autonomous equipment still needs oversight, maintenance and occasional intervention. Setting realistic expectations from the outset helps customers get the benefit they were promised and protects the dealer's reputation.

Supporting the people behind the change

Technology also brings staffing considerations within the dealership. Teams need time to learn new products, build diagnostic skills and become confident explaining the commercial benefits.

Manufacturers have a responsibility here too. Dealers need accessible training, technical backup, spare parts and clear processes. Asking a dealer to commit to a new category should come with a commitment to help them succeed.

Traditional machinery will continue to serve customers whose work demands it. Adding battery and robotic products broadens the dealer's offer and helps keep those customer relationships within the business as requirements change.

People make growth possible

Building a business is a collective effort.

One of the most rewarding parts of my career has been helping people develop their confidence, take responsibility and work towards a shared goal.

As I look ahead, I am grateful to the colleagues, dealers and customers who have been part of that journey. The relationships formed and lessons learned will remain an important part of whatever comes next.



L-R Elliot, Gary, Joe, Dave, Tim and Iwan

New kids on the block

A year and a half after opening their doors, six former colleagues are building a new dealership around experience, teamwork and a determination to keep serving their local customers. LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR paid a visit to Hughes Agri Oswestry Ltd.

A recent trip to Oswestry gave me the opportunity to call in and meet the staff of a newly formed agricultural and groundcare dealership, Hughes Agri Oswestry Ltd.

The business is based adjacent to the site of the recently closed Hughes Brothers, an established machinery dealer that had been trading since the 1970s. Hughes Agri Oswestry was formed by six former Hughes Brothers employees - Joe Piggott, Gary Price, Iwan Ellis, Tim Hughes, Elliot Jones and Dave Swannick - who between them had worked for the business in various capacities for a number of years.

They felt that, together, they had the ability and skills to undertake a new venture of their own.

With the new business opening on 1 April 2025, the team took the opportunity to rent some of the old buildings from the former site. They already had an established customer base in the town and were generally well known throughout the county.

The new business operates independently from the former company, while building on the team's long-standing customer relationships and Kubota training.

In the relatively short time they have been trading,

the team has grown to approximately 10 staff, including workshop technicians, parts and sales staff, office support, an apprentice and a cleaner.

The core business is approximately 80% agricultural with 20% groundcare. Main products include Kubota, Ifor Williams Trailers, Kress and Bomford, along with a wide range of agricultural implements.

Coverage extends across the local area, mid-Wales, parts of North West England, Cheshire, Anglesey and surrounding regions, depending on the product. Customers include farms, housing organisations, schools, golf courses, rugby and football clubs, councils and other amenity users.

The workshop has four road-based technicians, with additional workshop and sales support. Specialisms include tractors, implements, Land Rovers, trailers, quad bikes, RTVs and PDI work, with the business normally operating on a two-week lead time for service work.

Like most service dealerships, this year's hot, dry weather has had an impact, reducing mower sales, grass-equipment repairs and demonstration activity. Interest in robotic mowers, along with ATV, UTV and RTV work, has remained strong, however.

A new beginning

I arrived at the site and was greeted by Joe Piggott, one of the six directors of the new business. He spent time filling me in on how and why they had got together and started the new venture.

They didn't want to see the goodwill of the old business disappear and felt that, between them, they had the skills and experience to continue offering the services they were trained for - and, perhaps more importantly, retain a living.

Workshop responsibilities are shared between Joe, Gary, Iwan, Ralph and Jason, while Tim, Dave and Elliot support parts and shop operations, with Debbie handling calls, warranty claims and office administration.

Agricultural products account for most of the activity, including tractors, grassland equipment, spreaders, trailers and implements. Groundcare activity includes robotic mowers, battery tools, commercial mowing equipment and repairs.

The shop and parts department are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm and Saturdays from 8am to noon. Wednesdays tend to be the busiest days, coinciding with Oswestry's farmers' market, which takes place next to the dealership premises.

Joe then introduced me to the whole team and, from their banter, it was clear that they get on well with one another. Their individual skills and experiences also seem to fit neatly into the roles they have set for themselves.

The team comprises:

Joe Piggott, director/technician, has seven years' industry experience and is a trained mechanic, having previously come from the car industry.

Gary Price, director/technician, has four years' industry experience and specialises in mechanical work and PDI inspections.

Iwan Ellis, director/sales/technician, has eight years' industry experience and is another trained mechanic. He also works on his parents' farm and speaks fluent Welsh,



L-R: Gary, Elliot and Tim



One of the business's liveried vans

a useful acquisition when dealing with Welsh-speaking customers.

Ralph Evans is a technician who recently completed his apprenticeship with the company, having joined two years ago.

Jason Lindsay, another trained mechanic, previously worked for a local dealership in Shrewsbury and brings a wealth of experience to the team.

Dave Swannick, a director, has 19 years' industry experience dealing with spares, parts management and sales.

Tim Hughes is a partner involved in sales and brings more than 26 years' experience in the industry, specialising in parts and spares.

Elliot Jones, a director, is a former farmer and policeman and had been a customer of local machinery dealers for well over 30 years. He knew many of the people setting up the new business and offered his services.

On the administration and accounts side, **Debbie Jones,** Elliot's wife, joined the company to help deal with the growing workload. **Mike Jarvis,** a recently retired local accountant, has also joined the new company to provide specialist help with accounting.

All in all, this is a very happy team of experienced people enjoying the challenge of running a new business venture.

Riding out a difficult summer

I was interested to know how the business had fared during what has been an exceptionally tough summer of dry weather.

Joe explained that they had been reasonably busy on the agricultural side, although there had been a lull in mower repairs during the summer months. With the arrival of some rain and grass beginning to grow again, the team is hoping that this work will pick up.

Seasonal patterns have also changed, with customers increasingly requesting repairs during peak use rather than during the winter.

The workshop has remained busy with repairs and servicing of RTVs and quad bikes, while sales of Kubota machinery have been steady. The business is also currently building up the fleet of products it can offer for sale.

Battery and robotic products are another area showing promise. Having recently taken on the Kress range of battery tools and robots, the team is seeing keen interest from customers looking to move towards battery-powered products.

The dealership has also installed a Kress robot to maintain the lawns around the house it rents, allowing visiting customers to see the machine working.

"We have seen a dramatic interest since we took on the Kress products, especially with the robots," says Joe. "Iwan is constantly being called out to demo and set up the robots. He says they are efficient and robust and there is a wide choice of robots for different size lawns."

Looking ahead

So, what might be next for Hughes Agri Oswestry?

A quad-bike franchise is one possible future expansion, subject to the team identifying a reliable brand and assessing the local competition. Honda, Yamaha and Kawasaki are among the manufacturers they may consider.

There are also plans to address the current limitations of the workshop. The business has set up a new temporary workshop further down the yard to address space constraints and interruptions, with a view to funding a new facility in the coming years.

The team has attended many of the main industry shows in the past, including SALTEX and BTME but since setting up the new business they have had little time to attend anything other than their local Oswestry show.

I asked Joe how they had all settled into their new roles



The workshop has remained busy this summer with repairs and servicing of RTVs and quad bikes



Hughes Agri Oswestry Ltd. is based adjacent to the site of the recently closed Hughes Brothers

and whether setting up a new business had been harder than they thought.

"It has been quite a challenge for all of us, in one way or another," he says. "Luckily, we managed to persuade Kubota to run with us as our main supplier, along with Ivor Trailers, Bomford and Wessex, enabling us to continue to serve the many customers we had come to know over many years."

The team has also recruited Jason and Ralph to help cope with the extra demand for repairs, servicing and PDI inspections. Four vans are out on the road for repairs, servicing and delivering spares.

"It is fair to say we are all kept busy in one way or another and are happy to help one another out when needed," Joe says.

"We all get in early and often stay over to complete sales and invoicing to cope with the demand. Then, depending on the day of the week, we all often slope off to the pub for a few well-deserved beers."



The new business builds on the team's long-standing customer relationships and Kubota training



Inside the store

A team effort

It was certainly evident during my visit that the camaraderie between them all was very vibrant. They complement one another and work well together.

Their combined experience and skill base is very strong and their passion comes across in bucket loads.

For me, the future of the company bodes well. They all respect one another and work well as a team.

They all have vast experience of the service dealer industry and are keen to make their mark while continuing to serve the customers they have built relationships with over many years.

No doubt I will have to come back and review their fortunes some time down the line - and maybe get an invite to the pub next time!

YANMAR

JOIN THE YANMAR UK DEALER NETWORK

BUILT TOGETHER.

SUCCEED TOGETHER.



We're looking for ambitious, customer – focused dealers to join the Yanmar UK network and help shape the future of our compact tractor business.

A STRONG PARTNERSHIP
Work with a trusted, globally recognised brand.

GROW YOUR BUSINESS
Access industry-leading products, marketing and dealer support.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT
Benefit from award-winning training and continuous development.

BUILT ON PASSION. DRIVEN BY PERFORMANCE.
Join a community that shares your passion for performance, reliability and innovation.

INTERESTED?
Let's start the conversation.

Email: sales@bossorv.co.uk

Call: 01785 561046



Trends highlighted at Tillage-Live

Kuhn Prolander 14000

In mid-September on the chalky soils of Chrishall Grange, south of Cambridge, the Agricultural Engineers Association's Tillage-Live field event highlighted the sector's different directions. MARTIN RICKATSON rounds up some of the key exhibits that were at work.

The paradox of a dry demonstration day during the prime part of the season is, of course, that while it makes for great demo conditions, it can also mean potential visitors are busy making the most of the decent weather to do on their own land what they might otherwise come to see being done with the latest developments in the sector on the demo site.

That was the challenge that could have faced the organisers of this year's Tillage-Live, the cultivations equipment demonstration organised on behalf of the Agricultural Engineers Association, when it was held back in mid-September after a two-year hiatus. However, the event, hosted at regular Cereals host Robert Law's Chrishall Grange in Cambs, attracted some decent visitor numbers, perhaps many of whom were holding back on working land and drilling their own combinable crops until a little more moisture arrived.

Live field demonstrations remain at the heart of Tillage-Live, giving visitors the chance to make side-by-side comparisons of how different cultivation systems perform. This year's exhibitors ranged from multinational manufacturers including John Deere, Väderstad, Kuhn, Horsch, Pöttinger and Lemken to prominent UK firms such as Cousins and independent importers including UK Farm Agri and Samagri.

Beyond the demonstration plots, a dedicated static exhibition area hosted local machinery dealerships including Ernest Doe, Olivers and Tuckwells, and enabled visitors to seek advice on everything from precision farming technology to agronomic inputs, while a Knowledge Trail allowed attendees to collect BASIS and NRoSO CPD points across the site.

Kuhn Prolander 14000

Kuhn reports significant sales success with the wider models of its Prolander tine-based stubble cultivator, intended for working at depths of 3-12cm on ploughed, cultivated or untouched land, and introduced particularly to meet the needs of controlled traffic farming adherents. The 9.2m, 12.2m and 14.2m versions were represented at Tillage Live by the flagship Prolander 14000, and Kuhn's suggestion that the implement requires around 25-35hp/m translates to a tractor of 355-500hp up front. Tine options include 70x12mm S-shaped units, 60mm or 200mm goose foot tines and a 90x13mm S-tooth introduced with the larger models said to produce a tearing action on stubbles to process and mix surface material with surface soil. Press options include double 'u' and double tube rollers.

