

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

September/October 2024

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ARE PRO USERS EMBRACING NEW TECH?

We hear from turf professionals on their use of robotic and battery technology

SERVICE DEALER CONFERENCE & AWARDS '24

Launch of this year's event

OPENING NEW AVENUES

Following a change, MKM expands portfolio

CEREALS '24 REVIEW

Exhibitors seek the spenders



APPRENTICESHIP FUNDING RULES

Will they change with a Labour government? We consider what is a complex situation for dealers.

Paxster eCompact Air

THE SILENT ALTERNATIVE UTILITY VEHICLE



PAXSTER

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Faunamaster



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Faunamaster FM130 ATV Flail Mower

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Letter from the editor

Steve Gibbs

steve@servicedealer.co.uk



Welcome to the September/October 2024 edition of *Service Dealer* magazine.

We're into that period of a dealer's year now where great demands are placed on time to attend all manner of different events. There will be manufacturer and supplier open days, conferences and meetings being held around the country – and, of course, the autumn turfcare machinery shows are coming up. There are now two major shows within a few, short weeks of each other – which we cover, starting on page 38 this issue.

All of these excursions away from the dealership can be extremely valuable. It will, however, be a case of making judgements where time can most justifiably be spent.

Dealers will, no doubt, want to keep on top of all the latest launches from all their suppliers, so they can be fully prepared to best serve their customers' needs. We have an article within these pages related to this, where Laurence Gale, editor of our sister title *TurfPro* (subscribe for free at www.turfpro.co.uk) looks at what some key commercial end-user customers think about the new generation of outdoor powered machinery tech. Loz has

opened his little black book of contacts and asked around, to get a sense of what commercial practitioners think of robotic tools and battery-powered equipment.

It's a great subject for discussion, because there's absolutely no doubt that this is the route that manufacturers see the industry heading - supported by legislative trends. But is it what the turf professionals want right now? Because what those guys want will presumably be what dealers will want, too.

It's interesting to hear the spread of opinions offered by the pro users, because it's undeniable that some of our dealer readers also hold reservations about the direction the industry is moving in.

That's not to say they are King Canutes, trying to hold back the tide of technological development. Rather, they will simply know their own business and the requirements of their own customer base.

Whilst there remains the purchasing choice for end-users, between petrol and battery-powered products, dealers will likely fulfil those options for their customers.

For how long that choice remains on the table, though – well, that's another matter...

THE TEAM

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DEALERS

Turney Group has territory expanded

Strengthens established partnership

Groundscare specialist GGM Group has reported growth and expansion, as the business enters its busiest season.

The Turney Group, based in Oxfordshire, have signed a new agreement with their long-term partner Ransomes Jacobsen to expand their territory to the south and west of their existing area of responsibility.

Turney say this significant opportunity further strengthens their long-established partnership between themselves and Ransomes Jacobsen, and will serve to grow market share of the respective businesses through their experienced sales team and aftersales capabilities.

Turney Group's portfolio of groundcare brands includes Iseki, New Holland, Amazone Groundcare, Dennis, Sisis, STIHL and Husqvarna.



Members of the Turney Group's team

DEALERS



R C Setchfield's premises when they were appointed Deutz Fahr dealers in 2023

On July 5, 2024, dealership R C Setchfield Ltd – based in Grantham, Lincolnshire – announced they were to close their doors for good.

In a statement, the Setchfield family said: "After over forty years in business, it is with deep regret that we announce that we have decided to close down the business, entirely due to the imminent retirement of Richard Setchfield."

The family confirmed that the company was solvent, and that staff would be supported during this difficult time.

The dealership featured in *Service Dealer's* news pages twice last year – once in April, when they took on the Merlo range, and again in July, when they were appointed for Deutz Fahr.

In their message to customers, Setchfield confirmed they would continue to finish any workshop jobs that were currently being worked on, but said they could not take on any new tasks. They also said any job that had been booked in but not started could not be facilitated.

Customers were able to collect any parts that had been previously ordered by their team, and, for a period, customers were able to visit the parts showroom and buy items off the shelf.

Machinery and equipment that was currently in stock that was sold and paid for was delivered as planned, whilst the sale of remaining stock machinery and equipment was due to be advertised as this magazine went to press.

Dealer R C Setchfield closes

Prompted by retirement of Richard Setchfield

The Setchfield family signed off by saying: "It is not a decision we have taken lightly. We would like to thank all of our customers for their continued support over the years."

Reaction

R C Setchfield's announcement prompted some well know industry figures to get in touch with *Service Dealer*.

David Kirschner, independent consultant to the land-based engineering industry, said: "Sad news to see the industry lose another family-established business who were committed to supporting their customer base. Best wishes to you, Richard, your family, and the workforce for the future – it was always a pleasure to assist you with technical support."

Stephen Cabrol, owner of Riko UK Ltd, said: "I first met Richard around 35 years ago, when he was an early customer of mine for Riko front loaders, and our businesses have been around for much the same timeframe. Congratulations to Richard for building a successful company.

"Sadly, I expect to see a great many more 'packing up' announcements. In five-to-ten years' time, the agricultural tractor and machinery market will be a very different place in the UK, and farmers will be left with having to make a choice of a homogeneous product from one of five global giants. And boy, oh boy, will they have to pay through the nose for the privilege!"

PEOPLE

Top technicians honoured

LE-TEC's competition winners 2024

The Land-based Engineering - Training and Education Committee (LE-TEC Ltd) have announced the winners of their 'Technicians For 2024' competition.

The winners are:



First Place

William Harland-Knight
from Russell's,
winning a £150 gift voucher of
their choice.



Second Place

Zac Wallis
from Oliver Landpower Ltd,
winning a Makita UK Cordless
Grease Gun



Third Place

Mark Donaldson
from Gammies Groundcare,
winning a Kubota 8 Drawer Rollcab
with Ball-Bearing Slides

LE-TEC say the annual competition, now in its fifth year, is designed to find and celebrate the UK's best technicians and ambassadors for careers in the land-based engineering sector. This year, two routes of entry were available - the traditional video entry method, or a new format where employers or lecturers could nominate outstanding students or employees within their network

The LE-TEC Ltd judging panel consisted of representatives from IAgRE, BAGMA and the AEA, alongside industry independents.

Charlie Nicklin, CEO of IAgRE, said: "The calibre of entrants this year has been incredible. The number of talented technicians coming through the dealers is such a rewarding thing to see. This year, we have also awarded several certificates of recognition to those with exceptional talent."

Nick Darking, BAGMA's general manager, added: "Unearthing the often

unsung but incredibly talented individuals in our industry is what this competition does best. This year, the standard of entry has been outstanding."

Praise for winners

Winner William Harland-Knight was nominated by his lecturer at East Durham College, Mike Herrington, who said: "Will's contribution to training and development is outstanding, and he is a credit to himself and Russell's."

John Jackson, group aftersales manager at Russell's, added: "We are thrilled that Will has been named Technician of the Year. His dedication to the land-based engineering industry is truly inspiring, and he's a vital part of the Russell's team. We couldn't be prouder of his accomplishments."

Lisa Carty, service manager at Oliver Landpower Ltd, said of Zac Wallis' second-place win: "Everyone at Oliver Landpower is so pleased with Zac's award. Zac's attitude to all aspects of his

work is second to none, whether that is the admin side or his engineering side. It really helps keep our service department moving. He has the can-do attitude, and will always go above and beyond to ensure his work is carried out to a high standard. Zac is an absolute credit to Oliver Landpower and the agricultural industry."

Third-place winner Mark Donaldson said: "I would like to express my gratitude to the judges for recognising my passion for this work, and I hope to use this award to encourage our apprentices and future young engineers, and show them just how much there is to achieve within this industry."

Les Gammie, Mark's branch manager, added: "We are extremely proud of Mark for achieving this award from such a prestigious judging panel within the industry. It's great to see young engineers, as the future of our industry, being recognised for their hard work and dedication."

INDUSTRY

Garden Trader redesigned & relaunched

Improved navigation and more intuitive layout

The owners of Garden Trader have announced that they will be launching a new rebuilt and redesigned site.

Coming soon, it is described as featuring a sleek and professional look, making it visually appealing and user-friendly. Garden Trader owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke said, "With improved navigation and a more intuitive layout, it's now easier and more reliable for both dealers and customers to find exactly what they need."

Duncan continued, "The new site will bring a host of benefits, including enhanced security, better performance, and the ability to easily manage and update content. This transition also allows for greater customisation and scalability, ensuring that our website can grow and adapt to meet the needs of our users. Experience the difference with our new 'Garden Trader' website and enjoy a seamless, efficient, and enjoyable browsing experience!

"We continue to have an 'industry first, profit second'

philosophy and the Garden Trader annual subscription remains at an affordable £95 for the whole year. This equates to 26p per day."

For dealers who are not already represented on Garden Trader you can join today at www.gardentrader.co.uk



DEALERS

Four new dealers signed by Kymco

For manufacturer's ATV range

Kymco UK say they have welcomed four new franchise dealerships across the UK and the Republic of Ireland for their ATV range since the beginning of 2024 - their 60th year in business.

The four dealerships are:

- ARK ATVs - Minehead, Somerset
- JG Paxton - Bentham, North Yorkshire
- D A Forgie - Lisburn, Northern Ireland
- Kilkenny Quads - Kilkenny, Republic of Ireland

Neil Keeble, national sales and marketing manager at Kymco UK, said their growth in dealerships "shows that our reputation of selling high-quality manufactured products at competitive prices is of ever-increasing value to consumers."

The company's Irish ATV dealer expansion includes D A Forgie's Lisburn branch, its second dealer in Northern Ireland, while Kilkenny Quads is its first outlet in the Irish Republic.

Neil concluded: "It's Kymco's 60th year, but 2024 also marks 26 years of Kymco sales in the UK, 16 years since Kymco UK was formed, and six years since we began operating Kymco's mobility, motorcycle and ATV divisions together."



DEALERS



Mark Clifford-Kennedy, Infinitcut territory sales manager for the south of England, with James Bastian, MD of Wildwood Machinery

Infinitcut extend dealer network

Wildwood Machinery take on key counties

Infinitcut have announced the appointment of Wildwood Machinery as a new authorised dealer for Hampshire, Sussex, Dorset, Berkshire, Surrey, London and the surrounding areas.

The manufacturer say Wildwood – established in 2022 – have quickly established themselves as a leading provider for sales and servicing across southern England. Their extended portfolio will now include the full TMSsystem cassette range and Infinitcut cylinder and rotary mowers.

Under the management of James Bastian, Wildwood Machinery has grown rapidly since launching in 2022. James has over 30 years of sector experience, including many years as the managing director of East Horton Golf Club, which he has utilised to understand the exacting needs and requirements of those working in the professional turfcare industry. From their depot in Winchester, James and the team offer sales, support and servicing for customers, including local authorities, golf clubs, National Trust properties, schools and community clubs, as well as Premiership football clubs and other elite sporting venues.

James Bastian said: "Infinitcut and TMSsystem are the choice of many top-flight professional sports clubs around the world, which fits perfectly with our aspiration to provide the very best in groundcare equipment. They will enhance our existing portfolio of machinery, giving our customers access to a high-quality range of products that can really take their surface standards to the next level."

DEALERS



Vincents' team

Rebrand for southwest dealership

New name for Vincent Tractors & Plant

Southwest-based machinery dealer Vincent Tractors & Plant have announced a new chapter in their company's history, rebranding to Vincents, which they unveiled at the Royal Cornwall Show.

The dealership said this rebranding marks a significant milestone. Adopting a less product-specific brand name reflects the broad range of machinery they supply, including brands such as Kubota, Kverneland, Ktwo, Trimax, Baroness, Grillo and Nugent Trailers.

In a statement, the company said: "Our offerings encompass agricultural, construction and groundcare machinery and equipment, perfectly aligning with how most of our customers and suppliers already refer to us. This change goes beyond a new name and logo – it's about better representing our diverse customer base, particularly in the groundcare and specialist turf sectors."

Vincents say the rebranding journey has taken over 18 months, and has

involved a complete redesign of their logo. They believe the new design honours their history since 1966 while looking forward to an exciting future, appealing to a wider audience.

Nick Vincent, Vincents' director, said: "We were excited to share our new brand with everyone at the Royal Cornwall Show. Visitors to our stand appreciated the fresh look and feel of Vincents, and agreed that it truly represents who we are and what we stand for."

INDUSTRY



New garden machinery brand launches in UK

Fiat Professional are targeting dealers

The global brand, Fiat Professional, is launching into the UK garden machinery market, with the company claiming to have a “fresh perspective on the industry.”

In a statement, the company said that, right from the start, their intention is to do things differently, “especially for dealers.”

Behind the Fiat Professional Garden business is a team who say they have over 40 years’ experience as industry dealers and engineers, operating under the name of Engineering Eden Ltd. Their chief technical officer is Scott Lelliott, who many dealers will know from his years working in the industry.

Scott said: “This is a new brand on the block, built for dealers by dealers, and we’re determined to do everything better for everyone we work with. We know that dealers have been short-changed by some manufacturers for far too long and we want to right those wrongs. ‘The rot stops here,’ as our website says.”

Scott continued: “This is a lean and efficient operation, driving as much profit for dealers as possible. Our market price protection strategy makes sure that dealers won’t have to compete on price, meaning that every stocking dealer will always retain excellent margins.”

He confirmed that they’ll only be appointing a select few dealers in the UK, spreading them geographically wide enough to protect individual trading areas.

Scott also explained: “Marketing will send customers to dealers’ doors, directing orders to the right outlet. The products will be advertised and sold on Amazon, but orders will involve the local dealer, so Amazon sales will go beyond just commission – they’ll drive customer numbers, too.”

PEOPLE



National sales manager appointed

Cramer name former STIHL man

Having launched the new Cramer UK subsidiary in April, the company has now announced John McGrady as their new sales manager for the UK.

John has spent 11 years with STIHL GB in various roles, but most recently as the dealership development manager. Cramer says he has been involved in many projects which have given him a great understanding of the UK market and the dealer network.

John said: “I am extremely excited to start this new chapter of my career with Globe Technologies and the Cramer brand. There is an impressive product lineup which I know will impress the dealer network. I’m really looking forward to engaging with the network over the next few months.”

Jean-Christoph Durot, vice-president of Cramer’s European division, added: “We are pleased to welcome John to drive Cramer growth in the UK. John’s background will be an advantage to drive our new strategy to convince dealers to join our mission.

“The UK is a key region in Europe, which is why we have established our own organisation to deal directly with dealers and support them in the transition from petrol to battery for commercial users.”



COBRA **BILLY GOAT**
cobragarden.co.uk

Cobra & Billy Goat at Groundsfest Stand: OSA580

Cobra and Billy Goat will be showcasing their comprehensive range of products at Groundsfest from 10th - 11th September 2024 at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. Come and see us on Stand OSA580 to get hands-on with the latest and greatest garden machinery from Cobra including the new lawn tractors and Fortis cylinder lawnmower ranges.

