

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

MAY/JUNE 2021

BACKYARDING TO THE FUTURE

The OPEI's Kris Kiser tells us how dealers in the States are facing similar challenges to the UK and how they are looking ahead

Right show, right time, right audience

The 61st Doe Show with a difference

Claas revisions

Changes to manufacturer's best-seller range

Dealer profile

Charles Groundcare & Machinery on finding the right blend



COMBINE SECTOR IN ITS SIGHTS

New Holland's key target sectors for 2021

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to May/June 2021's edition of *Service Dealer* magazine – which continuing the sustainable theme kicked off last time, is delivered to you from now on in a compostable starch wrapping.

You can read in this issue the results of the survey we conducted recently via our *Weekly Update*, asking you, our dealer readers, if you have been experiencing difficulties obtaining stock so far in 2021? As you can probably guess, we received a fairly deafening yes in response!

From what we're being told by dealers, it sounds like there isn't a product sector across domestic, commercial, ATV or agriculture that isn't feeling the pinch one way or another. Be it delays in taking hold of wholegoods or parts for repair – everything is suffering. It certainly feels right now that how manufacturers cope with this situation and how they work with their dealers, is going to define this year. As with most everything, communication is going to be key.

As we hear from OPEI's Kris Kiser in the States this issue though, it is by no means a UK-centric problem. Shortages are being felt worldwide, with many predicting it will most likely take some months to resolve – if not the rest of the year.

It's certainly worrying when dealers tell us they fear that if circumstances do not improve, they may be forced into making quite fundamental decisions about the future of their businesses. Perhaps what this could mean though, is that a lot less discounting will be seen from the online-only retailers, resulting in a levelling-up of pricing for the end-users. Dealers who have been there for their communities throughout this pandemic, could be rewarded with new customers coming in through their newly reopened, showroom doors.

Providing, of course, that they have something to sell to them.



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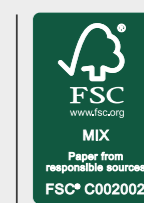
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NEWS

LATEST INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS

DEALERS

TUCKWELL COMPLETES BURDEN PURCHASE

All employees retained

P Tuckwell Ltd, the John Deere dealer across the East of England, has completed the acquisition of Burden Bros Agri Ltd covering the South-East.

The acquisition, which has been agreed by respective owners James Tuckwell and Dale Burden, will see all employees and the three branch locations at Stockbury and Ivychurch in Kent and Framfield in East Sussex retained.

The full terms of the agreement are not being disclosed but it has been announced that this acquisition has the full support and approval of John Deere Ltd and does not involve any other businesses in the BB⁴ Group of Companies.

Burden Bros Agri Ltd was founded in 2007 when it took on the John Deere agricultural franchise for North Kent. Subsequent expansion saw the business take on additional territory in East Sussex, parts of Surrey and the remainder of Kent. The John Deere Turf franchise was added following the acquisition of the Godfreys business for the area.

Tuckwells was established in 1954 and has been a John Deere dealer since 1965. Operating from seven locations across Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, the business employs over 200 people. In addition, the business runs Tuckwell Farms, a 1,500-acre working farm in Suffolk. Tuckwells was one of the first dealers in the UK to take on the John Deere Turf franchise.

"Dale and his team have built a strong agricultural and turf business throughout the South-East of England since the company began in 2007," said James Tuckwell. "We're excited to be given this opportunity to expand our business and to build on their success. We welcome the Burden Bros Agri team to the Tuckwell family and look forward to working together with them and their customers."

John Deere Limited Division Sales Manager Joedy Ibbotson commented: "I would like to express our gratitude to Dale and the Burden family for the outstanding job they

have done in supporting and growing the John Deere brand in South-East England since becoming a dealer nearly 14 years ago.

"We're delighted that they have reached this agreement with Tuckwells, which ensures the continuity of the Burden Bros team and dealership outlets within the John Deere network. This is a great fit, combining two businesses with closely aligned values based on outstanding customer service with a focus on precision technology and connected support."

Dale Burden added: "Whilst this is a time of mixed emotions for me and my brothers, we're pleased that a deal has been reached between the Burden and Tuckwell families. We've known each other for many years and I'm confident that the business is in safe hands and is well placed to continue its development and growth. I believe there will be many opportunities for the team and our customers will benefit from the strengths that come from this combined dealership."



Dale Burden and James Tuckwell

INDUSTRY

KRAMP MARKS 70TH ANNIVERSARY

With Generations campaign

Kramp has announced that it is marking its 70th anniversary with a campaign that celebrates the multi-generational 'Kramp experience' for partners, suppliers and employees.

The Generations campaign began in mid-February with a series of online quizzes, the first inviting users to test their farming knowledge, followed by a series of activities in collaboration with their partners, suppliers and new Kramp product announcements throughout 2021.

Some of the campaign highlights include a Kramp Cookbook featuring recipes and interviews with customers across Europe, a social influencer partnership with dairy farmer Tom Pemberton, YouTube How-to video experience, along with digital content that celebrates the day-to-day lives of its farming communities.

Eddie Perdok, Kramp CEO, said, "Kramp is a family business spanning several generations, myself being a 3rd-generation member of the Perdok family. Our multi-generational organisation reflects the agricultural sector where farms and dealerships are passed down through families.

"By understanding and valuing the past we can empower our customers to move forward into the future by continuously providing relevant product, added value services and expertise that makes us the essential partner in the agricultural, construction and forest and grass care industries of Europe.

"The pandemic has been difficult for many which is why we want to recognise the essential work of our customers and celebrate the successes of the last seven decades."



PEOPLE

NEW MD JOINS STIHL GB

Kay Green takes up role

Kay Green joined STIHL Great Britain in March as Managing Director, following the retirement of long-standing predecessor Robin Lennie in December 2020.