Lemken Solitair NT

Launched at last year's Agritechnica, Lemken's entry into the no-till drill market blends features of its established Solitair min-till drills with knowledge acquired through its 2023 acquisition of South African direct seeding specialist Equalizer. The ISOBUS-compatible Solitair NT has two rows of 480mm ProDisc single coulters spaced at 16.7cm and angled at seven degrees, with a ten-degree undercut. They can be pressured at up to 340kg for slicing through trash and penetrating hard ground. Seed is supplied via a 4,400-litre tank, with the option of a 5,100-litre split hopper that can deliver products to front or rear coulters. Also optional is a 500-litre small-seed/nutrient hopper for additional product or companion crop application. Behind each coulter come adjustable canted steel press wheels for slot-closing.



Lemken Solitair NT

Taege Series 300E

Based in Retford, Notts, UK Farm Agri is said to have been founded to source and supply equipment that overcomes the restrictions faced by small to mid-sized farms working with irregularly shaped and smaller fields, narrow lanes and challenging gateways. Its Tillage Live demonstrations included the Taege Series 300E, a Europeanised version of the New Zealand maker's established 3.0m tine-based direct drill. It features 25 tungsten-tipped narrow S-tines spaced at 121mm, a design said to particularly suit users looking to penetrate hard, uncultivated ground but avoid potential issues with disc coulters such as wear, maintenance and penetration problems. The tine frame's box section is mounted on a diamond-shaped angle so the entry point follows the mounting point, an arrangement said to enhance contour-following on steep ground.



Taege Series 300E

Köckerling Allrounder Profiline

Imported by Hants-based Samagri and further distributed by a small number of UK dealers, equipment from German manufacturer Köckerling included the Allrounder Profiline stubble/seedbed cultivator. While standard Allrounder models are designed for producing seedbeds on ploughed land seedbed and secondary stubble cultivation, farmers in mainland Europe are increasingly also using such implements as a glyphosate alterative with a light pass used to destroy weed flushes. In addition to a hydraulically-adjustable levelling board, the implement features seventy 12mm tines fitted with goosefoot points as standard – other options are available – and rear roller with following harrow. Underframe clearance is 600mm. On the trailed Profiline format shown at Tillage Live the working depth is controlled by the front support wheels and the rear double STS roller.



Köckerling Allrounder Profiline

Väderstad Swift 560

Väderstad exhibits included a 5.6m model of its Swift trailed tine cultivator, from a range that spans 4.0-8.7m. Its tines are designed to mixing trash and soil at depths down to 20cm, and are said to vibrate at up to 100 times per second to maximise soil profile shattering, with a further benefit being reduced point wear, claims the firm. Each tine axle is equipped with one tine ahead of the axle and one behind, a design said to allow for a narrow tine spacing of 19.3cm to maximise mixing intensity over the complete working width. 'Mixin' shins throw material forwards instead of upwards, and when it has landed it passes the tines once again, doubling the mixing and crumbling effect and enhancing straw distribution.

Pöttinger Terrasem V4000

Cultivator drills included the V4000 from Pöttinger's Terrasem range, on which the maker claims a particular highlight is its Intelligent Distribution System, which governs all outlets via the tractor and drill CANbus systems and allows the operator to control them using the tractor or drill controller ISOBUS. This, says the firm, means multiple possibilities for coulter pipe selection and tramline switching, including half-width shut-off, tramline and track widths, tramline switching and the selection of tramline rhythm independently of drill width. Optional seed flow sensors are positioned after the distributor head, and their sensitivity can be adjusted in stages to match the seed. The status of each coulter pipe is indicated by an LED directly on the sensor, with the coulter pipe number indicated on the control terminal.



Väderstad Swift 560



Pöttinger Terrasem V4000



John Deere 8RT tractors

John Deere 8RT tractors

While wheeled 8R and four-tracked 8RX models represent the majority of John Deere's 8R tractor series sales, the twin-tracked 8RT variants continue to find favour among certain arable buyers, partly for reasons of lesser complexity – and hence lower purchase and running costs compared to their 8RX cousins. However, while 8R and 8RX models are now available in new versions that stretch the upper power offering to a maximum of 540hp, the 8RT format still tops out at 410hp, with Deere suggesting this is where the 8 frame's design best matches a twin-track format. As such, the 8RT models sit in a sector where there is only one other direct competitor, namely the Fendt 900MT. Latest specification includes powershift or CVT transmission and Deere's Reactive Command Steering.

Güttler SuperMaxx Bio

From Wox Agri Services, the five or seven tine-row Güttler SuperMaxx Bio cultivator is designed for shallow stubble cultivation at high speeds as a mechanical weed control tool for repeated shallow cultivation, creating a thin mulch layer of soil, stubble, and straw said to minimise evaporation and create an ideal environment for weed seeds to chit. Double leaf-sprung 45×12mm tines are spaced at 13cm, and ground clearance under the frame is 56cm. For a later weed flush destruction pass, 200mm goosefoot shares can be fitted. Fuel consumption is claimed to be around 5.0 l/ha. Models available span 3.0-9.0m. Adjustment for working depth is hydraulic via support wheels, and Güttler now offers hydraulic adjustment of the following harrow working depth as an option.



Güttler SuperMaxx Bio



Tab-less is more

EGO's IoT product manager, Andrew Frohock, explains to Service Dealer editor STEVE GIBBS, the technology behind their new ARC Lithium MAX battery range and what it means for dealers in terms of power, charging, battery life and equipment performance.

EGO say their ARC Lithium batteries are designed to deliver high performance across a wide range of applications



EGO's IoT product manager, Andrew Frohock

***Service Dealer:* For those who aren't familiar with tabless battery technology, what exactly is different compared with a conventional lithium-ion battery?**

Andrew Frohock: To be clear, when we talk about ARC Lithium MAX and tabless technology, we're not talking about a new battery chemistry. The cells are still lithium-ion, retaining the characteristics that have made lithium-ion so well suited to outdoor power equipment: high energy density, strong power delivery, low self-discharge and flexible top-up charging.

Tabless technology is an evolution in the way the cell itself is constructed. In a conventional cylindrical lithium-ion cell, electrical current is collected through relatively small tabs. Those tabs can act as a bottleneck as energy moves into and out of the cell, particularly under high loads.

With a tabless design, the electrical connection is spread across a much larger area, creating multiple parallel current pathways. This reduces internal resistance, shortens the path the current has to travel and limits heat build-up. The result is that energy can move into and out of the cell much more efficiently, supporting higher power output and much faster charging.

A simple analogy is a stadium. Imagine everybody having to enter and leave through one gate – that's broadly how a conventional tabbed cell works. Tabless technology is more like putting gates all around the stadium. People have a much shorter route and many more ways in and out, so there is less congestion and much greater flow.

Importantly, the stadium itself hasn't become any bigger – you've simply made it much easier to move people in and out. That is the principle behind being able to achieve dramatically more power from essentially the same size and weight of battery.

For EGO, that is the real significance of tabless technology. It allows us to extract more performance from our existing 56V platform — more power, faster charging and improved power-to-weight — while controlling heat more effectively and avoiding the need to simply make batteries larger, heavier or less ergonomic. Reduced cell resistance also improves thermal behaviour, helping to reduce heat build-up and the associated stress on the cells over repeated charge and discharge cycles. This supports longer-term durability and helps the battery maintain its performance over a longer working life.

***SD:* What does that change mean in practical terms for the end user?**

AF: For tool and battery users, the introduction of tabless technology brings three key benefits, while still maintaining compatibility across the EGO 56V tool range.

Firstly, power delivery and power-to-weight. EGO's core 56V message has always been about delivering petrol-beating power, and tabless technology enables us to take that further while using smaller, more ergonomic battery packages.

Put simply, we can get significantly more performance from a given battery size and weight.

A good example is our new 6Ah ARC Lithium MAX battery. It uses essentially the same form factor and weight as our existing 5Ah battery, but stores 20% more energy and can deliver around twice the continuous power – approximately 4.48kW compared with 2.24kW.

That is important because traditionally one of the simplest ways of getting more battery power or runtime has been to add more cells, which generally means increasing size and weight. MAX allows us to change that relationship.

Secondly, faster charging and improved uptime. All three ARC Lithium MAX batteries – 3Ah, 6Ah and 8Ah – can charge to 100% in as little as 20 minutes when paired with the appropriate EGO charging solution.

The third benefit is battery longevity. How long any lithium-ion battery lasts depends heavily on its duty cycle – how hard it is worked, how frequently it is charged, the rates at which it is charged and discharged, and the temperatures it experiences.

For example, a standard-cell battery used predominantly on lower-power applications, charged at lower rates and kept away from temperature extremes could achieve more than 1,000 cycles before reaching around 60% of its original usable capacity. Put the same battery technology into a much more demanding duty cycle – regularly powering high-draw products such as chainsaws or brushcutters, operating across wider temperature extremes and being rapidly charged several times per day – and that could reduce to around 800 cycles to the same 60% capacity point.

With ARC Lithium MAX, the same duty-cycle principle still applies, but the longevity curve moves significantly upwards. Under a comparable pattern of use, tabless technology is designed to deliver up to twice the cycle life of our standard battery technology.

Importantly, reaching 60% remaining capacity does not mean the battery is dead or has reached the end of its usable life. It is a reference point used to measure degradation consistently. The battery can continue to be used beyond that point, although naturally with progressively reduced runtime as its usable capacity declines.

That distinction matters because a headline cycle-life number on its own does not tell the whole story. You also need to understand the duty cycle under which the battery was tested and how much usable capacity remained when that cycle count was recorded. Our engineering testing, for example, shows tabless-cell performance of around 2,000 cycles to 60% remaining capacity under our specified test conditions.

So, as a simplified illustration, a demanding duty cycle that might see a conventional battery reach the 60% reference point at around 800 cycles could see a MAX battery achieve around twice that number under comparable conditions. Equally, a less demanding application capable of delivering 1,000 or more cycles from a conventional battery would be expected to benefit from the same substantial uplift.

This improvement comes from several factors working together. Tabless cells reduce internal electrical resistance and heat generation, while their much higher current capability gives the battery greater performance headroom. For a given tool demand, the MAX battery can therefore operate further below its maximum discharge capability than an equivalent conventional pack.



EGO boast that their 56V battery platform powers a growing range of outdoor equipment

***SD:* How important a consideration was maintaining backwards compatibility in the development of this new battery?**

AF: It was fundamental.

One of the major strengths of EGO is our 56V battery platform, so MAX had to be an evolution of that platform rather than the creation of another battery ecosystem.

An existing EGO customer can add MAX batteries to their existing 56V fleet without having to replace the tools and batteries they already own. That allows customers to introduce MAX selectively where greater power, improved power-to-weight or faster charging provides the biggest benefit.

The exact performance benefit will naturally depend on the tool and application, but maintaining that common 56V platform was a key principle.

***SD:* Who do you see as the primary customer for the new technology?**

AF: Professional users will probably experience the benefits most strongly because power, battery weight, uptime



Battery technology continues to evolve, with power, weight and charging all key considerations

and battery life all have a direct impact on productivity throughout the working day.

A contractor doesn't necessarily want the biggest battery possible attached to every tool. They want enough energy for the task, enough power to complete demanding work effectively, low weight wherever possible and the ability to recover energy quickly during the day.

MAX gives us more flexibility to optimise that balance.

But the technology is equally relevant to residential users. They may not measure uptime in the same way as a professional contractor, but the benefit of getting more performance from a compact, manageable battery is just as real. A lighter, better-balanced tool is easier to handle whether you're using it for eight hours or 20 minutes.