For outdoor property clean-up products, look no further than the Billy Goat range. From aerators, sod cutters and brushcutters, to blowers, lawn vacuums and debris loaders, Billy Goat have you covered. We look forward to seeing you for an enjoyable two days at Groundsfest 2024.



CHAPTER TWO: THE EVOLUTION | 10-11 SEP 2024
STONELEIGH PARK, WARWICKSHIRE

News in brief:

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



INDUSTRY

Ground broken

Bobcat held a ceremonial groundbreaking in June for its new €280 million manufacturing facility for select compact track and skid-steer loader models in Mexico.



INDUSTRY

More donations made

The STIGA team have been offering their support to a number of domestic abuse charities, offering them mowers and gardening tools for the individuals under their care as part of their 'We Care, You Care' scheme.



AGRICULTURE

Half-a-million reached

Claas celebrated a major milestone in its combine harvester history, with half-a-million now built since their first M.D.B. combine was produced in 1936.

INDUSTRY

FGM expands commercial robotic mower focus

Adds brand and extends team

FGM Claymore has expanded its robotic mower division, focusing on the expansion of commercial robot sales.

Echo Robotics, a subsidiary of Yamabiko, is a manufacturer of large commercial robot mowers, serving customers in the golf, sports turf, leisure, education and local authority markets. The range is also sold under the brand 'Belrobotics' across Europe.

With the addition to FGM's commercial brand portfolio, the company have recently welcomed Sam Daybell to the team. The company say that, as head of the robotics division, Sam is driving business development across the UK and Ireland. As a main figure in the commercial robotics industry, FGM say that Sam brings with him a wealth of experience and expertise in commercial robot mower sales, and has already established a solid dealer network in the UK.

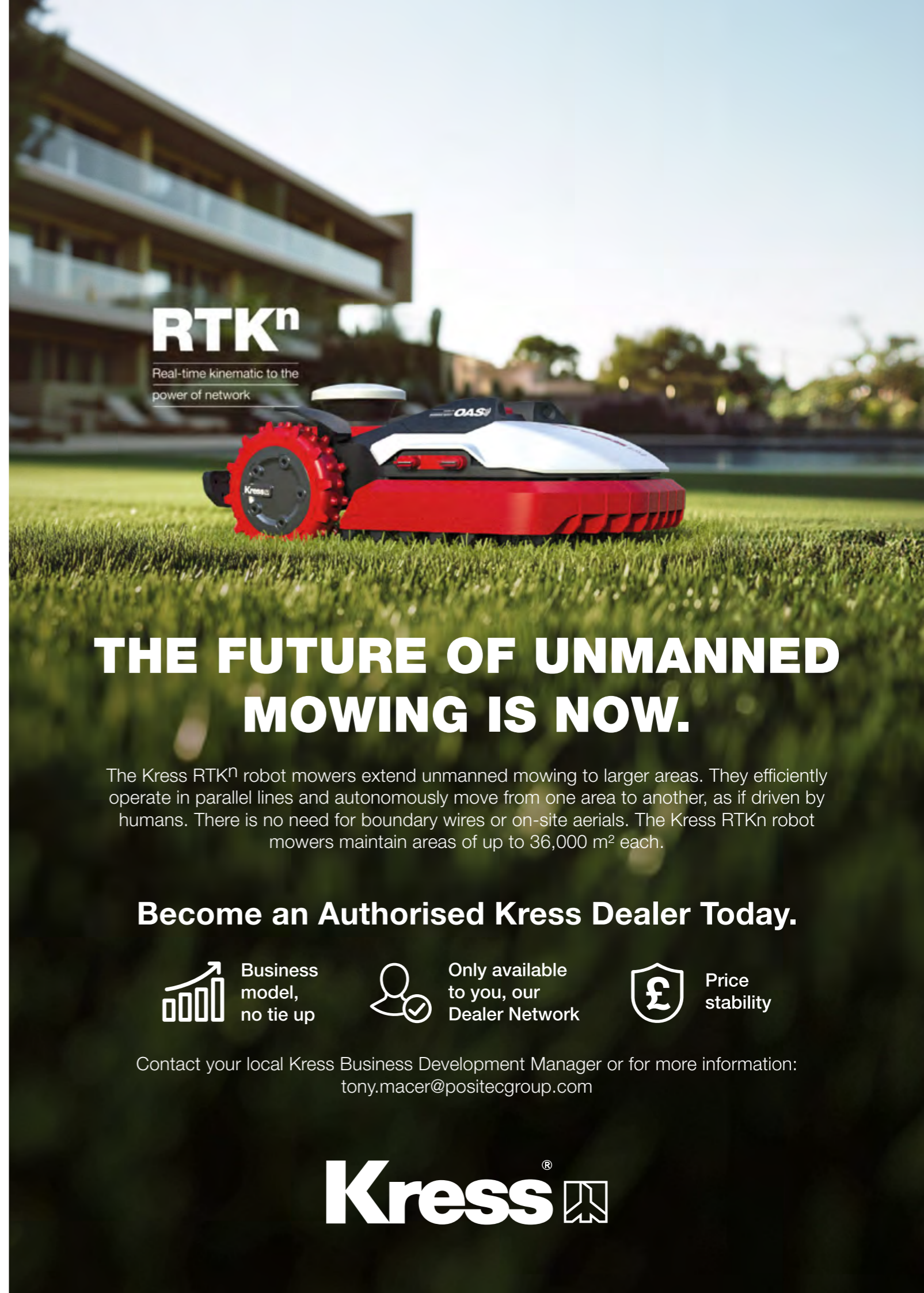


Paul Butterly with Sam Daybell

"This is a great opportunity," Sam said. "Echo Robotics produce the best commercial robots on the market, so, after every new installation, I know that the customer is going to be happy with the outcome. In sales, that's the best possible situation."

Paul Butterly, managing director at FGM Claymore, is the driving force behind the move into robotics. "The addition of Echo Robotics perfectly complements our existing commercial Echo offering, alongside our OREC range of OPE. Along with battery handheld and zero turns, robots remain an important segment in the market, and I believe that we now have a world-class offering in all three product categories. Sam is arguably the most well-known and well-respected figure in the industry, so we were delighted that he agreed to join us."

FGM say there are dealer franchise opportunities available in both the UK and Ireland.



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PEOPLE

Masons Kings appoint new general manager

Dominic Burt returns

Family-run agriculture and professional turfcare dealership, Masons Kings, has announced the return of Dominic Burt as the company's new general manager.

The John Deere dealership, based in southwest England, says this marks a significant step for their business.

The dealership says Dominic brings over 35 years of experience in the agricultural and machinery industry, which includes many years previously working for the company. They also say his knowledge of the industry, combined with a strong track record of driving growth, makes him an ideal fit. They believe Dominic's expertise and vision will be instrumental in guiding the company through its next phase of growth and development.

"We are thrilled to welcome back Dominic back into the Masons Kings family," said Roger Prior, director of Masons Kings. "We are confident that Dominic's leadership will help us achieve our ambitious goals."

In his new role, Dominic will oversee all aspects of Masons Kings' operations, including sales, service and support. He will work closely with the team leaders to ensure that the



L-R: Elliot Prior, turf business manager; Roger Prior, director; Dominic Burt, general manager; and Peter Endacott, agricultural sales consultant

company continues to meet the evolving needs of its customers while maintaining high standards of quality and reliability. The dealership says Dominic's strong, longstanding connections to the agricultural industry, along with his passion to develop and grow the turf division, will be key assets as they look to future-proof the company and maintain its family-run business ethos.

"I am excited to be returning to Masons Kings and lead such a talented team," Dominic said. "Masons Kings has a longstanding reputation for excellence, and I look forward to contributing to its ongoing success. Together, we will strive to deliver the best possible solutions and support to our customers."

It has also been confirmed that Peter Endacott, who has played a vital role in the company, will remain with Masons Kings to help with the transition and focus on his selling role.

INDUSTRY

Distributor appointed

For new robotic mower and line-marker combo

XDC Autonomous Solutions has announced that they have been appointed UK distributor of the RM21 Combo robot from FJ Dynamics.

The new robotic system, which the company describes as a "world's first combination," offers a cutting deck and line-marker to enable autonomous mowing and marking from the same unit.

XDC's director of sales, Matt Murray, said: "We are delighted to be working in partnership with FJ Dynamics and offering this technologically-advanced

solution to the UK turfcare industry.

"Having been involved with autonomous solutions for several years, I've seen how more customers are now embracing robotic technology to assist with their time-consuming, day-to-day jobs. Having one heavy-duty machine that offers an extremely competitively-priced single solution for mowing and marking takes things to the next level."

Matt continued: "The RM21 Combo



is like a Swiss army knife – in addition to the rotary mower and line-marker, there's the optional cylinder mower – plus different attachments available, including brushes and rollers for pitch-stripping, grass collection, and more in the pipeline for even greater flexibility."

DEALERS



Cyril Johnston expands portfolio

Describes addition as 'the missing piece of the puzzle'

Operating on an eight-acre site in Carryduff, on the outskirts of Belfast, Cyril Johnston say they are proud to welcome the Yamaha franchise to their portfolio of brands.

They say the recent appointment will allow the business to offer customers a full range of machinery for a variety of needs.

Managing director Tom Black said: "Yamaha is the missing piece of the puzzle for us. The appointment has come with a lot of excitement for the team as it gives us the addition of the golf vehicles and ATVs that we haven't had before. Brian Mitchell, our head of groundcare and retail, along with Ian Ellis, our sales manager, have both been instrumental in the appointment, and I am very grateful for the work they have put into this new partnership.

"As a rule, we don't like to hold brands that clash with each other, so we have been missing this type of product. The team are looking forward to getting out and speaking with customers about the new product range."

Gareth Sloane, manager for power products at Yamaha UK, added: "Cyril Johnston has a longstanding reputation for providing excellent customer service and expertise in the power equipment industry, and we are confident that they will be a valuable asset to our network. We look forward to working with them to bring the Yamaha ATV range to even more customers in Ireland."

DEALERS

GGM move further into arb

Take on new range for forestry customers

The GGM Group have announced the addition of the Worky-Quad mini loaders to their product range, as one of a series of developments to support their growth into the arb sector.

The company has been awarded the Cast SSQ Worky-Quad skid-steer loader franchise, which was unveiled on their stand at this summer's Great Yorkshire Show.

The addition of Worky-Quad to the product range follows significant developments in GGM's entry into the arb market, including the expansion of their FSI territories with the addition of Yorkshire to North Wales and North of England, from the Scottish border and the recruitment of a new product specialist – all within one year of entering this market.

Filippo Zangoni, of the Cast Group, said: "We are extremely excited to be working with the GGM Group to offer Worky-Quad to new territories in the UK. The company is long-established, and has made great inroads into the arb sector over the past year. We have previously worked with several members of the team, and we know that we will build a fantastic, long-lasting relationship."

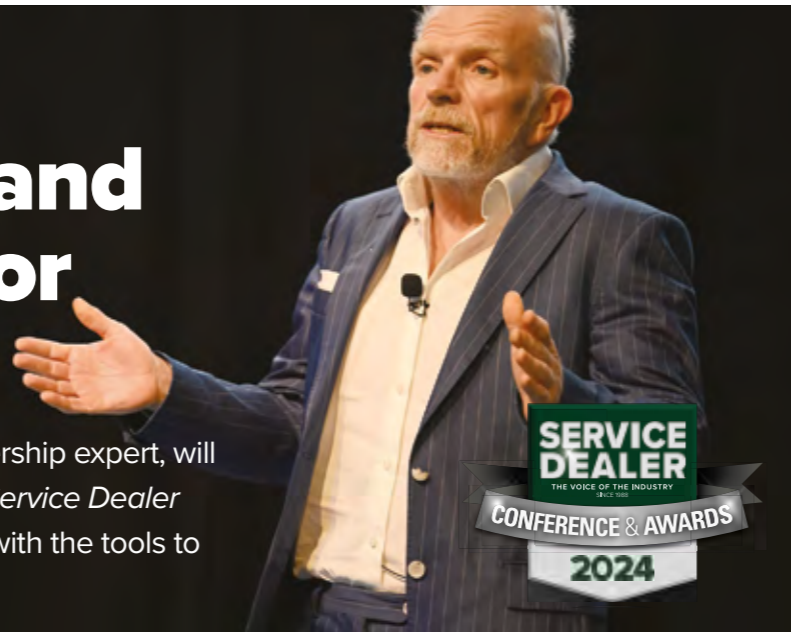
In a further development, GGM has appointed Matt Bolton as ag and arb product specialist, in a role which will see him working alongside Phil Edmondson (ag and arb product manager), tasked with taking the range out into the field and meeting customers.

Chris Gibson said: "GGM already have a reputation for offering the customer an exceptional level of service, both before, during and after sales. Welcoming Matt to the team brings additional skills and knowledge to compliment this existing expertise, offering our ag and arb customers a bespoke solution to their machinery needs."



Delivering inspiration and strategies for growth

Ellis Watson, businessman and leadership expert, will be taking to the stage at this year's *Service Dealer* Conference, to provide dealerships with the tools to thrive in the face of adversity.



Service Dealer are pleased to announce this year's conference keynote speaker as Ellis Watson, a business leader, whose impressive career has taken him on a journey, leading businesses through change and disruption.

Ellis' experience, makes him well-equipped to share his insights into how to deal with complex challenges and not to see them as a threat, but to view them as a springboard for positive change.

With a career spanning several decades, Ellis is known for revitalising businesses across multiple industries - from entertainment to transport. Previous roles include marketing director at *The Sun*, CEO of Celador International, and MD of Mirror Group Newspapers, where he consistently drove growth and innovation, working to transform the organisations and make them fit for the future. As board member of First Group, he turned around the major brand Greyhound (USA), and, as CEO of Simon Cowell's Syco Corporation, he propelled *The X Factor* to international success. Such is Ellis' success in business, he was invited to take on the advisory role of Chief Business Advisor to the First Minister of Scotland.

As a speaker, we are sure that Ellis' business acumen, coupled with his enthusiasm, frankness and humour, will be a big hit with our conference delegates. Experienced in

leading business through external shocks and cultural shifts, Ellis will be sharing his valuable insights into how to navigate digital disruptions, inspire passion under pressure, and foster authentic company cultures. We look forward to welcoming him to the *Service Dealer* stage in November.



This year's *Service Dealer* Conference is embracing the theme 'Driving Success,' and will deliver inspiration and strategies to aid dealership management and growth. Through a combination of

workshops, guest speakers and audience interaction, we want our delegates to leave with the tools to help dealerships thrive.

Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke said: "I think that this year has seen some extremely tough conditions, and even tougher decisions. I know everyone who runs an event says 'bigger and better', but we do just keep growing with everyone's support and positive attitudes. We promise to keep doing our best to deliver a strong, informative platform for our delegates and sponsors."

For up-to-date information regarding the *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards, keep an eye on the *Service Dealer* Weekly Update, published every Friday at midday.