For the past three years, Kay has been UK and Ireland Country Manager for Hasbro UK Ltd. During her career at Hasbro she also held a number of senior commercial roles including director-level positions in both sales and marketing, and a two-year period as Nordic Country Manager in Copenhagen.

STIHL said Kay joins a thriving and resilient company, with the business recording over a decade of year-on-year growth and a doubling of turnover from £57m in 2008 to £125m in 2020.

Commenting on her new role, Kay said, "I'm delighted to be joining this iconic global brand and to be building on Robin's tremendous legacy. 2020 was a record year for STIHL GB, despite the global circumstances. The business saw growth across most markets and



Kay Green

categories thanks to the support and commitment of the STIHL Approved Dealer network and, of course, our professional and domestic end-users. I'm very much looking forward to meeting our partners across the industry as soon as the situation allows.

"It's a genuinely exciting time to be taking the helm at STIHL GB. We have a game-changing new range of pro cordless tools launching this year, continued investment in consumer brand building and plans continuing apace for our sustainable new GB headquarters in Surrey. 2021 has all the potential to be another landmark year for the brand and our customers."

Kay is STIHL GB's first female Managing Director and joins an ever-increasing number of women in senior positions across the global STIHL business. Kay spent her childhood growing up on a farm and is married with two teenage children.

DEALERS

RAVENHILL TAKES ON CORVUS

New partnership established

Boss Off-Road Vehicles has announced the latest Corvus 4x4 dealership partnership is with Scottish agricultural, construction and groundcare dealer Ravenhill Limited.

"We're very proud that Ravenhill Ltd has become the latest addition to the Corvus dealer network," said Phil Everett, Boss ORV's Managing Director, "and we're excited to add their expertise in groundcare, construction and agriculture into the Corvus team of dealers."

"We welcome all five of their branches: Aberdeen, Dingwall, Elgin, Maud and Turriff, into the Corvus family. It's great to see that the future of the Corvus brand in North-East Scotland will be in such good hands."



Ravenhill's Groundcare Sales Manager, Brian Smith and Managing Director, John Wills

John Wills, Ravenhill's Managing Director, said, "We're excited to join the Corvus family and very much look forward to the opportunities this new partnership will bring."

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

INDUSTRY

ATCO AND THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION JOIN FORCES

To celebrate double centenary

ATCO and the Royal British Legion both celebrate their centenaries this year and to mark this historic double, a proportion of the sales value from three specific mowers will be donated to the military charity.



Stiga, owner of the ATCO brand, is giving £20 from the sale of each Liner 16S and Quatro 16S walk-behind mower and £100 for each GT43HR tractor model, throughout 2021, to the Royal British Legion. Each mower will be decorated with a unique decal to support this partnership.

The campaign is the brainchild of Amanda Kincaid, Stiga's Marketing Manager, who served for 23 years in the army. "I contacted the Royal British Legion to see if they could work with us to celebrate ATCO's centenary and had absolutely no idea that it was a double celebration," she said.

Gary Whitney, Managing Director of Stiga said, "The Royal British Legion is the nation's leading Armed Forces' charity and has been supporting serving and ex-service personnel and their families for 100 years. We're delighted that our two centenaries are being marked in a way that will bring practical help to those in the Armed Forces' community."

Ben France, Head of Corporate Partnerships at the Royal British Legion said, "We're delighted to be working in partnership with ATCO and we're very grateful for their generous pledge of donations on their products. It's a wonderful way to mark both centenaries and donations raised are used to provide life-long support to serving and ex-serving members of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependents through hardships, injuries and bereavements."

ATCO was founded in 1921 by Charles H Pugh in Birmingham, where he manufactured the first mass-produced petrol lawnmower. The name ATCO is from the Pugh-owned Atlas Chain Company. He wanted to stamp a name on each chain link and the new abbreviated name was invented.

TRADE SHOWS



SUMMER TRADE SHOWS SHIFT DATES

Festival of Turf and Cereals

Organisers of two trade shows due to take place before restrictions could hopefully be fully lifted this summer, have moved back the dates of their events.

First the British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) confirmed that its first Festival of Turf will now take place on 21 and 22 July 2021.

The Festival of Turf is a two-day event that will take place in the predominantly outdoor setting of the Warwickshire Event Centre and is designed to bring together golf greenkeepers, groundsmen and many others for the first time since BTME 2020, over 18 months previously.

BIGGA said the Festival of Turf will welcome BIGGA members and others in the turf industry to the 30-acre Warwickshire Event Centre, with a wide range of vendors and trade stalls and what the association describes as "entertaining twists" that bring to life the festival element of the event.

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton said, "The roadmap out of lockdown announced by the Prime Minister provided incredibly welcome news for the country and the association's members, not least because it provided a date for the reopening of golf courses in England and a potential return to normality for us all. It also presented an opportunity for BIGGA to host the Festival of Turf as the spectacular of sports and amenity turf maintenance that we had hoped for when we first announced this event last year."

Also having changed its date is the Cereals Event, which has moved to 30 June – 1 July.

Event organiser, Alli McEntyre, said, "Speaking with exhibitors and visitors we looked at the choice of having a restricted event in early June or moving the date and potentially having no restrictions, and the majority opted for the latter.

"We wanted to act quickly in making this decision to give everyone certainty so they can plan ahead," she added. "This is a really positive move for visitors, exhibitors and the event, as it will maximise the opportunities for all without lockdown restrictions in place."

DEALERS



Richard Hughes at Hughes Bros

TWO KUBOTA DEALERS EXPAND INTO GROUND CARE

Add to manufacturer's tractor offering

Kubota (UK) Ltd has announced that two of its machinery dealers have added the ground care equipment range to their Kubota tractor businesses.

Shropshire-based dealers Hughes Bros and Battlefield Machinery have extended their product offerings to include a full range of compact tractors from 18-60hp, RTV utility vehicles, and commercial and domestic ride-on mowers, allowing both dealerships to expand into new markets.