***SD:* Is this intended to replace EGO's existing battery options over time, or will standard and MAX batteries continue to sit alongside one another for different applications?**

AF: For the foreseeable product range, we see standard ARC Lithium and ARC Lithium MAX batteries sitting alongside one another.

Not every application requires maximum power delivery or the fastest possible charging, so our standard batteries continue to provide a very strong solution where those capabilities aren't required.

At the same time, we are expanding the MAX family across more battery capacities. That gives customers more choice and allows the dealer to select the battery according to the tool and job rather than simply assuming that one battery specification is right for everybody.

The important thing is that both remain part of the same 56V platform.

***SD:* Battery technology is developing rapidly, with other manufacturers evolving their offerings. So where does EGO believe it has an advantage with this new development?**

AF: The advantage is not simply having access to tabless cells. It is what that technology enables us to do within the established 56V platform.

EGO already has a broad 56V ecosystem across residential and professional products. ARC Lithium MAX gives us significantly more current capability within that same platform, which creates headroom not just for today's tools, but for the development of future products that can demand substantially more power from the battery.

That is a major opportunity for EGO. It allows our product teams to design future high-performance tools around an even more capable energy source, rather than being constrained by the output limits of conventional cells. In practical terms, that opens the door to taking battery further into applications that have traditionally been difficult to address without increasing battery size, weight or complexity.

So we see MAX not simply as a new battery range, but as an enabler for the next generation of EGO 56V products. The real advantage is the combination of a mature 56V platform today with significantly greater performance potential for the tools we develop tomorrow.

***SD:* How difficult is it for a manufacturer to differentiate a battery platform now, when many of the headline claims - more power, longer runtime and faster charging - sound similar across brands?**

AF: It is difficult if the comparison is reduced to individual headline numbers, because increasingly many manufacturers can make broadly similar claims around power, runtime or charging speed.

The real differentiation comes from how well those characteristics work together across the complete platform. For EGO, that means the combination of a 56V architecture, battery performance, power-to-weight, thermal management, charging infrastructure and compatibility across a broad range of tools.

For professional users in particular, the more meaningful measure is not simply the highest power figure or the shortest charge time. It is how much productive work the complete system can deliver across a working day, while keeping tool weight, ergonomics, battery longevity and charging requirements under control.

That is where we believe the competitive battleground is moving. The strongest battery platforms will not necessarily be those with the most aggressive single specification, but those that deliver the best overall balance of performance, usability, uptime and long-term value.

***SD:* Do you think we're moving towards a point where battery technology itself becomes as important a purchasing consideration as the machine it powers?**

AF: Particularly for professional users, increasingly yes.

The battery now influences much more than runtime. Its voltage and current capability determine how much power can be made available to the machine; its thermal performance affects how that power can be sustained; its weight affects overall machine weight and balance; charging capability influences uptime; and cycle life contributes directly to operating cost.

On handheld equipment in particular, battery development therefore has a direct influence on ergonomics as well as electrical performance.

That's why we increasingly believe customers should evaluate the machine, battery and charging solution as one productivity system rather than as three separate purchases.

***SD:* What does the arrival of technologies such as tabless cells mean for the independent dealer?**

AF: It means battery selection becomes a more important and more consultative part of the sale.

Amp-hours alone no longer tell the whole story.

Historically, if a customer wanted more runtime or performance, it was easy to assume the answer was simply a larger-capacity battery. Technologies such as tabless cells allow us to change that relationship.

A 6Ah MAX can now occupy essentially the same size and weight position as the previous 5Ah while offering around twice the continuous power.

That means dealers can have a much better conversation about the actual application: how much power does the tool require, how long will it be used, how important is weight and balance, and how will the customer recharge during the working day?

The right battery isn't necessarily the largest battery. It's the one that delivers the best balance of performance, ergonomics and uptime for the job.

***SD:* Looking beyond Lithium MAX, where do you see the next significant advances in battery technology coming from - and what should dealers be preparing their businesses and customers for over the next five years?**

AF: We don't expect the next five years to be defined by one single breakthrough.

Development will come from several areas working together: continued improvements in cell architecture and energy density, greater power-to-weight, better thermal and battery management, higher charge and discharge capability, and increasingly intelligent charging and fleet management.

Importantly, we don't think the direction of travel is simply towards ever-larger batteries.

Particularly in professional handheld equipment, getting more useful performance from a smaller and lighter battery package will become increasingly important. At the same time, charging infrastructure will need to become more sophisticated as professional customers operate larger battery fleets.

For dealers, that means becoming increasingly comfortable selling a complete energy and productivity solution – tools, batteries and charging infrastructure – rather than treating the battery as an accessory to the machine.

EGO's current direction, with an expanding ARC Lithium MAX family and the development of the PGX professional charging ecosystem, reflects that approach.

***SD:* Finally, it seems widely accepted now that battery equipment is quieter, cleaner and more convenient. So, is the industry now at the stage where battery genuinely must outperform petrol on productivity and economics – and if so, what still needs to change?**

AF: Yes. Quieter operation, zero exhaust emissions at point of use and ease of starting have all helped drive battery adoption, but professional users ultimately have to make decisions based on productivity and economics.

Battery therefore needs to compete across the complete working experience: power, uptime, operating cost, maintenance and ergonomics.

For handheld equipment, weight and balance are particularly important. The answer cannot always be to add more cells every time we want more power or runtime, because ultimately the operator has to carry that battery.

Technologies such as tabless cells allow us to change that equation. Our 6Ah MAX demonstrates it clearly: approximately twice the continuous power and 20% more energy than our existing 5Ah battery from essentially the same physical package.

This is also where EGO's 56V architecture is important. It gives us a strong foundation for high-power equipment; MAX improves how much performance we can obtain from a given battery size and weight; and PGX helps keep those batteries available throughout the working day.

The objective isn't simply less time charging. It's more productive uptime with less compromise in the operator's hands.

Ultimately, the benchmark is moving away from "can battery replace petrol?" towards "which system allows the customer to complete the day's work most efficiently?"

***SD:* Thank you**



Battery selection is becoming an increasingly important part of the dealer conversation

Plant Hire & Construction

Latest news for the sector *Edited by Dan Gilkes*

supported by BISHOP JONES CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS & TAX ADVISERS

Dan Gilkes, editor of *Service Dealer's* plant hire and construction machinery section, considers three areas that may be giving specialist dealers in his sector cause for concern.



Plant dealers face a challenging landscape



Construction equipment dealers and plant hire companies across the UK continue to face a mountain of concerns, from local legislative changes to global market pressures. There are perhaps three in particular though that are making trading conditions even more difficult, as we head into the third and fourth quarters of 2026.

Supply chain pressures

Global disruption, such as shipping delays, freight costs and international conflicts are causing knock-on effects on the supply of complete machines and of parts and essential components. Having recovered from shortages caused by the shutdown of factories and production facilities during lockdown, dealers are now having to deal with global shipping route disruption, rapidly rising freight costs and possible trade tariffs on equipment.

Uncertain economic demand

Construction demand is reasonably healthy in the UK and some might even call it 'back to normal', but it isn't consistent across the whole sector. While there is a strong requirement for public infrastructure works, there is still some weakness in private housing and commercial sectors. High interest rates are putting some customers off purchasing, delaying major capital investments, while interest rates can also affect dealers, particularly if they have a large amount of inventory. The continuing shift towards rental, rather than purchase, is also altering dealer profitability forecasts.

Talent and technician shortages

There remains a skilled labour gap and dealers and plant hire companies are competing with customers to attract skilled technicians and trainees. An ageing workforce is not being replaced fast enough, compounding the lack of trained engineers.

However, plant dealers are a resilient group and there remain opportunities, particularly for those prepared to consider new entrants to the plant and machinery sector. One of the primary challenges for Chinese manufacturers in particular, is attracting dealer partners to drive their entry into the market.

Dealers are increasingly expected to offer a more holistic approach to machine sales though. Simply delivering new equipment, is often not enough for many customers today, as they expect to experience the benefits of telematic diagnostics, extended repair and maintenance agreements and even fleet management assistance.

Sales teams need to be conversant in fleet software, financing options and a range of digital solutions. That may also include e-commerce, particularly in spare parts supply, where a simplified ordering and delivery process can cut time and cost for the customer and the dealer.

As plant dealers look to navigate the market going forwards, it is probably worth considering that what worked yesterday, may not continue to work as well tomorrow.

Plant and Dealer developments

DAN GILKES rounds up the latest news from the plant hire and construction machinery sector

Gordons Equipment opens seventh location

Scottish Develon dealer Gordons Construction Equipment has opened its seventh location, the first to be located in central Scotland. The family-owned business, based in Castle Douglas, already had six outlets in Carlisle and across South West Scotland. It has now opened a new site in Blairgowrie, Perthshire. Along with the Develon product line, the company has also taken on dealerships for Dieci telehandlers and Bomag compaction equipment.

"We are really excited about this next stage," said Kevin Fraser, a director at Gordons. "Dieci and Bomag perfectly complement the Develon offering, to give our customers the full spectrum of kit that they need for every scale of project. The Blairgowrie depot will give our customers in the East and North of Scotland a chance to come and see the equipment more conveniently. It also means that we'll be able to offer a prompt service to these regions of Scotland with both parts and engineer support."



Gordons' directors Ian Brydson and Kevin Fraser accept the keys from previous site owner, Fergus Mitchell, for Gordons' first dedicated construction depot

BISHOP JONES
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS & TAX ADVISERS

Stop Guessing, Start Growing.

We don't just look at your history – we help shape your future.

Book a free consultation
www.bishopjones.co.uk
01749 678307

As a machinery dealer, you know how to run your business, but are your accounts and finances helping you grow – or holding you back?

- Struggling with cash flow?
- Not sure if you're maximising tax savings?
- Reports that don't give you real insights?

At Bishop Jones, we specialise in helping machinery dealers take control of their finances.

We go beyond the numbers to give you clear, actionable insights that drive profitability.

- Get real-time financial clarity.
- Turn reports into smart business decisions.
- Make more profit, not more paperwork.



Sylvain Blaise, President & CEO of Manitou Group and Moon Jae-young, President & CEO of HD Construction Equipment

HD Construction Equipment and Manitou Group sign compact equipment deal

South Korean machinery giant HD Construction Equipment has signed a compact equipment partnership with French firm Manitou Group. HD, the parent company of Hyundai and Develon, will source compact machinery from Manitou, which operates under the Manitou and Gehl brands, with Manitou adding HD-produced compact machinery into its own line-up.

Through this partnership HD Construction Equipment plans to accelerate its market expansion, particularly in the compact machinery sector, while improving product quality and cost competitiveness. With compact equipment pushing growth, the company is aiming to achieve up to €825m in segment sales by 2030.

"This partnership is more than just enhancing our product lines, it opens up important new growth opportunities through significant market expansion," said Moon Jae-young, President & CEO of HD Construction Equipment.

"By bringing together our strengths, we will boost the competitiveness of our compact products and enhance our global presence."

Sylvain Blaise, President & CEO of Manitou Group, added: "This agreement fully aligns with our strategic roadmap aimed at accelerating our growth in compact equipment ranges. By combining the industrial excellence and innovative capabilities of two major industry leaders. This alliance allows us not only to reach a new milestone in product line expansion, but also to deliver enhanced value to our dealer network and customers worldwide."

