

# SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

JULY/AUGUST 2021

## DYNAMIC NEW INDUSTRY AMBASSADORS

LE-TEC's competition winners prove that excellent young recruits can be found by dealerships. It's a question of getting the message out to them

### A way of life

Dealer Farm & Garden Machinery increases its domestic customer base

### Not just golf clubs

Ag dealers moving into commercial groundcare sector

### Making the most of market moves

ARGO capitalises on network shifts

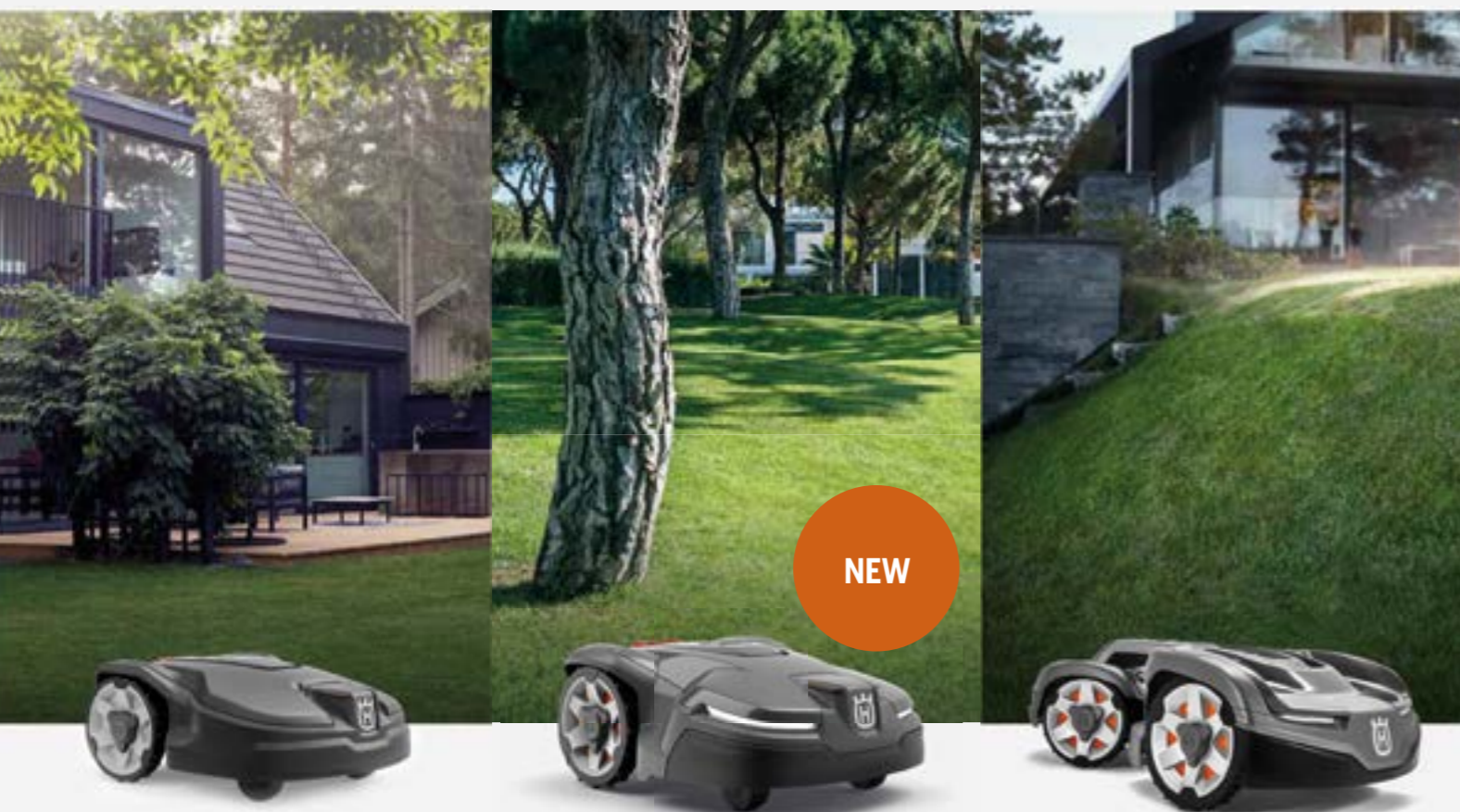


### ROBOTIC TRACTORS REACH RETAIL MARKET

First commercial sale of an autonomous tractor to a UK buyer

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## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

**W**elcome to July/August 2021's edition of *Service Dealer* magazine.

By the time you are reading this edition, the country may well have emerged from all social restrictions – or then again, perhaps not! At the time of going to press it was still unclear. What is clear is that dealers have worked incredibly hard during this whole period, facing extraordinarily difficult trading conditions – conditions that have been compounded during the first half of 2021 by the well-documented issues surrounding supply of stock.

Interestingly, a problem faced by dealers that has received some attention recently is one that no one is blaming on the short-term effects of the pandemic. Recruitment is a perennial problem for the network and one which many feel is not getting any easier. We publish the results of our recent survey on the subject on page 46 of this issue, where the sense of exasperation from our readers who responded is palpable.

Age-old factors such as a lack of applicants, lack of perceived skills, no local training facilities, or being priced out of the wage market by other sectors are all cited by dealers as holding them back.

However, all hope should not be lost. From our story in this edition about the dynamic, new industry ambassadors highlighted by a recent competition run by LE-TEC, there's proof that there are enthusiastic and talented young people out there, willing to embark on careers in the landbased industries. Finding them and making sure they stay in the industry should be a priority for all with a stake in the longevity of the dealer network.

There are, of course, no easy fixes that can make this happen – it will require a sustained, collaborative effort.



[www.servicedealer.co.uk](https://www.servicedealer.co.uk)

## OUR PEOPLE

**Publisher:**  
DUNCAN MURRAY-CLARKE

**Editor:** STEVE GIBBS  
[steve@servicedealer.co.uk](mailto:steve@servicedealer.co.uk)

**Agricultural Editor:**  
MARTIN RICKATSON  
[jmr.agriculture@gmail.com](mailto:jmr.agriculture@gmail.com)

**SME Digest Editor:**  
ADAM BERNSTEIN  
[adam@adambernstein.co.uk](mailto:adam@adambernstein.co.uk)

**Contributor:** LAURENCE GALE  
[laurence.gale@btinternet.com](mailto:laurence.gale@btinternet.com)

**Produced by:** THE AD PLAIN LTD  
Pipe House, Lupton Road, Wallingford,  
Oxfordshire, OX10 9BS, UK

Telephone: 01491 837 117  
[www.theadplain.com](http://www.theadplain.com)

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**Design & layout:** IAIN ROBINSON

**Advertising sales:**  
NIKKI HARRISON  
[nikki@theadplain.com](mailto:nikki@theadplain.com)

Telephone: 01491 837 117

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# NEWS

LATEST INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS

## DEALERS



70 machines and a workshop were lost in the fire

## MKM AGRI BEGINS RECOVERY FOLLOWING DEVASTATING FIRE

*Buildings and over 70 machines destroyed*

The Bedford dealership, MKM Agri, which specialises in utility vehicles, suffered a fire in April that completely destroyed its workshop, storage building and all of the contents, and is now undertaking the long process of recovery.

The fire broke out at 4.13am on Wednesday 7 April, with CCTV footage showing the first signs of the fire in the dealership's workshop – which was locked and alarmed – at Marston Moreteyne, Bedford.

Local residents sounded the alarm after an explosion at 4.22am, with owner Anthony Deacon arriving on the scene a few minutes later. Bedfordshire Fire Service arrived three minutes behind him.

Anthony said the fire rapidly spread through the workshop and across the adjoining machinery storage building. The fire service had little chance of extinguishing the fire and concentrated their efforts on containing the spread onto nearby buildings.

The fire completely destroyed the building and more than 70 machines including 35 ATVs, six UTVs, a forklift, many lawn mowers and over 35 years' worth of tools.

A full investigation into the cause of the fire was completed by a

forensic team and the cause remains unknown. Thanks to the CCTV, however, they do know it was an accident with the fire starting inside a locked and alarmed building.

### Steady but difficult progress

In the weeks following the fire, Anthony was in constant negotiations with his insurer, who fortunately accepted liability. He told *Service Dealer*, "Since then I've been working full-time dealing with the claim, working out exactly what's been lost. It's difficult but we're getting there."

"We've made steady progress, but these past weeks have been incredibly difficult."

In the fire MKM lost its entire workshop and another lean-to building, which totalled around 4,000 sq ft of space. Since then, it has continued operating out of a separate building that houses the office, showroom and parts storage.

"We're using a small, old shed as our workshop," Anthony explained, "which is about an eighth of the size of what we lost, so far from ideal."

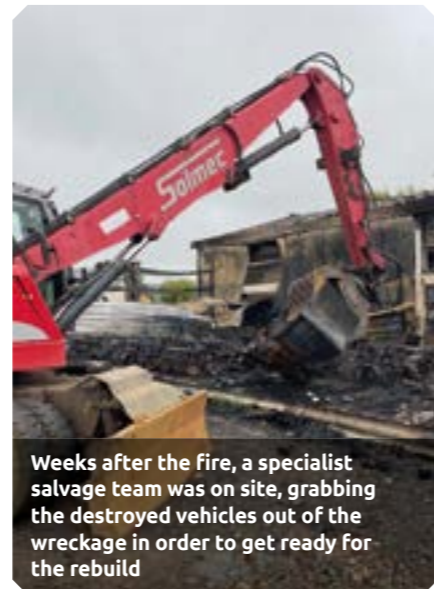
He continued, "Concrete has been poured for the base of a temporary workshop though, which we shall use whilst the remains of the old building are flattened, before building up our

new dealership.

"The plan is to design an entirely new purpose-built premises. There's a lot to think about with an endeavour such as this and I'd be very interested in hearing from other dealers who might have some thoughts about how we might best achieve our goals."

Anthony concluded by saying how the level of support they had received from the industry since the fire had been "incredible". He remarked, "I can't thank everyone enough for their kind words and offers of help."

*Service Dealer* will follow MKM Agri's story as the company builds back.



Weeks after the fire, a specialist salvage team was on site, grabbing the destroyed vehicles out of the wreckage in order to get ready for the rebuild

## INDUSTRY

## ARIENSCO ACQUIRES AS-MOTOR

*UK distribution remains the same*

US-based manufacturer, AriensCo, has expanded its presence in Europe with the acquisition of German turf care machinery manufacturer, AS-Motor.

AriensCo described the move as "the latest demonstration of our commitment to the development within the European market". It follows last year's announcement of Europe's first zero-turn production facility at its UK plant in Oxford.

AS-Motor equipment is distributed to dealers in the UK by PSD Groundscare. These two companies issued a joint statement to reassure their customers that following this acquisition, it is business as usual.

The joint statement said: "Ariens, AS-Motor and PSD Groundscare are all excited to be part of this fantastic opportunity. Not only will this acquisition increase the footprint of the AS-Motor range in Europe, but it will also facilitate significant investment into the product range. All parties are completely committed to working together to grow both the AS-Motor and Ariens brands in the UK with our respective focuses."

MD of PSD, Chris Gibson, told *Service Dealer*, "We're extremely excited about this new development and see it as a fantastic opportunity for the AS-Motor brand. We've worked with AriensCo for a number of years with our sister

dealership business and look forward to building on this already long-established relationship.

"We'd like to reassure our dealers and customers that day-to-day business will continue as normal as we continue to develop both sales and service support for AS-Motor machinery throughout the UK."

Torsten Schick, Head of Sales at AS-Motor added, "At AS-Motor we wish to assure you that our long-term partnership with PSD Groundscare will continue and benefit from the same high standards with regards to products, service, parts and excellent sales and marketing support."

Dan Ariens, Chairman and CEO of AriensCo, said of his company's acquisition, "We're happy to welcome AS-Motor into the AriensCo family of brands."

"The values of AS-Motor align closely with the AriensCo core values to be honest, be fair, keep our commitments, respect the individual and encourage intellectual curiosity. This acquisition allows for the expansion of both companies' reach across Europe."

This latest acquisition expands the company's European footprint, which also has locations in the UK and Scandinavia with a 112,000 sq ft manufacturing and distribution facility, over 150 employees, over 750 dealers across the UK, Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

## DEALERS

## FAROL PARTNERS WITH CLUB CAR

*As a commercial range dealer*

Club Car has appointed Farol Ltd as a UK dealer for its commercial range.

Established in 1976, Farol's headquarters are in Oxfordshire, and it has five more depots throughout the UK.

Andy Bourke, Club Car's Regional Manager UK & I & Nordics, said, "This new partnership will allow Club Car to further strengthen our position in key markets as well as expanding into new markets."

James Moore, Golf & Turf Business Director for Farol, said, "We're very excited to be working with Club Car as it will make a great addition to our already diverse product portfolio. Club Car's strong brand presence combined with our extensive connections within the professional turf industry and beyond mean we can hit the ground running."

"We've already seen significant interest – and taken orders – from Farol customers, and look forward to attracting many more new opportunities with Club Car."



James Moore, Farol Golf & Turf Business Director and Darren Jones, Farol Group Utility Vehicle Specialist

## DEALERS

# RW CRAWFORD TO OPEN NEW BRANCH

*In Hampshire later this summer*

Following RW Crawford's appointment as Fendt and Valtra dealers for Sussex and Hampshire, and the subsequent opening in 2019 of the Billingshurst depot in West Sussex, AGCO has announced that Crawford will be opening a new branch in Ropley, Hampshire, later this summer.

The site is located on the A31 between Arlesford and Alton in East Hampshire and was previously occupied by another agricultural dealer, William Wheatley Ltd.

Commenting, Wes Crawford, Managing Director of Crawford said, "The area of responsibility covering Sussex and Hampshire awarded to Crawford in 2019 by Fendt and Valtra is geographically very large. Consequently, travel times between our customers in Hampshire and our

Billingshurst branch are significant. As part of our strategic plan, once we had established our Billingshurst operation, it has been our ambition to offer a greater level of local support to our Hampshire customers by opening a local outlet.

"The new site will work hand-in-glove with our Billingshurst operation, ensuring we can fully support the whole area, delivering Crawford's high levels of customer service and support".

Crawford has also announced the appointment of James Freemantle, who will take a Business Development role for the Hampshire region. James will be known to many farmers in the area having worked within the local agricultural machinery trade for many years. This appointment follows Greg



Delaney as Area Sales Manager for North Hampshire, who joined the team in April.

"A small number of our Billingshurst team will be relocating to Ropley, including Michael Bridges, Area Sales Manager in South Hampshire, and Luke Smallbone as Parts Sales Adviser. However, we will be recruiting new team members, specifically technical support staff," said Wes Crawford.

## EVENTS



# TILLAGE LIVE SET TO RETURN

*To Cirencester in September*

Now in its 30th year, organisers of Tillage-Live, the national crop establishment demonstration show, say the event is set to return this autumn.

Put together by the Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA) on behalf of the industry, the event is heading back to Cirencester in 2021 with the show being held at Down Ampney after a year break in 2020.

The event, which will be held on

Thursday 16 September, will showcase machinery manufacturers with demonstrations of crop establishment technology including ploughs, cultivators, sprayers, conventional strip tillage and direct drills. The event also includes a static exhibition area. This year's knowledge trail includes a look at soils and cover crops as well as tyres and soil protection.

Kayleigh Holden, Event Organiser, said, "The AEA is extremely pleased that Tillage-Live will take place at Down Ampney in 2021. The site near Cirencester offers excellent facilities for manufacturers to showcase their machinery to potential customers and visitors and we'd like to thank Farmcare for hosting the event. Visitors and exhibitors can be confident that every step is being taken to ensure that the event is run to the highest standard and will be COVID-secure."

**KRAMP**



For 70 years, Kramp has made life easier for farmers. While you've worked the soil, watched the skies, tended the crops, we've been hard at work too, making sure you have all the technical equipment and support you need.

That's how we've grown into Europe's largest agri-supply specialist with the industry's most relevant product offering that's easy to order and ready to deliver fast.

**We Keep Farmers Farming**



# GENERATIONS OF GETTING PARTS TO YOU ON TIME

## PEOPLE

# AWARD FOR CHRIS BIDDLE

*IAgrE recognises 60 years in the industry*

Chris Biddle, who founded *Service Dealer* magazine in 1988, has been awarded the Institution of Agricultural Engineers (IAgrE) 2020 Award for Contribution to the Landbased Sector.

The Award was due to be presented in April 2020 at the HQ of Amazon UK, but the ceremony was cancelled due to the pandemic and was handed over virtually by IAgrE President Paul Hemingway in an online Awards ceremony on 27 April this year. He was co-winner of the Award, which was also presented to industry consultant David Kirschner for his work on developing apprenticeship standards for the landbased engineering industry.

Chris has spent almost 60 years in the landbased engineering industry, starting out as a demonstrator for Ford Tractors, based at the iconic Boreham House near Chelmsford.

He then spent over 25 years in an ag and turfcare dealership where he worked as a salesman, ran the grass machinery division and was Managing



Chris Biddle

Director of a multi-branch dealership in the West Country.

After a change of company ownership, in 1988 he decided to pursue a love of journalism by launching *Garden Machinery Retailer* which became *Service Dealer*, and in 1998 launched *TurfPro* magazine.

In 2015 he sold the titles to the present owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke of Land Power Publications.