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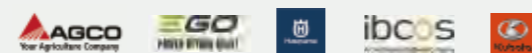
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"We are absolutely delighted to welcome back our friends at **Kress** as Principal Sponsors for the third time," confirmed *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke. "To team up with a company who clearly share our values regarding the vital importance of a thriving independent dealer network, is key to our event's ongoing success. We thank Tony Macer and the team for demonstrating the high regard in which they hold our specialist delegates." *Service Dealer* welcome Kress and all our other vital sponsors, thanking them for their support and input.

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Jim Buttar
Head groundsman at the RFU (Twickenham)

Jim holds over 25 years of experience of hands-on management in sportsturf. From an apprentice in a private school, to leading up the team at Twickenham, he has successfully delivered surfaces for many professional leagues and competitions globally. Through his passionate approach leading by example, and with his management, Jim knows what it takes to produce world-class surfaces – and what he requires from suppliers to achieve this.



Andrew Ward
MBE, farmer

Receiving an MBE in 2014 for his services to agriculture, Andrew Ward is a prominent face in UK agriculture. Managing 650 hectares of arable land in Lincolnshire, Andrew grows a diverse range of crops, including the UK's only commercial crop of capulet beans for baked beans. A strong advocate for sustainable farming, Andrew specialises in soil management and crop care. He is well versed in the elements needed to ensure business growth - both in the ground and the support network.



Karl McDermott
Head groundsman (Lord's)

An award-winning groundsman with exceptional knowledge, Karl has worked his way up from club level to be the manager of the leading cricket ground in the country. Beginning his career in 1991 at Clontarf Cricket club, he became head groundsman within six years. Having with grounds overseas, Karl has an in-depth knowledge of turf management, and of the techniques and resources necessary to achieve perfection on the pitch.



2024 Dealer of the Year competition

The categories have been announced for 2024's Dealer of the Year competition.

The core dealer categories for the 2024 awards are:



There are also special award categories this year:



In addition, of course: all those considered for entry will be put forward for the prestigious

Overall Dealer of the Year Award



For details of how to enter your dealership into any of the above awards, keep watching the

Service Dealer Weekly Update and www.servicedealer.co.uk

Opening new avenues

Following the announcement of a branch closure this summer, MKM Agriculture are pursuing new opportunities by taking on a new franchise for the dealership. *Service Dealer* editor, STEVE GIBBS reports



Managing director of MKM, Anthony Deacon

MKM Agriculture Limited – and its managing director, Anthony Deacon – will already be familiar to many regular *Service Dealer* readers.

Anthony spent a year as this journal's diarist of the season throughout 2022, during which time he kept

us up to date with the recovery and rebuild of his Marston Moreteyne, Bedfordshire branch following a devastating fire there in April 2021 (as well as chronicling the regular ups and downs of a year in the life of his business). Alongside writing for the magazine, Anthony has also contributed his expertise to *Service Dealer's* free Dealer Toolkit on several occasions (check it out at www.servicedealer.co.uk) and is well-known throughout the UK dealer community.

So it came as little surprise when he announced in August that, at the end of the month, he would be closing the second branch of MKM, based at Ixworth Thorpe in Bury St Edmunds. This became one of the most widely-read news stories we have featured so far in 2024 on our *Service Dealer* Weekly Update.

Anthony explained his reasoning to *Service Dealer* at the time, saying: "The decision to close our branch near Bury St Edmunds was personally very difficult – but an important call I had to make for the good of my business. I have never had to make anyone redundant before, and I am working with manufacturers and local businesses to find jobs for our five full-time members of staff. I would like to thank them all for their work in the time they have served with us."

Anthony continued: "Economic challenges and online competition have played a big part in the decision. Whilst these are challenges I'm fully prepared to face, I have found it difficult during this time to split my time between our HQ at Bedford and the Suffolk branch to give my staff the support, direction and decisionmaking that they deserve. This decision will now enable me to spend more time continuing our growth and success at Marston Moreteyne, Bedford."

Fresh opportunities

One of the ways that Anthony is looking to continue this expansion of the Marston Moreteyne branch, is with the addition of a new franchise to the company's portfolio. Already renowned for specialisation in the utility vehicles market, Anthony says he was looking to develop the dealership's range further in ATVs and SSVs – hence a recent decision to join the Can-Am off-road dealer network.

"As you know, a lot of research goes on behind the scenes when businesses are looking to add a new product to a portfolio," explained Anthony. "And, for us, we were very methodical in our due diligence.

"The way we went about it was general research online, listening to peers in the market and also seeing the Can-Am off-road team and products in person so we could get a feel for the product and their setup. Once we did this, we knew that the brand was the right fit for us, so we went through the process, got approved, and it has been all-systems-go from day one."

Anthony says that the reason they decided to add ATVs and SSVs to the dealership's portfolio was due to a belief within the business that focuses on providing vehicles that their local customer base is requesting. He said: "In addition, we felt that adding ATVs and SSVs would enable our team to cross-pollinate sales, which is what any good sales team looks to do."

Anthony continued: "An example of this is that we sell a specific brand of trailer that we have had customers come in and purchase, and then, down the line, after seeing Can-Am's products in the dealership, purchase one for

their business. It has also allowed our sales team to be able to open up new avenues of sales, due to the breadth of products in the line-up. This is highlighted by our team being able to target facilities management businesses and councils. For a business like ours, it has meant that we can diversify our customer base, so we are not relying on the traditional customers that come through our doors."

Dealers know that each brand they represent will have their own different ways of working with their partners. Anthony says: "When it comes to BRP, the first thing we noticed was the constant communication we got from the team managing the off-road network. This came in the form of conversations with the district commercial manager who looks after us, as well as bulletins about promotions, partners and new products. This provides our team with peace of mind, knowing that they can keep our customers up-to-date with information regarding products and offers."

Another benefit from working with his new partner that Anthony cites is the systems it has in place for its dealers. He says: "The main system we use is called BossWeb, which has been designed to help dealers, providing us with visibility of what stock is available. This feature ensures our sales team can plan acquisitions of additional models as and when required, while not financially overstretching the business."

Overall, Anthony believes that joining this new network has been a success for MKM Agriculture in this time of change for the business.

He concludes: "The benefits it has offered, in terms of opening new sales avenues, has enabled our team to take everything to the next level."



Anthony with the team at Marston Moreteyne

Are pro users embracing new tech?

Editor of *TurfPro*, LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR, spoke with several of his commercial end-user contacts, to find out what they think of the new robotic and battery tool offerings available through their local dealers.



TurfPro editor, Laurence Gale, trialling a battery hedge trimmer

In my role as editor of *Service Dealer's* sister title, *TurfPro*, I am becoming increasingly aware of how both robotic and battery-powered products are being offered to grounds professionals.

In my own capacity as a professional gardener, I've had the opportunity to trial a few makes of battery-powered products recently, including from the likes of STIHL, EGO, and Makita - all of which I found to be well-designed and easy to operate.

I was, however, interested to find out what other professional end-users – many of whom will be the customers of *Service Dealer* readers – feel about the use of this new wave of technology.

Robotics

Starting with robotics, it was fascinating to hear the comments of Warren Beven, course manager at Carus Green Golf Club in the north of England, who said he is now reaping the rewards of automation, due to the installation of a fleet of Husqvarna professional robotic lawnmowers.

His 18-hole course, located on the outskirts of the Lake District, embarked on its automation journey back in August 2023, following a demonstration of the Husqvarna Ceora on its driving range. Since then, the club has bought into the technology, and rapidly scaled up its fleet of robotics to ten machines – five Ceora, four Automower 550 EPOS, and one Automower 430X NERA.

“Four of the five Ceoras are cutting the fairways at a 10mm cutting height, and those machines cut overnight, every night, whilst the course is closed, so as to not interrupt the golfers,” explained Warren. “The machines will then recharge before automatically changing their cutting height and commencing the rough cutting during the day at 60mm. The four 550s are cutting the ‘carrys’ from tee to fairway around the clock on a 24-hour cycle. The last Ceora maintains our driving range split into different zones, and can cut the full range over the space of 48 hours, which has eliminated significant hours of labour a week for our team, who can now focus on other tasks in that time. The last machine, the 430X

NERA, cuts an area just in front of the clubhouse.”

Warren added that he sourced his robotic mowers from Lloyds' Carlisle branch, saying “Lloyds have been involved throughout the whole robotics journey and supported with the delivery of the machines, installations and provided technical support when required.”

It seems to me that Warren has grasped an opportunity to embrace the use of robotic mower technology, to help him maintain the course with many added benefits.

I am also aware that Manchester City FC, along with Liverpool FC and some local authorities, are using robotic mowers to mow banks and large amenity grassed areas, to help reduce manpower inputs. However, the biggest take-up of robotic mower products thus far has still been seen in the domestic, large gardens and estates sector.

I did speak to one head groundsman who wished to remain anonymous, though. He trialled a robotic mower at his ground, but was not completely convinced it was ready to replace a person with a mower. He told me it tended to take up a lot of time setting it up and keeping it running, needing the blades replaced on a regular basis.

I personally do not think many topflight football clubs will be using robotic mowers to cut their pitches quite yet, as the pros still like to be



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hands-on and feel the grass beneath their feet.

What might be taken up quicker in the professional sphere, though, are robotic line-marking machines. These are now widely used by contractors, local authorities, schools and sports clubs.

Battery power

Turf professionals are now also spoiled for choice when it comes to cordless products.

Over recent months, I have had the pleasure to try out several different types of battery tools, namely trimmers, hedge cutters, scarifiers, cultivators and blowers – all of which perform exceptionally well, are easy to use, and benefit from little hand vibration. The batteries last well for most tasks – except the blowers do tend to run down more quickly.

For me, these products do what I need them to, whilst tending to be more user-friendly than petrol-driven machines.

However, talking to my professional end-user contacts, I get the impression there is a 50/50 split on whether they are ready to change over fully to battery-powered products or stick with their petrol-driven hand tools and mowers. Some put it down to cost, while others tell me they are still waiting for runtimes to improve.

One turf professional who has fully embraced this new technology is Barry O'Brien, head groundsman at Burnley FC. The club has invested heavily in battery-powered mowers, hand tools, Husqvarna robotic mowers and a Turf Tank robotic line-marker.

Barry said: "We now have 13 battery-powered mowers covering both sites... including new G860 Dennis mowers and new Infinicut rotary mowers – along with battery-powered buggies. We are also keen to add more as we go forward."

As for the robotic line-marker, Barry told me it has sped up the marking of many of the training pitches, and freed up labour.

"The beauty of having battery-powered mowers is that they are far cleaner,



Head greenkeeper at Carus Green Golf Club, Warren Bevan, with the fleet of robotic mowers

quieter, and, over time, are going to be cheaper than running a fleet of petrol or diesel-powered mowers," he explained.

Barry continued: "We are served very well by our local dealers, namely Balmers, Gibson's GM, Campey's and Cheshire Turf. They all give us a tremendous backup and support for service, repairs and spare parts."

In the golf sector, Damian Wormald, head greenkeeper at East Bierley Golf Course in Yorkshire, says he was first inspired by the introduction of the Jacobson Eclipse hybrid greens mower - and is hoping to purchase a second-hand hybrid lithium battery-powered mower in the near future. He said: "The change from petrol to battery power is inevitable, and the quicker we start the process the better. It means no more petrol storage and trips to the petrol station."

He told me the dealers he uses are Balmers, PB Groundcare and Fairways Groundcare. He added: "We have just purchased a brand new Solis 26 compact tractor from Blacktrac Tractors at a fraction of the cost of your mainstream manufacturer. I must say, the dealer is fantastic, and we would recommend them to anyone."

Damien went on to say: "Having a

good relationship with your dealers is essential regarding backup and parts availability. The purchase of any machinery, from handheld to ride-on mowers, must be thought out, weighing up pros and cons of reliability, value for money, backup, etcetera."

I also spoke with Andy Ansell, grounds manager at the National Memorial Arboretum. He said that, in recent years, they have concentrated investment on battery-powered equipment, including ride-on and pedestrian mowers and transport vehicles.

"Our grounds are open 364 days a year, and are often a place where visitors come for quiet reflection and to remember," explained Andy. "By making these investments we have been able to significantly reduce both noise and air pollutants produced by our operations, improving both the comfort and conditions for our team and visitors. Ensuring that the Arboretum operates sustainably is incredibly important to us all, and, alongside our battery-powered equipment, we have also invested in a shredder. We are now able to recycle and reuse most of the green waste we produce – which is a huge win."

He continued: "As for investing in



Leigh Sports Village say it will take some time to replace all their traditionally-fuelled machinery

new battery-powered products, 80% of our ground's machinery is now battery-powered, and the team are fully invested, choosing to use the battery-powered equipment over combustion engine equipment when it's available. We now only use our combustion engine equipment as a back-up, or where a battery option that is suitable for our operational requirements, is not available. We do, however, always keep an eye on developments in the market, and I hope that, as our final petrol-powered pieces come to the end of their natural life, we will be able to replace them with greener alternatives.

"We always keep an eye on new technologies as they are released, and invest as and when we can. Limited power distribution across our 150-acre estate, operating safely when open to the public, and being a registered charity with a limited budget are just some of the considerations that guide our decision-making when investing in equipment."

Regarding the Arboretum's relationship with their dealers, Andy said: "Where it's possible, we always aim to work with local suppliers. Some of these have included: Country Services, Buxtons, Masseys DIY and



Robotic line-marking machines are finding favour

TH White. Whilst a competitive price is obviously expected – and, as a registered charity, is welcomed – we also value excellent and responsive customer service. As a small team, it's not always possible to attend all trade shows, so suppliers who understand our mission, vision and operational requirements, and are happy to share developments in the market and best practice, are always good to do business with."

Finally, a chat with Martin Porter, grounds manager at Leigh Sports Village, revealed an insight into their machinery requirements.

Martin said: "We need to be efficient and able to get on with jobs quickly.

"We are happy to move with the future. However, we aren't going to get rid of all fossil fuel equipment overnight. This will be over a long period of time, when machines need replacing.

"As for using robotic line-markers, we have a sub-contractor that does a bit of initial marking for us, re-marking the pitches after renovations, and all the throwing events we have during the summer on our athletics track. As for purchasing one: until they can get one that does not lose its GPS signal, we continue to hire one in as we need."



Mowing operations with a battery-powered Mean Green at the National Memorial Arboretum

Martin also told me: "We stick with a few of our local dealers, who give us a great backup service and, above all, honesty for buying, servicing and repairs our machinery fleet. We use Turner Groundscare, Campey's, GGM, Cheshire Turf Machinery and Dick Leigh Chainsaw Specialists for all STIHL."

To sum up

It's clear the market now has a wide choice of battery driven tools aimed at professional users. I believe there is still some resistance to converting away from traditional fuels by certain commercial practitioners who have spent all their working lives using petrol. Reluctance tends to stem from the cost implications of replacing all their tools and the suspicions that battery run times are not quite good enough for their needs yet.