HD Construction Equipment produces a wide range of mini excavators, skid steers, compact tracked loaders, wheeled and crawler excavators, large wheeled loaders, dozers and articulated dump trucks. Manitou Group offers a wide range of telescopic handlers, rough terrain forklifts, compact wheeled loaders and aerial work platforms.

Both companies will continue to work through their existing independent dealer networks.

Molson Scotland takes on Bell Equipment dealership

Molson Scotland has been appointed as the Scottish dealer for Bell articulated dump trucks. The South African-built haulers will be available through Molson Scotland's service centres in Newhouse and Inverness. The deal has in part come about as Molson Group's US-based Powerscreen business is already a dealer for Bell, with the two companies enjoying considerable sales success.

"Bell has such a fantastic relationship and achieved strong performance with Molson Group's US businesses," said Nic Grout, managing director of Bell Equipment UK. "We believe this new partnership will give Scottish customers the excellent sales and service support they need moving forward and continue to build on our brands' strong reputations."





Bobcat adds to compact loader line

Bobcat has broadened its compact wheeled loader line-up, with the addition of the L85 and the L100. The two loaders offer bucket capacities of 0.8m^3 and 1.0m^3 respectively. Both machines have a revised operator station, higher hydraulic performance and a range of application-specific options for landscaping and horticulture, municipal operations and material handling.

The two loaders come with a heated cab, automatic parking brake, a joystick integrated into the seat that can control up to four attachment functions and an optional 5" high-resolution display screen. There are three speed variants available, 20, 30 and 40km/h, to suit a range of applications. An optional hitch can pull up to a 3.5-tonne trailer where permitted. Other options include a reversible cooling fan, an additional counterweight and a ground protection kit.

JCB sets new hydrogen World Land Speed Record

Plant and equipment manufacturer JCB has set a second World Land Speed Record on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah, USA. The JCB Hydromax car, driven by Wing Commander Andy Green, achieved an average over two measured mile runs of 406.320mph (653.909km/h). This set a new speed record for a car powered by hydrogen engines, following the company's diesel-powered record, set at the same location 20 years ago.

"This achievement is about more than going fast," said JCB chairman Lord Bamford. "It is about demonstrating engineering solutions, that the internal combustion engine powered by hydrogen can be part of the solution for the future.



"This technology is based on the machines that we are building today. We hear constantly about global warming and the need to reduce the world's dependence on fossil fuels and their emissions. I believe very strongly that the internal combustion engine, powered by hydrogen, can be one of the important solutions for the future. At its heart, this technology is based upon the engines and engineering principles that we understand and that we use every day in construction machinery around the world."

Expanded wheeled offer from Wacker Neuson

Wacker Neuson continues to build its product portfolio with the launch of the EW135 wheeled excavator and the WL750p and WL950p wheeled loading shovels. The 13-15 tonne EW135 comes with a fixed articulating boom, to maximise lift capacity. Electro-hydraulic pilot controls and two auxiliary circuits allow use with a range of powered attachments.

The company has equipped the machine with MiC 4.0, an optional interface that allows communication between the machine and the attachment, allowing future-proof integration of work tools from a variety of manufacturers. The system is also said to lay the foundations for digitalisation of construction in the future.

This system can be controlled through a 10" touchscreen display, that provides a central location for all machine controls and monitoring. This intelligent open interface has been designed to work with future operator assistance systems, digital machine control applications and new technologies.

A formula that's working

Bumper crowds attended GroundsFest this September, with the event continuing to give both exhibitors and visitors what they want from a professional turf care show. *Service Dealer* editor, STEVE GIBBS, reports from Stoneleigh



This year's show saw increased exhibitors and visitors across the two days

GroundsFest took place at Stoneleigh again in mid-September and, if the consensus among the exhibitors and visitors I spoke to was anything to go by, this was the biggest and best edition yet.

This was confirmed in a post-show statement from organisers that said, *"A total of 10,664 unique visitors attended the fourth edition of GroundsFest, marking another significant milestone in the event's remarkable growth. What began in 2023 across approximately 8,500 square metres has expanded to cover more than 42,000 square metres – a reflection of increasing demand from both exhibitors and visitors alike."*

I was also told that there were 302 exhibitors this year – 40 more than in 2025. Sixty companies had also increased their stand space, and there is apparently already a waiting list of prospective exhibitors for next year, with scope to expand the show's footprint into unused areas towards the back of the Stoneleigh site.

So, what is the show getting right?

The weather certainly helped this year. But there is something more fundamental about an outdoor machinery show in September that simply works - for both visitors and exhibitors.

There is also a noticeably different atmosphere at GroundsFest compared with many other trade shows in our sector. It feels less formal, relaxed and, perhaps a word not often associated with exhibitions, fun.

That mood seems to bounce around the showground, from the staff running the stands to the visitors walking between them.

Each year, the show also seems to add little tweaks and improvements based on feedback. I took advantage of one of this year's new initiatives myself, with free coaches running between Leamington Spa railway station and the showground. Admittedly, the coach I was on at 8.30am on the Wednesday wasn't the fullest, but hopefully, as word spreads about the helpful addition, it could ease pressure on the surrounding roads.

Essentially, it feels to me like GroundsFest has hit on a formula that works. Certainly when the weather plays ball, as it did this year.

A difficult summer

This sector is, of course, intrinsically linked with the vagaries of the British weather. And when I spoke to dealers I bumped into, and their manufacturer partners on their stands, about the year so far, there was one subject that came up repeatedly: the summer drought.

Those months without meaningful rain, with grassed areas turning yellow and customers holding back on traditional turfcare purchases, were tough. Very tough, in some cases.

But there was also a recurring theme around what had helped keep things moving. Robotic solutions.

As we've heard from dealers before, these increasingly appear to occupy a slightly different space in the minds of customers. Rather than simply being another piece of outdoor powered machinery, they can be perceived more like a desirable consumer-electronics purchase. Something new and aspirational that customers still want, even when the wider market is being affected by the weather.

It was one example of a broader transition that was evident throughout the showground.

Battery is growing. Robotics is growing. Remote-control







The Service Dealer and TurfPro team on our stand

technology is finding new applications, while AI, LiDAR and RTK are becoming increasingly familiar terms in professional equipment.

But petrol remains relevant, particularly for some users with demanding applications who still value the familiarity of petrol, trust its performance and perhaps do not want to be concerned with establishing a charging infrastructure.

The showground may not have been roaring with the noise of traditionally fuelled engines as the U.S Equip show was last year when I visited, but there was certainly no sense that petrol-powered machinery is about to disappear.

The dealer challenge

Behind the optimism of the show itself, however, there were some slightly less comfortable conversations.

Dealers have had to contend with the weather, the internet and, in some cases I heard, manufacturers selling directly to consumers.

Of the more striking comments made to me, several dealers were questioning whether there is sufficient margin left in smaller handheld machines? Some were seriously considering reducing their focus on those products and concentrating instead on larger equipment.

Interestingly though, all the manufacturers I spoke with still clearly recognise the continuing importance of that dealer relationship.

Just as a few examples, AL-KO was placing considerable emphasis on its dealer network, with the new solo by AL-KO products being positioned as dealer-exclusive machines.

EGO was emphasising dealer-led demonstrations. AriensCo said leads generated at the show would be distributed to its dealers for follow-up, Husqvarna had a sophisticated system for similar, whilst Overton is looking to build its dealer network around the returning DR professional range.

The technology may be changing, but the human element hasn't gone away.

A market in transition

For dealers, that creates both opportunities and challenges. There are new categories to sell and new technologies to demonstrate, but also changing customer expectations, pressure on margins and questions about where the traditional dealer model fits into an increasingly digital marketplace.

Yet perhaps that is precisely why the atmosphere at GroundsFest felt significant. For all the talk about technological developments, the show itself is built around something remarkably traditional. Getting people together and letting them talk and try out machinery.

Dealers can speak to manufacturers. Manufacturers can meet users. People can climb on machines, drive them, test them and ask questions. New ideas can be discussed over a coffee (or a pint at the festival at the end of the day) rather than simply viewed on a website.

And, perhaps most importantly, there was a very little sense of despondency despite what has clearly been a difficult summer.

That doesn't mean the challenges have disappeared. The drought has had a real impact; margins remain under pressure and the questions around internet competition and direct selling aren't going away. But the conversations at GroundsFest demonstrated how quickly the industry is adapting.

Robotics continues to move beyond the domestic garden and into commercial, golf and specialist applications. Battery is becoming an increasingly normal proposition for professional users. Remote technology is opening up new possibilities. And petrol remains part of that picture too.

That mix of old and new perhaps sums up the industry, and the show, rather well.

GroundsFest understands the value of getting people together, outside, in a relaxed environment and letting them see, touch and try the machinery. It gives manufacturers the opportunity to demonstrate what their latest technology can do, while giving dealers and end users the chance to ask questions and work out where those developments might fit into their businesses.

It is a simple proposition, but one that appears to be working. And judging by the crowds walking around Stoneleigh this September, for an industry going through plenty of change, GroundsFest appears to have hit upon a format that gives everyone a reason to keep coming back.



The event covered more than 42,000 square metres

Around the show...

There was certainly no shortage of new machinery and technology to see around the showground, with battery, robotics, remote control and more traditional petrol-powered equipment all represented.

AL-KO was showcasing a raft of new solo by AL-KO products, including dealer-exclusive machines and new wireless robotic mowers. New walk-behinds were notable for how quickly they can be assembled, while the Velocity 100 TRFP remote-controlled flail mower is aimed at contractors working on slopes and other difficult or hazardous terrain.



Overton was showcasing its recently added DR professional range, with further models planned for launch at BTME. Two field & brush mowers and two trimmers were on show as the company looks to build a dealer network around the returning range.



Husqvarna had a strong focus on professional robotics, including machines equipped with AI cameras to help them navigate when satellite signals are compromised and recognise lifeforms and temporary obstacles. The company was also showing how its latest developments fit alongside its continuing petrol and battery ranges.



Toro and Hayter had plenty to show, from battery and petrol Harrier Pro models to the E-Pro Stripe for football pitches. Looking ahead, a new 32-inch GrandStand is planned for contractors needing to get through standard gates, while Hayter was using its 80th anniversary to underline its heritage alongside a move into a wider range of premium gardening products.



STIHL focused heavily on its new AllPro battery system and the different charging options available, from rapid on-site charging to workshop and vehicle-based solutions. It was also demonstrating collaborations with other manufacturers using STIHL battery power, with machines from Westermann and Kwern on the stand.



AriensCo had its Summit Pro range attracting attention, while remote-controlled machines were again among the highlights. The company was also using the show to generate leads for its dealer network.



EGO had its forthcoming ZTX 4800 commercial zero-turn mower as one of the main attractions, with its pricing intended to make the move from petrol to battery more accessible to commercial operators. The company was also showing its wider professional range, including new robotic and handheld equipment.



Greenworks Commercial confirmed that the Cramer name will disappear from the European market as the machines transition to Greenworks Commercial branding. The machines themselves are essentially unchanged, with the dealer-only Greenworks Commercial operation retaining its existing UK team and setup.



STIGA had expanded its demonstration area this year, with the Apex Pro robot attracting attention and visitors trying out the E-Park Pro throughout the show. The company was also demonstrating its wider range of professional battery and robotic equipment.



FGM Claymore was showcasing its robotic Sunseeker range, alongside its growing golf robotics offering. The company also announced that it is taking on distribution of the Victor range, with plans for a broader professional petrol offering.