In 2009, he had also been appointed as the Editor of *Landwards*, the professional journal of IAgrE, a post he held until he decided to retire from the role in December 2019.

The citation that accompanied the Award read, "Editing *Landwards* is clearly a challenging role. It demands a keen eye on the shifting sands of the Agricultural Engineering and allied industries.

"Chris has always been keen to keep *Landwards* ahead of the curve in terms of content and editorial and as such, *Landwards* pushed at the boundaries and is viewed by members as a useful

account of the developments of the IAgrE community.

"The IAgrE association with Chris has been highly beneficial and opened doors to new people and new themes. His work has enhanced the reputation of the Institution and introduced us to new audiences.

"On a personal level, Chris is always open to new ideas and ideas for editorial and articles. He then goes out to research these and arrive at logical conclusions which are of interest and value to members."

Since standing down from *Landwards*, Chris has entered a new media field and launched the *Inside Agri-Turf* podcast after teaching himself podcast production and audio editing during the UK lockdown during last year. He published over 30 episodes from August to March in Season One, and recommences with a second Season in May.

All at *Service Dealer* pass on our congratulations to Chris for his incredibly well-deserved honour.

## DEALERS

New Holland  
Dealer Of The Year  
2020

## NEW HOLLAND NAMES ITS DEALERS OF THE YEAR

*In the UK and Ireland*

New Holland has announced the winners of its 2020 UK and Republic of Ireland (ROI) Dealer of The Year Awards, which it said celebrate excellence in performance and service quality across its UK and Ireland dealer network.

Due to the current COVID-19 UK restrictions the awards were announced during an online presentation.

The awards were presented by Pat Smith, New Holland Business Director for UK and ROI.

### Main category winners:

Dealer of the Year:	Russells Ltd
Medium TIV Dealer of the Year:	Agricar Ltd
Small TIV Dealer of the Year:	T Alun Jones & Son Ltd
Ireland Dealer of the Year:	M C & S Agri Sales Ltd

### Product Line Category Winners:

Telehandler Dealer of the Year:	Malpas Ltd
Construction Equipment Dealer of the Year:	T Alun Jones & Son Ltd
Hay & Forage Dealer of the Year:	T H White Agriculture Ltd
Implements Dealer of the Year:	Francis Bugler Ltd
Service Dealer of the Year:	Agricar Ltd
Combine Dealer of the Year:	Lloyd Ltd
Parts Dealer of the Year:	G & J Peck Ltd
Tractor Dealer of the Year:	Haynes Agricultural Ltd

Pat Smith, New Holland Business Director for the UK and ROI, said: "2020 was a strong year across the whole range for New Holland, with gains in every product line thanks to the tremendous efforts from our dealer network.

"2021 has started strongly but will be a challenging year for many reasons and we're very lucky to have a strong dealer network backed up by our manufacturing plant in Basildon and parts facility in Daventry. We've put additional resources in the field to mitigate the challenges and look forward to building on our successes of 2020."

## INDUSTRY

## REESINK UK LAUNCHES ELECTRIC VEHICLE DIVISION

*For professional turf applications*

Reesink UK has launched a new division dedicated solely to electric utility vehicles.

Named Reesink e-Vehicles, it introduces to the UK, Star EV and its range of lithium and sealed battery-powered utility vehicles. The range features 28 units, including golf buggies and small, medium and large capacity electric UTVs for carrying materials, and people carriers for 4–22 people.

David Cole, Managing Director of Reesink UK, said, "We're focused on introducing battery-powered machinery options to the UK turfcare market. Such products have been extremely well-received and this is the direction of travel for environmentally-friendly technology at the moment, one we recognise will only gain more traction.

"There simply has to be the choice to buy electric and we identified a gap in our offering for a comprehensive range of electric utility vehicles to complement the Toro Workman GTXe we have just rolled out here in the UK."

David explained why the company chose to partner with Star EV, which they first encountered at BTME 2020. He said, "We were looking for an electric range with rapid charge, a good mileage per charge, an extensive warranty – up to six years on batteries – along with the usual no more emissions and no more pollution stance. It's no surprise that Star EV is an award-winning company in the USA and we're excited to partner with them."

Jane Zhang, CEO and owner of Star EV Corporation, added, "Star EV Corporation is delighted to be partnering with Reesink, under its new EV division, with an exclusive agreement for the UK and Ireland."



DEALERS



Stockist of the Year, Robertsons Orkney (L-R: Hylton Stevenson and Gary Flett)

# ROBERSTONS WINS TOP VAPORMATIC AWARD

Stockist of the Year

The annual Vapormatic Stockist of the Year awards named the overall winner of Stockist of the Year as dealer Robertsons Orkney Ltd.

Based in Kirkwall, Scotland, Robertsons provides agricultural machinery and aftermarket services to Orkney, Caithness and Shetland. It has been a Vapormatic Stockist since 1998 and this year has seen significant growth, achieving the milestone of Premiere Stockist. The company also has a new team in the parts store, with Gary Flett in the role

of Parts Manager and Hylton Stevenson as Assistant Store Person.

Commenting on the awards, UK Sales Manager James Ashby said, "Despite the challenges of the last year, the Vapormatic Stockists have continued to excel in the market, achieving significant growth and outstanding commitment to Vapormatic and their end users. The Vapormatic Stockist Awards are a celebration of their efforts and I congratulate all of our winners for their well-deserved success."

As well as the Stockist of the Year award, Vapormatic has also recognised stockists who have shown outstanding success in growth, engagement and commitment to Vapormatic during the past year. These stockists receive Category Awards to mark their achievements.

This year's category winners are: Fry & Son, located in Devon; C J Spares Ltd, near Norwich; Gwynedd Farm Machinery Ltd, in Caernarfon, North Wales; and Peter Noble Ltd, based in Ringwood, Hampshire.

DEALERS

# REBRAND FOR P TUCKWELLS

Now known as Tuckwells

Suffolk-based machinery dealership, P Tuckwell Ltd has launched a new corporate brand identity, name and tagline.

The organisation will now be known as Tuckwells, a name already used by many of their customers, with the tagline, "Machinery for every landscape".

The company said that as a long established, third-generation family business it became clear that the equity and reputation built under its previous identity was a hugely valuable asset. This, it said, led to the decision to evolve the brand rather than completely change it.

"Over the past 67 years we've built a strong reputation for customer service," said James Tuckwell, Managing Director of Tuckwells. "It was important that we continue to build on the legacy that my grandfather created, and although we've seen huge changes within the business, we will always remember how it began."

Len Tuckwell started the business in 1954, selling Ferguson tractors, and by 1964 became one of the first John Deere dealers in the UK. The latest evolution of the business has seen the acquisition of Burden Bros Agri, the John Deere dealership covering Kent, Surrey and East Sussex.

Tuckwells now employs nearly 300 people across the South-East.

James added, "We're really excited about the visual changes across all 10 outlets, but more importantly are very proud of what it stands for. Our family's heritage is very important, as is the very first tractor that my grandfather sold – which is why it remains an integral part of the logo."

"We're also a growing business, with an extended family made up of every single one of our employees. It's important that their efforts as a team are recognised, hence we are now known as Tuckwells."



DEALERS



An artistic impression of the new business as revealed on RVW Pugh's website

# RVW PUGH ANNOUNCES NEW BUSINESS FOR FENDT

To be called T R Machinery Ltd

Having split the Massey Ferguson and Fendt sides of their operation, dealer RVW Pugh has announced plans for its new Fendt machinery business in Newport, Shropshire, to be called TR Machinery Ltd.

The forthcoming new premises will hold the company's entire Fendt offering, meaning tractors, forage wagons, self-propelled sprayers and foragers, tracked machines, the full range of balers, combines and haykit, and the Cargo loader.

The company will also be promoting the Väderstad franchise which has historically had a very strong following in the Shropshire area alongside Pugh's current line-up of franchises.

Becoming Managing Director of the new Fendt business covering the mid Wales, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire areas will be Tom Shakeshaft. The company says he has

a wealth of experience of selling tractors and machinery in the area.

Tom is quoted on Pugh's website as saying, "It has been a whirlwind so far, with so much to do. It has been really exciting learning all about the Fendt product and being involved with the initial branding concept and company creation."

"We're still very much in the infancy of the process and hope to be going live with the new business in the summer. We're busy beavering away building a new website and will keep you posted when we go live."

Tom continued, "We're currently in negotiations over a site, so watch this space for new details soon."

"All I can say is that we're committed to providing a full service depot so that we can provide a full parts and service offering in Shropshire for our Fendt customers."

INDUSTRY

# BARONESS UK TAKES ON AGRIMETAL

Baroness AgriMetal

Baroness UK has announced it is the new sole importer and distributor for AgriMetal rollers for the UK.

Adam Butler, Sales Director for Baroness UK, said, "We're extremely pleased and excited to be working with such a well-made and respected brand."

"We already produce market-leading cutting technology for a wide range of mowing equipment but now we have added to our portfolio, in my option, one of the most affordable and well-made rollers on the market."

"To add the icing on the cake they will be rolling off the production line sprayed in the fantastic Baroness Red."

The range available will consist of the GR-400 and GR-660.

"The GR-400 model is the most affordable, high specification roller on the market, added Adam, "with the GR-660 model providing an industry-leading 66" width roll."



Baroness AgriMetal

INDUSTRY

# CLAAS INVESTS IN ROBOTIC START-UP

*Acquires minority shareholding in AgXeed*

In a statement, Claas said collaborating with and investing in AgXeed "...marks a logical step towards future-proof technologies".

AgXeed is described by Claas as one of Europe's leading manufacturers in this sector. Due to be launched in 2022, the AgBot has a diesel-electric drive via either wheels or tracks, with power outputs up to 156hp and is fitted with a standard eight-tonne capacity three-point linkage and load sensing hydraulics.

Thomas Böck, CEO of the Claas Group said, "Our involvement provides Claas with access to innovative technologies in a familiar market segment and complements our own expertise in

autonomy and robotics.

"In turn, AgXeed benefits from our extensive expertise and networks in many areas such as data transfer, interfaces and drivetrain solutions. It's a win-win situation in our view, and one reason why we decided to invest in this start-up company, as well as the fact that the targeted AgXeed technologies are in an advanced state of development. This solution offers farmers and contractors concrete economic added value, and what's more, it will soon be available."

AgBots will be launched in various sizes and performance classes. Further solutions are said to be currently under development.



# COBRA

## Why Not Become a Cobra Dealer in 2021?

With over 150 products in the Cobra range including the largest range of lawnmowers in the UK, Cobra is fast becoming a market leading brand in garden machinery. Contact us today to join the growing number of Cobra Dealers across the U.K. For information on becoming a Cobra Dealer contact Andy Marvin: 07771 581 296 or call: 0115 986 6646 today.

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- No unreasonable Cobra stocking commitment.



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**Blower Vacs**

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**Brushcutters**

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**Cultivators**

From Just £106.98\*



# AEA COVID, BREXIT AND THE FUTURE



Shaun Groom was elected AEA President at the conference

All were discussed at this year's virtual AEA Conference which also saw Les Malin hand over the presidential reins to Merlo's Shaun Groom. Service Dealer Editor STEVE GIBBS reports



Ruth Bailey, Director General & CEO of the AEA

In a normal year the AEA's annual conference sees the industry's great and good gather at the home of the Institute of Civil Engineers in Westminster.

Normally attracting an audience of representatives from manufacturers and dealerships, from memory, it was one of the first industry events to be cancelled due to Lockdown One last year. I'm not sure many envisaged it being a year on and still not being able to get together in a room to share ideas and talk about industry issues? Hopefully, as Director General & CEO of the AEA Ruth Bailey said in her opening address, by the time next April comes around, members and guests can be back together again, gathered in London.

But when it was time for this year's event in April, we were still not quite there yet. Hence, like so many other things this past year, the conference took place virtually over Zoom. This meant no opportunity for guests to interact, no after-lunch speaker and crucially, no 'wind down session' in the Westminster Arms post-event! This year, it was purely the speakers to enjoy.

First up was Anand Menon, Professor of European Politics and Foreign Affairs at King's College London. Readers may have seen him talk on shows such as *Newsnight* or *Question Time* and indeed, he had appeared at the AEA's last conference two years ago. Anand is a gifted presenter, who can make quite complex subjects

understandable for even the layman.

He spoke about how the effects of Brexit are far from over yet. He said that while Brexit is technically done, what now has to happen is to find ways to make what's been agreed upon actually work in the real world. Somewhat dauntingly, he said that whilst COVID's economic impact on the country will be relatively short-term, Brexit will be a much longer-term concern. He described Brexit not as a cliff-edge as some tried to present it as, but rather as a slow-puncture.

Whilst Anand was discussing big-picture socio-economics, the next speaker was more directly industry-specific. The AEA's own Agricultural Economist, Stephen Howarth, gave a presentation entitled *Prospects For Emerging from COVID and Brexit*.

He began by saying how 2020 was a year like no other and how no one really knows where we go from here. There is so much uncertainty around, it's a case of anyone's guess. Whilst there appears to be lots of money out there with many having saved during the lockdowns, there are concerns for future job losses, so perhaps the big spending boom that some are predicting might not quite come to pass. Equally there's evidence of pent-up demand – so who knows?

In terms of the machinery market specifically, Stephen said the sector did take a hit last spring, but not as bad as many others did. He singled out tractors and mowers as recovering well and bouncing back strongly. Commercial machinery though, did see a significant fall, for all the reasons discussed this past year.

Looking ahead for the commercial sector for this year, Stephen believed that local authority budgets would still be stretched, but there were signs that the domestic sector should maintain its strong position from 2020. New tractor registrations going forward are harder to gauge he said, but with the trend for increased power levels continuing, registration levels tend to fall.

There will, of course, be many factors which will influence the prospects of the machinery sectors over the coming years, led unsurprisingly by the weather. Stephen

talked through some more factors as you can see in the slide (below).

## Handing over the reins (virtually)

Usually at the AEA conference the incoming President gives an inaugural speech during the luncheon, but in keeping with the irregular nature of this year's one, something slightly different was offered. A Q&A session took place with Ruth Bailey overseeing a discussion between Shaun Groom of Merlo, who is taking over the position for the year, and the outgoing President, Les Malin of Etesia.

It will have been an odd period for Les to have been President, having taken the role over and relinquished the chain, both during periods when the conference wasn't able to meet in person. Les himself described this past year as by far the most unusual in all his years in business. Himself and Shaun discussed how their working lives had fared and changed during these months. Shaun said how he felt that the restrictions that we've all be working under had very much accelerated the development of technology in the sales process – enabling Zoom and the like to become a mainstream part of the process.

Les continued this theme, saying that dealers need to be forward-looking in order to thrive. He said an online presence for specialists is essential, but so is that real-world rapport with professional customers, advocating a hybrid approach. He also believed that dealers may need to consider stocking more heavily, where possible, in the future.

Both agreed that developing technology would drive the marketplace with increasing electrification of tools and precision options being in great demand from users in all sectors.

In terms of shows this year, Shaun and Les both felt they had their place, but were perhaps a little doubtful as to what would be able to occur in 2021? Shaun felt if an exhibition were to go ahead, it needed to be in its full, true form. He felt it would do an event no justice to take place in a way that would diminish the experience for visitors and exhibitors.



Agricultural Economist at the AEA, Stephen Howarth







Anand Menon



Leo Johnson

**Food for thought**

As is often the case at AEA conferences, the day included a couple of speakers slightly more tangential to the industry.

David Worsley, Professor of Engineering at Swansea University, gave a presentation detailing his work in advanced materials, solar energy, and research into the development of innovative technologies and materials to feed into the global supply chain. Essentially David has a vision to change the world, with a focus on de-carbonisation and renewable energy for buildings and transport.

His work into making industrial buildings 'energy positive' by utilising the huge roof spaces for solar panel usage, could have given pause for thought to the AEA members and guests listening.

Finally, Leo Johnson, Head of Disruption at PwC's and a presenter on Radio 4's *FutureProofing* series, gave a talk exploring the big ideas and innovations reshaping business and society.

His philosophy was that new technology wasn't replacing the ecosystem with the virtual – rather we should all be looking to use developing systems to help make the ecosystem thrive. He said that doing so has the potential to open up huge new markets and we're at a point of complete transition.

Congratulations should go to the AEA for staging a topical and engaging event this year, with some valuable content. Also, on a technical level, it all worked very well with hardly any awkward pauses.

As I'm sure the organisers and attendees also do, I sincerely hope that for the conference next April, everyone can be back together at One Great George Street in London – and importantly not forgetting, at the Westminster.



David Worsley's presentation

**“ TECHNICAL CHALLENGES AWAIT ”**

*Says new President*

The AEA Conference saw Shaun Groom, General Manager of Merlo UK Ltd, elected as its President, following his two-year tenure as Chairman of the Farm Equipment Council.

Upon taking up his new position, Shaun said, "It is in challenging times such as we face now that the industry can draw real value in coming together as members of the AEA. Whether it be dealing with new import or export regulations in a post-Brexit transition marketplace or understanding what implications COVID-19 restrictions mean for our industry, the AEA has the expert staff and knowledge in place to support a member's business.

"In the not-so-distant future new technical challenges await manufacturers as the pressure to replace fossil fuels with greener alternatives and stiff carbon net-zero targets find their way to the sectors our members operate in. As equipment manufacturers harness alternative forms of power, the drafting of new regulations and standards will be required to ensure safety and compliance.