As for robotic technologies, both mowers and line-markers are becoming increasingly popular for certain applications. I would suspect that as prices become more affordable, we will see even more used in professional environments.



Apprenticeship funding rules

Will they change with a Labour government? KEITH CHRISTIAN considers what is a complex situation for dealers.

In writing this piece, I stress two things at the outset. One is my liberal use of online research in piecing this together in an attempt to provide an understanding of how apprenticeship funding currently works.

Two is the fact that this is a heavy and complicated subject, understood by few, but relevant to many - especially as it may all change with our new Government.

I am far from an expert on this subject, but, having been involved with the introduction of the Trail Blazer Apprenticeships and the more recent Technical Levels – and in various discussions with the powers that be surrounding funding apprenticeships and the constant change to the rules and criteria that apply to them – it seems that an explanation of funding needs to be publicised. My hope is that smaller employers in our industry will look toward employing apprentices and take advantage of the funding that exists, and pay attention to the potential changes that are being proposed by our new government to extend the funding to non-apprenticeship training.

This article is not about apprenticeship standards or assessments, or, indeed, the current apprenticeship review being undertaken by LE-TEC, the Landbased Engineering Training and Education Committee comprised of BAGMA, the AEA and IAgRE. An introduction to this review can be found on BAGMA's web site at: www.bagma.com/news/new-approach-to-land-based-engineering-apprenticeships/

Current apprenticeship funding

In April 2017, the National Training Levy was introduced, along with other reforms for apprenticeships. There were more changes made in 2019. The levy applies to all the UK nations, but it is dealt with differently in terms of distribution in the devolved nations. The levy is a 0.5% tax on UK companies that have a pay bill over £3 million a year. An annual pay bill is all payments to employees that are subject to employer Class 1 secondary National Insurance contributions, such as wages, bonuses and commissions



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(not to be confused with payroll, as some report it). It is currently used to fund apprenticeships only.

All sectors must pay the levy if they have an annual pay bill of over £3 million. The apprenticeship levy funds almost 650 different types of apprenticeships to train people for a huge variety of jobs.

Levy funds can only be used to pay for apprentices to achieve qualifications that are set out in their approved apprenticeship training programme, and are deemed necessary to being effective in the job. The levy is there to fund apprenticeship training for all employers. Any unspent levy funds are used to support existing apprentices to complete their training, and to pay for apprenticeship training for smaller employers.

Levy funds can be transferred from a levy-paying company to fund training for a non-levy-paying company through an approved training provider under specific rules for the transfer.

For new starts from April 1, 2024, where the employer does not pay the apprenticeship levy, the government will fund all of the apprenticeship training costs – up to the funding band maximum – for apprentices who are aged between 16 and 21 years old when they start their apprenticeship training. It can only be used towards the costs of apprenticeship training and assessment. This must be with an approved training provider and assessment organisation. It can't be used on other costs associated with your apprentices (such as wages or travel costs), or for other types of training.

What happens to unspent levy funds?

Employers have 24 months to use their funds once they enter their apprenticeship service account – after this point, their funds will expire. The funds expire to encourage levy-paying employers to invest in high-quality training and assessment, and to prevent levy payers from accruing very large balances. However, any unspent

levy funds within each financial year are then used to support existing apprentices to complete their training, pay for apprenticeship training for smaller employers, and additional payments to support apprentices.

The levy was intended to encourage 600,000 new apprenticeship starts a year, but the average has been nearer 330,000. There has been a collapse in starts from the demographics it intended to serve, including entry-level and under-25 apprentices, and £3.3 billion of levy funding has gone unused, as reported in April 2023.

Proposed Funding Changes

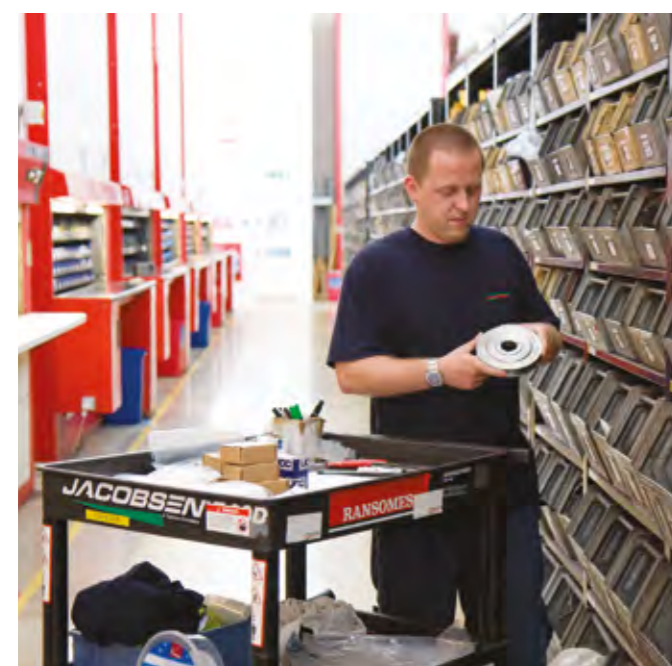
As reported in FE Week (July 1, 2024): *“Labour proposes to replace the apprenticeship levy with a skills and growth levy, allowing employers to spend up to half their levy on training outside apprenticeships. A new body, Skills England, would help decide what training should be fundable.*

“The argument is that apprenticeships aren't the answer to everything – the current system is like a golfer going out with just a putter. Greater flexibility could allow employers to hit a bigger range of shots.”

If these changes come about, one would hope the UK LBE dealer network would be able to take advantage of a wider range of funding for training different roles in their business. Who knows when this will happen, though?

The previous government have reviewed the funding rules, and issued and published the first version of the 2024 to 2025 rules, which summarise changes to the previous rules and will apply to apprentices starting after August 1, 2024, in England. The new rules are designed to reduce the burden of administration, and make it easier for employers and providers to take on apprentices. I am not going to go into the detail of this, but would suggest anyone taking on an apprentice should talk to their approved training provider about funding, or check out the government web site at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules



New starters

Most employers will offer an induction programme for new employees, but, as career starters or career changers, apprentices may need additional support to understand their role and responsibilities.

An induction could include:

- One-to-one meetings for the apprentice to meet or shadow key members of the team so that they understand how their role fits with the wider organisation
- Information on what is expected of them – for example, dress code, time management and general work behaviours
- Details of how the apprentice's work fits with the wider team, and where they can go to for support
- A clear outline of their job role and objectives, to help the apprentice understand what is expected of them
- An introduction to company policies, rather than asking the apprentice to read them
- Regular one-to-one meetings with the apprentice's line manager
- A welcome handbook, which provides a useful glossary of key business terms, organisational charts and key tasks for them to complete in the first weeks
- An introduction to their workplace mentor and/or 'buddy'



Summing up

There is a crisis in many engineering industries, with aging employees and too few newcomers. The land-based engineering sector can no longer rely on the traditional feed-in of new employees, and must explore every opportunity to recruit new staff and provide training for them. Some of our larger suppliers do an excellent job with apprentice programmes, and commit heavily to bringing in new people – very often at their own expense.

Funding is available, and a dealer need not be out of pocket by employing an apprentice. It is up to the industry as a whole to invest in the future. The recruiting of new people to our sector should be a priority. The funding levels for land-based service technicians at Level 2 and 3 are undergoing review, but are currently better than most similar sectors, and may well improve later this year.

There is a huge amount of information on the Internet about apprenticeships, how to recruit, how the funding works, who can help, what the apprenticeship standards are, and how to fund an apprentice. Approved training providers can also help and guide dealers along the right path, but the dealer needs to make the first move.

The LBE trade associations can also help. The We Are Landbased Engineering website is well worth a look for those seeking advice, and for potential employers. The AEA, BAGMA and IAgRE have worked hard and invested a great deal of time and money in keeping apprenticeship programmes alive and meeting the demands and standards of industry, for both the manufacturing and dealer business they support.

Grass kit makers reveal 2025 news

Away from the arable sector unveilings detailed elsewhere in this issue's Cereals event report (starting on page 32), forage machinery manufacturers have been previewing new products for dealers and the press ahead of the 2024-25 sales season. MARTIN RICKATSON rounds up some key launches.



Krone Vendro C 1340 tedder

Krone tops its tedder range

Joining the ten-rotor/11.2m trailed Vendro C 1120 at the top of its trailed tedder range, Krone has added a 13.3m C 1340 flagship model.

The machine, which is fitted with 12 rotors of 1.5m diameter and six tine arms, is reckoned to need just 55hp to power it.

The standard model comes with a reversible drawbar and 40mm drawbar lug for top and bottom hitching, with a K80 ball-hitch or swinging drawbar as options. Alternatively, the Vendro C 1340 Plus features a two-point hitch and tension spring to provide load compensation. The spreading angle

is adjustable in four stages, from 13 to 19 degrees, and working height is altered via a hand crank, with the option of hydraulic adjustment from the cab. Other options include a hydraulic relief on the transport axle, a standard feature on Plus models. Adopted from the Vendro C 1120, it reduces the weight on the axle to avoid field damage when making tight turns. The machine folds to under 3m wide, and a height of 6.05m for transport.

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Claas Rollant 630 RC Uniwrap

Mower/tedder/baler updates from Claas

News from Claas for next season includes two new 8.3m mowers, the Disco 8500 C Trend (tine conditioner) and Disco 8500 RC Trend (roller conditioner), which bring features from larger Disco models down to machines suiting mid-size tractors from 160hp. Operation is possible from 850 PTO rpm, to reduce engagement stress loads, and each mowing unit is individually drive-protected and features bolted Walterscheid overload clutches. Mower operation and individual lift are controlled via two spool valves, and can be fully integrated into the tractor's headland management.

The Claas telescopic arm design incorporates Active Float ground pressure adjustment actuated from the cab, and mechanical non-stop collision protection, with the arm pivoting up and over obstacles before automatically resetting. Optional on the RC is a double roller drive with scissor gear unit, introduced last year on the Disco 9700 RC Auto Swather and targeted at users cutting dense crops.

There is also a new 9.1m Disco 9300 C/RC Comfort mower-conditioner – roller conditioner RC models are targeted primarily at buyers working in leafy crops, such as lucerne. In 'Comfort' specification, optional automatic control of Active Float allows hands-off individual ground pressure adjustment on each mower side on slopes. Additional ISOBUS-controlled functions include individual telescopic arm lifting and optional hydraulic protective cover folding.

In place of delivery belts, the Disco 9300 Direct Swather features an auger system harnessed from Jaguar foragers, to either group swaths or disperse grass across the full working width, even when mowing without conditioning. Alternatively, the 9300 C can be ordered in Auto Swather format, with tine conditioner and cross conveyor belts.

To its established Volto tedder offering spanning 4.5 to 13m, Claas has now added new top-end models, the 15.1m 1500T and 13.1m 1300T. They are built around a new frame and chassis, which means they are also available as TS versions with self-steering chassis, enabling negotiation of headlands and tight bends without lifting the rotors, while also preventing distortion between the chassis and rotor frames and tyre damage to the sward, claims Claas. Upon

raising the rotor frame, the chassis wheels automatically align in the direction of travel.

Replacing the Rollant 455 RC Uniwrap baler-wraper for 2025 is the Rollant 630 RC Uniwrap, which features a 2.1m Multiflow pickup with five cam-controlled tine bars, governed by a new cam track reckoned to reduce power requirement by 20% and enhance component life. New plastic stripper bands are released by simply pressing a flat screwdriver into a tab in the band. From here, the crop is transferred by four rows of 8mm double-boron steel tines arranged in a helical formation to the Roto Cut cutting rotor, a 25-knife unit (of which 25/13/12/0 can be engaged electro-hydraulically) which operates at up to 13,800 cuts/min to produce a 44mm chop length. The knives are individually secured, and can be hydraulically engaged or retracted centrally.

Options include Maximum Pressure System Plus (MPS Plus), a pivoting three-roller segment in the tailgate that delivers extra pressure to maximise bale density through the profile. As baling begins, the three MPS rollers project into the chamber, with the rollers pushed up into their end position by the bale as it expands. The system, for which pressure can be adjusted from the cab from 60 to 120 bar, is said to ensure immediate bale rotation, and compaction from a 0.9m diameter.



Massey Ferguson 9614 TL

New mowers from Massey Ferguson

Massey Ferguson has added two heavy-duty butterfly mowers to its DM range: the 9.6m 9614 TL and the 10.1m 10114 TL. Equipped with the brand's latest spur gear design cutterbar, the machines feature a conditioner as standard, with a choice of the tined KC or RC roller versions – the latter now featuring drive to both rollers and a more aggressive steel-on-steel option for heavier crops, such as lucerne.

Pro models include ISObus control, allowing operators to automate functions, and conditioning intensity can be adjusted to match the crop and produce a uniform dry matter. This spec also connects the front and rear mowing units, offering manual or automatic side shift for the front mower to reduce missed areas on hills. The system automatically adjusts the ground pressure – via MF's TurboLift system – in

relation to the rear mower. GPS section control lifts the mower on the headland to avoid previously-worked areas, while the rear mower automatically raises and centres when reversing.

All Pro models are also available with a belt grouper that transfers crop to the centre to form swaths from 1.6m to 3m wide. New sensors on the system monitor the belt units' position, and automatically adjust this to maintain the optimum centre of gravity.

Meanwhile, MF has also introduced six new models to its RK twin-rotor rake range. Spanning working widths from 7.6 to 10m, the new machines come in Pro ISOBUS specification as standard. A new flexHIGH speed-dependent raking height system automatically raises and lowers the machine to maintain optimum working height. All rotors have maintenance-free heads, while a standard switch box, or load sensing on the Pro models, allows individual control of the rotors.

Section control is available on all models to increase accuracy and reduce contamination by automatically lifting and lowering the rotors according to GPS position. A new MyMemory option makes it faster and easier to change between fields by saving the working height and working width.



Pöttinger Novacat

New products from Pöttinger

Pöttinger has made introductions across its mower, tedder, rake and forage wagon ranges for 2025. New Novacat F 2.62m/3.04m front mowers are available with a new automatic curved side-shift development, said to ensure a perfect overlap with the rear mower. The tractor drives along a clear track free of forage when cornering and working on steep ground. The firm suggests that the curved movement means that the entire working width of the cutterbar can be used, and the effective width of the mower combination is maximized.

Meanwhile, new Novacat H mower combinations include the 9.46m H 9500 and 11.14m H 11200, reckoned to have power requirements of 130hp and 160hp, respectively. They feature cutterbars with a 4cm high and 28cm deep cross-section, a design that, Pöttinger claims, ensures an optimum flow of grass. The centre pivot mounting on the cutterbars provides a travel of +/- 22.5° for full ground-tracking. Hydraulic weight alleviation provides uniform ground pressure across the

cutterbar width.

The mower units can be lifted either together or separately, the latter either by a shared spool valve with selection using the company's Basic Control terminal, or by two separate spool valves. For transport, the mower combination is folded backward hydraulically, while the guards are folded up automatically, for a transport width of 2.2m.