"We're extremely pleased to be able to support Hughes Bros and Battlefield Machinery with the opportunity for further growth in these important sectors," explained Tim Yates,

Agricultural and Ground Care Sales Manager, Kubota (UK). "This partnership will help Kubota to further strengthen its position in these key markets with the ability to cross-sell between agriculture and ground care customers." Hughes Bros Agricultural Engineers, based at Oswestry, was established in 1973 by brothers Gary, Roy and Roger Hughes. A Kubota tractor dealer since 2012, the family-run business also has Kubota implements and Vicon machinery among its portfolio.

"There are great opportunities ahead, supplementing our agricultural business with Kubota's prestigious ground care equipment," said Richard Hughes, Sales Manager and Partner. "We've been

looking after many ground care customers with parts and servicing – now we can reinforce that with sales of new equipment."

Battlefield Machinery was formed in 2017 as a Kubota tractor dealer, based in Shrewsbury. Run by company Directors Richard Evans and Meyrick Pope, the business is one that comprises a team of 14, of which six are mobile engineers.

"We're delighted to have been given this opportunity to expand our business into new sectors," said Company Director Richard Evans. "Ground care fits very well with what we already do, and the ability to now provide sales, service and support to schools, golf clubs, parks and sports grounds is a fantastic opportunity for all involved.

"Our customer base has evolved, and a lot of that is linked to the prestigious brands we supply and service," he added. "We also want to apply our 'can-do' approach to customer service and back-up to the ground care sector. All our customers must benefit from the same level of service and support."



Richard Evans and Meyrick Pope at Battlefield Machinery

DEALERS



HUNT COMPLETES SMART PURCHASE

and announces that Smarts will be Kramer dealers

Following completion of the purchase of Smart Ag Services, Hunt Forest Group has announced that Smarts are now Kramer dealers for their John Deere area of responsibility.

Hunts said this decision helps align the business with its parent company so that customers experience more consistency across the trading area.

This appointment follows the decision by JCB to terminate the dealer agreement held by Smarts, following the purchase of the company.

"During the transition of the business to Hunt Forest, it was planned to continue with all of Smarts suppliers. It's a surprise that JCB should take such a dramatic decision when Smarts remains in business and our wish was to continue what I considered to be a

very successful relationship," commented Colin Smart.

"We're a business that's well known for customer satisfaction and outstanding support, which partnering franchises have benefitted from to build excellent levels of market share. The product is only part of the story and Smarts as a business has been instrumental in the success of JCB, with market share well in excess of 65%."

Although the agreement to supply JCB machines ended on 12 March, JCB requested Smarts continue to supply parts and service support and warranty coverage through its network of technicians for the next six months.

Paul Burnett, Business Development Director of Hunt Forest, said, "In Kramer we have a highly reliable and quality product

that we excel within our current area. Using this recipe of staff attitude, knowledge and understanding of what customer support really means, I've no doubt Smarts can replicate that success with Kramer.

"After completing a business-wide product roadshow for all staff, we're in great shape to hit the ground running and very much look forward to inviting new and existing customers to experience the Kramer product.

"The company has a high level of stock with demonstrators available, and all HFG machines are supplied in special colours to signify that we can offer something a little different. To prove that, we will support all new sales with a four-year or 4,000-hour warranty, funded by Hunt Forest as an introductory offer until July."

INDUSTRY

VANMAC TAKES ON PROGRESSIVE MOWERS

New home in UK

Vanmac Ltd has announced that it has been appointed as full-line distributor of the Progressive range of trailed and mounted rotary mowers for the professional grounds and sports turf market.

Having represented Progressive in the turf farm sector for several years, the extension of the partnership to incorporate distribution to the professional amenity sector has been effective from mid-March 2021. Progressive designs and manufactures rotary finishing mowers, which are suitable for a wide range of applications, from golf

courses to sports fields, turf producers and local authorities.

As part of the deal, available in the UK for the first time will be the tri-deck TDR-X contour mower. Along with other machines in the range, the mower takes advantage of Progressive's Pro Lift-N-Turn technology, allowing the operator to temporarily raise the decks with the PTO still engaged.

"Expanding our agreement with Progressive to cover the professional turf care market is fantastic news for Vanmac Ltd," commented Area Sales Manager Jeremy Vincent. "Its range

is renowned for delivering durability and fantastic cut quality and it complements our other product lines, including Trilo and Brouwer Kesmac, fantastically.

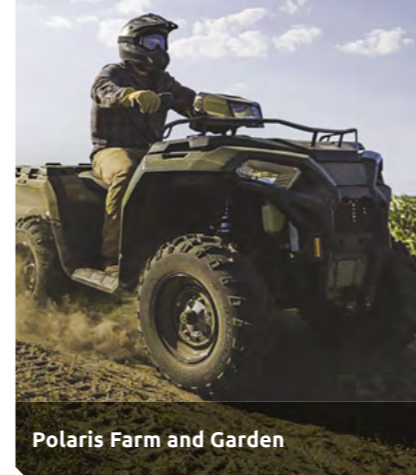
"We can now offer those managing turf surfaces a comprehensive collection of equipment, together with parts service, all from under one roof. Over the next few months we look forward to building a network of dedicated dealers to assist with the all-important back-up support, and beginning demonstrations as soon as we can."



DEALERS

POLARIS APPOINTS NEW DEALER

In the West Midlands



Polaris Farm and Garden

Polaris has appointed Farm and Garden Machinery Ltd as an authorised dealer for Shropshire and the West Midlands.

A family-run business based in Bridgnorth, Farm and Garden Machinery now stocks a full range of Polaris utility vehicles as well as genuine Polaris parts and accessories.

Set up in 2003 by Neil and Andrea Morris, Neil has over 20 years of experience servicing, repairing and selling UTVs and ATVs. He studied Agricultural Engineering at Walford Agricultural College and gained valuable experience at an agricultural machinery dealer for a few years before setting up his own business with his wife Andrea.