"Working to ensure that future regulations are both workable and valid for the industry and the environment, is a critical role the AEA fulfils. As we all adapt to a digital world the AEA has invested in staff and resources to keep the association at the forefront of those changes."

Ruth Bailey, Chief Executive Officer of the AEA said, "We are absolutely delighted Shaun has accepted the role of President of the Association. Shaun's experience and knowledge will bring a powerful voice to the sector at a time when we face some of our most serious challenges, ones that could change the whole landscape of how the industry operates, both in the immediate and long-term future."



Ruth Bailey with Shaun Groom (top) and Les Malin

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# KÄRCHER ENTERS LANDSCAPE MACHINERY MARKET

*The manufacturer best known for cleaning machinery has entered the commercial turfcare sector and says it is looking to establish a dealer network. Service Dealer Editor STEVE GIBBS reports*



The new brushcutter

It's arguable that the commercial turfcare sector was the hardest hit of the areas that our readership services during the pandemic.

With sporting shutdowns and local authorities initially redeploying grounds management staff, along with the tightening of budgets, that market had it as tough as any in our field.

Now, with those professional customers perhaps starting to look to replace or repair equipment again, we've been hearing how dealers have been struggling recently to acquire parts and wholegoods to satisfy that demand.

Showing faith in the future of the marketplace though, and crucially in its own supply chain, Kärcher, probably best known for pressure washers, has chosen to enter the professional landscape machinery market for the first time.

It's not that often we get to report on a completely new player entering one of the areas covered by *Service Dealer*, so the news did feel significant when it broke, especially considering that this manufacturer is so established in another field.

At launch Kärcher is offering a full range of battery-powered, professional landscape management (PLM) tools. The suite of products includes a lawnmower, chainsaw, hedge-trimmer, leaf blower, leaf blower backpack, line trimmer, brush cutter, multi-tool, pole hedge trimmer and a pole chainsaw.

All the products utilise the Kärcher Battery Universe platform which the company says works across numerous products, including the entire professional landscape management range, as well as its cleaning products, allowing transition from one product to another.

## Network of vast importance

The company clearly sees potential and value in the marketplace, and the news for specialists when I spoke to them at the launch was that they had as their first priority the establishment of a new network.

Daniel Took, Head of Professional Product Marketing, told me, "For the distribution of our PLM range we're looking at opening up a new specialist dealer network. Our plan is to go into the places where the products are traditionally sold.

"We're quite aware that the local relationships between the dealer and the people that are using this equipment is of vast importance – for local servicing, to source replacement consumables etc – so we're looking to extend our dealer network to have these specialists in place.

"We have a dedicated sales team, specifically for this PLM range, and conversations are ongoing."

I asked when dealers could expect to take delivery of any of this machinery? "Immediately," was the answer given, "once they have chosen their requirements".

Asking how Kärcher views the supply situation for the UK, Daniel said, "We currently have a sufficient supply of our new products in our warehouses and have been assured that there should not be any supply issues going forward."

With this confidence in supply, what would constitute a successful first 12 months in the pro-sector?

"Obviously selling lots of machines would be desirable," confirmed Daniel, "but again this will be very much allied to the establishment of the right network – which will in turn raise the profile of the range."



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Neil and Andrea Morris

# A WAY OF LIFE

*Run by husband and wife Neil and Andrea Morris, Farm & Garden Machinery, based in Bridgnorth, Shropshire, has faced a challenging year – but one that has brought the team closer together. Service Dealer’s LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR, hears how they have expanded their domestic customer base during the pandemic*

A recent trip to Bridgnorth, in Shropshire, offered me the opportunity to meet up with another successful family-run dealership.

Farm & Garden Machinery is based on the Livestock Market Complex, just on the outskirts of the town, and is ideally placed to serve Shropshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands.

Like many small dealerships, it offers a wide range of agricultural and garden equipment, quad bikes, lawnmowers, strimmers and chainsaws.

On arrival I was met by Neil and Andrea Morris, husband and wife, who started the business in 2003. Originally meeting as young farmers, they began their working careers with

Andrea working for the PDSA and local councils as an admin support accountant, while Neil started as an apprentice in 1989 training as an ag technician. He then moved on to working for a machinery dealer for several years.

In 2000 they got married and in 2003 decided to take the opportunity to start their own dealership. Neil was well known in the area and had no shortage of customers who needed machinery repaired.

I would like to thank Neil and Andrea for allowing me the time to come and interview them. It is always pleasing to meet the people who dedicate their lives to serving others. Like many family-run businesses, it becomes a way of life.

time together managing our farm holding so it seemed like a good idea to pool our skills and run our own business.

An opportunity came up to rent the premises at the Livestock Market Complex and the rest, as they, say is history. Now, after 20-plus years, we enjoy a thriving business that employs two full-time staff.

I remember we earned £137 on our very first day of trading. It was almost a weeks’ wages back then and a great incentive to carry on and develop the business.

**SD: How do you split up the business responsibilities between you both?**

**NM:** Andrea is Company Secretary and I am Managing Director. However, in reality it’s a case of we’re all in this together.

Over the years we’ve managed to employ dedicated local staff to help us. At present we have Ed Kirton who has been with us since he was a lad – some 10 years now. Also, a little while ago we took on Nigel Preece, who has now been with us for three years.

Up to now we’ve not had a problem recruiting staff, but listening to colleagues and other dealers it’s becoming a bit of a

problem finding young technicians who want to work in this industry.

Essentially, including myself, we have three sales staff and dedicated mechanics. To help us in our work we have three vans that allow us to transport and deliver products and machinery to our customers.

**SD: How has trading been this past year?**

**NM:** There’s no doubt it has been quite a challenging year, especially having to deal with the pandemic. However, it has certainly brought us all closer together and more focused on looking after our customers. Sales of domestic mowers and machinery have been buoyant throughout Covid.

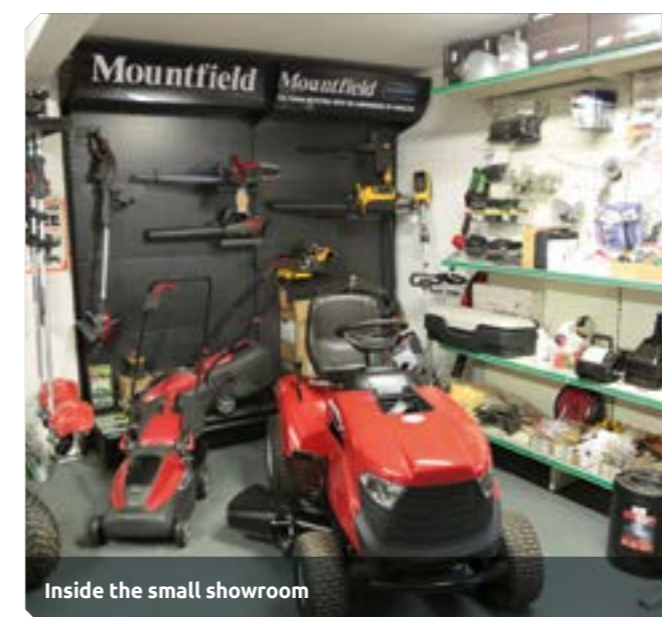
Farming practices have to go on so the need to maintain machinery has stayed high.

To be honest, I can’t say that Covid has affected our business too much because we’ve continued to work throughout the pandemic. We’ve obviously had to adapt to follow the government guidelines, but generally things have stayed pretty busy.

Recently, however, we’ve found it difficult to obtain some products, but demand is still high, especially for ride-on lawnmowers. We have a great working relationship with other local dealers, such as Morris Bufton’s in Ludlow, who are always happy to help.

**SERVICE DEALER: How did you go about starting the dealership?**

**Neil Morris:** We took the opportunity to start the business in 2000 and in 2003 set up a limited company. We already spent a lot of



Inside the small showroom



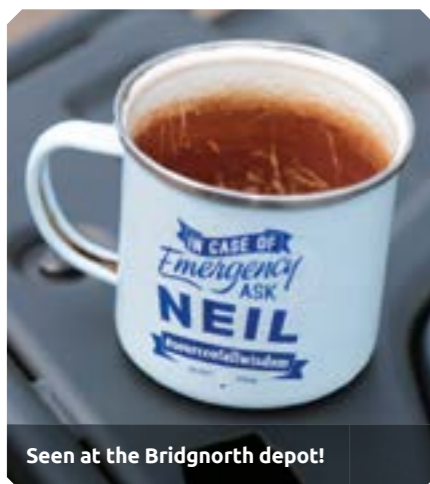
The three vans for transporting machinery



The business began in 2003



Neil says the dealership has increased its customer base for domestic machinery recently



Seen at the Bridgnorth depot!

**SD:** How has your dealership's location helped your business thrive?

**NM:** Our location enables us to cover a fairly wide area of rural customers within the counties of Shropshire, Hereford, Worcestershire and mid Wales – plus some parts of the West Midlands.

We're also lucky to be sited at Bridgnorth Livestock Market complex, which operates on Tuesdays and Fridays. Market days very often bring us some much needed passing trade.

**SD:** What sort of customers do you find yourselves serving?

**NM:** We're lucky to have a plethora of customers to serve in our area. These include farmers, small contracting and landscaping businesses, along with a growing domestic market. During this past pandemic year, the domestic sector has actually provided us with many new customers.

We also serve a variety of commercial customers including a number of local councils, schools and private estates, a greyhound stadium and, more recently, a jail.

**SD:** What products prove popular among your customer base?

**NM:** Suzuki ATV's, Polaris, Mountfield and Countax are our main regular sales items. I'd say our selection of ATV's are probably the most popular products. Many of our customers are local farmers and smallholders who need a reliable source of utility transport, especially during the winter months.

This year we took on Polaris ATVs as they complement our range of petrol-powered Suzuki machines. Having the ability to offer a diesel-powered ATV and side-by-side utility vehicle fits the bill perfectly for some of our customers.

**SD:** Are you seeing significant rises in the sales of battery-powered equipment?

**NM:** Yes, we're seeing a steady growth in our customers' interest in cordless equipment. With manufacturers increasing their range and scope of battery-powered kit, we feel it's only going to stimulate more interest and sales in the future. In fact we've just recently sold our very first Stiga e-Park 220 electric ride-on.

**SD:** What about robotics?

**NM:** We don't stock a lot of robotic mowers but can source them for people if they want one. I have to say we don't seem to get much call for them in our area at present. A few more years down the line we will no doubt see a greater demand.

**SD:** What methods are you using to market your business?

**NM:** We advertise in *The Farmer* newspaper and use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Google My Business. We also sponsor some local charities when they have fundraising events, such as Young

Farmers and the local point-to-points. We also have a trade stand at Burwarton Show each year.

**SD:** Are you happy to demo machinery for customers?

**NM:** Yes, we place a strong emphasis on demonstrating machinery to our customers. Nine times out of 10 it secures a sale. We're happy to demo any size of machine as we feel it's important for our customers to fully understand and be confident in its ability and performance.

**SD:** Do you still see value in trade shows?

**NM:** We believe attending trade shows can still be an important method to keep up with the latest machinery and technology.

We have in the past attended some of the larger industry shows, such as Saltex at the NEC, and enjoyed the experience.

**SD:** What sort of emphasis do you place on the online side of the business?

**NM:** We have a website set up for

online selling, but we won't give products away! We can't see the point in being busy fools trying to undercut all the other online retailers. At the end of the day, once someone has bought a high-value product, whether online or from a shop, it still needs to be serviced and repaired.

However, we're not prepared to repair a lot of the cheap Chinese imports – it's just not worth our time and effort.

**SD:** How do you encourage footfall in your premises?

**NM:** We're always looking to improve our little shop, but space is often an issue. We've restricted the shop to one family at a time because of space. However, many of our ATVs and ride-on mowers can be seen outside and we have the space to demo products outside.

**SD:** Have you suffered from theft over the years?

**NM:** We have, although it has been minimal really, due to our alarm system and the fact that we live locally. While on the subject of theft though, we do supply a very effective

tracking system to our customers for the larger value products and ATVs, that has proven popular. We have found the ATV Trac system an effective security device which is endorsed by many manufacturers.

**SD:** What are your thoughts regarding the future for your dealership?

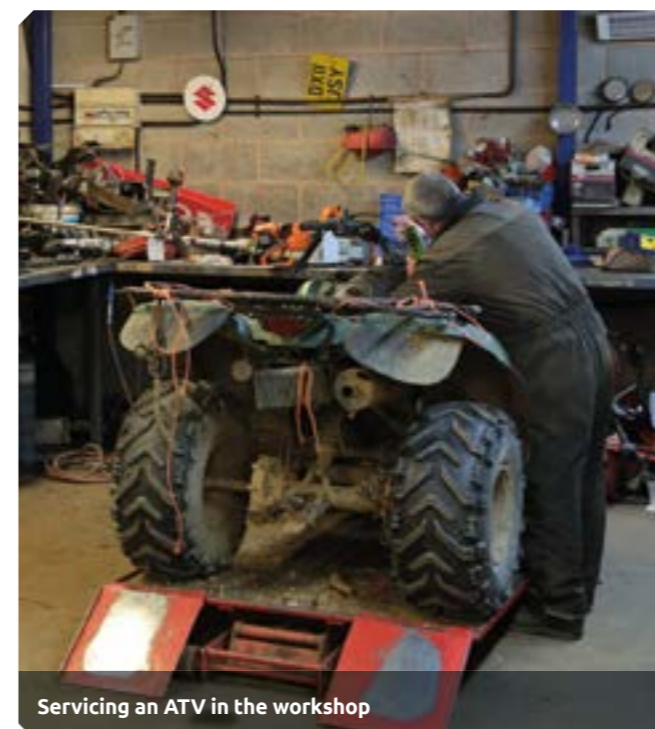
**NM:** The future looks good. There are a lot of uncertainties, of course, but when you run your own business there always are.

We're trying to stay up-to-date with technology and embracing social media. We took on the Polaris franchise at the beginning of 2021 and have had a lot of enquiries, which is very positive.

At present we're not planning any major changes or developments to our business model as we're very happy with the way we are currently operating.

Maybe our children might want to come and work for us in the future, but we're happy for them to choose a career of their choice and that's a long way away. At the moment we're content with the quality of our work/life balance.

**SD:** Thank you.



Servicing an ATV in the workshop



Neil and Andrea are happy with their work/life balance

# ROBOTIC TRACTORS REACH THE RETAIL MARKET

*Danish manufacturer Agrobot, UK importer Autonomous Agri Solutions and farmer co-op Fram Farmers have joined forces to make the first commercial sale of an autonomous tractor to a UK buyer. MARTIN RICKATSON discovered what such developments might mean for dealers*



The Robotti can operate through the day and into the night on a tank of fuel without a need for change of driver, or the issue of driver fatigue, says Andrew Williams



UK importer Autonomous Agri Solutions and farmer co-op Fram Farmers joined forces to sell the first autonomous tractor to a UK buyer

While autonomous field machinery often still seems the stuff of research projects and manufacturer concepts, the first commercially-retailed robot tractor went to work in eastern England earlier this year, on the farm of a Suffolk business with a particular focus on vegetable growing. Although mass production and sales – and the subsequent need for dealer support – may still be some way off, the development means dealers should perhaps keep a close eye on what is unarguably a major move in the agricultural machinery sector.

Co-operative Fram Farmers, which uses collective buying power to source equipment and other inputs for its members through various deals with manufacturers – with machines then supported by servicing dealers – was the initial driver behind the arrival of the UK's first Agrobot Robotti 150D autonomous tractor onto a UK farm. The 1,940ha Ipswich-based Home Farm Nacton, one of its members, is a grower of conventional and organic

vegetables, with a high inter-row weeding workload in both crop types.

"As a purchasing company which sources, among other things, machinery for its members, we've a strong interest in new technology, and had been observing autonomous tractor developments," says Gordon Cummings, machinery buyer at Fram Farmers, which negotiates favourable deals for its membership with various equipment manufacturers. "I'd been following the work of various autonomous

machine design firms, to help us identify the likely future path of machinery development, sourcing and support. The Robotti, developed by Agrobot, a Danish autonomous tractor design start-up, interested me particularly because, whilst it has no operator station, it has many other conventional tractor features – it's diesel engine-powered, has four hydrostatically-driven wheels and a three-point linkage plus PTO. That led me to strike up dialogue with the maker.

"Certain members of Fram Farmers that I talked to, such as Andrew Williams, director at Home Farm Nacton, Ipswich, were keen to see what the Robotti could do. In this particular farm business's case, repeated inter-row cultivation of vegetable crops is central to both conventional and organic weed management, with 1,940ha producing both organic and conventional vegetables, including leeks, brassicas, onions, red beet and potatoes, plus fodder and sugar beet in addition to combinable crops.

"But while good labour is becoming harder to find, conversely the inter-row weeding task is fairly monotonous, yet offers great potential for automation. Andrew expressed a particular interest in how an autonomous tractor could help address these challenges, and stimulate staff enthusiasm by refocusing their skills on more productive management tasks."