New 2.7m/3.05m Hit V 4240 Alpin four-rotor and Hit V 6260 six-rotor tedders feature a compact headstock design that keeps the centre of gravity close to the tractor, says the maker, suiting users with steep terrain. Two hydraulic centring cylinders provide smooth operation without overrunning – even when driving downhill, claims Pöttinger. Both models are equipped with a mechanical fenceline tedding system as standard, while the 6260 is also fitted with the company's Hydrolift system to provide additional ground clearance at the headland, lifting the outer pairs of rotors into a limit position when the spool valve is briefly actuated.

Meanwhile, new rakes include the four-rotor/12.5m Top VT 12540 C, on which working width can be adjusted hydraulically on the move. All four rotors are driven mechanically by cardan shafts, and the rear rotors can be shifted into three positions, without the need for tools. Swath width can be set from 1.20 to 2m. One double-acting spool valve controls the lifting and folding of all the rotors, with integrated step valves ensuring the front rotors are always lifted and lowered first. Via Pöttinger's Basic Control terminal, the front two rotors can be lifted and lowered together or separately. To adjust the working width, the two front rotors are operated together using a separate spool valve.

There are also new Top VT 6820 S (6.8m) and VT 7620 S (7.6m) twin-rotor rakes with side swath placement. Each features a five-wheel chassis in combination with gimbal-mounted rotors to keep tines following ground contours, with a Multitast jockey wheel option to detect bumps ahead of the tines and lift the rotor accordingly (adjusted automatically with the chassis). Raking height can be adjusted electro-hydraulically from the tractor, or manually using a hand crank.

Lastly, Pöttinger has introduced a new entry-level Jumbo forage wagon to complement its 7000 and 8000 models. The Jumbo 5000 is available in six versions, with capacities of 32 to 54m³, with a movable front panel offering an additional 4.3 m³. They feature six- or seven-bar bar pickups, with respective gathering widths of 1.89 and 2.35m, and both are controlled from both ends by a steel cam track. The floating pickup has a freedom of movement of 170mm at the jockey wheel, so that it can compensate for bumps and deliver perfect ground tracking.

The 800mm-diameter loading rotor features 10mm-thick tines set in a helix eight-row configuration. Rotor width is 1,580mm. Pöttinger's Powercut 45-knife chopping system can process material down to 34mm. The knives are individually protected against foreign objects, while a swing-out knife bank enables the changing and reversing of knives. Autocut electro-hydraulically operated knife sharpening is optional.



INTRODUCING

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Cereals '24 exhibitors seek out the spenders

There was no hiding the slightly subdued mood at this year's Cereals event, with farm machinery manufacturers and dealers finding many farmers' chequebooks firmly closed. For those ready to ride out the downturn, though, there was plenty new to provide potential customers with equipment to boost efficiency, reports MARTIN RICKATSON.



Second new CR

After previewing its new flagship CR11 combine at Agritechnica, New Holland surprised Cereals visitors with the global debut at the show of a smaller sister model, the CR10. The primary differences are in power and

grain tank size – while the CR11 incorporates a 20,000-litre tank and a 15.9-litre FPT Cursor 16 engine producing 775hp, the CR10 engine is a 12.9-litre FPT Cursor 13 generating 635hp, while its grain tank holds 16,000 litres. A new design layout sees the engines installed longitudinally in the same direction and at the same angle as the rotors, for maximum efficiency, with cooling air being drawn from behind the grain tank. All drives are taken via a transmission connected directly to the rear of the engine, minimising power loss.

Features common to both combines include 600mm-diameter twin rotors and a new cleaning system. Cutterbar widths of 10.6-15m (35-50ft) are available in fixed, flexible knife, movable knife and draper formats, the latter courtesy of CNH's agreement with MacDon. The elevator, Dynamic Feed Roll system, and the two longer and wider (3.3m long and 600mm diameter) rotors can now be reversed in the event of a blockage. Arranged sequentially, the new TwinClean cleaning shoe consists of two sieve systems, each with its own upper and lower sieve and clean grain auger.



Grange enters drill sector

Well-established as a soil-loosener specialist, Grange Machinery chose Cereals to reveal its diversification into the drill market, the 3-to-6m mounted Tine-Drill Toolbar (TDT), which has gone into production following the commissioning three years ago by a Cambs farm of an initial unit. Said to have been designed to address the compaction issues posed by heavyweight machines on headlands and in corners, the TDT features 20mm Grange

tines staggered over four rows on the toolbar frame at a tine spacing of 250mm centres.

Contouring wings with a side-to-side pivot pitch of up to 5° integrated into the carrying frame above each wing help follow undulations to maintain seed depth across the full working width. Grange is sourcing coulters and tips through Bourgault Tillage Tools (BTT). Seeding depth is set hydraulically, and one or two distribution heads can be ordered for seed or seed/fertiliser work. A variety of front hoppers is available.

Grange also used Cereals to introduce its 3/4/6m Top-Tilth Cultivator (TTC), which broadens its Strip-Till Preparator tillage principle by using an intensive tine and disc across a full cultivator working width, and can be used as a full cultivator, a shallow disc cultivator or low-disturbance loosener. It features hydraulic front-leading discs and hydraulically-retractable Grange low-disturbance legs to lift and restructure the soil at depth, ahead of a full-width beam of staggered wavy discs which cultivate the soil surface. The disc beam is hydraulically adjustable for precise disc working depth management. At the rear is a full-width Güttnler packer.



New JD combines

Hot on the heels of new S-series rotary separation combines which slot in below the X-series, John Deere gave a UK debut at Cereals to its new line of T-series straw walker machines. The T5 five-walker and T6 six-walker ranges comprise eight models, from the T5 400 (305hp) to the T6 800 (466hp). They inherit the cab first unveiled on the X9, with a new corner post display and an electronic dust-sealing door. Grain tank capacity is up to 13,500 litres on the T6 combines and 11,500 litres on T5s. An adjustable spout aids filling accuracy, while peak unloading speed is 150 l/sec. Base side-hill compensation handles slopes of up to 7%, while a full side-hill package compensates for inclines up to 14%, and there is a further HillMaster option that compensates for slopes up to 22%.

In the cab, key functions are controlled by Deere's G5^{Plus} CommandCenter terminal, with a 12.8in display, while a G5^{Plus} extended monitor is optional for separate control of key functions, such as machine management, guidance and Machine Sync, which enables the combine driver to control the tractor speed, direction, and position.



Split drill from Claydon

Claydon chose Cereals to launch a new split design to its drill range, with a front tank/rear coulters bar model set for users seeking the balance and weight distribution advantages of such a configuration. At the rear, the established Claydon breaker tine/seeding tine arrangement is used, with options such as leading disc openers. Up front, the pressurised tank, with spin-on rather than hinged lids, holds 2,750 litres, or enough for a tonne of seed and a tonne of fertiliser, with a 45/55 split and a twin metering system. The drill is managed by an ISOCAN terminal with ISOBUS compatibility, and is variable-rate compatible. There are various metering wheel options, plus press wheels to take the weight from the tractor linkage. A front camera system is available.



Topper drives differently

New from Razorback, the vegetation management brand which is a sibling to the Mzuri direct drill range, is a topper design with a difference, namely in the way it is driven by the tractor PTO. The 5m RT500 is connected to the tractor via its lower link arms, with a pivoting headstock designed to reduce PTO stress and the risk of fouling during turns. A twin-skinned deck houses a redesigned twin blade system, which Razorback says reduces power consumption and wearing part/running cost numbers. Folding stops on the wheel lift cylinders are used to alter cutting height at the rear, with the tractor link arms managing the front end, and maximum cutting height is 400mm. The machine can be specified with four, six or eight support wheels.



Besson is back

The fruits of Maschio-Gaspardo UK's recently-announced deal to market Gregoire Besson ploughs alongside its own offering were on show at Cereals. The move, says the Italian firm, gives its dealers a range of on-land/in-furrow models to add to its own in-furrow product line, and takes it into much larger-scale territory, with models of up to 14 furrows adding to its own line, which covers mounted models up to six furrows and semi-mounted up to nine furrows. Gregoire Besson has not had official representation across the UK since its former subsidiary here was closed in 2021, although it has continued to work directly with a small number of dealers. Parts stocks have been created at Maschio-Gaspardo's new UK HQ at Witham St Hughes, Lincoln.



Front/rear Sprinter

Horsch gave a UK debut to the 6.25 SL and the 12.25 SC, two new additions to its Sprinter tine coulters drill line, which the firm says is designed to help maximise soil moisture retention by working in unmoved ground with high amounts of surface residue. Both models are available with 12mm, 21mm or 110mm coulters, set across three rows, spaced at 25cm and with a release force of 180kg. The depth of each tine is controlled by a press wheel. Seed capacity is 6,300 litres on the larger model and 3,300 litres with the smaller machine's Partner FT front tank.



Two new Opico partners

Following an initial announcement back in March, Cereals 2024 marked the first showing of Opico's two new import partners, with products from Spanish plough maker Ovlac and Italian cultivation/drill

specialist Alpego on its stand, filling some of the gaps left in its line following its split with Maschio. Ovlac first came to the UK via RECO, and when that firm closed, the company set up a direct arrangement supported by former RECO man Nick Clark. Alongside a full offering of mounted and semi-mounted ploughs from three to nine furrows, Ovlac also offers a number of shallow inversion models designed to work at 8-20cm. Having first come to the UK via a subsidiary, Alpego's range of cultivation equipment is now also sold and supported by Opico and available through its dealer network. Originally established as Pegoraro – which at one time was imported into the UK by Westmac and offered via its dealers – the company changed its name in 1988 to appear higher in catalogue and show listings. It now specialises in rigid and folding power harrows, rotary cultivators and combination drills, the latter supported by its own design of front hopper. A line of flail mowers is also available.



KRM extends Sola drill range

The latest addition to the KRM tine drill range built by Spanish partner Sola is a new 8m model at the top of its SM-P line, with four rows totalling 32 sprung coulters spread at 25cm and staggered at 40cm, fed by a Sola-developed metering system that permits sowing rates from 2kg-400kg/ha. Calibration is via a single button press on the metering unit to collect the seed, the weight of which is then entered into the ISOBUS controller. ISOBUS also controls the tramline shutoff and monitors the tractor's forward speed, while further capabilities include section control and variable seed rates, plus manual or auto half-width shutoff. A combination of angled and straight tines form a covering harrow at the rear.



Kuhn shows off strip-till tech

Making their debut on the Kuhn stand at Cereals were the French firm's latest mechanical weeding developments, the Tineliner and Rowliner, which had their global launch at last year's Agritechnica. The Tineliner range comprises 6m, 9m and 12m models, formed of 1.5m sections with 48 tines across six rows, while there are 5m, 6.2m and 6.6m Rowliner models, spanning row widths between 500-800mm. On its Cereals stand the firm showed a 12m Tineliner, alongside a 5m Rowliner 500 with six rows at 750mm widths, with Rowlink camera guidance and section control.



Knight PWM alternatives

Knight Individual Nozzle Switching (KINS), the latest sprayer technology development from Knight Farm Machinery, offers users the potential to benefit from

greater product application efficiency from stale seedbed and pre-em/early post-em weed control right through until the last pre-harvest pass with the sprayer, claims the firm. Developed using in-house design expertise, KINS retains a conventional nozzle body configuration, giving users the flexibility to specify single, triple or quin-nozzle bodies. Incorporating the company's air-actuated switching technology, the system allows individual nozzle switching without the need for the complexity of a pulse width modulation system. At the system's heart is the incorporation in every group of four nozzles of a 'Smart Module,' which controls the nozzle switching and provides instant response. This allows the possibility to upgrade from section control to full individual nozzle control. For customers not requiring individual nozzle switching, the Smart Modules can be configured to provide traditional section switching. Using this installation method means the sprayer can, if required, be converted to individual nozzle switching at a later date, at a reasonable cost.

Progressive approaches to sustainability

This year's regenerative agriculture festival, Groundswell 2024, was well-attended, and saw an increase in visitors keen to learn about innovative techniques and technologies



Attendance of the show was up again this year



Electric Wheels' Will Hinks and Matthew Radmore



Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, chatting with Emma Craigie (second right), director of TAP, Service Dealer's publisher

Taking place between June 26 and June 27, the Groundswell event saw a busy and buzzy couple of days at Lannock Manor Farm in Hertfordshire.

The Prince of Wales and Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh engage with the exhibits and attractions. The numbers through the gates being talked about were around the 8,000 mark.

Organisers say the event provides a forum for farmers and anyone interested in food production or the environment to learn about the theory and practical applications of 'conservation agriculture' or regenerative systems, including no-till, cover crops and reintroducing livestock into the arable rotation, with a view to improving soil health.

They bill themselves as a practical show aimed at anyone who wants

to understand the farmer's core asset – the soil – and make better, informed decisions. It is a two-day event featuring talks, forums and discussions from international soil health experts, experienced arable and livestock farmers, agricultural policy experts, direct-drill demonstrations and agtech innovators.

Groundswell was founded by the Cherry family on their mixed farm in Hertfordshire. John and Paul Cherry have farmed for over thirty years, converting to a no-till system in 2010.

John explained: "We started Groundswell out of a sense of frustration that no-one was putting on a summer show to which we might want to go. Having gone down the no-till route, we realised that we only really needed a good seed drill and not a barn full of expensive cultivating equipment, so Cereals and all those

Tillage events were a waste of our time. None of the lectures, and very few of the exhibitors, talked about the soil, let alone soil biology."

John continued: "A visit to the fabulous No-Till on the Plains Conference in Salina, Kansas, showed us what could be done. One of the most striking things was how hungry for information the farmer delegates were about the soil and the ecosystems that lived in them. Also, a lot of the speakers were describing some fairly radical farming ideas and techniques, and their audiences were lapping it up. We thought that if the good people of Kansas were ready for this, we sure as hell ought to be ready in Europe."

And so Groundswell began seven years ago, and is growing each time, with organisers attributing the growth to the snowballing of interest in regenerative agriculture.

Genuine engagement

Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke was in attendance this year, and reports that he spotted more agricultural machinery manufacturers exhibiting than in previous years. "Visitors appeared genuinely engaged with what they were seeing," said Duncan.

One such manufacturer, for example, was Kuhn, whose Striger 600R strip-till cultivator was a main feature on their stand.

Edd Fanshawe, Kuhn's arable

and connected services product specialist, said Groundswell is a key show for a growing market. He said: "An increasing number of growers are looking to reduce soil movements through innovative cultivation techniques, and models we are displaying highlight the versatility of the Kuhn range and how it can be adapted to different field techniques."

Edd explained that the Striger 600R only works soil in precise narrow bands to match seed placement, leaving the rest of the field undisturbed, which not only saves fuel but improves the structure of the field.

He said: "During a recent maize trial, the Striger was compared to a conventional establishment system. Key outcomes included significantly lower diesel use on the strip-till area to achieve the same end yield and improved plant establishment and early crop growth. Machine travel at

harvest was also noticeably better, with fewer ruts, and water filtration had improved, with less water remaining on the soil surface."