Henton & Chattell had a new Cobra out-front rider with four-wheel-drive options attracting attention, alongside the prototype Rotary Stadium Fortis. Designed for post-match tidy-ups on football pitches, but also suitable for rugby and cricket applications, the 34-inch twin-blade rear-roller machine is due next year in both petrol and EGO-powered versions.



GROUNDSFEST '26

BOSS ORV brought together its Yanmar Agri compact tractors, Aodes ATVs and UTVs, Powerland electric ATVs and Paxster electric utility vehicles. The company was also showing Faunamaster compact seed drills, sprayers and flail mowers, with its expanding Aodes dealer network another focus.



Kress used the show to launch its larger Voyager robotic mower, capable of covering up to 19 acres on a single charge, alongside a smaller Voyager and a new four-wheel-drive commercial robot. The latter uses AI cameras to assess grass quality and identify potential problems.



Ferris announced its new Z1-P stand-on mower range for spring 2027, headlined by a compact 81cm model designed for working in tight spaces and through narrow gates. The new platform is also available in 91cm and 122cm versions, with a configurable deck offering rear discharge, side discharge or mulching.



PYRAMID
DEALER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Streamline Your Business with Pyramid DMS

Cloud DMS
Access anywhere via a web browser.

Monthly Rolling Contract
No long-term tie-ins.

Pay Per User
Only pay for active users each month.

Multi-Channel eCommerce
List products, sync inventory & manage orders from eBay, Shopify, Magento, and more - all within Pyramid DMS.

Warehousing & Logistics
Integrated with DPD, FedEx, DX & Interlink. PDA scanning for despatch, stock-taking & transfers.

Custom Development
We adapt to your business – not the other way around. Bespoke scripts & features tailored to you.

AI Integration
Boost efficiency with AI-driven development into your DMS.

Integrated Accounting or Export to Sage/Xero
Department-level Profit & Loss, Balance Sheets & Budgets, Dashboards, MTD compliance – all in one system.

Garden Machines
SPECIALIST TURF & GROUNDS CARE SUPPLIERS

The new system is a joy to operate, and we've already seen significant savings in our running costs. We couldn't be happier with the outcome
Steve Gammon - Manager Director - Garden Machines Northampton

Contact us today to see how Pyramid DMS can power your dealership.
Tel: 01782 789 317 • **Web:** www.truetracksoftware.com

BUSINESS MONITOR

Little change reported in dealer business

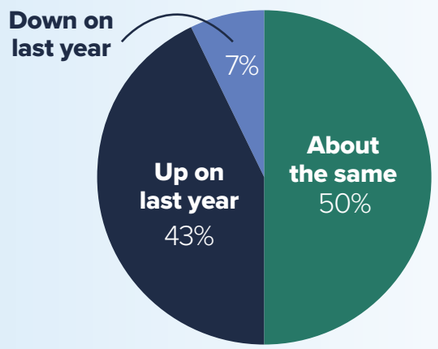
Year-on-year comparisons show similar levels of business, say respondents.

The results of our Autumn 2026 survey indicated that independent dealers have found this season much the same to last – which is not saying much as we were told that 2025 was down across the board on the previous year. To the key question of how your overall business has compared to 2025, 43% who answered said it was about the same – with a potential bright spot being that 36% said it was improved.

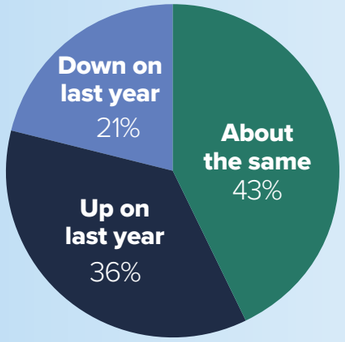
Wholegoods sales were described by most as being about the same – but one area of potential concern is the 50% who said their workshop service levels are down on 2025. This would make sense with all that we heard about the drought months of this summer when customers simply were not using their machinery and therefore not booking it in for repairs or a service.

Elsewhere, we were told that parts sales have also stayed the same for plenty of dealers and most had maintained staffing levels – but unlike last year there were signs that some had began to take on new team members.

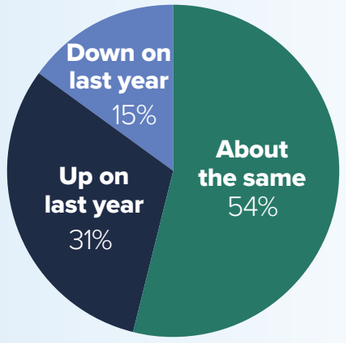
How has your service department / workshop performed this year compared with 2025?



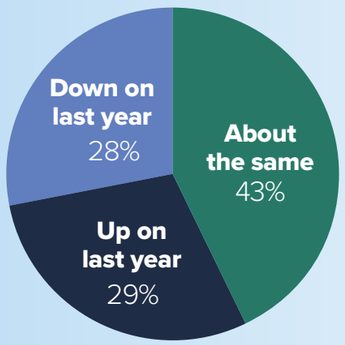
How has your overall business compared to 2025?



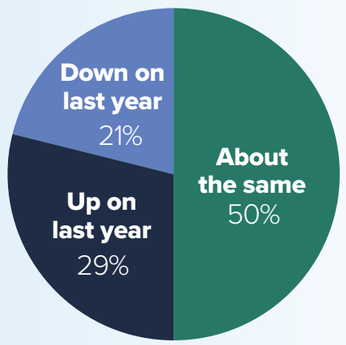
How have your parts and accessories sales performed this year compared with 2025?



How have your machine sales (whole goods) performed this year against 2025?



How have your staffing levels been this year compared to 2025?



Your say...

We asked you to tell us what the bright spots - and not so bright spots - have been for your dealership these past 12 months.

"A bright spot would be tractor sales - although last year was 30% down so a resurgence was bound to come. Not so bright would be workshop and parts. An easy season coupled with high labour rates forced up by manufacturers' warranty rates being a % of retail are damaging the labour market. We will soon be like car dealerships only doing warranty work and some servicing."

"We started the year strong driven by a 40% increase in ride-on mower sales and a busy workshop, However, we experienced a sharp contrast with our autonomous mower line where sales remain slow combined with a critical lack of supplier support – i.e not answering the phone and three weeks to reply to a email. To successfully sell and support autonomous technology dealers need reliable technical support."

"Robot mower sales growth continues but whereas we had a lot of new customers it is now moving across to existing traditional customers and therefore reducing those sales. The dry weather has definitely had an impact this year, even in Scotland!"

"Pre selling lots of Segway X4 and Teranox robots. And then the stock ran out . . ."

"A disaster after last year's drought! Good job I am nearly 77. After 35 years in the trade I think there will not be many businesses left if things stay the same. It's good that we sell EGO as it sells itself. I have noticed Honda dealers dumping their stock so it's a good job they sacked us during Covid. I was livid at the time but they did me the biggest favour."

"The seasons have shifted. Two Augusts on the trot that would have traditionally been peak breakdown income, have fallen flat."

Stop hiding when your ASM walks in!



Sara Hey, president of business development at Bob Clements Inc, the dealership development company based in Missouri, shares the insights she offers U.S dealers with *Service Dealer*'s UK readership every issue.
This issue: Sara considers how dealers can work closer with their area sales mangers for their mutual advantage.

Area sales managers. Depending on who you are, you either look forward to seeing them walk through your door... or you suddenly remember that very urgent "thing" you need to do in the back until they leave. But here is the deal: if you know how to work with them, your area sales managers can be one of the best resources to help your dealership move forward.

Loyalty goes both ways

Let's talk about the elephant in the room. You cannot expect your sales rep to be loyal to you if you are not loyal to them. It is a two-way street. If you constantly dodge calls, cancel meetings, or treat them like they are just checking boxes, do not be surprised if they do not go to bat for you when you need something.

The dealers who get the most out of their reps are the ones who treat the relationship like a partnership, not a one-sided arrangement.

Ask for ideas from the field

Your reps see more dealerships in a month than just about anyone. They know what is working in real time. Why not use that? Ask them what other dealers are doing that is working. (Okay, maybe not your direct competitor down the road.) But things like marketing campaigns, showroom displays, or creative service bundles are all fair game.

If someone else has already tested something and it is working, save yourself the headache and shamelessly steal their idea.

Use them as your line to the manufacturer

Your sales rep is your direct line to the manufacturer. No, the CEO is not going to pick up the phone every time a dealer calls. That is why the area team exists. They are there to filter, solve, and escalate when needed.

Instead of venting to the receptionist, who did nothing more than show up for work, start with your rep. Nine times out of ten, they can get you answers faster than anyone else.

What if your rep is not a good fit?

Not every rep-dealer relationship is a match made in heaven. Sometimes, they do not click with you, or they are not providing the support you need. If that is where you are, here is what to try:

- **Have an honest conversation.** Tell them what you need and how they can best support your dealership. Sometimes they truly do not know.
- **Escalate it.** If you are still not getting anywhere, reach out to the director of sales or VP of Sales.
- **Ask for a reset.** Territories shift, expectations get fuzzy, people change roles. Request a reset meeting to get back on the same page.
- **Control what you can control.** Even if your rep is not a perfect fit, you can still ask specific questions, request resources, and take advantage of programs. Do not let a tough relationship hold your business hostage.

At the end of the day

Your area sales manager is not just there to make sure your signage is straight or count units on your forecourt. They can be a partner, a source of fresh ideas, and your best connection back to the manufacturer. The more you treat the relationship as two-sided, the more value you will get out of it.

Because let's be honest: you do not have to figure this out alone.



Stock, weather and relationships...



In her final Diary entry for the year, Kelly Burgess of Buxtons, reflects on a busy APF and the challenges of planning ahead when the weather refuses to play ball.

Here we are again and, rather surprisingly, I'm writing what will be my final Diary of a Season entry.

As I sit down to write this, we're just coming out the other side of the APF, and what a show it was. We had an absolutely fantastic few days and, by all accounts, it was a hugely successful event. It's always great to see so many familiar faces, catch up with customers and suppliers, and get a real feel for what's happening across the industry.

It's also one of those events that reminds you just how much goes into putting a show like that together. There's the preparation beforehand, the stock, the travelling, the early mornings, the long days on your feet, and then the inevitable pile of jobs waiting for you when you get back.

So, whilst I'm already looking forward to the next one, I'm also very glad it's only every two years!

This year's APF has also been interesting from my perspective, the first since Neale's retirement; learning to juggle year end, show planning and thinking about the year to come has been an additional challenge to the previous 10 years of trade shows I have planned. And I now have manufacturers knocking at the door wanting to talk winter stock, and I can't help but think that the conversation needs to be a slightly different one this year.

After two years of drought, we've all experienced just how dramatically the weather can affect our businesses. Groundcare sales and servicing have been hit, customers have been cautious, and we've had to work considerably harder to generate the same opportunities. Now we're hearing forecasts that 2027 could bring another difficult weather year, which certainly gives us something to think about when manufacturers start asking us to commit to stock.



Kelly on the Buxtons stand at APF 2026

Of course, we need stock. Dealers can't sell machines that aren't there, and manufacturers need to plan their production. But I really hope that, after the last couple of years, there can be some understanding and focus to work together.

I am aware manufacturers have their own pressures and challenges – just as we do – and I'm certainly not suggesting there's an easy answer. But perhaps this is a good opportunity to have some honest conversations about stock, forecasts and what dealers actually need. If the weather is going to continue throwing curveballs at us, then surely the best way of dealing with that is to do it together.