With Mr Cummings' help, Mr Williams talked to the maker and, after further research, presented to Home Farm's management a fully-costed proposal setting out the £150,000 investment in a Robotti 150D against the potential labour and machinery/tractor savings. Consultations with insurers followed, to ensure the Robotti – which has a full array of proximity sensors guaranteeing immediate shut-down should anything unexpected come into its path – was fully coverable. With this complete, and assurances given of the machine's capabilities and back-up, Home Farm agreed to buy the UK's first Robotti 150D.

While Fram Farmers facilitated the deal, West Midlands-based Autonomous Agri Solutions (AAS) is Agrobot's official UK sales/support partner. AAS, which was formed recently by Harper Adams graduates Jack Wyatt and Tom Beach, backs the machine with additional help from Agrobot in Denmark. The autonomy of the Robotti is based on a combination of RTK guidance and telemetry, concepts with which many dealer engineers will be familiar.

It is managed via combination of the smartscreen on the machine itself and the Agrobot website, which features an online Robotti portal providing the owner with real-time updates of progress, and showing the view from its front and rear cameras, while also allowing monitoring of data such as fuel levels and estimated work time remaining. Text message alerts can be set up to provide warning of any operating issues such as low fuel, an unexpected stoppage or a completed task. Mapping a field takes around 10 minutes depending on size, plus a further 10 minutes to log the weeding plan into the system, with field obstacles also logged at this stage.



On-board terminal links wirelessly to an internet-based operating and monitoring portal which shows camera views, fuel levels and more



The machine operates on pre-defined paths, and is guided by RTK. Proximity and pressure sensors stop motion if it should come close to unexpected objects



Hand controls aid manoeuvring of the Robotti machine short distances and onto a trailer for road transport

## On dealer forecourts?

Could Agrobot Robotti machines, or other autonomous tractors like it, be seen on dealer forecourts any time soon? For the foreseeable future it seems unlikely, with the niche market and consequent low volumes meaning manufacturer and importer can cope with current demands for sales and support. But the first machine is here on farm, and the Robotti 150D's components are largely conventional, which may mean sales, service and parts support could, in future, come from a dealer network.

The machine is powered by conventional diesel engines – two of them. One 75hp three-cylinder Kubota sees to the Robotti's driveline, which comprises hydrostatic wheel motors, and its hydraulic systems – primarily the three-point linkage. For tasks requiring power take off-driven implements, the other identical powerplant looks after the PTO. In many respects, therefore, the make-up of the Robotti is not particularly different from many other self-propelled vehicles sold and supported currently by dealers.

With each engine having a 110-litre fuel tank – although with one powering the PTO, only one serves the driveline and switchover isn't possible – capacity is claimed to be sufficient for approximately 24 hours of continuous operation. Farm to field or between-field transport requires movement by trailer, and there are hand controls for slow-speed manoeuvring to aid this.

"One of the most significant attractions for us is that it can operate through the day and into the night on a tank of fuel without a need for change of driver, or the issue of driver fatigue," says Andrew Williams.

"That provides a broader window of opportunity during potentially short spells of weather suited to weeding. By moving surface soil in the early stages of weed growth with guaranteed precision, we catch weeds early before they can affect the crop. The machine's much lighter weight than a conventional tractor/cultivator combination also helps here, allowing us to make multiple, frequent passes where necessary, with minimal soil damage."

Since delivery in mid-April, the Robotti has been coupled to a Schmotzer tine weeder, and focused solely on this task. While the business's soils are mostly light, and the machine is not designed for high draft work, trials in Denmark suggest the Robotti also works well on heavier ground.



The Agrobot Robotti features two 75hp Kubota engines, hydrostatic drive and four-wheel steering

With the implement mounted centrally, weight is distributed evenly across all four wheels, while a combination of low ground pressure, low weight and drive to all four wheels supports Mr Williams' note on minimal soil compaction, while also minimising the chance of the Robotti becoming stuck during work. Now confident in its abilities, Home Farm is exploring other applications for the machine, including topping, drilling and transplanting.

"Over the longer term, should developments make it possible, I'm especially interested in spraying applications for our conventional crops," says Mr Williams.

While this is the UK's first Robotti, Agrobot says there will be 50 similar units working in Europe by the year-end. Although its arrival may not immediately impact upon the business of dealers, the development of the sector will undoubtedly be watched with interest by many.



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Collection	65 ltr
Deck	Steel
Propulsion	Self-propelled variable speed



### LMX51SPHV LAWN MOWER

Functions	Collection, mulch, side discharge
Work side	51 cm
Work height	25 - 75 mm
Adjustment	6 stage
Power	166 cc Honda GCV170
Collection	65 ltr
Deck	Steel
Propulsion	Self-propelled variable speed



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Power	212 cc



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Laura Bassnet, Trainee Service Technician at Ernest Doe Power in Fyfield

# DYNAMIC, NEW INDUSTRY AMBASSADORS

*LE-TEC's winners of its Technicians For 2021 competition prove that excellent young industry recruits, not necessarily from a machinery background, can be found by dealerships. It's a question of getting the message out to them, says Service Dealer Editor STEVE GIBBS*

**E**arlier this spring, debate was stirred up via the *Service Dealer Weekly Update*, regarding the effectiveness of bodies set up to promote our industry. The founder of this journal, Chris Biddle, wrote a *Viewpoint* article offering his opinions on the notion of industry identity cards and the LTA scheme – which is run by LE-TEC (the Landbased Education and Training Committee, an industry collaboration of AEA, BAGMA & IAgRE). Chris's point was that the Landbased Training Accreditation scheme which saw widespread support upon its launch in 2007, has fallen under the radar somewhat in recent times and requires the "oxygen of publicity" to ignite it in the collective consciousness once again.

Chris acknowledged that perhaps the custodians of the scheme, LE-TEC, might feel that their hands are tied in this regard, with the manufacturers who they rely upon to financially support the endeavour, seemingly going cool on the initiative. His words provoked responses from some well-known industry figures. Peter Leech, ex of John Deere and a past IAgRE President, agreed with Chris, saying that whilst there are those who complain that something needs to be done about recruitment and retention, why didn't they "get on board a fantastic programme that was designed and developed to address those problems"? David Kirshner, Independent Consultant to Land-based Engineering and past winner of a *Service Dealer*

Lifetime Contribution award, also felt that the LTA is a "perfect example of a proactive industry identifying a solution to the very real problem of recruitment, retention and training of technicians". However, he did unfortunately feel that "there is an apathy within industry employers when it comes to investment in time and resources to address industry challenges". Representing one-third of the organisers of the LTA, Keith Christian of BAGMA pointed out that the scheme is still active, with regular news updates distributed, a registration system, certificates and a photo ID card that states a holder's qualifications. "It's all there," he said, "but it does need the industry to support it."

## Winning young people

Clearly, it is frustrating for all concerned, because the desire for everyone with a vested interest in the industry, will be broadly the same. All will want to see more young people encouraged to take up roles in the landbased industries and continue on into a long and rewarding career. And then, as if responding to the debate, LE-TEC made a timely reveal of the top three winners of its Technicians For 2021 competition, which was designed to celebrate and find the UK's best technicians in the land-based engineering sector. Entrants were asked to submit a short

video explaining three aspects of themselves:

- **who they were**
- **what inspired them to become a land-based technician**
- **why they enjoy their day-to-day job so much.**

The winners picked by the judges were Laura Bassnet, a Trainee Service Technician at Ernest Doe Power in Fyfield, in first place; Lauren Savage, an Apprentice Engineer at Chandlers (Farm Equipment) in second place; and Chris Laidler, Harvest Product Support Technician for New Holland Agriculture, in third place.

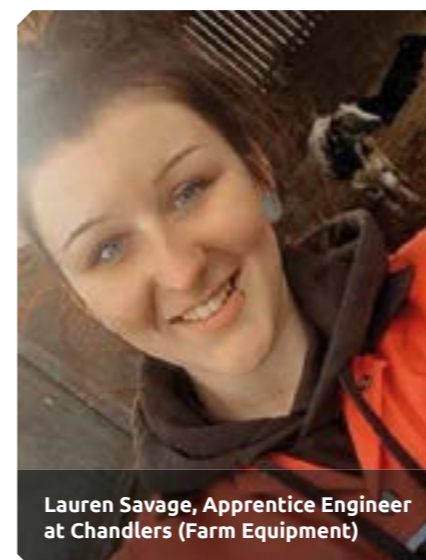
LE-TEC says all three videos displayed incredible passion for their entrants' work and illustrated just how rewarding a career in land-based engineering can be. All three winning videos are available to view on *Service Dealer's* website. I encourage everyone to check out the clips as the enthusiasm on display for their jobs from all three is palpable, offering great hope for the future. These individuals are wonderful real-life examples of new blood entering our sector and succeeding. The competition discovered three amazing new ambassadors for the industry.

Aiming to highlight the skills and passion for the sector, the judges say they were overwhelmed by the content of the entries received, and it took much deliberation to settle on their top three.

Ruth Bailey, CEO of the AEA explained the initiative behind the competition, saying, "Recruitment for us, as within many industries, has been difficult in recent years. Our industry is an absolute gem but one that is little-known outside of industry circles. These three winners will be fantastic champions for our industry, showcasing the major talent and ambition that is represented throughout the sector. We can't wait to work with them further."

Charles Nicklin, CEO of IAgRE added, "Our industry is such a great place to work, we're surrounded by sophisticated highly-productive machinery enabling customers to run their operations efficiently. Service back-up and product support are essential elements of this, and that needs top-quality professional technicians performing these roles. The top three technicians we have selected are fantastic examples of people working in our exciting industry and I wish them well in their careers."

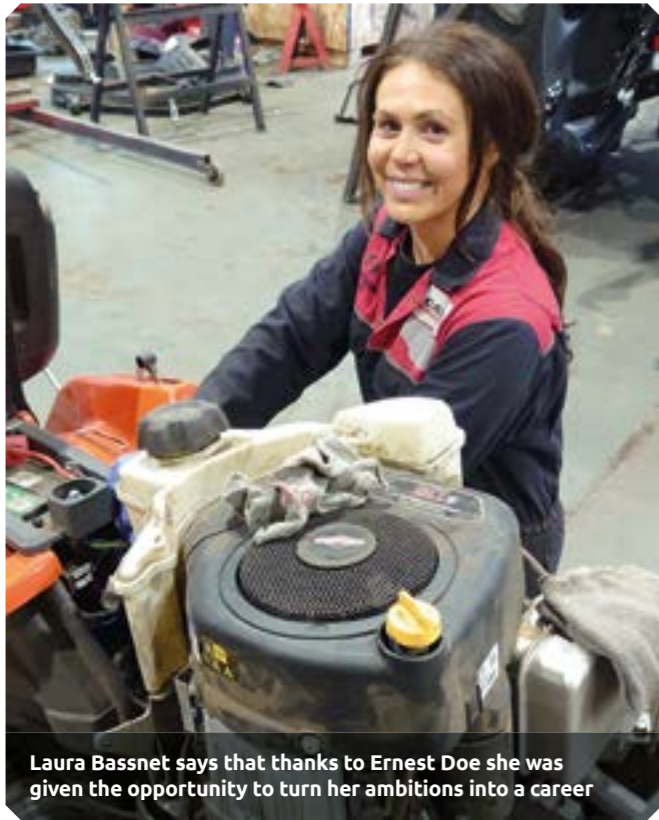
Keith Christian, Director of BAGMA said, "With around 48% of dealer staff employed in the technical side of the industry, the wealth of experience, level of professionalism and technical ability that technicians offer to UK users of equipment in the land-based sector is on a par with all other engineering-based industries in the UK."



Lauren Savage, Apprentice Engineer at Chandlers (Farm Equipment)



Chris Laidler, Harvest Product Support Technician for New Holland Agriculture, in his video



Laura Bassnet says that thanks to Ernest Doe she was given the opportunity to turn her ambitions into a career

### Great stories to tell

Competition winner Laura Bassnet said, "I'm delighted to have been acknowledged as an upcoming technician in this progressive industry. It just goes to show that with the right leadership and opportunities presented you can turn your ambitions into a career".

She went on to say, "I find the job here at Doe's so interesting because each day is so diverse. The team have gone above and beyond to support and mentor me, offering a positive approach to my learning."

"I find this job so rewarding because not only are we supporting our local farmers and giving back to our local community, but we're also continually adapting to upcoming technology. Thanks to Ernest Doe I was given the opportunity to turn my ambitions into a career."

Charles Nicklin remarked on Laura's winning video that it was a "...great example of a professional dynamic person embarking on a career in our industry. Her personable confident approach will be a great asset to her employer in providing a professional customer service".

Ruth Bailey said of the winners, "All the judges felt that the entrants had a great story to tell and told it with real passion and sincerity. The judges were looking for several things from the video submissions: how someone started their career; what type of equipment they were working with; what excited them about their job and how the candidate had either progressed or could see themselves progressing. They were looking for how they presented themselves, how they related with the audience and how their style could engage with an audience that LE-TEC is looking to capture. All three of our winners were able to

deliver on this."

Keith Christian added, "As an industry collaboration, LE-TEC is looking to tackle one of the biggest current issues the agricultural and outdoor power equipment sectors face today: that of skills. The training and recruitment of youngsters for our industry, particularly in respect of attracting young talent into our manufacturing and retail base, is ever more critical. As an industry, we face a huge crisis in the skills gap if we do not start to look more pragmatically about enticing a new intake of recruits and then genuinely offering them a progressive career path which recognises skills and competence levels within the technicians' and customer service-related roles."

LE-TEC says it hopes to run this competition on an annual basis.

### The opportunity to thrive

Laura, Lauren and Chris's videos all prove that there are young people out there, who don't necessarily come from a farming or engineering background, but when given the opportunity, can absolutely thrive in the dealership. The problem, of course, is many will have never even considered applying for industry roles for a myriad of reasons – and high among those must be the relatively low-profile of the sector.

Hopefully dynamic new advocates for land-based engineering such as Laura, Lauren and Chris can cut through and connect with other young people, proving that these jobs are not just a closed shop, only available for those with an established history in the trade.

Alongside this, employers may need to consider hiring on attitude and enthusiasm, rather than pre-acquired skills, as a positive move going forward. Employing on personality is clearly a more time-consuming approach, requiring increased training and mentoring up front, but in the long run, potentially much more rewarding for all involved.

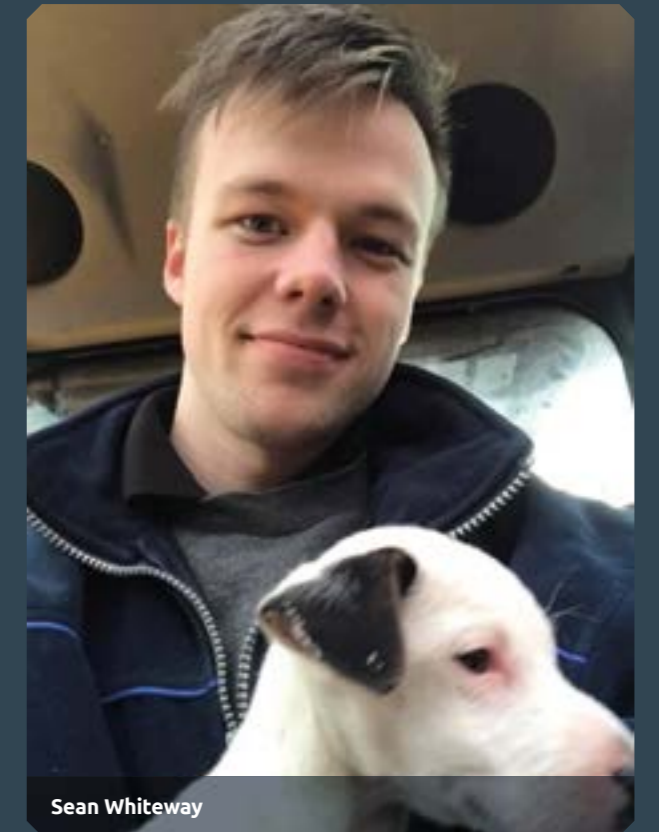
Across the board, dealers, manufacturers, trade bodies and industry commentators, will all be fundamentally on the same page. All will be desperate for the industry to be promoted in a positive, exciting light, with the intention of attracting newcomers to begin a career in land-based engineering.

Initiatives such as LE-TEC's search for Technicians of 2021, must be commended and could prove to be a useful tool for spreading the word about what's on offer to young recruits to our sectors. As we can see from the results of our dealer survey which **you can read on page 44** of this issue, initiatives like this – and more of them – are desperately needed. Dealers at the sharp end are finding it just as hard as it has ever been to recruit.

What one would like to see happen is that the oxygen of publicity creates a spark that gets those videos, and any future initiatives, seen by enough people – which requires a concerted and ongoing effort by all invested in the future of the industry.

# AEA INVESTS IN YOUNG TALENT

## First scholarship awarded



Sean Whiteway

The AEA recently announced the winner of its first ever AEA Scholarship.

The prize has been awarded to Sean Whiteway who is in the final year of a BEng/MEng Agricultural Engineering course at Harper Adams University. Sean will now complete his degree studies and will graduate as normal this summer, but with the AEA supporting him with a financial contribution in return for working alongside it as an ambassador for the industry.

The Association is describing his role as being 'a young voice' and 'a champion' for the sector.

The AEA says it will collaborate with Sean to develop video and social media content that inspires others to consider a career in agricultural engineering.

The aim of the scholarship, according to the AEA, is to promote and support the industry through finding and attracting new talent.