Andrea has an accountancy background and looks after the administration, marketing and

accountancy side of the business.

"I grew up on a small farm in South Shropshire and I've always tinkered with engines and farm machinery from a young age," said Neil.

"We've been looking to take on a franchise that provides reliable side-by-side vehicles and ATVs and Polaris is the perfect fit.

"The children's range is a bonus and we're excited to have that on offer for our customers."

Richard Coleby, Polaris Britain's National Sales Manager, said of Farm and Garden Machinery: "They are in the ideal location to serve our customers in Shropshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands, and they offer all the right experience to provide excellent sales and support."

DEALERS

ATTLEFIELD FARM MACHINERY AWARDED BY SPEARHEAD

Named their Dealer of the Year



Attlefield Farm Machinery's owner Henry White with Jack Norton, Spearhead's Area Sales Manager

Attlefield Farm Machinery, based near Daventry and owned by 29-year-old Henry White, has been named Spearhead's Dealer of the Year 2020.

The dealership first stocked Spearhead equipment three years ago and during the past 18 months, its sales performance placed it at the top of Spearhead's sales league table.

Henry White comes from a well-known family with industry heritage. His father, Patrick White, runs PJ Services, the international haulage company.

The White family also run farms in Poland. They used a 450-9S flex-wing topper to bring the farm back into production after 20 years of being fallow. As a youngster this, Henry says, first sparked his interest in the product.

In his early 20s, Henry started selling quad bikes. Today he operates from brand-new purpose-built premises with Spearhead equipment at the helm. The Hellidon site includes showrooms, offices and workshops.

Attlefield said that after sales service is a huge focus for them. Stocking plenty of Spearhead parts, they strive to get machinery back in the field quickly.

Henry said, "Holding a continual stock of the Multicut 460, 620, and the new Sniper series flail mowers has been

key to our success. They're the type of item you must be able to supply immediately."

Attlefield believes its success is also down to the fantastic relationship between themselves and Spearhead. Working closely with Jack Norton (Spearhead Area Sales Manager) Henry said he is always on the front foot with Spearhead developments. He is also in daily contact with Steven Nel (Spearhead's Parts Manager), ensuring he is carrying the correct items to support the wide range of products.

Henry continued, "I'm delighted that Attlefield Farm Machinery has been named Spearhead Dealer of the Year. It's great recognition for the team here and I'm happy to keep building on the high standards that we have set ourselves.

"To my advantage, Spearhead takes centre stage here and I believe we give the brand the energy and attention it rightly deserves.

"There's incredible demand for robust mowing and cutting machines across the UK. I couldn't be prouder to align my business with the quality of Spearhead."

Spearhead nominates a Dealer of the Year annually, basing the decision on dealer promise and success.



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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RIGHT SHOW, RIGHT TIME, RIGHT AUDIENCE

Machinery in Doe's yard for the auction



Earlier this year, dealer Ernest Doe proved an online event can work if everything clicks. Sales Director, Graham Parker, spoke to Service Dealer Editor, STEVE GIBBS, about staging a show with a difference

The first few months of 2021 have seen a considerable level of discussion within the industry regarding how our trade show landscape might look this year.

Understandably event organisers are the keenest to get the calendar up and running again. I think many of us last year probably believed 2021 would be when things got back to some sort of normal. The way the year has kicked off however, those thoughts may yet prove a tad ambitious.

As happened throughout 2020, events have been called off, or shifted in line with government roadmaps, with a degree of regularity. Some organisers, meanwhile, have chosen to find alternative methods to stage their gatherings.

There have been conflicting reports about how successful virtual shows have proven during the pandemic. Getting punters to sit at their laptop screens, attending presentations or visiting virtual stands doesn't really seem to have ever caught fire.

One show organiser, however, now has tangible evidence in cold, hard sales figures, that if you stage something attractive that customers are genuinely interested in and is of benefit to them, they will log on in their droves.

A show with a difference

Graham Parker, Sales Director at Ernest Doe, has run the Doe Show at the company's base in Ulting, Essex, for the past 20 years. He told me it had got to October last year when it became painfully clear that there would be no way they would be able to run a physical event this February.

"We started at the beginning of November, planning for the show with a difference, and it all came about from there," he explained.

A crucial addition to the show, that came out of this planning, was the decision to run an online machinery auction as part of it, with help from Cheffins. Graham says he visited the professional auctioneers last year and thrashed out a deal with them. The second major element of the organisation was to put together the show-specific micro-site. "That was not started until late November," Graham says, "so it was all pulled together really, in a six-week period."

This makes it even more remarkable that before the 61st Doe Show had fully closed, it was already obvious the online event would be at least the third most successful show in its history, sales-wise. Once all of the auction results were finally received, Graham confirmed that the 2021 edition did indeed turn out to be their best ever in terms of the value of orders taken. An incredible achievement by anybody's reckoning.

"I was flabbergasted, quite honestly," Graham said. "I think we were lucky in that we caught the mood of the time. There was clearly an appetite for an event such as this, with everybody stuck at home."

Graham said it became obvious early on that the event was doing well. "We were way ahead of 2020's edition quite quickly," he confirmed. "As you can imagine, we were very chuffed with that."

Asked if the show had exceeded expectations and if he thought it would be as financially successful as it was, Graham replied, "No I didn't. I had a figure in my head that I wanted to get to – and we blasted through that!"

In terms of attendance, Graham explained, "For the auction we had over 100,000 views and we sold to something like over 600 different customers."

"At a normal Doe Show we'd get around 10,000 people turn up. We had 12,000 come for the 50th anniversary event a few years ago, but a normal show is 8-10,000."