And that brings me rather neatly back to one of the themes I've probably mentioned more than once during these entries: relationships.

The garden machinery industry is built on them. Customers and dealers, dealers and manufacturers, manufacturers and customers. When those relationships work well, everybody benefits. When they don't, it tends to be the dealer who is left trying to explain things at the sharp end. As I said in my previous entry, dealers are the ones representing these brands in their local communities every single day.

Despite everything, though, I remain incredibly positive about the people in this industry. There are some brilliant businesses and some genuinely good people working incredibly hard behind the scenes. We've been through droughts, supply problems, rising costs, changing customer habits and more than our fair share of uncertainty, and somehow we're still here.

I'd like to finish by saying a huge thank you to the *Service Dealer* team for asking me to write these entries in the first place. When I was first asked, I wasn't entirely sure what I'd let myself in for, but I've genuinely enjoyed putting my thoughts down and not being overly opinionated (sorry Duncan!)

Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got some winter stock to think about...

And perhaps a small lie down after the APF.

Until next time.



Buxtons enjoyed a fantastic few days on their always busy APF stand

SME DIGEST

Advice for small and medium-sized enterprises

Edited by Adam Bernstein



RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Mentors can help apprentices learn



Sectors including those related to the agricultural and landscaping markets, have had problems in recruiting and retaining the right workers options, **writes Adam Bernstein, SME Digest editor.**

In an Instagram world, jobs that feature a combination of an office, air-conditioning and sociable hours seem so much more desirable.

But those who know what this sector is really like recognise that no two days are the same, that there's much satisfaction to be had in working outdoors or with machinery, and that it can be just as enjoyable and equally rewarding.

Industry stalwarts also recognise that ours is a trade that needs and relies on a number of essential skills, good technical knowledge, physical ability, the ability to problem solve and, importantly, offer good customer service.

Of course, training courses, product demonstrations and apprenticeships also provide someone with the foundations for a long and storied career. However, there is no substitute for learning directly from those with real-world experience.

New tricks

It's said that 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks'. But that's not to say that the 'old dog' cannot teach an apprentice those same tricks.

And for many new apprentices, having a mentor can be one of the most effective ways that they can develop the skills, confidence and professionalism they need to succeed in the trade.

It's easy for a long-established employee to take the job for granted. But for a new joiner, the world of groundcare is far more complex than they will ever realise until they're embedded with an employer.

They will have much to learn.

Machine preparation, servicing, technical specifications, safe usage, and maintenance are just some of the key knowledge points. And every day will present different challenges, from machinery for heavy duty situations and tight deadlines to difficult clients and changing site conditions.

A mentor will help an apprentice not only bridge the gap between theory and practice, but they'll also pass on practical knowledge that will make the job much easier and faster to complete.

Avoiding mistakes

It follows that a key advantage of a mentor / apprentice relationship is the chance to learn by watching someone skilled and in the real world, not a classroom. Everything from how an experienced mechanic approaches a job, plans the work, handles materials and solves problems under pressure are lessons that cannot be taught in a classroom. Seeing is believing and it'll soon become apparent to an apprentice why a certain method or process has been used.

Similarly, given that time and materials come with cost, a mentor will help an apprentice avoid expensive mistakes; inexperience leads to poor choices, poor preparation or errors that may result in expensive remedial work. It's much better to learn from another's mistakes. At the same time, mentoring will help a young person, lacking in confidence (but full of bravado), by knowing that there is someone to ask questions of or seek guidance from.

Standards

Landscape and grounds care is a very visual trade where the finished work is, by definition, on show. Attention to detail and pride in workmanship is essential and mentoring can help instil a desire for high standards by teaching the importance of preparation and finishing.

A mentor can teach an apprentice that groundcare is more than just spreading weedkiller as quickly as possible. Rather, it's about working with machinery for a finish that pleases clients and protects the reputation of the business. Mentors, over time, pass down the work ethic and standards that have helped them in their many years in the trade.



But mentorship goes further, it's also about learning how to deal with clients and others; employees need to communicate effectively, manage expectations and maintain good working relationships with clients, suppliers and others. Experience will have taught a mentor how to handle difficult conversations, respond to complaints and manage commercial projects. Such interpersonal skills are not taught formally, but learnt on the tools.

Likewise, there's health and safety. Given that heavy and dangerous machinery is involved, it's key to understand the importance of correct manual handling, proper and safe maintenance, and the risks that come from machines in motion. A mentor can drum into an apprentice the importance of safe working and protecting themselves by demonstrating the right techniques, how to use tools correctly, and how to work with a machine without injury.

Mentors help apprentices grow into the job so that they develop their skills faster than they would otherwise. In time, such hands-on learning will help the apprentice to take on more responsibilities and with confidence too.

But let's not overlook the advantages for employers. Mentoring preserves key skills within the sector; highly skilled mechanics will have spent decades developing techniques and expertise that are difficult to replace, and which make, for example, servicing simpler and faster.

Even better, and of direct benefit to the employer, mentoring helps bind the young or new starter through a common team bond so that they are drawn in from an outer orbit into the core of the business making them less likely to leave part way through their apprenticeship or shortly after as they feel supported and motivated. And that's got to be a bonus for all.

Summary

For any dealer looking to build a successful business, finding good workers and apprentices is essential. But while employing is 'easy', keeping them and growing them is much harder. Mentorship is likely to be a move that no one regrets.

REGULATIONS

Unfair dismissals law to change

With the Employment Rights Act 2025, which is being implemented over a two-year period, employment law will significantly change, especially in relation to unfair dismissals as new rules come into effect from 1 January 2027. SME Digest editor Adam Bernstein explains.



The current position

One of the most fundamental protections awarded to employees under the Employment Rights Act 1996 is the right not to be unfairly dismissed. Mark Stevens, a legal director at VWV, often deals with this form of claim and outlines that currently "for an employee to bring an ordinary unfair dismissal claim, they must be able to show that they meet specific criteria." This, he says, includes a minimum of two years continuous service with their employer - the qualifying period.

This two-year qualifying period was introduced in April 2012 and doubled the qualifying period of one year in place at the time, with the aim of providing employers with greater flexibility in managing performance and staffing levels within the early periods of employment.

That said, he says "some forms of dismissal are treated as being automatically unfair from day one, regardless of the length of service that the employee has." Included are dismissals connected to pregnancy and maternity leave, whistleblowing, health and safety duties and trade union activities.

Stevens explains if an Employment Tribunal finds that an unfair dismissal has occurred, it has "the power to order the employer to reinstate the employee in their old role, employ them in a different job or pay the employee compensation". This would be based on the employee's age, length of service and weekly pay, and a compensatory award, which is subject to a statutory cap set at the lower amount of one year's gross pay or £123,543 (2026).

Changes to the process

The new Act introduces three key changes to the unfair dismissal regime.

According to a Department for Business and Trade analysis of Labour Force Survey analysis based on Q1 2022 to Q4 2024 release, approximately 6.3m employees have worked for their current employer between 6 months and two years and have limited protection against unfair dismissal.

This makes the reduction of the qualifying period for ordinary unfair dismissal claims from two years to six months one of the most significant for Stevens. He details that, in effect, "all employees with at least six months' service on 1 January 2027 will automatically gain protection on that date, with newer employees acquiring rights as soon as they reach the six-month threshold."

The Act also removes the power to vary the qualifying period by secondary legislation, meaning that any future changes will require primary legislation through Parliament, signifying that the government intend for this reduced qualifying period to be a lasting feature.

The Act also removes both the financial cap and the 52-week gross pay cap on compensatory awards, bringing unfair dismissal compensation in line with discrimination and whistleblowing claims, where awards are already uncapped.

And from October 2026, Stevens warns that "the Act extends the time limit for an employee to bring a claim in respect of unfair dismissal from three months to six months. Advice." They will still need to engage with the ACAS early conciliation process before lodging a claim.

Impact of the Act

The changes will have a knock-on effect on collective redundancy processes given the wider pool of employees who will now benefit from unfair dismissal protections.

Specifically, Stevens highlights that very few unfair dismissal claims that succeed at an Employment Tribunal and provide compensation to the employee result in a compensatory award that reaches the current cap. However, he says that "the reforms increase both the legal and financial risks associated with unfair dismissal claims, especially in respect of senior or highly paid staff... the compensation cap has previously provided a maximum limit in high-value claims and without this, successful claimants may be able to recover substantially higher damages for lost earnings." These amounts may exceed the current statutory limit of £123,543, especially in cases where the dismissal has long term career consequences.

Consequently, the lack of a financial cap may encourage individuals who would not have traditionally pursued an Employment Tribunal claim to do so, particularly if they are high earners in senior roles as they could recover a substantial financial award.

Further, Stevens reckons that "the six-month qualifying period is expected to result in a larger proportion of employees bringing unfair dismissal claims, including those in the early stages of a role or a temporary contract." He predicts an increase in the volume of claims and case backlogs, longer turnaround times and additional pressures on the Employment Tribunal system.

Employers need to prepare

Given the significance of these changes, Stevens advises employers take proactive steps in readiness for 1 January 2027.

First off, he says that "the new qualifying period means that the window available to identify and address poor recruitment decisions is dramatically reduced; employers should invest in robust hiring processes."

Next, with unfair dismissal rights becoming available after six months, he comments that "probationary periods of that length may no longer offer practical value. Employers may consider a shift towards shorter probationary periods."

At the same time, he recommends that employers review all documentation, including employment contracts, staff handbooks, disciplinary and performance management policies "to ensure they can withstand scrutiny at an Employment Tribunal."

The removal of the compensation cap is likely to increase the complexity and cost of settlement negotiations and will require employers to fundamentally reconsider how they assess and manage unfair dismissal risk. Employers should review their insurance policies and consider how the uncapped regime will affect the cost-benefit analysis of defending claims, by revisiting settlement and budgeting strategies.

And finally, he says that "managers should be trained on the importance of documenting performance concerns, conducting fair processes, and understanding when to escalate issues to advisers."

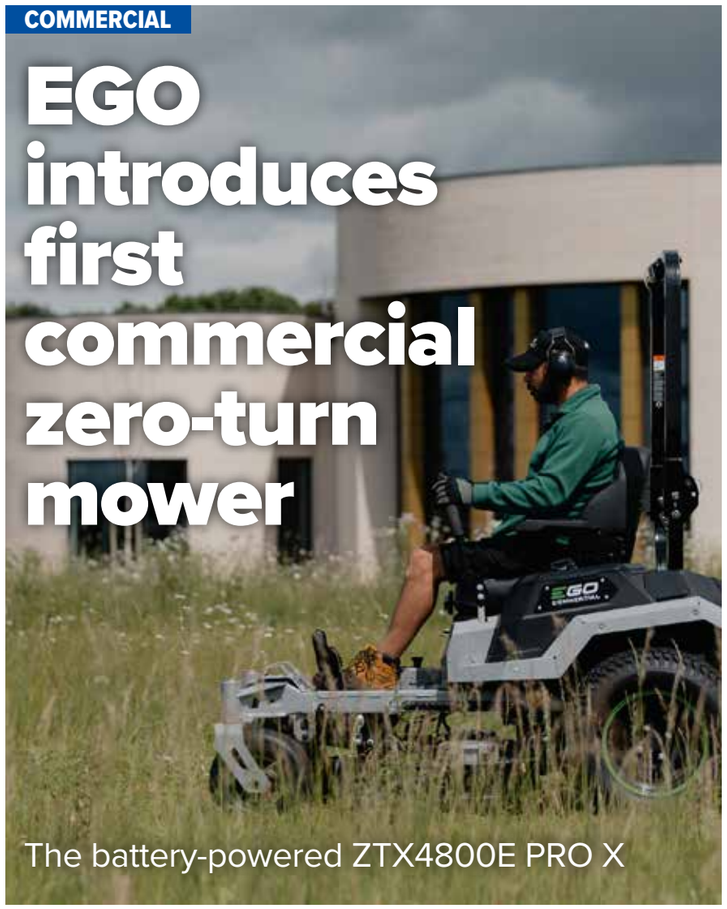
Conclusion

The Act is a significant milestone in the way that unfair dismissal claims are dealt with. Employers who act proactively now by reviewing their practices and policies will be far better placed to navigate the new process when it comes into force in January 2027.