The award will give Sean a great opportunity to connect with key industry partners and to work with them to promote careers in the agricultural and outdoor power equipment sectors, says the Association.

The AEA explained to *Service Dealer* that it decided to choose final-year students to offer a scholarship to initially, so they can then follow their journey into the work environment and their career.

"I'm really looking forward to working with the AEA," said Sean. "I'm truly excited to be involved with the positive promotion of our industry, which will be interesting if not challenging."

"Connectivity within the farming community is rising. There is still somewhat of a barrier to attracting those without an agricultural background into our industry, but by using social media and video content we can portray the industry in a greater light to the next generation, whilst showing

off the amazing opportunities available within the agricultural engineering sector."

Sean said of his award that it goes to show, "you don't have to be from an agricultural background or a farm to succeed in the industry".

Later this year, the AEA will be launching further scholarships for 2021/22, aimed at second-year students studying Agricultural Engineering and Automotive Engineering (Off-Highway) degree courses.

Gareth Ford, Digital Media & Marketing Specialist at the AEA told *Service Dealer* of these two further awards: "Again, this will be a financial contribution to help with their studies or funding living costs to allow them to focus on studies in return for a relationship with the AEA."

"It fits with the goal of the AEA to support the next generation and championing our industry as a great place to work."





John Deere and training provider ProVQ have announced plans to open a new Apprentice Training Centre this autumn, at a farm site in Upper Saxondale, near Bingham in Nottinghamshire.

This will mark the 30th anniversary of the company's first Ag Tech apprentice intake, who were enrolled at original partner Brooksby Melton College in 1992.

Designed specifically and solely for John Deere dealer apprentices attending the company's Ag Tech, Turf Tech and Parts Tech training programmes, the first John Deere Apprentice Training Centre was established at Radcliffe-on-Trent five years ago. According to the company, these premises have now been outgrown, due to the programmes' success and increasing dealer demand.

The Ag, Turf and Parts Tech apprenticeships focus on developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for dealer personnel of the future, says Deere. Each year group trains at the centre for up to eight weeks a year in four blocks of two weeks. Some of this time is also spent at the manufacturer's Langar HQ when working with the largest equipment and the latest technologies.

John Deere appointed ProVQ Limited in summer 2015 as its new business partner to deliver the apprentice training programmes on behalf of its dealers in the UK and Ireland. The current full-time ProVQ staff will continue to be managed by James Haslam at the new Apprentice Training

Centre from the autumn.

"We're really looking forward to establishing this new bespoke facility close to our UK headquarters at Langar," said John Deere Limited Training Centre Manager Allan Cochran. "Our joint investment in the expanded Apprentice Training Centre will be in the region of £1.5 million. This will allow us to continue our growth and ambition to attract more young talent to develop successful careers in land-based engineering through the John Deere agricultural, turf and forestry dealer network.

"As our dealership businesses continue to grow, there is increasing demand for qualified technicians equipped with the correct knowledge and skills to support that growth. We have therefore recognised the need to increase the capacity of our already successful and industry leading training programmes even further.

"The new site will feature a purpose-built two-storey unit in addition to refurbished and extended farm buildings, effectively almost doubling our available square footage. The premises will include a bigger workshop space as well as larger classroom and cafeteria facilities.

"Most importantly, this will give us the capability to double our throughput of trained technicians to meet dealer demand. ProVQ will maintain its current staffing levels and continue to provide the full suite of apprentice technician training programmes at the new premises."

# IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT GOLF CLUBS

*With Kubota's agricultural machinery having established itself in the market, a number of its agricultural dealers have expanded into groundcare in the past 12 months*

**W**ith the well-documented trials and tribulations faced by the dealer network over the past year or so, there has been much talk of dealerships diversifying into areas they may not have previously considered in order to keep the business healthy. This isn't always a leap into territories unknown, taking on products entirely unrelated to a dealer's core specialism. In some cases it can be a more natural move, extending into another field of outdoor powered machinery, previously untouched.

In the case of some Kubota dealers recently, this has meant a branching out from a purely agricultural machinery offering, into also providing professional groundcare options for their customers.

The manufacturer describes the awarding of a groundcare franchise to one of its ag dealers as "a vote of confidence in the dealership" and a sign of Kubota's commitment to helping it develop its business.

Henry Bredin, General Manager-Sales, Marketing and Dealer Development explains, "We want our dealers to have sustainable, profitable businesses in the future, and by adding groundcare to their portfolio it gives them the chance to expand their offering within the same premium brand."

Henry believes that successful groundcare dealers recognise that the two sectors are represented by different types of customer.

"To look after the requirements of agricultural and groundcare customers requires a targeted approach, although the two can operate successfully under the same roof. Dealers with the agricultural and groundcare franchises tend to run two separate sales teams, and if they don't have the expertise in house already, recruiting staff with specialist knowledge can be helpful."

Groundcare is, of course, a highly competitive sector. Henry suggests, though, that the company's new dealers can have plenty of opportunities.

"We're enduringly strong in the municipal and contractor business, but we also see increasing potential with smallholders," he says, "and while we don't have a full range for the consumer market, the reliability of our diesel garden tractors is widely respected."

## **Irelands Farm Machinery**

One such dealer that has taken recent steps into groundcare is Irelands Farm Machinery. Based in Carrington, Lincolnshire, Jonathan and Fiona Ireland say this was always the grand plan for themselves when they took on the Kubota franchise in 2014.



Huw Price, Groundcare Sales and Marketing Manager at Irelands Farm Machinery (on tractor), with customer Paul Maltby

"We always wanted to be a 'one-stop shop' and the company's acquisition of Kverneland, Viccon and Simba Great Plains moved us towards that on the agricultural side," Jonathan explains.

"Groundcare also appealed from the start – it's not just about golf clubs. Lincolnshire isn't a highly populated county so there's not the concentration of sports facilities that there is in other parts of the country, but we have lots of glasshouses which need compact tractors and a wide range of amenity users from estates to caravan parks."

Irelands now has Kubota Groundcare products available from its headquarters at Carrington near Boston and from its branches at Sutterton and Market Rasen, following the launch of the new division in October 2020.

By this summer there will be an additional branch, with a new facility depot opening at Tinwell, Rutland.

"Rutland opens up opportunities not just with a wider range of farmers for the agricultural machinery, but also to a higher population of customers for professional groundcare products," comments Jonathan.

The eight-acre purpose-built premises at Carrington includes a fully stocked Kubota spares and parts

itinerary and merchandise range, workshop with trailer brake testing facility and large demonstration areas.

"When we designed the premises, we included two large lawned areas in front of the buildings which can be used for demonstrations and customer days," says Jonathan. "There's also a further grass banked area to the rear where machines can be seen in action before purchase."

A selection of machinery is displayed out front in opening hours and the Kubota 'totem pole' stands out in Lincolnshire's flat plain.

Groundcare franchises to complement the Kubota range

have also joined the line-up, including Baroness and Campey Turfcare Products.

"Baroness is a great fit as it gets us into customers requiring fine turf equipment, such as golf clubs," explains Huw Price, Groundcare Sales and Marketing Manager, "and Campey has a wide range of equipment that lends itself to hire. For example, we've got a 1.8m Vredo overseeder that has already been hired out for some work on a local estate."

Hire Manager Stuart Gosling has plenty of experience from the agricultural side of the business, which includes an extensive fleet of

Bailey trailers made available to customers for peak periods, and he is now rolling the service out across the groundcare side of the business.

"Hire is another good way to get customers familiar with the machines – we've got a couple of compacts available with implements such as tillers, while demonstrator fine turf mowers could help fill a gap while their mower is being serviced or repaired," comments Huw.

Weidenmann's range of aerators and blowers appeals to the contractor says Stuart, while Spearhead, which was already in the portfolio with its agricultural flail and rotary mowers, also offers a range of compact products.

"Demonstrating these products is also an ideal opportunity to show off the Kubota tractors, either as a potential future purchase or to match more powerful implements which may be beyond the scope of the customer's current tractor," he comments.

Huw adds that Irelands is also keen to promote Kubota's range of ride-on mowers to customers in the area with large gardens or estates.

"We know that they're going to be up against other brands, and we'll always take the opportunity to demo Kubota mowers if we can. For some customers it's a jump in price from the consumer machines they've been using, but we can push the benefits



Jonathan and Fiona Ireland



Irelands' stores



Battlefield's showroom



Battlefield's fleet of service vans

of reliability and longevity.”

Like many businesses expanding in the past 12 months, some significant rethinking had to take place to keep employees and customers safe.

“The salesmen have all been working from home anyway so that wasn't a problem, but we've had to rearrange the offices for social distancing, utilising our stores for meetings and for our audio-visual services,” explains Huw. “We don't mix staff from the different branches and our delivery driver has to just drop off packages rather than interact with anyone. The parts and retail counter are operated on a ‘one in at a time’ basis and it's more challenging for staff to work on projects together.”

Recruiting new members of staff – the team has grown from 29 to 38 since the first lockdown – has also required a revamp, points out Jonathan.

“We take CVs in the normal way and then interview by video call to avoid unnecessary mixing; if the candidate looks like a good fit we move to a face-to-face interview.”

The expanded workforce includes an experienced mechanic and a former greenkeeper as groundcare salesman for the Rutland depot. New Agricultural Salesman William Fraser will have a demonstrator role to back up Stuart Gosling, based at head office. “We've had good support from Kubota with product and service training, both

online and where it can be arranged safely for small groups, in person,” comments Huw.

Plans for the future for the progressive business include a winter servicing campaign for groundcare equipment in 2021/22 and getting back to meeting potential customers face-to-face.

“We've never really done much with shows,” comments Fiona Ireland, “but specific market demonstrations have always been popular, and we certainly intend to return to those as soon as it is appropriate, using the facilities that we have here at Carrington.”

### Battlefield Machinery

Another dealership that has recently diversified into groundcare is Battlefield Machinery. When the company expanded into groundcare at the beginning of 2021, it was a continuation of development plans put in place when the business was founded some four years earlier.

“Battlefield Machinery arose from the ashes of Ravenhill, which had its biggest branch in Shrewsbury,” explains Director Richard Evans.

“I'd worked for Ravenhill before moving on to Kverneland, and my business partner, Meyrick Pope, was Branch Manager, so along with my father-in-law we decided to set up a new dealership to serve the area. We were keen to uphold the strong tradition for service that Ravenhill had held, and as well as taking on the

Kverneland and Kubota franchises, we retained a lot of the New Holland and Ford service work.”

With no desire to take on multiple franchises – although Battlefield also represents McConnel, RS Agri, Marshall Trailers and Browns implements – the partners considered business areas to offer revenue in the quiet months of November and December, with groundcare offering a solution.

Kverneland remains the strongest franchise in the diverse mixed farming area, but Kubota was well received by farmers from the outset, he points out.

“Few people had seen the M or L series tractors before, but they liked what they saw. There's plenty of competition however – 16 different dealers with 20 depots in Shropshire alone.”

Thus, they reckoned that groundcare had the potential to make a strong contribution to the business.

“Friends in the industry and our experiences at Ravenhill convinced us that it was worth looking

at,” he comments. “It gives us the opportunity to balance the workload and do something different. Plus, the Kubota groundcare range is well established and has a reputation as a premium product.”

Battlefield Machinery's territory, which stretches from Shropshire into Worcestershire and the West Midlands, also offers plenty of opportunities, Richard points out.

“It's quite rural, but there are golf clubs, private schools and holiday parks; heading into Birmingham there are some larger local authorities plus large houses that will be a good market for high-end domestic and lower-end commercial products.”

Inroads had already been made with ‘groundcare lite’ products and the accompanying implements.

“We've got good contacts with councils and contractors such as idverde; we've also sold a number of

L series into nurseries and there was always interest in the RTV,” he comments.

“But now we've got access to the full range there's more scope – some customers will prefer the higher specifications offered by the B series tractors, for example.”

The company is investing in its new venture with additional workshop equipment, which has already brought more opportunities, including the service contract for Baroness, the fine turf machinery specialist with whom Kubota has a good relationship.

“We have nine members of staff plus Meyrick and myself as directors, and having taken on a groundcare technician, we're now recruiting a groundcare salesman and a second technician.”

Future plans include expansion of the showroom to allow more groundcare equipment to be displayed under cover, while

container-based units deployed to offer social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic are providing storage and workshop space.

Marketing is also an important consideration: “It's been a difficult time to meet customers and many of the local shows may not survive this situation. We plan to offer targeted open days where customers can ‘arrive and drive’ to maintain that all-important contact.”

Richard clearly enjoys being a Kubota dealer and says, “We've had great support from Kubota during the transition, with product training ongoing and good technical back-up. It's a progressive company that likes to do things differently, but it's a bonus for us starting with a groundcare range that's already top of its game.”

“Once we're fully up and running we expect a big gain in business.”

## KUBOTA UK STATS



Richard Evans, Director of Battlefield Machinery

Total number of Kubota dealers in the UK

**138 depots**

Agricultural

**58**

Groundcare

**81**

Engines

**18**

Construction

**36**

Farthest north

**HRN Tractors,  
Caithness**

Furthest south

**Vincent Brothers,  
Cornwall**

Longest established

**Gibsons Garden  
Machinery**

# MAKING THE MOST OF MARKET MOVES

*One indirect result of the shifts by big-name brands to fewer, larger networks is that farmers and dealers are increasingly open to considering lower-profile tractor makes. ARGO and its McCormick brand are aiming to capitalise on this, finds MARTIN RICKATSON*

A raft of recent dealer signings, new area manager and technical specialist appointments and an intensive demonstration campaign to get potential dealers, customers and the press behind the wheel of its latest tractors – Italian firm ARGO's UK distribution operation, and in particular its McCormick brand, has had a busy few months. With shifts in dealer/manufacturer franchise agreements as larger makers shrink their dealer numbers opening up opportunities to sign new dealers, the Doncaster-based Argo Tractors UK and Ireland business has been among those that have sought to capitalise on customer-dealer loyalty.

It has not been shy to back its dealer drive with a promotional push, most

recently being one of those to commit early on to the rescheduled Cereals event, where there was a significant McCormick presence at one of the first agricultural exhibitions to take place following the lifting of coronavirus restrictions.

"Cereals 2021 gave us an ideal opportunity to show our support for the agricultural industry and the wider economy by backing the exhibition and the gradual return to normality for farmers and the broader public," says Ben Agar, business development director at Argo Tractors UK & Ireland.

"It gave us the opportunity to showcase machines including our largest model, the 310hp X8.680 VT, which has been the subject of an intensive demonstration programme by our dealers around the UK, and is

continuing to notch up sales. Added to this, representing the popular 200-250hp bracket that is currently one of the most hotly-contested in the arable tractor market, was an X7.624 VT tractor, another model with VT-Drive CVT. With both these machines we were also able to illustrate our full precision farming package, which like many other features we'd consider comparable with anything else in the sector."

Rounding out the main arable offering on show was a 130hp McCormick X6.440 VT model, flagship of the X6 line of mid-range tractors, again equipped with the brand's VT-Drive CVT. In addition, representing the demand for tractors for smaller arable farm tasks, and to show the diversity of its line-up, McCormick also showed an X6.55, the 93hp flagship of

**With models of up to 310hp in its X8 series, McCormick says it is coming under consideration by more customers and dealers**

dealers and customers – our commitment to UK agriculture is clear."

## Dealer recruitment

A family-owned business operating five factories across Italy, ARGO Tractors manufactures many of its own components in-house, including axles, transmissions and complete cabs, before assembling them and distributing the finished products globally. With McCormick being the higher horsepower, higher technology brand of the two main ones it manufactures, the recent appointment of a new Eastern England Area Manager to oversee dealer/import/manufacture links for ARGO dealers in the region is particularly important, believes Ben. Josh Clayton's role will be to connect the area's McCormick (and Landini) dealers, the Doncaster-based offices and facilities, and ARGO's Italian HQ and factories.

Based from his home on the Cambs/Beds border, Josh most recently worked with one of his locality's key dealerships. His career also includes a spell with one of the larger suppliers of precision farming technology.

"I'm really pleased to be joining Argo at a time when dealer recruitment, interest from potential customers and the McCormick and Landini product lines are all developing rapidly," says Josh.

"From previous experience, I'm confident we have tractor products that can match any other brand. Coupled with the fact we have an excellent dealer support package with the Argo 4.0 programme the company has developed, we have what we need to help dealers grow their market share – and to attract new ones for the handful of areas where we have coverage gaps.

"There's a lot of franchise change happening in the tractor dealer sector at the moment, and many dealers are having to make some big decisions about which way their future lies. I'm certain we have the products and support package that will make our brands attractive to them and their

customers. Across eastern England, I'm keen to help dealers in the key arable areas in particular show the capabilities of the latest X7 and X8 McCormick ranges, where we have models of up to 310hp with powershift and CVT transmission options. But, of course, we also have extensive ranges to suit livestock farmers, specialist crop growers and the needs of the grounds care sector."

Josh's dealer coverage region spans an area from Essex up to North Yorkshire, across to the M1, as part of a team of four looking after McCormick and Landini dealer management across the UK and Ireland.

"Josh's retail sales experience and his product knowledge from two key competitive tractor brands are excellent assets," says Ben Agar. "He has a great understanding of all the elements needed to make a dealership successful – brand, image, active customer prospecting and lead nurturing. We're really pleased to have him on board."