Elsewhere, Duncan observed that all the seminar sessions seemed to be full and overflowing.

One speaker was HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh. HRH, who is Honorary President of LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), was part of a panel discussing inspiring the next generation of sustainable food producers.

Groundswell event director Alex Cherry said: "The Duchess' return reflected the genuine interest she had shown on her previous visit. HRH is knowledgeable about farming, and has a real passion for encouraging the next generation. We were all absolutely thrilled and honoured that she returned and made a valuable contribution to the discussions."

In terms of dealers exhibiting at the

show, Duncan caught up with the guys from Electric Wheels, the dealership that specialises exclusively in electric all-terrain vehicles. Speaking with managing director Will Hinks and sales specialist Matthew Radmore, Duncan heard that the company has undergone a management change, and that they are looking to push forward into what they see as a growing market.

Elsewhere, Tuckwells had taken a plot again with John Deere.

Here to stay

The organisers of Groundswell say they are proud that the event remains a show 'for farmers, by farmers.'

Summing up, Alex Cherry said: "We are finding more and more attendees from non-farming backgrounds are showing an interest in regenerative agriculture, and it's a welcome stimulus to increase diversity and diversification into the industry."

He continued: "Visitors always find the energy and enthusiasm at Groundswell contagious. It creates a momentum that never fails to sweep people up in a feeling of positivity about the future of the agricultural industry."

Duncan Murray-Clarke agreed, saying: "The mix of environmental types and progressive farmers were all in attendance with the same enthusiasm.

"It was clear to see that progressive approaches and attitudes to sustainability are well and truly here to stay."



Kuhn's Striger 600R strip-till cultivator was one of the machines on display



Turf shows take centre stage

GROUNDS
Fest
SALTEX

Once again, this autumn dealers and end-users have two professional turfcare machinery shows on offer – GroundsFest and SALTEX. Will it be a case of choosing one over the other, or will both be added to busy schedules? *Service Dealer* editor STEVE GIBBS reports

This autumn, following on from the Cereals and Groundswell agricultural machinery shows, it is time for the professional turfcare machinery sector to take centre stage.

As happened for the first time last year, 2024 sees two shows catering for a similar audience, and featuring a crossover of exhibitors - taking place within weeks of each-other.

New kid on the turfcare block **GroundsFest** presents its sophomore effort on September 10 and 11 at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire.

Meanwhile, the GMA's long-established **SALTEX** will be celebrating its 78th edition on October 30 and 31 at the Birmingham NEC.

Whether this is the new normal, time will tell. The question remains whether the industry wants and is able to sustain two comparable exhibitions

within quick succession of each other. Not forgetting that BIGGA's **BTME** show also follows only a couple of months after SALTEX closes its doors.

Of course, organisers of both would argue that their two shows are different and distinct from one another – and each does indeed have its own identity and unique selling points.

In chronological order, here's what organisers are promoting at both Stoneleigh and the NEC:

GroundsFest

September 10-11, Stoneleigh Park

The organisers of **GroundsFest** say the show boasts the most space, exhibitors, and products on display for a show of its kind in the UK. It's also the only event in the industry where visitors can see machinery in action, and get hands-on with the equipment in a large outside demonstration area.

This year's features include:

- **Outdoor demos**
The opportunity to test a wide range of machinery
- **Free educational seminars**
Gain insights and solutions to the industry's biggest issues
- **The Landscape Zone**
Discover the latest in outdoor environment technologies and innovations
- **Free practical training**
Hands-on training sessions in a variety of grounds care topics, delivered by Lantra-approved instructors
- **Retail area**
Purchase tools, clothing and accessories at discounted rates
- **Live music festival**
Live music, street food, and activities in a revamped festival area
- **Registration prize**
Every person who registers will have a chance to win a Toro ProStripe 560 pedestrian mower

Also new this year is **Machinery Nation Live!** This feature, brought to you by YouTube presenters Machinery Nation, includes products from various brands, which are set to compete in a series of "machinery face-offs." Live comparisons are promised, with in-depth testing as the machinery is put through a series of "fun, entertaining, and rigorous trials."

Machinery Nation duo James Hayes and Joshua Smith said in statement: "GroundsFest is absolutely brilliant; there is a nice vibe and a good buzz about it. We think it is going to be the biggest date in the grounds care calendar, as there is nothing quite like it. We are really looking forward to seeing everyone at this year's event!"

In addition to these features, GroundsFest offers free on-site parking for everyone. There will also be a dedicated camping area, which can be pre-booked in advance.

Organisers are also keen to point out that, by attending the show, visitors are also supporting the GroundsFest Education Fund. Profits from the event, they say, are reinvested back into the industry to provide support to students at land-based colleges.

Christopher Bassett, event director, explained: "GroundsFest is more than just a trade show - it's a celebration of the grounds care and landscaping industries. The incredible response from visitors underscores the demand for an event that offers hands-on experiences, live demos and comprehensive networking opportunities."

You can find out more about the show and register for free at: www.groundsfest.com



James Hayes and Joshua Smith, of Machinery Nation, will feature at GroundsFest



GroundsFest features an outside demo area, as well as an inside exhibition space

SALTEX

October 30-31, Birmingham NEC



The GMA's SALTEX show takes place once again at the Birmingham NEC

The organisers of SALTEX, the Grounds Management Association (GMA) have said that, for the show's 78th edition, the theme is 'Uniting the Industry, Powering Progress.' They say the theme is all about powering the industry – how SALTEX “enables the industry to continually progress by bringing together people from all around the world and helping drive innovation, education, and networking”.

Geoff Webb, CEO of the GMA, explained: “Each year, SALTEX plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of grounds care. This year, we are focusing on uniting the industry and powering progress by providing a platform for professionals to connect, learn, and advance their skills.”

The show will include the **Learning LIVE** schedule, where visitors can hear from industry experts as well as grounds care professionals from the country's top sports grounds, covering hot topics. There will also be opportunities to speak with grassroots pitch advisors from the GMA and representatives from the national governing bodies, for turf professionals to receive technical advice, as well as guidance on accessing much-needed funding and ways to upskill through the Grounds Management Framework.

Organisers also say they are pleased to be welcoming back a series of big-name industry brands. Some companies of interest to our dealer readers include; AriensCo, Cramer, Dennis Mowers, EGO, Grillo, Husqvarna UK, ISEKI, Kioti UK, Kress, Kubota, Milwaukee, Reesink UK/ Toro UK and Weibang.

This year's show will also see DeWalt exhibiting as part of Infinicut's expanded stand for the first time, as well as McConnel making a return for 2024.

Event director Sarah Cunningham added: “I'm really excited to welcome back our old industry friends, and can't wait to meet our new exhibitors this year. Having these top-tier companies here shows just how important SALTEX is for sharing knowledge, growing professionally, and pushing our industry forward. Their commitment really highlights how much they value being a part of SALTEX.”

Sarah also stressed that attending the show helps the GMA give back to the sector. She explained: “By attending SALTEX, visitors and exhibitors are supporting the vital year-round work that enables the GMA to invest in its members, education, and training. It allows us to continue to lobby, to influence, and to create stakeholder relationships with sports bodies and the like, which create inward investment back into the sector.”

To discover more about the show – including who the new exhibitors are this year – and to register for free, visit www.saltex.org.uk



SALTEX say they are welcoming back big brands

... A decision to be made

Whilst each show undeniably has their own distinct personality and standalone content on offer to visitors, there is no getting around the fundamental fact they are principally professional turfcare shows, taking place within a short space of time of each other.

For our dealer readers, choices will need to be made. Do they attend both? Or one or the other? Will all their brands that they represent in the dealership be at both shows, or will their manufacturers have decided to commit their budget to a particular event? Meaning, of course, separate trips if a dealer wants to catch-up with all their marques.

Autumn is traditionally a busy time for dealers. September especially tends to see many suppliers run dealer conferences and roadshow events, which our readers will want to attend.

Time availability away from the dealership is likely to be the deciding factor. Dealers will be weighing up attendance at one, two or zero shows.

Clearly both can be valuable days out – but, looking forward, will this be a tricky choice that dealers will be faced with each and every autumn?



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BUSINESS MONITOR

Taking the temperature of the dealer network, sponsored by STIHL

Dealers explain why they drop brands

Reliability of product, backup and loyalty to network are key considerations.

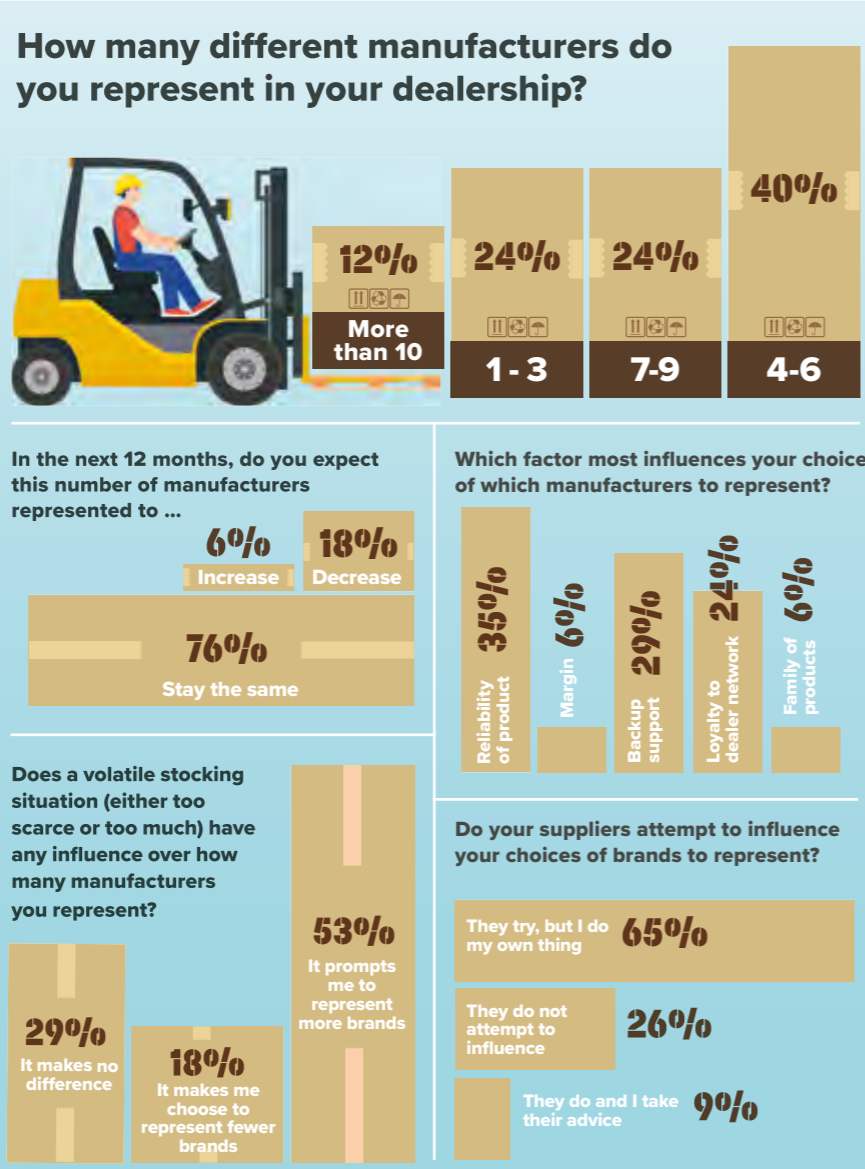
Dealers who responded to our recent survey regarding how many brands they choose to represent in their dealerships, have told us they like to spread their options when it comes to suppliers represented – but there are lines which, if crossed, will prompt them to drop marques.

Most respondents (40%) said they held four-to-six manufacturers' ranges in their showrooms, with a large majority (76%) saying they didn't expect this to change in the coming year.

When asked if a volatile stocking situation had any influence over how many manufacturers a dealer chose to represent, most who answered (53%) said it would prompt them to stock more brands.

When thinking about the factors that most influence their choice of which manufacturers to represent, the most popular responses from our dealer respondents were reliability of product (35%), backup support (29%) and loyalty to the dealer network (24%).

Finally, independent dealers can be relied upon to not allow themselves to be dictated to, with most (65%) telling us their suppliers try to influence them in what they stock – but they do their own thing.



Your say...

We asked you to describe the circumstances that would prompt you to either drop a held franchise, or decide to take on a new brand.

- Products are being supplied online, or through 'the sheds' at unrealistic pricing. We have dropped a few manufacturers over the years for supporting this, although the situation seems to be a little better at the moment after a few notable culprits went bust. You only find out how good a company is when you have a problem, and so backup support is a key factor when assessing new suppliers. Difficult and time-consuming warranty procedures, seemingly designed to make it unworthy of sending small claims in, are a huge red flag, as are useless technical support lines which never get answered, or which frequently know less about the machine than you do already.
- I believe stability and continuity are important. Having too many brands can be confusing for customers and salespeople. Returning customers like to see the brand they purchased still being represented.
- A brand needs to complement existing brands for us to take it on.
- Slow warranty, processing or poor communication would lead to us dropping a brand.
- If the range becomes hard to get, we look at other brands. Reliability is our main factor.
- Margin and aftersales service are key. Also, if a brand allows massive discounting online and expects "the locals" to pick up their aftersales backup, they won't last, either.
- Limiting to one franchise because they cover all products would be ideal. However, adding in factors of lack of stock, product pricing and relationship with the manufacturer (i.e. warranty policies, product support, being valued as a dealer) does create difficulties with this. Having a small group of reliable brands allows you to offer customers products that are available, and which suit different needs and budgets.
- If a brand I support through a supplier ends up in a local DIY store, or garden centre, or online, then I will probably drop the product, as it takes away the fact it was unique to a dealer, and customers think it's cheaper to support those outlets. Machines can become very expensive ornaments if we're not careful. It's a shame our professional service and sales are becoming redundant.
- If the supplier is too demanding, and has difficult levels of discount to achieve, I may drop them. Also, stock levels and backup are crucial to us to support our customer. To take on a franchise, we need a 'must-have' incentive.

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KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL TRAINING



Sara Hey, president of business development at Bob Clements International, 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: HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF YOUR STAFF THROUGH TRAINING.

Working with businesses across the country, we have seen every form of training imaginable. While each dealership's training process is different, all successful businesses have incorporated three things into their training programs:

Consistency
Variety may be the spice of life, but consistency pays the bills. Having a repeatable training program is key to the long-term sustainability of a dealership. If your training plan is dependent upon one or two experienced people to train new employees, you're going to be in for a world of hurt if that key employee decides to leave one day.

Businesses who have a plan for consistent training see more growth and productivity in their business than those that do not. Consistency in training allows your employees not only to continue building knowledge, but also to retain knowledge.

Accountability
When you were young and first got your driver's license, the only thing in the world that kept you alive was the accountability put on you by either local law enforcement or your parents. This accountability for your actions helped you to become a safe driver.