Products

COMMERCIAL

EGO introduces first commercial zero-turn mower



The battery-powered ZTX4800E PRO X

EGO has announced its first commercial zero-turn ride-on mower, the ZTX4800E PRO X, for launch in 2027.

The lap-bar-steered mower is powered by up to four 40Ah batteries from the company's 56V platform. It has a 3.8mm fabricated cutting deck, three blade motors and a claimed blade speed of 19,000ft/min.

An onboard DC-DC charging port allows users to recharge a handheld EGO battery from the mower while working. Fixtures are also available for carrying handheld equipment.

The machine incorporates 4G connectivity and is compatible with the maufactuer's Fleet app, allowing operators and fleet managers to monitor equipment performance, usage and maintenance requirements.

An IP66-rated colour touchscreen provides machine diagnostics and servicing information, while gyroscopic slope detection is included to assist operation on uneven terrain.

The ZTX4800E PRO X is due to become available during 2027 and will be covered by EGO's three-year professional tool warranty.

DOMESTIC / COMMERCIAL

Higher powered quiet shredder

Cobra adds the QS2800 with a 2,800W motor

Cobra has expanded its shredder range with the QS2800 Quiet Shredder, a 2,800W electric model designed for processing branches, hedge cuttings and other garden waste.

The new machine builds on the QS2500, with the increased motor output intended to handle larger volumes of material and thicker branches.

The QS2800 features a self-feeding system and forward and reverse feed functions, with the latter designed to help clear blockages. Large transport wheels and a compact footprint are also fitted.

Cobra says the shredder is aimed at both serious domestic gardeners and professional users, with its applications including processing pruning and seasonal garden waste for composting or mulching.

The QS2800 has a retail price of £189.99.



AGRICULTURAL

Fendt unveils 680hp tracked tractor



The new 1100 Vario MT series includes four models

Fendt has launched its second-generation 1100 Vario MT tracked tractor range, comprising four models with power outputs from 521hp to 680hp.

The flagship 1167 MT has a continuously variable transmission and is claimed by Fendt to be the world's most powerful tractor using a CVT.

Built in Minnesota, the tractors feature a new cab incorporating FendtONE controls, a 12in armrest terminal, 3L-Joystick and digital dashboard. ISOBUS implement control is standard, while Fendt Guide and additional agronomy and telemetry functions are available.

The tractors use the manufacturer's Mobile Track System, with a 3m-long twin-track arrangement. The six-axle design distributes the machine's weight, while Michelin tracks are available from 18in to 36in wide. UK machines will be limited to 27.5in tracks to maintain an overall width of 3m.

Maximum permitted weight increases to almost 27 tonnes, with rear lift capacity of 9 tonnes. The fuel tank has also increased to 1,370 litres.

First deliveries of new range are expected in early 2027.

ATV / UTILITY VEHICLES

2027 range unveiled



Yamaha updates include revised EPS technology and new colour schemes

Yamaha Motor UK has announced its 2027 ATV line-up, with updates to its utility, leisure and sport ranges.

The Grizzly 700 EPS XT-R remains the flagship leisure model and continues with a 686cc engine, Ultramatic CVT transmission and selectable four-wheel drive. For 2027, it is available in a new Titanium Bronze and Tactical Black finish alongside Moss Grey.

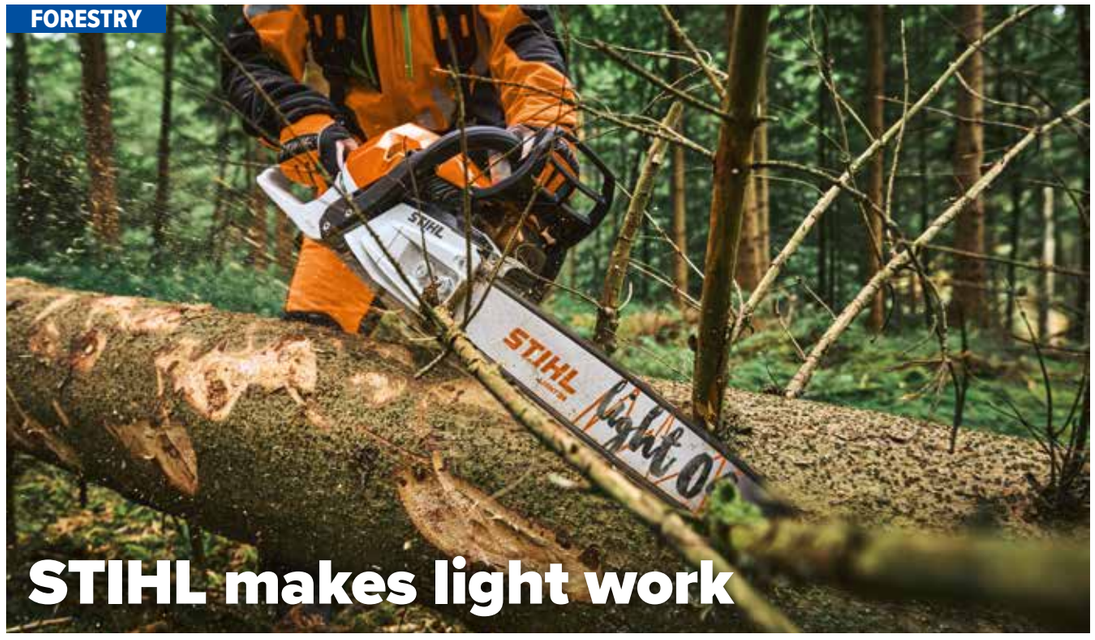
The Kodiak utility range comprises the Kodiak 450, Kodiak 450 EPS and Kodiak 700 EPS. The Grizzly 700 EPS XT-R, Kodiak 700 EPS and Kodiak 450 EPS receive Yamaha's latest speed- and torque-sensitive electric power steering system.

The utility models also feature steel cargo racks, selectable four-wheel drive and differential-lock options, with Yamaha's 10-year belt warranty applying to Ultramatic transmissions.

In the sport range, the YFM700R SE and YFZ450R receive revised colour schemes and graphics, while the YFZ50 and fuel-injected YFM110R continue as youth models with parental speed controls.

Yamaha's online ATV Configurator allows customers to specify factory accessories before submitting the build to a local authorised dealer for a quotation.

FORESTRY



STIHL makes light work

New 50cc chainsaw combines 3.3kW with a 4.8kg operating weight

STIHL has introduced the MS 300 C-M, a new 50cc-class chainsaw aimed at professional forestry users.

The saw produces 3.3kW of power and has an operating weight of 4.8kg. The company say their M-Tronic engine management system automatically regulates ignition timing and fuel metering, while providing high torque across the engine's speed range.

The machine has a slimline design, with a new rear handle and wider knee rest intended to improve handling. Markings on the fan housing indicate the direction of felling and plunge cuts.

A semi-transparent fuel tank includes a 50% level marking, while tool-free oil and fuel caps are fitted for refuelling. The oil pump can be adjusted using a combination wrench.

The MS 300 C-M also features side chain tensioning and a captive nut. A further MS 300 C-M VW version is available with carburettor heating and a heated handle for operation in colder conditions.

COMMERCIAL



Makita has added a three-wheel ground trimmer to its 40VMax XGT cordless range.

The UG001G has a 500mm cutting width and is designed to be pushed across the ground rather than carried. Its three-wheel configuration allows the machine to stand independently, while a large rear tyre is intended to aid movement and turning on uneven ground.

Cutting height is adjusted without tools from 25mm to 105mm using a one-touch locking lever. Handle height can also be adjusted without tools and the handle folds away for storage.

The trimmer uses a single-sided, T-shaped blade positioned at 90 degrees to the shaft. Cutting speed is between 3,000 and 4,000 strokes per minute, with soft-start and constant-speed control.

Powered by a 40V XGT lithium-ion battery, claimed continuous runtime is approximately two hours 40 minutes in low mode and one hour 30 minutes in high mode.

Makita suggests applications including large, grassed areas, sports fields, field ridges, roadsides and riverbanks. The machine is IPX4 rated.

AGRICULTURAL

JCB digs into farming



New 3CX Sitemaster targets on-farm groundworks

JCB has introduced a new 3CX Sitemaster backhoe-loader aimed at customers including farmers and agricultural contractors carrying out their own groundworks and infrastructure projects.

The machine is available in a single specification priced at £55,000, or from £271 per week through JCB Finance.

Power comes from a 3.0-litre Stage V, 55kW (74hp) JCB engine producing 440Nm of torque. JCB says the engine requires no exhaust after-treatment. A four-speed manual gearbox provides a maximum travel speed of 40kph.

Specification includes a 1.0cu m six-in-one loader shovel with integrated pallet forks, sideshift excavator with telescopic dipper, seat-mounted servo excavator controls, single-lever loader control, air conditioning, LED work lights and LiveLink monitoring.

The telescopic dipper increases excavator side reach from 5.57m to 6.57m. At the front, maximum loader lift capacity is 3.65 tonnes, with a lift height of 3.59m to the bucket pin.

Single and twin auxiliary hydraulic circuits allow the excavator to operate a range of attachments, while the loader can be fitted with a JCB Quick Hitch for implements including bale spikes and grabs.



DOMESTIC



Webb gets rough

Self-propelled wheeled trimmer tackles long grass and rough ground

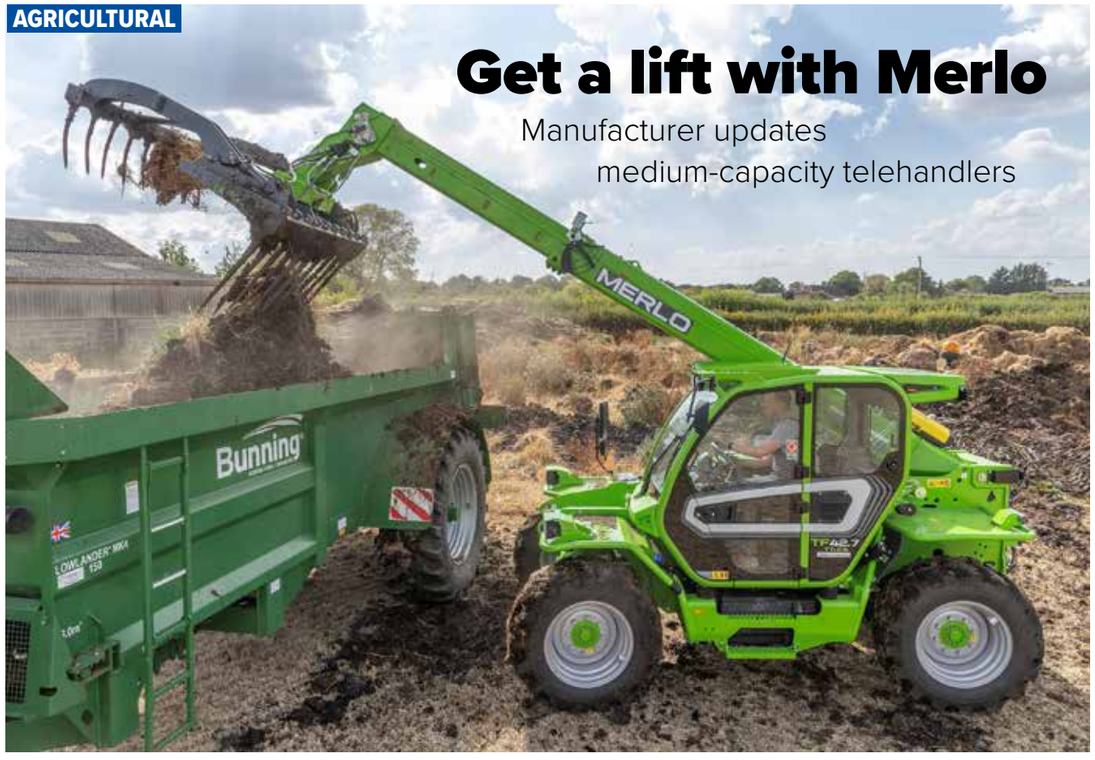
Webb has added a self-propelled wheeled line trimmer to its range, aimed at cutting long grass, weeds and other vegetation across larger or rougher areas.