## Bolstering business

Meanwhile, ARGO Tractors UK and Ireland has also made a key appointment to bolster its business in Ireland. Thomas McMullan joins the firm as after-sales and demonstration manager, working across the Republic and the North of Ireland, and with both product lines. He joins the business after four years working with a British tractor manufacturer in test and development, and latterly technical service on a global basis.

"We have two very strong brands in Landini and McCormick, with some significant potential markets to build upon across Ireland," believes Thomas.

"Landini is especially popular here, and there's a lot of scope to build on this, with models up to 240hp but, in addition, a strong offering of simpler tractors in the lower-horsepower bracket to suit stock farmers, and a number of models to meet the needs of grounds care and other specialist applications.



Mark Weatherhead Ltd joined the McCormick network late last year, filling one of the few remaining gaps in its UK dealer network, covering Cambs, Beds and Herts



McLaren Tractors was one of McCormick's first appointments of 2021, serving the Scottish Highlands and, via sub-dealer GS Donn at Harpesdale, the Caithness area



New Eastern Area Manager Josh Clayton's region covers dealers from Essex up to North Yorkshire and across to the M1, as part of a team of four

"With models up to 310hp, VT-Drive CVT and precision farming technology options, the McCormick line fits well with the needs of the tillage and large grass farms down the East of Ireland. But there's also a strong McCormick offering lower down the scale with the X4, X5 and X6 ranges that are probably the most significant sellers currently for the brand here.

"While we're already well known for our smaller and stockman-sized tractors, I'm eager to introduce the market to the new range of high-horsepower models people may not have necessarily associated with the brands in the past.

"Among my first jobs is to boost our demo programme and show farmers what these ranges can do. In particular, we've had a pair of 210hp Landini 7-210 tractors – one with V-Shift CVT and one with Robo-Six six-step semi-powershift – on demonstrations this summer, both fully-equipped with precision farming technology from our partner TopCon Ireland.

"With these and other demonstrations for both product lines, we're looking to show prospective and current customers and dealers what Landini and McCormick have to offer, particularly as networks continue to change, putting us under wider consideration. As a tractor-only maker,



Thomas McMullan is a recent appointment as After-sales and Demonstration Manager, for the Republic and the North of Ireland

we can also help dealers preserve and enhance relationships with implement suppliers. This is all helping to raise the profile of the brands in Ireland."

### Expansion continues

Back in the UK, McCormick continues to expand its dealer network. Having in recent years focused on personal transport and grass machinery, under the Cheshire Mowers and ATVs banner, James Barlow, of the eponymous Cheshire-based dealer family, recently signed to re-enter tractor retailing with McCormick.

"The past year's challenges have provided an opportunity to re-examine how our business can best support the local rural community, and one of the key decisions we have made has been a renewed focus on the specialist services required by Cheshire farmers and a wider agricultural base," says James.

"Taking a step back has helped to look at what our business really needs to do to help our rural community, and I'm really excited about our plans.

"Among these is a return to tractor retailing with McCormick, with which we had good success in the past.

"While in the past two years we focused on selling and servicing ATVs, UTVs and mowers, our business has always supported farmers and their needs first and foremost. This all forms part of our plans to be a central part of

the rural community, serving our agricultural customers whether they're seeking a new tractor, want to try an ATV, or have some essential machinery they need repairing urgently."

The McCormick franchise agreement crowns the continued development of the Barlow business's site in Marton, near Macclesfield. The agricultural and grass equipment dealership forms part of a 'rural hub', with adjacent developments of complementary rural businesses including a garden shed company and a village shop.

Mark Weatherhead Ltd joined the McCormick network late last year, filling one of the few remaining gaps in its UK dealer network, covering Cambs, Beds and Herts from its Hardwick premises near Cambridge.

"We've a long-established history of selling and supporting tractors in this area, with many longstanding customers," says Mark.

"The opportunity to represent McCormick in Cambs, Herts and Beds means we can offer farmers and contractors in this area models from 44-310hp, covering the main power sectors sought locally, and backed by an importer and a manufacturer whose support has already impressed me. With the capacity to manufacture 22,000 units a year, McCormick's parent ARGO Tractors is a major player in the business.

"Once our agreement with McCormick was signed, we commenced a demonstration programme as soon as possible, providing tractors to interested customers so they could test them thoroughly, and leaving them with forms so they could provide both us and McCormick with feedback. With the autumn weather then curtailing our demo plans, we invited 300 key customers to a mid-October open day here at Hardwick, where they could examine a range of McCormick tractors and talk to ARGO staff and our own, with full catering and respect given to coronavirus safety."

The signing of the Mark Weatherhead business to the McCormick network is considered a major appointment by Ben Agar.

"This is a very well-known and high-profile dealer business in the Cambs, Herts and Beds area, with a long-established and strong reputation. We've been seeking the right dealer to cover this region for the brand for some time, and are very pleased to have signed a partner of Mark Weatherhead's stature to the McCormick network."

The raft of recent McCormick appointments stretches not only from western to eastern England, but also up into the Scottish Highlands, where McLaren Tractors was one of McCormick's first appointments of 2021. The company has served farmers, crofters and sporting estates in the Highlands since its foundation in 2003 by George and Fiona McLaren.

"Early on we added a trio of stock tractors to our fleet, comprising a 120hp X6.420, a 115hp X5.55 and a 70hp X4.30, representing three ranges and model sizes which are well-suited to the needs of local farmers and contractors, including those in the Caithness area, where we are working with GS Donn at Harpesdale, Halkirk, as a sub-dealer," says George.

"We have developed a well-established tractor sales business, and in McCormick I think we have picked the right partner to build on this."



Prominent dealer appointments and developments in high-hp tractors and precision farming technology have helped boost McCormick's arable profile, says Ben Agar

# TIPS FOR SUCCESS WITH COMMERCIAL CLIENTS

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

**This issue, three simple tips for cultivating relationships with commercial account customers**



**F**or many dealerships, the commercial accounts that you service lack a dedicated and effective process. Your commercial accounts may include a golf course, a landscaper, a larger farmer, or a local authority.

Regardless of who it is that you are servicing or what your commercial accounts look like, there are three keys we see in dealerships who demonstrate on-going success when handling these accounts.

## Commit to eight touches a day

The very first thing you need to do is assign someone as the main point of contact for these accounts. While this may seem like common knowledge, it typically takes a different set of sales skills to handle commercial accounts with multiple decision makers and often complex bidding and approval processes.

After you have identified this person, our goal is to have them touch eight commercial accounts per day. This could be a phone call, email, text message, or visiting them in

person. When we have this person touching eight accounts per day, it keeps their sales pipeline full and proposals going out the door. For most dealerships, eight commercial touches a day would only take part of a salesperson's job.

## Be there when your competitors aren't

My guess is that your competitors are in front of your customers at Christmas with a calendar that will promptly go into the trash. You should be in front of your commercial accounts when your competitors aren't. This may mean spending your marketing money on these accounts during off-season holidays, such as Saint Patrick's Day, Groundhog Day, or even National Ice Cream Month!

I also encourage the person who oversees these accounts to make sure they do what we call Turf Visits at least once a year per account. During a Turf Visit, the salesperson meets with each commercial contact "on their turf" which could be at a local diner or restaurant, or another favourite place close by and connect with them there.

Not only does this build the rapport you need, but typically walls come down when you eat with people on their turf and you can get to know the players better.

## Always ask the question, "How can I make their life easier?"

One thing you should always be asking about each of your commercial accounts is: "How can I make this person or organisation's life easier?" The people you are working with are often running their business and have a list of things to do that can be incredibly overwhelming. When you begin working with a commercial account, you should work to connect them to other people who will be able to help them in areas you can't.

Find ways to connect them and help them succeed in their business. The better business is for your customers, the better business will be for you as well.



Chris Gibson

# WELCOMING CUSTOMERS BACK TO THE SHOWROOM

Chris Gibson, MD of GGM Groundscare, says it has been a strong first half of the year and great to see customers back in-store, but ongoing issues with supply mean managing expectations

**A**fter a dry and unseasonably cold April (certainly in the North-West), May saw temperatures increase and the return of the rain. Some days it seemed like *Four Seasons In One Day* with spells of sunshine quickly followed by heavy showers, thunderstorms, and the occasional hail stone too! All of which has seen grass growth increase substantially, meaning we've all been kept very busy, in all areas of the business.

The first six months of the year have seen strong growth, which I'm sure many others in our industry have enjoyed too. Our order book has swelled, but due to supply chain issues from several manufacturers, our challenge has been to manage expectations and keep customers informed. Once again, our team's stood up to the challenge very well. Thankfully, most customers are aware of the issues and difficulties in supply we're all experiencing and are understanding and sympathetic, so long as we're open and honest – and they are kept informed on the progress of their order.

A supply shortage has certainly helped to focus customers' minds on making a buying decision as well as helping tilt the scales in the dealers' favour when it comes to negotiations on price. Some see the honest explanation that "we only have one left and we're not sure when more will be coming into stock" as salesmanship, but thankfully those customers who

we've built longstanding relationships with understand that this is simply our honest understanding of the supply situation and we can quickly close a sale.

The supply chain challenges for new machinery have certainly created some good opportunities for used equipment and so long as used machines can be refurbished and prepared for re-sale in a timely manner, they are certainly an asset rather than a disposal issue.

Our after-sales department is always busy with customers. Demand for parts and service continues to grow, meaning that we seem to be constantly busy recruiting parts advisers and engineers. It's always good to freshen things up and bring in new people who match our company ethos as they bring with them new ideas and suggestions from their previous experiences.

The fact that we now have all the team back in the office has certainly helped the induction of these new recruits, as well as morale overall.

We've introduced hybrid working arrangements for some, which have proved beneficial to the employee and the company. Without the pandemic I'm not sure we'd have done this; everyone has adapted to the new ways of working and, I think, in many ways made our team stronger.

It's been great to reopen the showroom doors to customers and welcome them back into our premises. We've been operating a locked door policy, so it almost seemed unusual to see customers

back in the premises, but with the procedures we've put in place, neither customers nor our team feel uneasy. That said, I'm sure we'll all be glad to see the back of face masks, hand sanitizer and social distancing, when it's safe to do so.

This summer still holds the prospect of being much more normal than last year, and while the final date may change, I'm sure we'll see the final stage of the government's road map to freedom implemented, even if it's too late to save many of the usual shows and events or see them radically change format. The Great Yorkshire Show, for example, moved to pre-booked visits only over four-days.

For us, the logistics of such a change just doesn't work. We've decided our time is better spent where we can visit and demonstrate equipment safely without all the time and effort of building and manning an exhibition. We'll continue to try to find ways of supporting these shows where we can but instead of exhibiting, we feel holding smaller roadshow-type demo events later in the year, supported with virtual meetings and demonstrations, will prove more beneficial.

Hopefully, as we move into the height of summer, our suppliers will have started to overcome some of the supply chain issues, government restrictions will have eased, and we can enjoy a positive summer season with good sales and some great weather – and maybe even a well-deserved break!

# BUSINESS MONITOR

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## DESPITE A GENUINE DESIRE, RECRUITING IS STILL DIFFICULT

*Appetite among dealers to expand staffing, but frustrations abound*

The message that came through from dealers who responded to our recent recruitment survey is that many have a genuine desire to take on new employees for the dealership – however, the process is still just as fraught as it ever was.

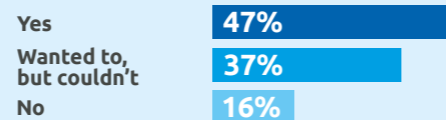
Interestingly though, slightly more of those who responded had actually been able to take on people during the past year than those who had wanted to but failed (47% vs 37%). An encouraging sign also, was that a large majority (79%) expressed a desire to swell their ranks in the coming year.

What is still of concern, however, is that 90% of dealers who got back to us expected this process to be either difficult or extremely difficult.

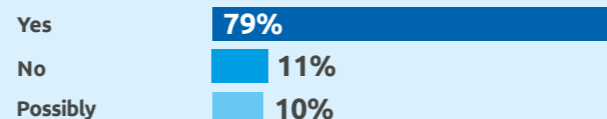
The main reasons given for why recruiting is so hard were 'lack of applicants' and 'lack of appropriate skills' – two statements that could be described as traditional hurdles that the industry perennially faces. Certainly, these can't be specifically blamed on the circumstances surrounding the pandemic.

When looking for new recruits, similar as to when we last asked readers back in 2019, Facebook was cited by a majority (32%) as the most successful route to finding candidates. Also similar to 2019, dealers still felt that the responsibility to promote the industry to potential new recruits should be burdened by a combination of manufacturers, trade associations, dealers, schools and colleges.

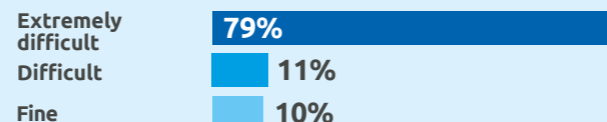
### Have you recruited new staff in the past year?



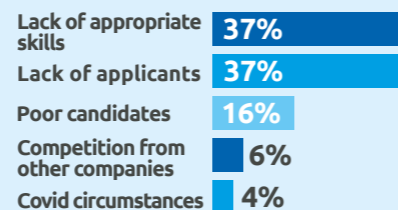
### Do you want to take on new staff in the next 12 months?



### How difficult are you finding recruiting new staff?



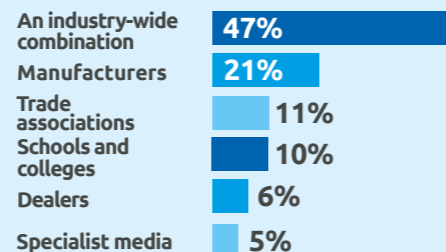
### What is the principal hurdle you face in recruiting new staff?



### Where do you find is the most successful place to advertise for new staff?



### Whose responsibility is it to promote the industry's profile to potential employees?



## YOUR SAY...

We asked for your thoughts on the current recruitment situation in the industry.

- The average age of staff in our industry has been rising for years and that is now starting to bite. As dealerships close through retirements, the work is spread around the remaining dealerships but there is no pool of staff being released. We're trying to recruit "fresh blood" into the industry but are finding it almost impossible. We pay the industry standard but find that we are out remunerated by jobs like supermarket shelf stacker and production line operative. Manufacturers could help by offering a comprehensive offering of training courses (some manufacturers are very half-hearted in their approach to training) and doing whatever it takes to keep margin within our industry to support the higher remuneration we are having to pay.
- There's a lack of people wanting to do this kind of work or even know about it, so it's got to start at schools/colleges. We have one apprentice at the moment, we're based in London and he's got to go to Brighton to attend college. No wonder it's hard to find the right person. In the next month we will be needing two more mechanics and some warehouse staff and I'm dreading it already.
- Impossible to find the required skilled staff. We're having to take on staff with no experience in the sector and train them, praying they stay with the company and not leave once they have the experience everyone's looking for. Proper apprenticeships need to be offered by all dealers so poaching isn't the reality. Frustrating when you've spent time and effort training one up yourself when a neighbouring dealer offers a higher wage, as they haven't had to invest the initial capital required to get the trained member of staff.
- We're taking on a new retail assistant who is coming in fresh into this trade at mid-30s and I'm hoping she will take to it like a duck to water – she has many skills required, just lacking in our field. I've also just taken on another mechanic. This role was advertised for a while and eventually someone came along with what we were after. He's one week in and proving to be an asset. I only received five applicants for this position, out of those two were of interest (one being successful, the other had already accepted another job). Could do with qualifications in small engines rather than large farm machinery at techs/colleges.
- We've been looking for an engineer since last August. We've suffered from a lack of applicants, applicants with no skills and those that did apply were looking for wages too high for us to pay. We found Gumtree and Facebook the best methods of making awareness of a new post and have used CV Library, however this hasn't proved successful. The whole experience is awful and in the meantime, we struggle on!
- I believe garden/groundcare machinery manufacturers could offer a one- or two-year training program where dealers can send trainee staff on a one- or two-day a month "block release" training program. Split into modules say two-stroke, four-stroke, cordless electrical, machine electrical, welding, hydraulics, ulleys/belts/bearings/gears. The possibilities are endless and if set up correctly something dealers would pay towards and if marketed correctly even Joe/Jo public would buy into the idea and pay for themselves to be put through the course. Similar could be done with sales and product experts. Manufacturers need to offer careers rather than just random training days. This way dealers can advertise for staff positions with tangible training opportunities available.

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## MARKING RULES

# UKCA-not un-CE NEW RULES



*New product marking rules have changed the landscape for those in the supply chain from manufacturer to retailer, writes SME Digest Editor, Adam Bernstein. While there are some similarities between old and new, there are many differences and dealers would do well to understand the changes*

### What has changed?

Following the end of the Brexit transitional period, the well-known CE mark on many products sold across the UK was replaced by the new United Kingdom Conformity Assessed (UKCA) mark. The good news, according to Claire Burrows, a Director in the Regulatory & Compliance department of Walker Morris, is that, unlike other product labelling requirements, "the UKCA marking requirements have adopted a phased approach, with the CE mark remaining temporarily valid on most products until 31 December 2021, easing the pressure on businesses."

### The current position

Currently, certain goods placed for sale in the EEA must bear the CE mark – the manufacturer's declaration that

its product meets all the specified essential safety requirements set out in EU directives specific to the particular product type.