The same concept rings true for training in your business today. Because you are investing valuable time and money in training your employees, you need to be intentional in following up with your employees to make sure they are implementing what they have learned, and that they continue to make your business a success.

Know the Big Picture
People like to be part of something bigger than themselves. You see it everywhere you look. The same holds true for your employees. What goal do you have for your business, and how can your employees help you achieve that goal? By getting your employees on the same page, and having a unified and well-communicated vision for your company, you will find that your employees are eager and excited to engage with the training you offer, as long as it helps them get to the bigger goal.

Other training options can include:

Training through live events
LIVE Training seminars and conferences are a popular way to train employees. With a hands-on approach from a professional in the industry, attendees are given an education that cannot be replicated in-house. Also, who doesn't like the opportunity to get to know and meet new people who work in the same industry? There's an incredible amount of sharing, learning and leveraging that can happen during a training conference.

To make the most of your training event look through your material before the day of the event. Highlight the things that interest you the most, and make sure to note when these items are scheduled to be discussed.

Make conversation with your peers. The unique, personal and insightful conversations you have cannot be replicated.

Training via webinars
When used as a training method, webinars can be interactive, engaging, and creative. They allow managers and owners to track who has attended, and they also make sure every new hire is thoroughly trained. Visual learning is known to be the best learning method in humans, and is utilised with videos, PowerPoints, question and answer columns, and detailed explanations from live audio or video feeds. Information can be broken down into small sections and worked through at a pace appropriate to each individual.

Webinars can be recorded, and attendees and future staff can have access to this information as needed.

Every business we work with is concerned about the cost of training, but webinars can be cost effective.

Good training is an investment in the future of your business. For continued success, always keep your eyes open for additional training opportunities in your industry.

An opportunity to introduce ourselves to a new audience



Joanne Balmer, of Balmers GM, explains how increased warranty work means more footfall through their doors – and the chance to give new customers a positive experience.

How else could I start this edition of my Diary of a Season, other than with the big industry news that Screwfix are now authorised STIHL dealers for their battery-powered tools, along with a selection of STIHL accessories?

After reading Kay Green's email dropping the bombshell news to the STIHL dealer network, it took me all of 10 seconds to message our STIHL account manager with the following words: "Hugely disappointed with this news."

Of course, this wasn't a well-thought-out or considered response, but rather a kneejerk and emotional reaction to how I was feeling at that time and in that moment.

Now, having had some time to let it sink in, process, digest and ponder the bigger picture ... I can't say that I'm particularly bothered about the whole situation, even though we have three Screwfix outlets within a five mile radius – and here's why...

STIHL say that their new relationship with Screwfix will be an opportunity to grow their brand exposure to the consumer market - something which I can't disagree with. Ever since the Covid days, consumer buying trends have certainly shifted, with more and more sales moving online, so I can see the logic behind STIHL's decision. The upshot is that there will be more machinery in homes and gardens within our area. Therefore, it's inevitable that we'll see an increase in warranty work for our service team – something that, as a business, we genuinely, wholeheartedly welcome.

At Balmers, we've always taken a positive and

proactive approach when it comes to warranty work - regardless of whether the machine was originally sold by ourselves or sold by another dealer. We view warranty work as an opportunity to increase footfall through our depot doors, and to introduce ourselves to an audience that we would possibly have never met before. Granted, we may never see them again, but, if we've done our job right and have taken that opportunity to introduce them to our business with a positive experience, you never know the next time that they need a toy tractor for an upcoming birthday, or are considering a robotic mower for their garden, they'll already know where to go – Balmers GM!

In other news, I'm pleased to report that we still remain busy across all departments – which is great, considering the delayed start to the season due to all the wet weather that we encountered in spring. Of course, being so busy brings its own set of challenges (especially over the summer period, as staff take their well-earned annual leave), plus all the local and county shows that we were committed to. For 2024, we did make the decision to cut back on the number that we attend annually, reducing from eight shows per year previously, down to just four this year. They are a difficult one to quantify as to whether they're actually worth the money,

time and effort required to create a good trade stand - but, on reflection, I do feel they are worth all the hard work, and we'll be rebooking again for next year.

So, as the busy summer season grows to a close, I'll sign off for now as we focus our attention to autumn and, fingers crossed, an equally busy arb season.





TAX IMPLICATIONS

Improvements and renovations to premises

Premises come in all shapes and sizes but, whatever yours looks like, it will need ongoing repairs and maintenance, writes *SME Digest* editor, Adam Bernstein.



While tax shouldn't be the driver behind repairs and maintenance decisions, it's important to understand the tax implications of spending on improvements – compared with renovations – to allow you to maximise claims for relief.

For David Wright, a technical officer at the ATT, the pivotal question for tax is whether money spent on the premises is revenue or capital expenditure. As he outlines: "The costs of ongoing repairs and maintenance will normally be revenue, meaning they're fully deductible in the period incurred, and the business benefits from tax relief relatively quickly. In contrast, if you build, extend, or make improvements to your premises, the money spent is classed as capital expenditure." This means, as he explains, that, unless you can claim capital allowances or Structures and Buildings Allowance, no tax relief is available upfront for capital expenditure – you'll also have to wait until you sell the premises to get tax relief.

Revenue or capital?

Wright says that, in principle, the distinction between revenue and capital expenditure should be simple – work done to return premises to the condition they were in at acquisition is revenue, while expenditure on enhancing them beyond that is capital.

For instance, if the roof blows off and you pay for a like-for-like replacement, that cost should be a repair and therefore deductible for tax purposes in the period incurred. In contrast, if you decide to have the roof replaced in order to add a mezzanine, then the cost will be capital, as you're enhancing the building beyond its state when it was acquired.

It needs to be said that, if an expense should be treated as capital, any incidental costs are also likely to be capital in nature. For instance, the cost of building an extension to your premises would be capital, and, therefore, so would any associated legal or planning fees.

Detailed invoicing – an easy win

When works are completed, a single invoice might cover a range of changes, such as an extension and redecorating. In this instance, Wright explains that the cost of the extension would be capital, and only recoverable when the premises are sold – but the redecoration is a repair, and so can be deducted for tax purposes when incurred.

As a consequence, he advises: "Whenever you commission building work covering more than one task, always ask for the invoices to be subtotaled by area or sub-project as appropriate." He says that doing this will help determine what tax relief is available now, and what will be treated as capital.

Capital allowances

With most capital expenditure on your premises, you have to wait until you sell to get any tax relief. However, money spent on 'integral features' can qualify for capital allowances, meaning you can get tax relief much sooner.

Wright outlines that integral features are defined as items that make up your premises, rather than plant and machinery used in your business. "Put simply," he says, "they are things 'in which,' rather than 'with which,' your business operates." He says that qualifying integral features are strictly defined as electrical and lighting systems – hot and cold water systems (excluding kitchen and toilet facilities); lifts, escalators and moving walkways; powered ventilation systems, and air cooling, heating or purification systems; and external solar shading.

It needs to be remembered that the cost of these assets qualifies for an annual Writing Down Allowance at a rate of 6%, which, says Wright, "allows tax relief based on a small amount of the asset's value to be claimed each year over the course of its useful life."

However, Wright points out: "Many businesses will be able to get more tax relief sooner by claiming the Annual Investment Allowance (AIA) against the cost of integral features in the year they're acquired." In explaining what AIA is, he says: "It allows businesses to offset against their income up to £1m of expenditure each year on new integral features, as well as most plant and machinery..."

You can't claim the two allowances simultaneously, though – it's a choice of either AIA or Writing Down Allowances in the first year."

Structures and Buildings Allowance (SBA)

Lastly, it can be painful to wait for tax relief on capital expenditure on buildings. But, since October 2018, the cost of buying, constructing, or renovating commercial premises for use in a trade can qualify for SBAs. The allowance is currently 3%.

Wright says: "Leaseholders can qualify for SBAs on qualifying building works they pay for, such as fitting out premises for their use, and, if the lease is for more than 35 years, they may even be eligible for SBAs on the original construction/renovation costs."

But he offers words of warning on SBAs. Firstly: "You can only get relief once, so the value of assets qualifying for capital allowances can't also be included in an SBA claim." Secondly: "If you sell the premises, the amount of SBAs claimed will be added to your sale proceeds, so tax will eventually become payable on the amount of SBAs claimed."

Summary

Renovating or improving premises is costly, but one thing is certain - taking the time to understand the rules and to work to them will make a project much less expensive.

RENUMERATION

The National Minimum Wage still catches out employers

Mid-February, the government published a list of employers that have been caught out not correctly paying staff and breaching National Minimum Wage (NMW) legislation, writes *SME Digest* editor, Adam Bernstein.

The list was one of the longest, with more than 500 employers named.

While some of the underpayments were very small, 20 involved six-figure sums, 98 involved five-figure amounts, and one employer was found to be underpaying staff to the tune of £5.1m.

Mark Stevens, a senior associate at law firm VWV, explains that the NMW sets the amount of pay due to most workers from school leaver age up to the age of 25, with the National Living Wage (NLW) applying to those aged 25 or over. "All workers," he says, "except those who are genuinely self-employed, are entitled to receive

the NMW or NLW."

He says that it is calculated by "including most financial awards or payments, but excluding allowances such as regional or on-call allowances, unsocial hours payments, tips and gratuities, or any benefits in kind, with the exception of accommodation up to a specified amount."



Changes from April 2024

“Prior to April 2024,” says Stevens, “the NLW applied to those 23 and above. However, from April, it expanded to include 21 and 22 year olds.” He continues: “The NLW increased by 9.8%, from £10.42 per hour to £11.44 per hour. For a full-time employee working 37.5 hours per week, this equates to a minimum annual salary of £22,308.”

As for younger employees and apprentices, they too saw significant pay increases from April. As Stevens explains, an 18-20 year olds’ hourly pay increased to a minimum of £8.10 per hour. Additionally, 16-to-17 year olds and apprentices saw their pay increase to a minimum of £6.40 per hour, which, says Stevens, “is a huge 21.2% increase from the previous minimum in this bracket.”

Enforcement

Like other forms of employment legislation, the NMW is incredibly complex, which is why Stevens has seen “underpayments being the result of a misunderstanding of the law rather than any deliberate failure by an employer to comply.”

In particular, there’s employment status. Where this is misclassified, or where a worker is ‘off-payroll,’ employers can fail to pay the correct NMW. Then there are issues over salaried staff who are relatively lowly paid and regularly work long hours

– employers fall short when taking into account hours worked in relation to the rate of NMW.

Another area to keep tabs on is working hours. This may apply if a worker is required to arrive early or stay late for training, debriefing or staff meetings – these hours will constitute ‘working time,’ and therefore should be paid at NMW. Employers also need to be aware of staff uniforms, as employers that require staff to pay for their own uniforms out of their salary can cause pay to fall below the NMW.

Lastly, employers sometimes slip up where they fail to increase a workers’ pay following a birthday, which moves them into a new NMW bracket.

The repercussions of getting NMW wrong

Employers found in breach of the legislation may face significant legal repercussions. Stevens says: “It’s important to remember that underpaid workers can launch formal and/or legal action. Those who think that they have suffered an underpayment of NMW can raise a formal grievance to their employer, complain to HMRC, or bring a number of claims against their employers.”

In particular, he warns that they can bring a claim for unlawful deduction from wages under Section 13 of the Employment Rights Act 1996; a breach

of contract, either in the employment tribunal or the County Court; or a claim for unfair dismissal or detriment under the National Minimum Wage Act 1998.

And then there are the financial penalties that can be brought to bear. Employers found to have not paid workers the NMW can face substantial fines – currently up to a maximum of £20,000 per underpaid worker.

Next on Stevens list is the risk of adverse publicity. He says: “The government’s ‘name and shame’ scheme can put a negative spotlight on employers found to be in breach of the NMW legal requirements.” This could result in significant damage to the employer’s reputation, and make it harder to hire staff.

Lastly, for the worst offenders, there’s criminal prosecution. “This,” says Stevens, “can occur if employers persistently refuse to comply with the law and to co-operate with the compliance officers.”

Summary

The National Minimum Wage is nothing new, and this year marks 25 years of it being in operation. While it’s well-known, and there are some employers who deliberately seek to underpay staff, the majority just make accidental errors. For them, the best advice is to look at the risk factors and seek to deal with them.

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Products

DOMESTIC

Makita enter robotic mower market

Make sector debut with RM350D

Makita have launched their first robotic mower with the RM350D, which can cover lawns up to 3,500m² and slopes of up to 26°.

The company says the mower benefits from a cutting width of 240mm, rapid charging capabilities, and long, uninterrupted usage time. Due to the automatic cutting height adjustment, both the starting and target height of the lawn can be adjusted. Specifically, the cutting height can be adjusted from 20 to 60mm in 5mm increments.

To operate, users need to set the boundary wires and guides and press 'Go,' with no need to download and sync up to an app. Four brushless motors drive the blades and power the machine across the working area, and, once the battery has discharged, it automatically returns to its



charging station – resuming mowing when the charging is complete.

Also included is a schedule settings feature, where the product can be programmed to run on specific days and times of the week. It leaves its charging station automatically, mows the lawn, and then returns to the charging station independently.

In terms of maintenance, its IPX5 rating means it can be cleaned with a hose – remove the top cover to wash the entire machine with water.

Matt Chilton, product manager at Makita UK, said of the mower: "It's easy to set up and totally autonomous, meaning professionals can take care of other work on site while the robot takes care of the lawn."

UTILITY VEHICLES

Paxster eCompact Air launched in the UK

Introduced by Boss ORV



UK distributor, Boss ORV has introduced the new Paxster eCompact Air, a Norwegian, electric utility vehicle.

Described by the manufacturer as "rugged elegance with an eco-smart design," the new model offers quiet

efficiency with the electric vehicle's silent drive. A maximum power of 7.48 kW from battery type LiFePo4 combines with a 2x4 RWD drivetrain, featuring enhanced traction. The ride is comfortable, with a fully-adjustable seat and side support. It is built to withstand rough use in all-weather conditions.

The ergonomic handlebars feature minimal switches, and there are optional heated grips. Homologated for road use, the eCompact Air has LED front lights for optimal illumination. There are storage capabilities, with a spacious cargo bed, front trunk and lockable side pockets.

"This latest addition to the Paxster

range we offer in the UK is incredibly versatile," says Boss ORV MD Phil Everett. "They're tough little vehicles, suited to work anywhere – from horticulture, groundcare, construction and equestrian to agriculture, estates, and leisure."

In the field, the eCompact Air can be used to power tools and equipment, delivering up to 3,000 watts of onboard electricity. Hitch systems front and rear allow for a variety of attachments, and there are a wide range of accessories available.

Paxster vehicles come with a three-year commercial warranty and a five-year battery warranty.

AGRICULTURAL

Trio of wider models

Kuhn's Prolander range expands



Kuhn Farm Machinery has expanded its Prolander cultivator range, with three wider models suited to farmer and contractors requiring a high-output machine for a variety of soil conditions.