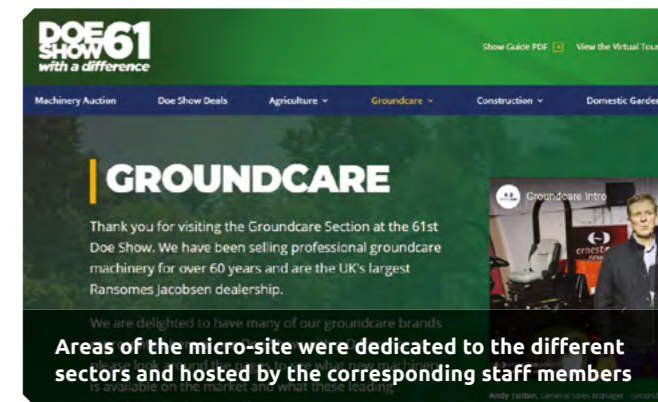
"So this year we clearly opened ourselves up to a bigger audience, across the UK and Europe, because in the auction we also sold items to Germany, Belgium, Finland, Holland and quite a bit to the Republic of Ireland."

Visitor attraction

To make sure that what they put on was an attractive proposition to their customer base, Ernest Doe populated their event micro-site with videos, all starring their own



Ernest Doe Sales Director, Graham Parker, alongside his dealership colleagues, presented videos on the Doe Show 2021's micro-site



staff. I asked Graham what the thinking was behind this and whether staff were keen to be in front of the camera?

"I wanted the video aspects of the show to be our own people, rather than just taking generic bits from the internet," he said. "I wanted them to be the stars."

"Some weren't too happy to start with, but we got into a routine. The crucial aspect was that customers could watch and recognise staff members that they knew – which is exactly what I wanted. It was important to make it a really personal thing."

To make sure that their efforts were then seen by enough customers it was important that the show was promoted in the right way. Graham told me they doubled their marketing budget to aid this – a hefty cost. He also singled out their Marketing Manager, Hayley Hill, as being a marvel with getting the organisation spot on.

While there were clearly significant costs involved, they were much less than running a normal show, which was reflected in the show's profitability. "The end result, we're over the moon with," said Graham.

Were there any unforeseen headaches, I asked. "Not really, no," Graham replied. "We planned and planned and planned – and we seemed to think of everything. I also have to say Cheffins are a very professional company who are very easy to do business with. Really down-to-earth, good people."



The auction sold machinery across the dealership's horticulture, groundcare, agricultural and construction lines

A repeat performance?

Due to the success with the online edition, the question presents itself, would Doe consider repeating the format or is the intention to get people back on site?

"We want people back, pressing the flesh," Graham told me. "I'm still really keen to have a physical Doe Show next year, where people can come along and meet the manufacturers and meet us. It's our shop window for the year. It allows people to see what we can do and all the brands we represent. So without a doubt we intend to go back to a physical show. However, I think there might be an element of auction to it, potentially including online again, but we still have to make a final decision on that."

Doe appears to have struck on a format that was just what their customers were looking for at the start of 2021. It certainly appears that the auction element was especially well received. On top of this the company made good new machinery sales too, and where they picked up enquiries for equipment purchases from customers outside their trading area, they passed these leads back to the manufacturers, who in turn could pass on to their local dealers.

"I'm very pleased to be the first dealer who has done something like this," Graham confirmed, "because I do think others may follow and do something similar."

I asked him whether he thought something similar, but on a smaller scale, might perhaps work for other dealers

who may not be able to exhibit at their local county show this summer?

"I'm not so sure that would have enough attraction," was his honest answer. "We had 1,300 lots in our auction and it did attract an awful lot of people from all over. If you're doing something on a much smaller scale, I don't think that brings the appeal, really."

What Doe presented this year was clearly the right format, at the right time, for the right audience.

Could other shows replicate its success? Perhaps ones with a strong sales component might be able to. Online events where visitors are simply browsing virtual displays don't really appear to be cutting it for audiences, as they simply cannot replicate that live, in-person atmosphere.

Will we get back to in-person events this year is the million-dollar question? Do visitors and exhibitors even want to get back to those any time soon is also a key question?

As we move through the year it will certainly be interesting to see if all of those events that have dates in the calendar manage to stick to them.

Heaven forbid we arrive in early 2022 with restrictions still in effect. Were that to be the case, however, Ernest Doe does at least know that it has a structure in place for a show with a difference that has been proved to work for the company and its customers.

As Graham points out, "The hard work and the worry is done!"

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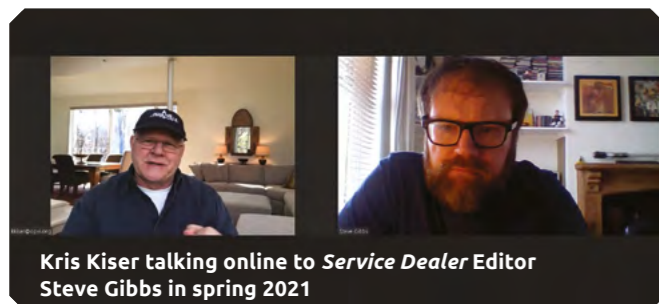
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BACKYARDING TO THE FUTURE

Head of the American trade association the OPEI, Kris Kiser talks to Service Dealer Editor STEVE GIBBS about how the industry in the US has risen to the challenge during Covid, being forced to cancel GIE+EXPO last year and the plans for the event in 2021 and beyond



Kris Kiser talking online to Service Dealer Editor Steve Gibbs in spring 2021

When I spoke with Kris Kiser, President and CEO of the American trade body, the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) at the start of March, he was his usual ebullient self. Coming off the back of the year that saw a pandemic take hold, massive political upheaval occur, and some extreme weather hit his country, one would forgive him for feeling somewhat subdued, but quite the opposite was the case. It seems the outdoor power equipment industry in the US has risen to meet all these challenges head on and, as Kris puts it, has experienced a “banner year”.

“It’s been very challenging for many States,” explained Kris, “and I feel badly because Covid obviously adversely affected an awful lot of folks. But for the business it was a banner, banner year.”