As Burrows explains, "EU legislation sets out the rules that manufacturers (or their appointed 'authorised representatives') must follow in order to demonstrate that their products comply with the applicable safety requirements." She continues: "This can include a self-declaration by the manufacturer, the assessment of the final product by an EU-accredited body (known as a Notified Body) or an assessment of a product's design by a Notified Body followed by testing/quality assurance processes."

Until the end of 2020, either the manufacturer or their representative

(the 'responsible person') had to be based within an EU member state.



### What is the UKCA mark?

The UKCA mark is essentially the UK equivalent of the CE mark. It is a mandatory mark on a product confirming its compliance with UK

product safety legislation and applies in Great Britain – it does not apply in Northern Ireland which will continue to use the CE mark.

Burrows says that as with the current CE marking, "either the manufacturer or their authorised representative will be responsible for affixing the UKCA mark to a product; it's worth noting that if a business – a retailer for example – is selling a product under their own label, they too will need to make sure products meet the requirements of the regime".

The two markings are largely the same, says Burrows "apart from the fact that the UKCA only applies in the UK, only requires information in English and that the UKCA mark derives compliance from UK conformity assessment bodies as opposed to the EU Notified Body System". Not unsurprisingly, the EU declaration of conformity with the relevant and applicable product standards has been replaced with a UK-only declaration of conformity to be derived from relevant UK law. Burrows also points out that "the scope of the products covered, technical requirements and conformity assessment procedures will all remain largely the same as they are now."

### What do the changes mean for businesses in the UK?

The UKCA mark could be used from 1 January 2021, but a natural question is: what can firms do with CE marked stock they still hold? Here, Burrows advises that they will still be able to use the CE mark until 1 January 2022 in most cases, allowing them to get rid of current stock. "But," she says, "this will only be the case if firms currently apply CE marking to their goods on the basis of self-declaration; any mandatory third-party conformity assessment was carried out by an EU-recognised notified body; and the certificate of conformity previously held by a UK-approved body has been transferred to an EU-recognised notified body."

It's notable that the ability to use the CE mark on products sold in the UK between 1 January 2021 and 1 January 2022 will only continue for as long as the UK and EU requirements

remain the same. Should the UK and EU requirements diverge, Burrows says that the position will change.

That said, she highlights how, in certain narrow circumstances, the UKCA mark must be used from 1 January 2021. This would be where the product is for the UK market, is covered by legislation that requires UKCA marking, requires mandatory third-party conformity assessment by a UK conformity assessment body and the firm hadn't transferred its conformity assessment files from its UK body to an EU-recognised body before 1 January 2021. Again, she points out that "this does not apply to existing stock. So, if, for example, a product was fully manufactured and ready to place on the market before 1 January 2021, it could still be sold in the UK with a CE mark, even if covered by a certificate of conformity issued by a UK body."

### Penalties

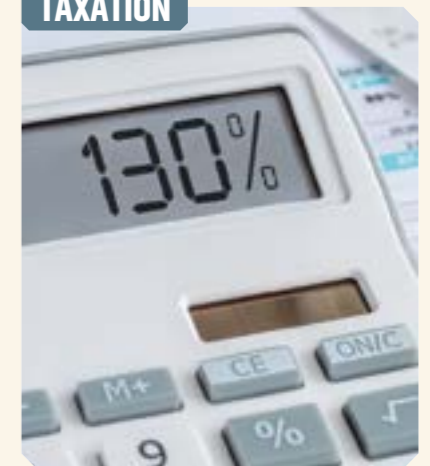
With the landscape set out, what are the penalties for non-compliance with the UKCA requirements? Burrows says that they remain the same as for non-compliance with the CE marking requirements as they are derived from the EU legislation. She tells how, at present, "enforcement of the CE mark is undertaken by the UK's market surveillance authorities which include Trading Standards and the Health and Safety Executive. These enforcement authorities have the ability to request sight of technical documentation to ensure compliance, so it is important that all technical files are up to date and reflect the UKCA marking requirements from 1 January 2021".

In serious cases of non-compliance, however, there is the possibility of a potentially unlimited fine and imprisonment.

### Conclusion

It's a function of fact that because the UK is now fully outside of the EU and the transitional period has ended the ground rules have changed. Firms should familiarise themselves with the changes to product safety marking and how these apply to their business. Times are tough enough right now without having to deal with official intervention.

## TAXATION



# SUPER DEDUCTION – A FINANCIAL MARVEL?

*The Chancellor's Budget Day announcement of a new style of capital allowance that will allow companies to reduce their taxable profits by 130% of the cost of new equipment has attracted a lot of interest, says Will Silsby, a Technical Officer with the Association of Taxation Technicians, but it's also raised a number of questions*

### The Super Deduction defined

Very simply, the Super Deduction is a new temporary allowance which gives a greater and faster level of tax relief on qualifying expenditure incurred between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2023. For most expenditure on plant and machinery, it works by treating the company as if it had spent an extra 30% on the item and then allowing tax relief on the whole of that uplifted amount in calculating the tax bill for the year of expenditure. So, with a 19% tax rate, the Super Deduction is designed to reduce a company's tax bill by some 24.7% of the actual cost of the qualifying item(s).



But the allowance isn't available to all businesses; it will only be available to those which are subject to Corporation Tax. Nor will it be available to a company ceasing activity.

The Super Deduction only applies to items which are treated for tax purposes as plant and machinery. For many businesses, this is likely to cover most of their expenditure and simple examples include anything from a laptop to a double-decker bus. In contrast, a building or structure, or something intangible cannot be plant or machinery and will not be eligible.

A special provision in the legislation means that any expenditure incurred as a result of a contract which was entered before 3 March 2021 will be ineligible as the expenditure is treated as made before 1 April 2021 regardless of when payment was required.

Some items of plant or machinery are specifically excluded from eligibility. Common examples include cars; used and second-hand assets; and plant or machinery which is leased out to another.

### Practical effects of the Super Deduction

Before delving into the effects of the Super Deduction, all businesses are already entitled to an Annual Investment Allowance (AIA) which enables them to get tax relief on the whole of their qualifying expenditure for the year of purchase, up to an annual limit.

Until 31 December 2021, the AIA limit is £1 million, but is scheduled to reduce to £200,000 from 1 January 2022. The higher limit means that a company spending £500,000 before 1 April 2021 on plant or machinery will (without the Super Deduction) get a tax reduction at 19% on that amount – so £95,000. If that same level of expenditure was incurred after 31 March 2021 and qualified for the Super Deduction, the tax reduction would instead be £500,000 x 130% which, at 19%, gives a tax reduction of £123,500 – so £28,500 more.

At higher levels of qualifying expenditure, the Super Deduction creates a disproportionately greater benefit.

### A separate Special Rate

As already noted, some items of plant and machinery are not eligible for



the Super Deduction. This includes all items of capital expenditure which are treated as 'special rate' assets. These assets include integral features of a building, long-life assets, thermal insulation and solar panels.

Under the general capital allowance legislation, the annual Writing Down Allowance on these items of plant or machinery is just 6% rather than the normal 18%, meaning that these 'special rate' assets are written off more slowly for tax purposes.

If a company incurs qualifying expenditure on these types of asset in the two-year period starting on 1 April 2021, they cannot qualify for the 30% value boost explained above, but (provided that the particular assets are not specifically disqualified) the company is entitled to new Special Rate Allowance. This provides tax relief for the year of expenditure on 50% of the actual cost instead of just 6%. Unlike the Super Deduction, this does not increase the value of tax relief over the life of the asset, but it does significantly accelerate the relief.

### Tax losses

Companies can normally carry back losses from one accounting period to the previous accounting period so that the profits of that previous period are

reduced. This enables a repayment of Corporation Tax for the previous period. Because of the pandemic, the Chancellor has announced that losses arising in a company's accounting period which ended between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2022 can be carried back for two further years.

Such a loss carry-back could enable a company that had depressed profits to still receive early tax relief. It would, however, be important to consider the alternative of carrying the loss forward, particularly if that might result in tax relief at 25% instead of 19%.

Lastly, an important consequence of both the 130% Super Deduction and the Special Rate Allowance is that part of the tax reduction will be clawed back if the relevant asset is subsequently sold.

### In summary

With the complexities set down, it's not hard to see that it is essential for any company to take appropriate professional advice in advance to ensure that the Super Deduction or the Special Rate Allowance works as expected.

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# PRODUCTS

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## COMMERCIAL/DOMESTIC



Stiga has launched the sixth generation of Park front mowers designed for maintaining large areas.

Machines in the range are largely petrol-powered, with one battery option, and many have been modernised and upgraded for 2021. While some models are powered by Honda or Briggs & Stratton, the majority are powered by the latest Stiga engines and marketed as 'Powered by Stiga'.

"We have incorporated the latest technical innovations allied to a very strong emphasis on delivering a smoother and safer ride for the user," said Gary Tully, Sales and Marketing Director of Stiga UK Limited.

### New for 2021 includes:

- Improved driving experience including ergonomically designed seating, more comfortable drive pedal and a reconfigured steering column;
- Power steering and electric PTO are standard on all models and electric height of cut adjustment on machines with electric cutter decks;
- A total aesthetic redesign;
- Greater traction on uphill cutting;
- Drive belts made from Aramid;
- Bluetooth connectivity, via a dedicated app;
- Park models are compatible with QuickFlip deck technology;

- Improved LED headlights on many models;
- A hard steel rear bumper;
- An external, easily accessible fuel cap;
- Nine redesigned Park machines in the range.

The Park 640 PWX reflects all the key new features of the redesigned range. It has a new high-back seat with arm rests available as an optional extra, an ergonomic side dashboard, electromagnetic PTO and electric height of cut adjustment.

With 50:50 articulation, this machine allows the operator to turn around obstacles or run alongside walls and fences without looking back, as the rear part of the machine always directly follows the path of the front.

It is powered by the Stiga ST 600 Twin engine that provides almost 20hp (gross), with Tuff Torq all-wheel drive. It has a three-year standard warranty and is fitted with high-beam headlights.

The Park 345 PWX, the Park PRO 540 1X and the Park PRO 740 IOX are powered by Honda. Three further machines in the range use Briggs & Stratton engines. The e-Park 220 is powered by a 48V lithium-ion battery.

**A range of accessories are available, including combi-cart, an edge cutter, a fertiliser spreader, flail mower, sweeper and snow plough.**

## DOMESTIC



Manufactured in its UK factory, the Edge zero-turn mower has been launched by Ariens.

Driven and steered by the rear wheels via two independent transmissions, the control levers offer the user the ability to drive, brake, steer and spin on the spot. The Edge features Ariens' 635cc engine and benefits from a high-back adjustable seat. Natural airflow enhances operator comfort while all the controls are positioned in ergonomic, easily accessible locations and are mostly hand-operated.

The mower comes in two versions: Edge 34 with an 86cm (34") cutter deck and the Edge 42 with a 107cm (42") deck.

The company says the commercial-style, four-point deck hanging system enhances deck stability and robustness for a premium cut quality. There is a foot-operated deck lift for simple changes of deck height.

By pushing the pedal forward and using the lever users can select cutting heights from 3.8cm to 12.7cm (1.5" to 4.5"). The 50.8cm (20") high, 20.3cm (8") wide rear tyres are gentle on turf, delivering traction and absorbing shock on uneven ground to give a smoother, more comfortable ride.

**The Edge comes with a two-year/150 hours warranty and a range of accessories is available.**

## COMMERCIAL

# STIHL KOMBI-NES NEW MODEL INTO RANGE

## KMA 135 R expands line-up

STIHL has launched the KMA 135 R, adding to its range of KombiEngines for professional users.

The new KombiEngine accompanies the KMA 130 R in the range. Featuring a new battery housing, users can now slot in the company's 36V AP batteries.

The unit has an ergonomic control handle with three level speed pre-selection displayed on an LED panel and infinitely variable speed control on the trigger to match the KombiTool and the work being carried out.

A quick-release coupling allows the splitting of the KombiSystem into two parts for transport and storage – and then reassembly without any tools required.

The KMA 135 R is compatible with STIHL's range of



KombiTool attachments, including the HT-KM, HL-KM 145°, HL-KM 0°, FH-KM, MB-KM, RG-KM, BG-KM, FCB-KM, BF-KM and KB-KM, which are all interchangeable.

**Further ranges of accessories are also available to use with the KMA 135 R, including Shaft Extensions, RTS Harness, Angled Gearhead and Carry Bag.**

COMMERCIAL

# PORTABLE POWER FROM EGO

## Nexus Escape PAD1500E

The new Nexus Escape PAD1500E from Ego provides access to power whenever it is needed. With a 240V AC power outlet and two USB ports, the unit can be used to power a range of equipment, from laptops and mobile phones to TVs, outdoor lighting and other equipment that requires access to a flexible, portable power source.

Ego says it has harnessed the power of its 56V Arc Lithium batteries to create a multi-purpose power source, which offers low-noise and zero emissions. The unit can be paired with any of the company's 56V Arc Lithium hand-held batteries, which range from 2.5Ah to 10Ah. Once charged, the batteries click into the Nexus Escape to provide a portable power source.

Weighing 0.5kg, with an integrated carrying handle, the unit is easy to transport and small enough to fit into a



Ego Nexus Escape

backpack. Its compact size and low weight mean the Nexus can be used as a temporary power source for multiple uses. With enough power to charge five laptops for 10 hours (when paired with a 7.5Ah battery), the company also says the Nexus is a solution for home offices or small businesses looking for reliable back-up power.

**The Nexus Escape PAD1500E retails at £84.99. It is also available as a kit, complete with battery and charger, at £219.**

COMMERCIAL



Kuhn Euromix 3 CL

Kuhn Farm Machinery has extended its range of diet feeders with cross-conveyor feeding with the addition of triple vertical auger models.

The Euromix 3 CL series includes four models with hopper capacities of 28m<sup>3</sup>, 33m<sup>3</sup>, 39m<sup>3</sup> and 45m<sup>3</sup>.

The company says three vertical augers, along with the polygonal shape of the hopper interior, are specifically designed to achieve rapid break-up of whole bales. The augers are designed with a continuous spiral and are fitted with seven knives with asymmetric teeth that have a self-cleaning effect. The auger knives work against two counter knives for faster chopping and optimum mixing.

# DIET FEEDER RANGE KUHN BE EXPANDED

## Euromix 3 CL series includes four models

All Euromix 3 CL models are included with an anti-overflow ring, increasing the height of the hopper to help prevent the loss of coarse and fibrous fodder during the chopping phases.

Feed distribution is via a large clearance hatch to the right or left of the machine and a broad cross-conveyor with a hydraulic motor at each end. The PVC belt structure of the conveyor ensures a quiet and efficient feed-out and easy maintenance. Rear discharger is also an option, to the right or left of the machine.

**Euromix 3 CL models have programmable weighing as standard, allowing pre-set mixing times, storage of ingredients and rations in the system memory, and the accurate control of rationing.**

AGRICULTURAL

# HE-VA GO SOLO

## Top Cutter launched by Opico

Aimed at conventional and organic farmers, HE-VA's Top Cutter Solo is the stand-alone version of its Top Cutter range of integrated vegetation and stubble control machines.

It is designed to roll, cut and bruise cover, catch crops and vegetable crops in a form of mechanical destruction, thus reducing the reliance on herbicides.

The standard twin-rotor machine is front-mounted, although it can be supplied with an optional three-point kit to mount it on the rear of the tractor. Being front- or rear-mounted, it can be used independently or in conjunction with a cultivator or drill.

A strong headstock and main frame holds the rotors in place and each rotor is mounted on rubber suspended arms to reduce shock loading and increase longevity. A robust steel canopy covers the rotors for safety protection, as well as reducing the potential for crop and soil being thrown onto the tractor. The individual rotors are 400mm in diameter, each with six blades mounted in a spiral formation to give a smooth rolling radius. The inherent rotary action means a low horsepower requirement is needed.

**The twin-rotor Top Cutter Solo is available in five widths: rigid in 3.00m and 4.00m; hydraulic folding in 4.00m, 5.00m and 6.00m widths. The twin-rotor provides twice the cutting action in one pass as opposed to single-rotor versions.**

COMMERCIAL

# ROBERINE MODERNISES 3 SERIES

## Automotive driving combined with 4WD

With the renewed Roberine 302 series, the manufacturer says the 3 Series has undergone a serious modernisation.

The company says that automotive driving combined with 4WD ensures ease of use and maximum grip on any surface. The series is equipped with an electric parking brake that can be operated via the CommandArm. Cruise control with memory function is also added.

With a new Stage 5 engine, the

machines comply with the latest emission regulations. Due to the ability to drive automotive in ECO mode, Diesel speed is reduced, thus less fuel consumption and emissions, and the engine makes less noise.

**The robust rear axle is terrain-following, aiding stability, and the electrically switchable weight transfer system gives a better result on a soft surfaces.**

AGRICULTURAL



# TRAILBLAZER RANGE UPDATED

## By Knight Farm Machinery

Knight Farm Machinery says it has completely updated the Trailblazer range, with models varying from the high-spec Trailblazer Pro through to the entry level Trailblazer-LITE.

Pro series machines include a number of innovations, such as a sprung drawbar that means it now matches the tractor pulling it, which offers a more even ride on the road and in the field.