The WEPWTSP is powered by a 161cc Webb DVO165 petrol engine and has a 56cm (22in) working width. Four 4mm cutting lines rotate at 3,000rpm, while the self-propelled drive is designed to reduce the effort required when covering larger areas.

The machine runs on 35cm (14in) wheels and has an adjustable cutting height from 40mm to 95mm. Webb says the combination makes it suitable for areas including larger gardens, paddocks, verges and rough paths.

The WEPWTSP is priced at £489.99 and comes with a three-year domestic warranty.

AGRICULTURAL



Get a lift with Merlo

Manufacturer updates medium-capacity telehandlers

Merlo has introduced Generation III versions of its TF38.10 and TF42.7 TurboFarmer telehandlers in the UK. The TF42.7 has a 4.2-tonne lifting capacity and 7m lift height, while the TF38.10 offers 3.8 tonnes of capacity and a 10m lift height.

Both models feature redesigned cab access, with wider staggered steps and a 50mm floor cut-out. New cab mountings are intended to reduce noise and vibration.

The FOPS Level 2 roof guard has also been redesigned, with the front roof bar raised by 30mm and protective plates repositioned to improve upward visibility.

Other changes include metal mudguards, a new hydraulic distributor and a chassis extended by 30mm. Both hydrostatic and CVTronic models use a 136hp Perkins engine.

Merlo has also updated its Adaptive Stability Control System, adding recovery movements during overload situations and expanded attachment management, allowing attachments to be pre-programmed.

Two-speed hydrostatic versions are available through UK dealers, while CVTronic models are due from January 2027.

Choose SPAL High-Performance Long-Lasting Fans and Blowers

4 YEAR WARRANTY*

*Applies to LL/VLL brushed models and BLDC. All other products have a 3-year warranty.



Robust Efficient Powerful Thermal Management & HVAC

SPAL

+44 (0) 1905 613 714 www.spalautomotive.co.uk sales@spalautomotive.co.uk



uni-power
ENGINES • TRANSMISSIONS • PARTS
BRIGGS & STRATTON
HATZ DIESEL
HONDA ENGINES
Kawasaki ENGINES
KOHLER Engines
Kubota
rehlko
LOMBARDINI
VANGUARD
YANMAR
HYDRO-GEAR
PEERLESS TRANSMISSIONS
TUFF TORQ
HONDA POWER EQUIPMENT
Simplicity
MURRAY
Kubota
SNAPPER
TEL: 01371 875331 www.uni-power.co.uk

Let loose...

Our mystery columnist The Sprocket waxes lyrical about a modern industry show that strikes a chord with classic events from the past – and hits the road!



I was grateful to be let out to go to GroundsFest in September. I thought my days of visiting shows were over, but I was so glad I made the effort to visit, albeit just for the one day.

Looking back at all the fuss, uncertainty and concerns about the various industry shows and how GroundsFest would impact on them, I can't help but say that the new show has really stepped up in the short time it has been in place and provided the garden and groundcare machinery sector a very impressive shop window, benefitting from a comprehensive visitor base.

It has been reported that over 10,600 unique visitors attended this year's show which is around 1500 more than the previous year. There was also a good visitor turnout from abroad.

It takes me back to the heady days of the IOG show at Windsor Racecourse with long queues to get in and a vibrant buzzing atmosphere. Not that there were long queues at GroundsFest. This sort of buzz has dwindled away over the years as visitor numbers have reduced and exhibitors have chosen to spend their marketing budgets on other things. So, on a pleasant day in September at Stoneleigh Park (the old Royal Show Ground) it was a delight to recapture some of that old feeling of an atmosphere at a show with busy stands and plenty of people from across the industry. A fantastic level of diversity.

An electric future

Nostalgia is great but it doesn't pay the bills, so the very reason so many machinery exhibitors were at the show is an indication of the need to have such an event that can justify the many thousands of pounds spent being there. For me, it also showed how diverse and fast changing product ranges have become and how much more trending our industry is becoming.

Being a long-term industry guy, I do go back to the battery products of yesteryear with products like the Wheelhorse Electrac and various cylinder mowers powered by a car battery. They seemed innovative and practical at the time but the current explosion (sorry, not literally!) of battery powered products is like someone has kicked over a hive of bees and they are just everywhere. The variety of battery products is mind boggling, and the product applications are broad for battery powered equipment - from some of the smallest mowers to some exceedingly large bits of kit.

It did look like most traditional exhibitors had an existing or prototype electric product on the stand and many variations on a theme across all sizes and types of machines. Whatever anyone's concerns are about battery power and the demise of petrol machines it is here with us now and only time will tell how the longevity of this change may impact future markets.

Rise and rise of the robots

GroundsFest provided a stage for all these changes and possibilities with, of course, previous columns in *Service Dealer* exploring petrol versus battery as well as touching on the rise of the robot. What struck me at GroundsFest was the proliferation of robot mowers of all sizes and how quickly the technology is changing and making some of the earlier models pretty much obsolete. I don't think I would want to be a dealer sitting on a stock of perimeter wire robots with the advances that are going on.

Seeing so many 'robots' in one place besides more traditional equipment throws up so many questions about where this is going in the future? Also, how the dealer network will cope with it is a scary subject. Is it all moving so quickly that a dealer cannot keep pace with it? Or does it offer opportunities that only a specialised dealer network can provide for?

There is clearly a threat from the newer larger commercial robot mowers replacing the more traditional large area mowers such as fairway mowers. Talking to some at the show, they are optimistic that the traditional equipment will have a place and whilst under threat just now, there was a belief that demand will bounce back to this type of equipment in the future if the robots do not provide what users are expecting of them - or stand up to the potential savings gained from using them.

The show also highlighted those suppliers that have robots and those that do not. As the robot revolution requires a different type of skillset, many dealers and suppliers are creating separate sides to their business with more specialised people to handle the robotics. Maybe we are creeping toward the solus robotic dealer of the future or opening a door to a whole new genre of dealerships!

All this aside, GroundsFest provided a platform for a huge variety of machinery and services and there was much on offer from niche suppliers of specialised equipment and services.

GroundsFest 2026 should be congratulated for their perseverance, innovation and presentation and what I consider to be one of the best shows of this type for a long time.

Bikers' fun

I just must mention a little motorbike adventure to Scotland to ride the NC500 from near Fort William around the west coast to the north and down the east coast and through the Cairngorms on the 'Snow Roads' that I rode with some industry friends who shall remain nameless. All I can say is 'Wow'! Scotland gave us its all with good weather, bad weather and very bad weather - but what an incredible adventure. The NC500 coastal route has some of the most amazing scenery I have ridden through.

Even on the rough days it was a delight to ride with incredible vistas around every corner. We rode for some long days to make the most of it. The company was great, the riding superb and Scotland was amazing. It's on our doorstep. If you ride a motorbike you should do the NC500, a fantastic ride.



What's on?

Status of the events correct at the time of going to press, but we advise confirming with organisers' websites and social media channels.

NOVEMBER 2026

FTMTA Farm Machinery Show, C Kildare 10-12
https://ftmta.ie/

EIMA International, Bologna 10-14
www.eima.it/en

GMA Saltex 2026, Birmingham NEC 11-12
www.gmasaltex.co.uk/

AgriScot 2026, The Royal Highland Centre 18
https://agriscot.co.uk

Midlands Machinery Show 18
https://www.midlandsmachineryshow.com/

Royal Welsh Winter Fair 30-1/12
www.rwas.wales/winter-fair

DECEMBER 2026

***Service Dealer* Conference & Awards, Stratford-Upon-Avon** 3
www.servicedealer.co.uk

JANUARY 2027

Oxford Farming Conference 6-8
www.ofc.org.uk

Golf Industry Show, New Orleans 15-21
https://gcsaaconference.com/

LAMMA 2027, Birmingham NEC 20-21
www.lammashow.com

BTME 2027, Harrogate International Centre 26-28
www.btme.org.uk

FEBRUARY 2027

Doe Show 2027, Ulting 2-4
www.ernestdoe.com

Dairy-Tech, Stoneleigh Park 3
https://dairy-tech.uk/

Yorkshire Agricultural Machinery Show (YAMS), York Auction Centre 4
www.yams.uk.com

Spring Fair 2027, Birmingham NEC 7-10
www.springfair.com

World Ag Expo, Tulare, California 9-11
www.worldagexpo.com

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

MARCH 2027

GMA Conference & Awards, Emerites Old Trafford 11
www.servicedealer.co.uk

APRIL 2027

Ideal Home Exhibition, Olympia, London 2-11
www.idealhomeshow.co.uk

AEA Conference 2027, One Great George Street, London 13
https://aea.uk.com/

The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC 20-22
www.cvshow.com

Intermat, Paris, France 21-24
www.intermatconstruction.com/en

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

Newark Garden Show, Newark Showground 23-25
www.newarkgardenshow.co.uk

East Anglian Game & Country Fair, Euston Estate, Thetford 24-25
https://ukgamefair.co.uk

XGT
Makita®
UB004G XGT® 40V MAX BACKPACK BLOWER
UB005G XGT® 40V MAX BLOWER VACUUM
UB003G XGT® 40V MAX BLOWER
XGT® 40V MAX BACKPACK BLOWER
UB004G
XGT® 40V MAX BLOWER VACUUM
UB005G
XGT® 40V MAX BLOWER
UB003G
MAKITAUK.COM | @MAKITAUK | @MAKITAUKOFFICIAL



SERVICE DEALER EVENT OF THE YEAR

SERVICE DEALER
THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY
CONFERENCE
2026

SERVICE DEALER
THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY
AWARDS
2026

3RD DECEMBER - STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

CULTURE
NATURE & NURTURE IN BUSINESS

This year's conference theme is about nature and nurture in business. In today's trading conditions, getting the working culture right is more important than ever.

For all ticket enquiries contact us via email at **soriaya@theadplain.com**
or call us on **01491 837117**

www.servicedealer.co.uk/2026-theme-speakers

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE AT THE PRESTIGE EVENT OF THE YEAR