He continued, “I think this has been the biggest year for chainsaws ever, for example. Also it has been a very good year for snowthrowers. But more importantly, with this Covid business, people stuck at home have reconnected to their yards, making it the best year for our manufacturers.”

Like here, when the pandemic kicked off in March and April last year, there was great concern for what the



Kris believes autonomous machines will have a big presence at this year's GIE+EXPO

coming months were going to hold for the OPE sector in the States – and there was a slight downturn at first. “But then what we saw, and we think this is permanent,” Kris told me, “was an emerging trend for what we have termed ‘backyarding’. It means people have taken ownership of their outdoor space. So many of us have been couped up at home, but maybe with outdoor spaces that we’re now making more use of than ever. People are having staycations and putting up tents and the like. Therefore, a lot of people are dedicating time to their own yard work.”

This concept of ‘backyarding’ was certainly gaining traction thanks to efforts by the OPEI to promote the practice to the wider public. The week I spoke to Kris, he had seven television interviews lined up to publicise the notion – giving superb coverage to both specialist dealers and their manufacturers.

I asked Kris if there had initially been any confusion over whether American dealers could remain open as there had been here? “It was a little clearer cut,” Kris said, “but with 50 State governments and county governments on top of that, it did become a little challenging! By and large though, on the dealer side, because so much of the equipment was classed as essential, they were permitted to stay open.”

Once it became accepted that dealers did indeed sell necessary equipment such as agricultural machinery, power generators, chainsaws and the like, it paved the way for this bumper year. “With homeowners,” explained Kris, “there was a recognition that you can’t just let the yards go unattended. You have to cut it and maintain some semblance of order. So most everywhere, dealers were thankfully deemed as essential. And importantly, so were landscapers to maintain the public spaces.”

Commercial sector

Thinking back to the early weeks of the crisis last year, it was our dealers of commercial turfcare machinery who



The OPEI's event caters for both indoor displays and outdoor demonstrations

could be argued to have suffered the most – and this also had parallels in the US.

“Early on, in the first several months, the commercial sector was hard hit because there was just so much uncertainty,” confirms Kris. “On the business side of the equation, the commercial guys just stopped spending, they were holding on to cash.”

“Over time, however, they realised that they stayed busy. The big commercial jobs like college campuses, hospitals, hotels and business parks might have drifted a little, but the smaller maintenance tasks kept going.”

As things became more ordered, and as life with the virus was understood more, the commercial customers came on strong. “Because a lot of landscapers do things like treework or hardscaping, and people were investing in their outdoor spaces, they were busy, said Kris. “The demand now for outdoor living, for outdoor spaces, is just off the chart.”

This demand has resulted in strong sales in the States for products such as consumer handheld tools as well as consumer zero-turns.

“In terms of the commercial machinery,” Kris says, “what the manufacturers believed was happening, and we’re seeing it now, was that landscapers were simply holding on to cash during those uncertain times.”

As we spoke in early spring 2021, Kris believed there would now be a significant need on the landscaper side to replenish inventory. “We’re already beginning to see in those States with early spring buying, landscapers going back into dealerships and buying that commercial equipment. We’re seeing that now. The manufacturers are pretty heartened that they’re experiencing very good, early pull. This is combined with all the extreme weather the whole country has faced lately. The landscapers clean up a lot of that. As a consequence, you end up in a pretty good cash position.

“There’s light at the end of the tunnel now with vaccines

getting us back to a new normal – and that optimistic feeling predicates so much business. Therefore, our guys are predicting a pretty significant year.”

Stocking issues for dealers

As our dealers know all too well though, so far this year, consumer demand for product is great, but if you haven't got the supply of stock in your store, you're going to face some disappointed customers. Are American dealers facing similar issues?

“Yep, we have the exact same problem,” confirms Kris.

“Significant parts shortages. Significant interruptions in transportation and delivery. Very real challenges. Most manufacturers are producing, it's getting product out which is hard. So, yes, we're having the same problems as you guys. And this weather we've had here has added to the interruptions.”

Whilst they haven't had the consequences of Brexit exacerbating their supply problems, I ask Kris if their recent change of political leadership has had any effect on the industry?

“Not especially,” he says. “The nice thing about our country and the equipment we deal in, it's a 'needs' purchase. It's not like jet-skis! It's stuff you need, right? It's work stuff. Mowers, chainsaws, generators etcetera. But there is this palpable, returning sense of normalcy in the whole country right now. And a sense that we're reconnecting with the rest of the world. There feels like there's more certainty for the markets and for corporations. Things are settling down.”

“Combine this feeling with the vaccines and there really is light at the end of the tunnel. People want to go back out, they want to get back to work.”

During this time when people haven't been able to get out as much though, similar to dealers in the UK, the American trade has had to develop how it works. Like here, useage of digital tools has increased.

“Certainly, digital communication with customers has become part of the new normal,” says Kris. However, he believes more than ever, that a physical dealer network is vital.

“With the kit our industry sells, you're going to always

need a dealer. Our guys have learned through this, you can have a product delivered to your house via Amazon or whatever, but our machinery requires a dealer handover. I think there really is a reawakening of the need for personal contact. A chainsaw is not an iPhone!”

As the rest of us have, Kris and the OPEI team have been connecting more than ever through Zoom and other online channels. He says he does sense, though, that there's a recognition that the industry needs to meet

in-person once again.

“We need to get together,” he says. “There's things that happen at our GIE+EXPO show and at the dealer meetings there, that can't be replicated online. There's a real acceptance that we want to get back together, that we need to get back together – which bodes well for our show.”

Show plans

Which brings us neatly on to the OPEI's huge trade show, GIE+EXPO.

Taking place in Louisville, Kentucky each October, I've had the privilege of attending a couple of times and it's quite an experience.

A hugely impressive event, it takes place across a giant indoors hall, full of static displays, leading out into an equally massive outside demonstration area, that allows visitors to get hands-on with machinery.

How much of a disappointment was it, being forced to cancel the 2020 edition, I ask Kris Kiser?