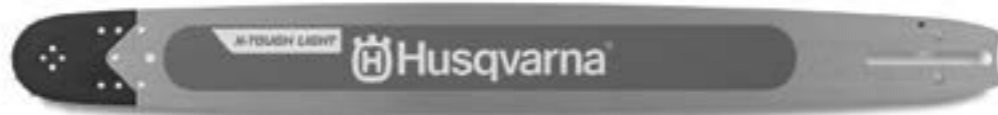
The new design includes simplified plumbing, an air purge system, auto-clean water tank fill and a new induction hopper that aids effective cleaning of the whole system after work and minimises risks to the operator and the environment.

The company says the Trailblazer-LITE sprayers offer an excellent level of performance from a simpler machine that will suit farmers working to a tighter budget. They feature a 3,600-litre spray tank, 24-metre gull-wing boom and active air suspended axle, with single nozzle bodies on a stainless steel spray line, with a Muller Smart 430 controller and Knight's MAXImiser plumbing system.

FORESTRY

# HUSQVARNA'S NEW PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPS LIGHTWEIGHT BARS

*X Tough-Light made with Tsumura/Suehiro Seiko Co*



Husqvarna has launched the new X-Tough Light lightweight bars that have been developed in partnership with Tsumura/Suehiro Seiko Co Ltd.

Gent Simmons, Global Director of Product Management for chainsaws at Husqvarna, said: "We're very excited to finally announce our partnership with Tsumura and Suehiro Seiko. Their ability to produce the best chainsaw bars is well recognised in the industry. Our mission is to offer our customers the best cutting system possible and these new bars are a vital part in that."

The company says the X-Tough Light benefits from a solid light-weight body with hard resin inserts that

reduce weight, making it is easy to manouvre but at the same time robust. Furthermore, its high stiffness gives a robust bar, in order to improve straightness in the cuts.

The three-rivet RSN mount and an optimised oil hole give reliability and performance. This, together with the rail hardness of the new bars, gives longer maintenance intervals. The sprocket nose adds to the high performance.

**The new 3/8" lightweight bars come in lengths up to 36"/90 cm and will be available from the end of July 2021. The bars fit Husqvarna chainsaws from 60cc and up with a large bar mount.**

COMMERCIAL



# JOHN DEERE ADDS TO ZERO-TURN RANGE

*Two new petrol models and two rear-discharge decks*

John Deere has expanded its commercial ZTrak ZTR range to include two new petrol models and two rear-discharge decks.

The company says its zero-turn mowers are based on a heavy-duty frame including a ROPS. The high-gauge PRO steel rotary cutting decks feature a deep mowing chamber designed to handle more grass for increased capacity.

The new Z740R semi-commercial mower is powered by a Kawasaki 23.5hp commercial grade petrol engine, while the Z950R commercial machine has a larger Kawasaki 27hp petrol engine and is equipped with Michelin Tweel X Turf airless radial tyres as standard (these are optional on the smaller model). Both mowers feature an adjustable operator platform and ComfortGlide suspension seat with armrests, with easy access to a quick-change height-of-cut dial and on-the-go tracking adjustments to maximise mowing performance.

The Z740R offers a choice of high-capacity 122 or 137cm (48 or 54in) side-discharge decks, while the larger Z950R is available with 137 or 152cm (54 or 60in) side-discharge and new 152cm (60in) rear-discharge decks. John Deere's Stage V diesel engine zero-turn mowers, the Z994R 24.7hp and Z997R 37.4hp models, can now be fitted with a choice of 152cm (60in) side-discharge and new 152 or 183cm (60 or 72in) rear-discharge decks in addition to the previously available side-discharge options, depending on model.

The new heavy-duty rear-discharge decks employ a single-belt deck design for easy maintenance and are mulching enabled for a cleaner finish. These have been introduced to the John Deere zero-turn mower range for the first time, specifically for those customers who require this particular configuration to meet contract requirements.



CONTACT [ Philip Tutty 00 353 87 6755237 or philip@southernmachinery.ie  
Chris York 07884 374445 or chris.york@hustlermowers.co.uk ]

# CONSIDERING BECOMING A HUSTLER ZERO TURN LAWNMOWER DEALER?



Hustler Turf Equipment have launched brand new homeowner models for 2021, The Dash XD, Raptor X, XD and XDX. The Hustler Trimstar walk behind has a new and improved rear discharge deck. Hustler invented the world's first Zero Turn Lawnmower in 1964 and have been producing innovative and market leading lawnmowers ever since.

The product range caters for customers with small lawns right through to the most demanding commercial operator who wants tough, reliable lawnmowers which can deliver superior performance. We offer flexible terms to suit individual dealer requirements and provide comprehensive sales and spare parts support service.



Distributed by Southern Machinery UK Limited:  
[www.hustlermowers.co.uk](http://www.hustlermowers.co.uk)

# uni-power

ENGINES • TRANSMISSIONS • PARTS





Chris Biddle is founder of *Service Dealer* and the current host of the *Inside Agri-Turf* podcast

# SELLING THE INDUSTRY

*We have plenty in our midst to tell their story to 'outsiders'*

**Y**ou know it. I know it. Everybody who works in and around this industry knows it.

This is an extraordinarily resilient business, driven by extraordinarily talented and committed individuals – many of whom have the same qualities as the pioneers from its formative years. Collectively they are its driving force.

We may be relatively unknown by the public at large, we rarely hit the headlines, and we have some difficulty in finding a phrase that adequately describes who we are, and what we do. But for spirit and personality, we take some beating.

Having worked in this industry for nigh-on 60 years, you'd think I'd got its number by now. But in the past few months producing my podcast I've encountered those who have reinforced my belief that for job satisfaction and qualities of 'never-say-never', this agri-turf machinery business is second to none. As proof, here are some individuals who prove the point for me.

After spending 23 years in the Army, seeing service in several war-zones and working as an instructor on Challenger tanks, Will Foster was looking for a fulfilling job in 'civvy street'. His first focus was on the maintenance of rolling stock in the railway sector, but somewhere along the line, and encouraged by the organisation Forces Farming, he was given a taste of agricultural engineering. He 'got the bug', joined Chandlers Farm Equipment and has recently moved to Ben Burgess. Will came up with the memorable line that few of us have ever heard in relation to ag engineering when he told me he found it 'glamorous and glitzy'.

Someone with a rather different story is Tom Johnston. I spoke with him during Mental Health Awareness week. He had experienced depression and a series of mental health issues as he took his first steps into agricultural engineering, a career that he had always dreamed off.

For a 'tractor-mad' boy, brought up on a farm estate, he never wanted to do anything else but work with tractors and combines. However, his bouts of depression kicked in during a couple of spells working with ag dealers in his late teens which resulted in difficulties working with colleagues. Although he had gained practical experience, he decided to return to college (Outridge) to study ag engineering where he gained excellent marks. On leaving college, a chance opportunity resulted in a job on a golf course.

He immediately connected with the turfcare industry which he says provides him with enormous job satisfaction – and a degree of mental stability. He's recently started his own 'man and a van' repair business, providing service to customers across Fife (much in the way that many established dealers started out) and says that should the opportunity arise, he would seek to obtain a franchise.

## Role models

If those two examples reinforce the image of a stereotypical male-dominated industry, I had the opportunity to chat with Laura Bassnett, who'd just been announced as winner of the Technician For 2021 along with runner-up Lauren Savage.

Is this the moment that the 'glass ceiling' of the industry really falls in? Probably not, but it is a visible indication that the industry offers great opportunity to those who want a challenge – and to do something different.

Laura came to the industry after spending some years in Australia and New Zealand, where the outdoor life and the countryside really suited her. She enrolled as a student on an ag engineering course at Reaseheath where she was older than her, all male, fellow students. Apparently, her travel experience and their young engineering skills blended well.

On leaving college, she contacted local dealer Ernest Doe who gave her the opportunity to join the service team at its Fyfield branch. Speaking with Laura, you are immediately struck by her enthusiasm for the job and her total commitment to learn.

For some time, I've been thinking that what the industry needs more than ever are young role models who can represent everything that this industry has to offer.

We have these people in our midst. They, along with the likes of Sean Whiteway, a student at Harper Adams University and winner of the recent Agricultural Engineers Association Scholarship Award, are ideally placed to sell the industry – particularly to those with no background in agriculture.

These are indeed exciting times. We operate in a dynamic business. One with amazing opportunities fuelled by incredible technological advancements, and underpinned by a solid and highly respected heritage.

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

### JULY 2021

- 2-4 **Devon County Show**  
[www.devoncountyshow.co.uk](http://www.devoncountyshow.co.uk)
- 3-4 **Royal Isle of Wight County Show**  
[www.iwcountyshow.co.uk](http://www.iwcountyshow.co.uk)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 6-11 **Hampton Court Garden Festival**  
[www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-hampton-court-palace-garden-festival](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-hampton-court-palace-garden-festival)
- 9-11 **Kent County Show**  
<https://kcas.org.uk/>  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 10 **Newport Show**  
[www.newportshow.co.uk](http://www.newportshow.co.uk)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 11 **Rutland Food & Farming Festival**  
[www.rutlandcountyshow.com](http://www.rutlandcountyshow.com)
- 13-16 **Great Yorkshire Show**  
[www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk](http://www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk)
- 19-22 **Royal Welsh Show**  
[www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh](http://www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 21-22 **BIGGA Festival Of Turf, Warwickshire Event Centre**  
[www.bigga.org.uk/event/festival-of-turf](http://www.bigga.org.uk/event/festival-of-turf)
- 21-25 **RHS Flower Show – Tatton Park**  
[www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-flower-show-tatton-park](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-flower-show-tatton-park)
- 23-25 **The Game Fair, Ragley Hall**  
[www.thegamefair.org](http://www.thegamefair.org)
- 24 **Mid Devon Show**  
[www.middevonshow.co.uk](http://www.middevonshow.co.uk)
- 27-29 **Sports & Grounds Expo, Malvern**  
[www.sportsandgrounds.events](http://www.sportsandgrounds.events)
- 27-29 **New Forest & Hampshire County Show**  
[www.newforestshow.co.uk](http://www.newforestshow.co.uk)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 30-31 **Border Union Show**  
[www.borderunion.co.uk](http://www.borderunion.co.uk)  
POSTPONED TO 2022

### AUGUST 2021

- 4 **North Devon Show**  
[www.northdevonshow.com](http://www.northdevonshow.com)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 6-7 **Dumfries Agricultural Show**  
[www.dumfriesshow.co.uk](http://www.dumfriesshow.co.uk)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 8 **Ripley Show**  
[www.ripleyshow.co.uk](http://www.ripleyshow.co.uk)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 8-10 **spoga-gafa 2021, Cologne**  
[www.spogagafa.com](http://www.spogagafa.com)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 13-14 **Shrewsbury Flower Show**  
[www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk](http://www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 17-19 **Pembrokeshire County Show**  
[www.pembsshow.org](http://www.pembsshow.org)
- 25-26 **Staffordshire County Show**  
[www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show](http://www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show)
- 26-29 **BBC Gardeners' World Live – Birmingham NEC**  
[www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com](http://www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com)
- 27-29 **Bath & West Country Festival**  
[www.bathandwest.com/bath-and-west-country-festival](http://www.bathandwest.com/bath-and-west-country-festival)
- 31-2/09 **The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC**  
[www.cvshow.com](http://www.cvshow.com)

### SEPTEMBER 2021

- 4 **Alresford Show**  
[www.alresfordshow.co.uk](http://www.alresfordshow.co.uk)  
CANCELLED
- 5 **Cranleigh Show**  
[www.cranleighshow.co.uk](http://www.cranleighshow.co.uk)  
CANCELLED
- 5-8 **Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC**  
[www.autumnfair.com](http://www.autumnfair.com)
- 9-11 **Royal Cornwall Show**  
[www.royalcornwallshow.org](http://www.royalcornwallshow.org)  
POSTPONED TO 2022

- 11 **Usk Show**  
[www.uskshow.co.uk](http://www.uskshow.co.uk)
- 11 **Romsey Show**  
[www.romseyshow.co.uk](http://www.romseyshow.co.uk)
- 14-16 **Glee 2021**  
[www.gleebirmingham.com](http://www.gleebirmingham.com)
- 16 **Tillage-LIVE, Down Ampney**  
[www.tillage-live.com](http://www.tillage-live.com)
- 21-26 **Chelsea Flower Show**  
[www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show/](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show/)
- 22-25 **Balmoral Show, Belfast**  
[www.balmoralshow.co.uk](http://www.balmoralshow.co.uk)
- 23-25 **APF Exhibition 2021, Ragely Estate**  
[www.apfexhibition.co.uk](http://www.apfexhibition.co.uk)  
POSTPONED TO 2022

### OCTOBER 2021

- 6 **The Dairy Show, Bath & West Showground**  
[www.bathandwest.com/the-dairy-show](http://www.bathandwest.com/the-dairy-show)
- 19-23 **EIMA International, Bologna**  
[www.eima.it/en](http://www.eima.it/en)
- 20-22 **Green Industry & Equipment Expo 2021, Louisville, USA**  
[www.gie-expo.com](http://www.gie-expo.com)

### NOVEMBER 2021

- 3-4 **GMA Saltex 2021, Birmingham NEC**  
[www.gmasaltex.co.uk](http://www.gmasaltex.co.uk)
- 6-10 **SIMA, Paris**  
[www.en.simaonline.com/](http://www.en.simaonline.com/)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 9-10 **Midlands Machinery Show, Newark Showground**  
[www.midlandsmachineryshow.com](http://www.midlandsmachineryshow.com)
- 14-20 **Agritechnica, Hanover**  
[www.agritechnica.com/en](http://www.agritechnica.com/en)  
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 17 **AgriScot, The Royal Highland Ctr**  
[www.agriscot.co.uk](http://www.agriscot.co.uk)
- 25 **Service Dealer Conference & Awards**  
[www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk)
- 24-25 **CropTec 2021, East of England Showground**  
[www.croptecshow.com](http://www.croptecshow.com)
- 29-30 **Royal Welsh Winter Fair**  
[www.rwas.wales/winter-fair](http://www.rwas.wales/winter-fair)

Sponsored by



# JIM GREEN

THE PRICE IS RIGHT



## MARGINAL DECISION

*Are dealers feeling confident enough to raise prices this season?*

**T**hroughout my tenure of contributing to this esteemed journal – so we're talking from the time when it was written by quill and delivered by carrier pigeon – one of the many issues that raises its head time and again is that of pricing, and more specifically, margin.

Dealers, while a charitable bunch, are not in this game for the good of their health. They're running a business – and one that needs to be consistently profitable to remain in existence.

A bane of dealers' lives in recent years therefore, is the constant discounting seen in the market, especially it must be said from the online-only retailers. With their overheads that are considerably lower than traditional bricks-and-mortar dealers, it has been felt like these pirates of the internet have been able to reduce and BOGOF to their hearts' content.

In the olden days, when dealers used to be able to get together to discuss such things at events such as the *Service Dealer* Conference, this notion of online-only retailers spoiling it for everyone else with their crazy pricing would never fail to be a point of (heated) debate raised by attendees. There has been a real sense of an unfair playing field with traditional dealers not wanting, but

feeling obliged, to get dragged into a discounting spiral.

A conversation with a customer that many dealers will be sadly all too familiar with, will commence with an opening gambit along the lines of: "Well, I've seen it cheaper online!" While the temptation is, of course, to follow this up with a gesture towards the door and a swift two-fingered salute, it is a genuinely problematic state of affairs.

But is there a glimmer of hope regarding pricing in this strangest of seasons?

### Less stock, higher prices

Through discussions that *Service Dealer* has been conducting with dealers around the country via the magic of the internet (it's not all bad!), an interesting development seems to have arisen out of the scarcity of stock that all have experienced thus far in 2021.

The mag has been told that dealers are feeling confident enough to actually put their prices up this season, perhaps for the first time in some while – and at the same time, incredibly, not feel under pressure to offer any discount.

Dealers are telling us they hope this will be a trend that's seen across the network and, indeed, one that will remain even when we get beyond the current crisis.

Surely any situation that allows

dealers to make greater margin across everything they sell should be grasped with enthusiasm?!

When there are these lower stock levels across the whole industry, it does, of course, mean there's also less for our online-only-discounter friends to sell. As a consequence, some traditional dealers have been happy recently to tell their customers this is what a product costs – without fear that the punter will go home, whip out their device and frantically search for undercutting websites!

It's simple old-school economics: supply and demand. If you've got something that a customer wants at the moment, you should be able to sell it for what it's truly worth. Dealers are telling customers, if they desire a product, they should buy it today at that price, because it simply might not be there if they wait until next week.

It's also a similar situation with second-hand equipment. Prices in that market, for machinery across the board, are being seen higher than ever.

It would be wonderful to think that all dealers might have the confidence now to not be shy in having conversations with their customers regarding costs. Letting them know that prices must increase this year will be happening across all other sectors.



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Emily Waterman, Garden Tools & Engineering.  
STIHL Dealer since 2008

**Retailers like Emily at Garden Tools & Engineering love being a STIHL Approved Dealer. And it's not hard to see why.**

At STIHL, our goal is simple. To make sure our dealers' customers benefit from the ultimate sales and service experience. So, we support you with an industry leading delivery and logistics network. We keep you up to date with all the latest service related developments. And we have a customer service team always on hand to deal with any enquiries.

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