The three models - 9000, 12000 and 14000 - offer working widths of 9.2m, 12.2m and 14.2m, respectively, which the manufacturer says will suit users operating controlled traffic systems.

The new models take the Prolander range to eight, offering a stubble cultivator capable of working a range of seedbeds, including ploughed, cultivated or stubble.

Working depths of 3 to 12cm are possible across the range, and a new 90x13mm S-tooth is suitable for 'tearing' stubbles to guarantee a complete mix of surface material. Existing tine options are available,

including the 70x12mm S shaped tine and 60mm or 200mm goose foot tines. Double U or Double Tube rollers can be specified to suit user requirements.

The five smaller Prolander models, from 4m to 7.5m, are now available with the SH 600 – a 600-litre hopper designed to sow cover crops and small seeds in a one-pass system. Seeding options for the new larger models include the TF 1512 front tank.

COMMERCIAL

Toro offer greenkeepers wider width

With electric Greensmaster e1026

Toro say their new Greensmaster e1026 fixed-head pedestrian mower represents not only their investment in research and development, but their dedication to providing choice within their range of battery-powered products.

Inspired by the success of the e1021 and eFlex 1021 models, the e1026 brings the choice of a wider width of cut to the market, with zero engine exhaust emissions.

With a mowing width of 26 inches, the company says customers can cut faster without losing the quality and precision of cut, and it's efficient, quiet and virtually maintenance-free, boasting excellent balance and manoeuvrability.

Jon Cole, divisional business manager at Reesink Turfcare, said: "We're delighted to be able to offer customers an ever-expanding range of sustainable mowing options, while optimising processes and boosting productivity."

The company say the USPs of the

petrol model remain, including the telescoping handle – with five different handle positions to accommodate the height of the operator – and the clip frequency feature – which can easily be changed in the field to mow the perimetric collars, and more, while on the go. The quick-change feature can also be locked out for added control.





EGO charge it up

PGX Professional Charging system launched

EGO Power Plus, has launched a new charging system to support landscaping and groundcare professionals.

Andrew Frohock, product manager for the manufacturer, said: "We have developed a new system that gives users incredible flexibility, whether that is charging high numbers of batteries overnight or finding solutions for charging portable batteries out in the field."

The PGX Professional Charging system is described as a flexible charging solution that scales to meet the specific needs of any business. The system is powered by the PGX1600E-H 1600W Charging Hub, which runs off any standard electrical outlet, meaning no electrical infrastructure upgrade is required.

A modular system, PGX allows for each user to adapt it to their specific

power needs. The PGX1600H Hub connects to any combination of up to 30 PGX3000D 3-Port Docks, or PGX1400PB Power Banks (available separately), to provide charging power to 90 battery ports. The system manages charging intelligently, meaning all batteries can be charged without the need for manual intervention. The charging power means that the PGX system can effectively charge up to 70 EGO 56V ARC Lithium batteries, or up to 250Ah of battery capacity overnight (in 12 hours).

The 1600W Hub and PGX3000D 3-Port Docks securely mount to the wall via steel-reinforced screw through-holes, and are both E-Track-compatible via the PGX Commercial Charging E-Track Mounting Kit (available separately), unlocking the potential for in-vehicle

charging for all EGO batteries via a single power connection. EGO say lockable battery ports provide peace of mind that the platform remains safe on the jobsite, while integrated connectivity allows users to monitor and control when they charge, and provides reassurance that power will be available when it is needed.

When disconnected from the PGX Hub, the PGX1400PB is a portable Power Bank that allows users to transport their energy to the jobsite and recharge their portable batteries. With the energy stored in the new EGO HC2240T 40Ah Battery – from the company's new High-Capacity platform – the Power Bank utilises high-efficiency DC: DC charging to pass this power to 2,700W charging ports, compatible with all EGO 56V ARC Lithium batteries, for fast on-site, off-grid charging.

DOMESTIC/COMMERCIAL

Zero expansion

Larger chassis model from Kubota



Expanding Kubota's existing zero-turn mower range – and tailored for the pro-consumer market – the Z4-541 is a 54-inch petrol model which boasts a larger chassis, exceeding the dimensions of the current Z1 and Z2 models.

The manufacturer says the introduction of the Z4-541 broadens the existing zero-turn lineup, building upon a larger chassis while maintaining manoeuvrability comparable to smaller models.

The 360-degree turning capability enables navigation around obstacles, while the machine's low centre of gravity and wide-profile drive wheels ensure stability and balance, making it suitable for tasks on uneven terrain.

The mower's 54" steel fabricated deck comes as a three-blade side discharge, and features quick-dial height adjustment and K-lift deck operation for raising and lowering of the deck.

This specific model also features an optional ODCD (Operator Controlled Discharge Chute) kit, enabling operators to temporarily shut the side discharge.

The Z4-541 is equipped with a petrol Kawasaki V FS730-V engine, producing 24hp/17.9kW. The design of V twin engines allows the machine to run quieter and smoother, says Kubota, with fewer vibrations than most traditional single-cylinder engines. A rear 'wrap-around' bumper gives added protection and comes as standard, along with a rear towing hitch.

AGRICULTURAL/COMMERCIAL



Mini-excavator improves performance

Kuhn's Prolander range expands

Develon has launched the new DX10Z-7 one-tonne zero tail swing mini-excavator, which, they say, provides a significantly improved performance compared to the previous DX10Z model it replaces.

The DX10Z-7 is compact and easy to transport, offering a width of 730mm when the tracks and the front blade are fully retracted, allowing the machine to pass through doors. The hydraulically expandable undercarriage provides it with one of the widest stances in the mini-excavator segment. When it is extended, the width of the square footprint becomes 1,100mm, providing stability. In addition, a foldable TOPS (Tip Over Protective Structure) canopy meeting ISO 12117 requirements is standard on the model.

Supplying an output of 7.6 kW, the Kubota D722 engine powers the unit, providing reliability as well as low vibration and noise levels.

The increased performance of the DX10Z-7, say Develon, is based around a new 1.45m boom design and increased arm length (from 810mm to 890mm), resulting in an enhanced working range compared to the DX10Z. This includes a 21.5% rise in dump height of 2,205mm and an 8.5% increase in digging reach at a ground level of 3,355mm.

The machine also offers a 30% increase in bucket breakout force of 10.8kN, and a 14% increase in arm breakout force to 6.3kN. This is combined with an increase on ground track length of 1,025mm, providing enhanced stability and a 31% increase in traction force.

COMMERCIAL

Blowing force increased for pro users

M18 Fuel Dual Battery Backpack Blower from Milwaukee



Milwaukee Tool has introduced the M18 Fuel Dual Battery Backpack Blower, designed to deliver a higher blowing force for outdoor trade professionals.

The manufacturer says Redlink Plus intelligence allows the blower to reach full throttle in under one second, increasing control and

productivity in the application. It can use two batteries for lighter weight in quicker clean-up applications, or four batteries for longer clean-ups.

Mode Select capabilities allow users to set various performance levels for different demand and runtime needs, while a variable speed trigger provides additional control.

Designed to maximise operator comfort, the blower features a fully adjustable harness, load lifter straps, a telescoping nozzle and an adjustable handle position to allow the operator to customise the tool for their work.

The new blower is fully compatible with the entire M18 line, now offering more than 290 power tool solutions.

AGRICULTURAL



New transmissions and integrated AutoTrac

John Deere's 5M tractor

Earlier this year, John Deere introduced their new 5M tractor, which is available with new transmissions and integrated AutoTrac functionalities in the dashboard.

The company has also added the 5M 130 to the range, broadening the upper power class portfolio with a maximum output of up to 135 horsepower.

The manufacturer says the new PowrQuad PLUS and Powr8™ transmission options provide farmers with solutions for a wide range of tasks. The technology allows operators to experience continuous pulling power,

with smooth gear shifts within the selected group. Additionally, a button on the lever eliminates the need for manual clutching when shifting between groups. Due to the EcoShift feature, the 5M tractor reduces RPM to save fuel while delivering sufficient power to accomplish transport tasks at up to 40 km/h.

Deere say that the integration of AutoTrac in the dashboard (a feature that 6M Series owners enjoy in the Corner Post Display) enhances precision and efficiency by minimising overlaps during field and grassland work. The guidance system helps to

stay on track in straight-line field jobs. An upgrade to more sophisticated guidance functionalities with a G5 Universal Display is possible at any time.

With a 4.1-metre turning radius, the company says the 5M series provides great manoeuvrability, making it suited for such tasks as yard work and animal feeding in confined spaces. The low hood and the large roof window offer visibility, especially for front loader tasks. The new series comes with the predictive analysis functionality Expert Alerts, enabling early recognition of required maintenance needs.

Anxiety and disappointment



Our mystery columnist, THE SPROCKET, considers the dealer's position when a long-held supplier makes moves to increase their market share, outside of the network.

Whilst this piece comes a few months on from the news for dealers that STIHL will and are supplying Screwfix with their products – with Screwfix having a service facility to handle warranty and repairs of these products – I suspect there will be anxiety and disappointment across the dealer network, not least because the company has a long history with the dealer channel.

We have seen it all before: big brand names using their strong identities to gain increased market share. It has happened over the last 45 years I can remember, with various brands – including Flymo, Mountfield and others. They seem totally supportive of the dealer network until they feel they must go further in order to boost numbers, get better market exposure and keep the competition at bay.

The reasons given are always the same. If brand awareness and market share are improved, then the dealer will benefit. That sometimes works for dealers who can embrace the change, or simply just go with the flow. Historically, it has caused problems for dealers who are bound by their dealer agreement to offer aftersales support and warranty service for products they have not sold, and at warranty rates that can be much lower than the dealers' charge-out rate. It is simply not fair, and does not make sensible business practice for a dealer.

Route to market

Suppliers engage with the dealer network when they are early entrants into the market. Generally, they do not have the resources or the infrastructure to service a national market, and the dealer network offers a reliable and readymade solution for this. This can also be the case when appointing a distributor for a country or region. If it is successful, the supplier will invariably want to appoint more dealers at the expense of those that originally supported

them. Eventually, they want more volume, and will turn to the mass merchants – or, nowadays, the internet. They may lose the dealer support, but, for them, the dealer or distributor has served its purpose, and they think they can move on.

I have been there and suffered from suppliers thinking they can do a better job by handling distribution themselves, cutting out the middleman. In my experience, it never worked, and sales volumes were lost. Eventually new distributors were appointed who could not do the job and – lo and behold – the product disappeared from the UK market.

I recall talking to the sales director of a German-owned UK distributor which was one of the early suppliers to the sheds and catalogue companies back in the day, pre-internet. When asked why they went down this route and still expected the dealers to support their product, I was told they did it for the brand awareness, but there was no margin to be retained as advertising requirements, and the cost of returns negated any profit. They confirmed that their only real profit came from the dealer network.

Things are different now, and the sales channels are wide open, with the use of the internet and click-and-collect. Electrical and battery products that require little maintenance can be sold directly to the end user. *But!* Should the supplier have their cake and eat it? Can they multi-channel and keep a dealer happy and profitable? Is it really fair to make a dealer do warranty work on a product they have not sold, not made any profit from, and which is not for one of their own customers? This seems to be expected by some suppliers, who are reimbursing dealers at much lower rates than the dealer charge-out rate when the dealer can sell most of their workshop hours at normal rates. This, coupled with the difficulties in getting qualified technical staff, does make a nonsense of a supplier's policies, and does not do enough to support the dealer.

There is no question that the dealers' USP is their

experience and aftersales service - so why is this not being supported? Screwfix has a service facility to support the sale of STIHL products. Should we be concerned that, if more were to be set up, the required staff could be poached from local dealers?

My local Screwfix branch is great, open seven days a week, 12 hours a day – except for Sundays, when opening times are restricted. They are easy and efficient to deal with, and helpful. They also generally have very good prices, and can get things quickly. I believe they have 880 branches in the UK – which is a hell of a lot of competition for dealers up and down the country.

Dealer's choice

Dealers must be unique – it is their stock-in-trade. But they are not going to compete with the likes of Screwfix, as has been the case in the past with the sheds and the internet. They must be offering products that are good, sensibly-priced, and only available through a dealer network. If the big brands can afford national advertising and mass distribution, leave them to it, as it will become very difficult to earn a living from selling the brands through a dealership.

I must admit, I had visions of niche machinery suppliers leaping up and down and punching the air in their offices when they heard the news from STIHL. Times are changing. Dealers are faced with big-brand corporate policy with global ambitions, modern marketing methods, and more distance between supplier and dealer staff. But, with all that

said, we still enjoy some traditional suppliers, and those really do support their dealer network and recognise the value a dealer brings to their business. Specialist opportunities are, indeed, out there for the dealer network.

Having spoken to dealers in the past about their contractual arrangements with suppliers and how unhappy they could be about the 'rules' of having a certain brand in their dealership, it was clear that the dealer would accept the Ts & Cs to improve their own local standing in the hope of gaining extra business. Suppliers are adept at providing contracts that protect their own business. Understandable – but a dealer needs to study these contracts to make sure that they can also protect their own business and ensure that they can be profitable. The age-old debate about pre-season or winter stocking will no doubt be paramount in the thoughts of many dealers this season.

Final word: make sure that your business is not totally reliant on any one brand. Build your business around several popular brands, supported by sensible alternatives. I know it is obvious, and I have done it in the past. Look at your product ranges like the legs of a table. If you lose one leg, you can adapt and stay upright – but, if you lose too many legs, the table will fall over. Don't let it fall over!

If you have any comment for me, please just email the editor at steve@servicedealer.co.uk – he knows how to find me ...



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.

SEPTEMBER 2024

Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC www.autumnfair.com	1-4
Moreton-in-Marsh Show www.moretonshow.co.uk	7
Glee 2024 www.gleebirmingham.com	10-12
GroundsFest, Stoneleigh Park www.groundsfest.com	10-11
UK Dairy Day, The International Centre, Telford www.ukdairyday.co.uk	11
Penistone Agricultural Show www.penistoneshow.com	14
Kington Show www.kingtonshow.co.uk	14
Bowes Agricultural Show www.bowesshow.org.uk	14
Stanhope Show www.stanhopeshow.com	14-15
Tillage Live, Headley Hall, Tadcaster www.tillage-live.com	18
APF Exhibition 2024, Ragley Estate, Warwickshire www.apfexhibition.co.uk	19-21

OCTOBER 2024

Equip Exhibition, Louisville, USA www.equipexposition.com	15-18
GMA Saltex 2024, Birmingham NEC www.gmasaltex.co.uk	30-31

NOVEMBER 2024

EIMA International, Bologna www.eima.it/en	6-10
AgriScot 2024, The Royal Highland Centre www.agriscot.co.uk	13
Midlands Machinery Show www.midlandsmachineryshow.com	20-21
Royal Welsh Winter Fair www.rwas.wales/winter-fair	25-26
CropTec 2024, East of England Showground www.croptecshow.com	27-28
Service Dealer Conference & Awards, Stratford-Upon-Avon www.servicedealer.co.uk	28

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