“Well, if you lost five million dollars that's going to sting a little,” he jokingly replies. “But seriously, the OPEI is lucky to be in good financial health, with significant reserves, and we weathered the storm. We didn't have to let anybody go, for example.”

Changes are afoot in the running of the show, though. From 2022 the OPEI will own the show outright, with no external partners involved. Currently the event also has two other bodies as part of its management – the NALP (National Association of Landscape Professionals) and the PGMS (Professional Grounds Management Society).

Kris believes this change should make for a better put together, more focussed show. With the other associations involved, spin-off meetings and gatherings were being organised away from the showground, creating conflicts for visitors – and potentially less footfall for the exhibitors.

“I will just say we loved our partners, but elements had

WITH THE KIT OUR INDUSTRY SELLS, YOU'RE GOING TO ALWAYS NEED A DEALER

become ill-coordinated,” says Kris. “So, in 2022 what you'll see is a much better coordinated show. For example, the dealer education or the landscaper education, will fit in much better with the main show and its hours. It can all happen on-site too, as we have plenty of space.

“There will be one person in charge, so there will be no overlapping agreements on time or programming. We're enthused about that as it'll just create a better experience for visitors. It had been a case of too many cooks in recent years.”

There is still one final edition of the show to take place with the joint management structure though, with Kris saying he is “cautiously optimistic” about the prospects for this year.

“We're way ahead of where we would normally be at this time,” he says. “Most of the manufacturers who had committed to 2020 rolled their monies over because they wanted to keep their spaces. So, we're already running way ahead and there's a lot more interest. Also, some companies are wanting to modify, expand or enhance their presence.

“We believe there's pent-up demand and pent-up energy for the show. Lots of people had new product they wanted to exhibit last time which still hasn't been seen at a show. There's a bunch of new battery-powered, commercial zero-turns coming into the marketplace for

instance, and people are keen to see those. Also, all the dealer meetings that were cancelled last year and went remote will want to be staged. You can't experience new kit the same by phone!”

Kris genuinely feels there's a demand, an anticipation, to get back in a room or outside, with other people by both the manufacturers and importantly, by the visitors.

“What's being predicted here now is that genuine business travel will take off first. What's also in our favour is that Louisville has a very large drive-in audience – not all attendees have to get on an airplane to visit.

“As we don't take place till October, there's a belief that quarter three this year should hopefully be safe to congregate in large groups. By then everyone who wants a vaccine can get a vaccine. It is a legit business trip and there's this genuine energy to get out and meet people.

“I want to play it conservatively because I thought at one point we'd be able to get it on last year, but I had to eat crow! So, we're saying it might be down 15% – but right now the indicators are very strong.

“Whenever you have a big banner year, the manufacturers are in good financial shape, their customers are also in good financial shape, there's enthusiasm there – these are all ripe indicators for a successful show. We just pray for good weather.”

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A 40ft tree being lifted into place for the tree climbing demos at 2019's show – an activity that will run again this year

international buying show – and it's returning to that. We bring all these people together from around the world and we can get some real work done. There's no better place to do that. Going forward we intend to facilitate a lot more international meetings and get-togethers for our worldwide visitors."

As well as being excited for the future of the show, Kris is optimistic about the industry in general and the prospects for specialist dealers.

"The nature of the machinery being dealt with now, battery and software-controlled equipment for instance, dealers are having to look at different models for sales and service.

For robotics, for example, those are coming along in a big way. You'll see it at EXPO this year. Big, big commercial robots are coming for sportsfields and college campuses, and with that increased technology, the dealer is going to become even more important – they'll be needed more than ever to work with the home consumer or the landscape contractor on those units."

Kris reiterated just how much he believes that positive times are ahead for the industry, emphasising, "We think there's a light at the end of the tunnel."

Helping the industry get back on track

There were some new elements planned for 2020's GIE-EXPO, including drone flying training and a UTV test track, which had to be shelved along with the rest of the event. Does the OPEI plan to run with these this year?

"Absolutely," confirms Kris, "because even the UTV guys have had a pretty good year. All that stuff that was planned, just carries forward. We'll also put up indoors, a large tree or two once again to conduct some more tree climbing training. That was very well received in 2019."

The show this year can also address the many difficulties that have been faced by their dealer and landscaper visitors.

Kris explained, "Out of this horrible situation, some people did financially really well – but others did really badly. We want to take our educational elements within the show and create sessions where people can come together and talk about that. How did you survive the situation? Who excelled and why? What did you learn? We want to discuss pre-planning and how do we deal with the next crisis better? It makes for a good opportunity for education."

Kris is keen to promote GIE+EXPO to international visitors as a one-of-a-kind show for the power equipment dealer and user. "It's where you can find everything for the business in one place," he says, "and you're not competing with agricultural machinery or construction equipment. If you're in the landscape contractor business, or if you're in the dealer side of the equation, this is a unique place. It's special because you can interact with the corporate staff and look at the equipment indoors where it's warm and dry – and then you can go outside and use and experience the tools. Even in this country, the Louisville convention centre is a one-off facility offering this.

"We would also say to our friends in the UK, that in some ways EXPO is returning to its old roots. It used to be an



People want to get back to experience machinery in a real-world setting once again, believes Kris Kiser

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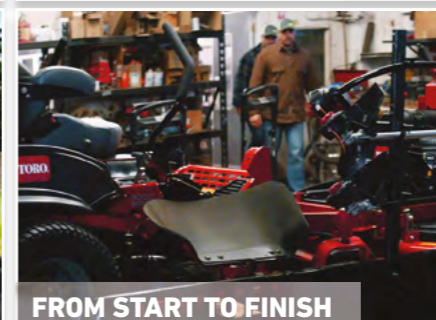
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CLAAS REVISES BEST-SELLER TRACTOR RANGE

Claas used a March online presentation to reveal recent updates to its Le Mans tractor factory, unveil an updated Arion 400 tractor series and announce an extension of the CEMOS machine optimisation system to the Axion Terra-Trac tractors.
MARTIN RICKATSON reports

With a quarter of units produced staying within the French market, Claas clearly has a strong commitment to keeping the heart of its tractor production in the Le Mans plant it inherited when it purchased the Renault tractor business. France is one of Europe's larger tractor markets, and aside from its smallest mainstream Atos models, production of which is contracted to SDF, and its flagship Xerion tractors, built in the German firm's combine factory in Harsewinkel, all of the key Claas Arion and Axion ranges, from the 400 series to the 900 range, are built in the Le Mans facility.

The business recently appointed Dr Martin von Hoyningen-Huene to its executive board, with particular responsibility for its tractor business unit and the Claas Industrietechnik components concern. Most recently,

Dr von Hoyningen-Huene was with John Deere, which he joined in 2009 to take responsibility for its global 6B and 6D/E tractor ranges, holding roles including Head of Development. In 2014, he was initially appointed Factory Manager and then sole Managing Director of header maker Maschinenfabrik Kemper, part of John Deere. Since February 2018, Dr von Hoyningen-Huene had been managing the John Deere baler factory in Arc-les-Gray, France.

Claas used a recent online press meeting to detail the completion of the latest phase of improvements at the Le Mans tractor plant, which has undergone significant modernisation since its acquisition from Renault in 2003. The latest changes have seen investment by Claas into the plant rise to €80m over the past 18 years, with around half of that accounted for by the recent production line

redevelopment. Currently the plant produces 10,000 units annually, and Claas says there is scope to raise production by 30% on one shift.

"The recent investment in our tractor plant is the biggest we have made in recent years into any one of our production facilities," says Thomas Bock, CEO of Claas.

"As our top-selling tractor product, the Arion 400 range, which has been on sale since 2014, accounts for a large proportion of total factory output. It has strong market shares across countries ranging from France and Germany to Poland and as far afield as Japan. Having produced almost 30,000 units to date, we are confident the new third generation will build on this success once production starts in June."

According to Alister Lamb, responsible for sales and marketing at the Claas Tractor business unit, the latest factory investment at Le Mans is the latest and largest in a series of upgrades that began with the 2005 renewing of the cab assembly line.

"That was followed three years later by a complete manned/robot paint process upgrade. The latest major step in what we call the Claas Forth programme of development began in 2018, with a complete change in the direction of the production line to a north-south configuration to make best use of the factory space and operate a system that flows much better, with tributaries feeding sub-assemblies to the main line. This is in addition to a number of areas of automation of processes, including the adoption of automated guided vehicles (AGVs) to move machines in place of a chain system, plus new test benches at the end of the line and a new purpose-built test track. We will be opening the new facilities officially on 21 May."

Fourth generation Arion range

The main product news at the press meeting was the launch of the fourth generation of Arion 400 series

tractors, the strongest sellers in the Claas tractor range. Where formerly there were six models from 90-140hp (max), there are now seven versions, with the new flagship having a maximum 155hp output.

All models are equipped with 4.5-litre, four-cylinder FPT engines which incorporate the latest four-valve technology and turbochargers with intercooling. Turbochargers from the Arion 430 upwards are also fitted with a wastegate. The after-treatment system cleans the exhaust gases using a combination of SCRof technology (Selected Catalytic Reduction on Filter) and a diesel oxidation catalytic converter (DOC). This, says Claas, not only ensures emissions meet Stage V requirements, but also minimises diesel and DEF consumption.

From the Arion 430 upwards, purchasers will have the choice between the 16x16 QuadriShift and 24x24 HexaShift four- or six-step powershift transmissions. Both come with the Revershift clutchless steering column shuttle, which can optionally also be operated via the multifunction control lever on the right-hand armrest. The tractors can also be specified with Smart Stop clutch/brake function.

The Arion 400 design combines a long wheelbase (2.49m on the 410/420 or 2.53m on the 430-470) with a short overall length. Static weight distribution is 50:50 without ballast, while gross vehicle weight has been increased to 9.0t, permitting payloads of up to 3.8t.

As on the previous series, fully-integrated front linkage and factory-fitted front loader options can be controlled by the multifunction control lever, with the option of also controlling the front loader via the Claas Electropilot (CIS or CIS+ versions) or Flexpilot joysticks.

Further options on the new tractors include ProActiv front axle suspension, mechanical two-point cab suspension and various seating options. The Stage V Arion 400 range will be available in the UK and Ireland from this autumn.

Cemos availability extended to Axion 900 Terra-Trac tractors

Following the extension of its CEMOS (Claas Electronic Machine Optimisation System) from combines and forage harvesters to its Axion and Arion tractors during 2020, the dialogue-based operator assistance system is now also available for the Terra-Trac half-track versions of Claas's Axion 900 tractor line. In addition, the implement assistant has been extended at no extra cost to include disc mowers.

DLG tests have shown potential increases in area output of up to 16.3% and reductions in fuel use of up to 16.8% during cultivation work on tractors equipped with CEMOS, points out Claas. The latest version of CEMOS for Tractors now includes a function to optimise disc mower work. The new mower assistant is designed for all



Completing a programme begun in 2018, the latest stage in the upgrading of the Claas tractor plant at Le Mans centres around a complete reconfiguration of the production line



The strongest sellers in the Claas tractor range, the Arion 400 series, have been replaced with a new fourth generation, with seven models from 90-155hp (max)



CEMOS for Tractors now includes a disc mower function designed for all brands of mounted rear and front mowers, as well as front-rear and butterfly combinations

brands of mounted rear and front mowers, as well as front-rear and butterfly combinations. The driver enters the working width just once, followed by the basic settings such as crop type, cut crop placement (spread or swathed) and the PTO speed. CEMOS is then said to help the driver correctly align the mower cutterbar, set the right cut height and ground pressure, adjust the lift height and select a suitable overlap. The system takes care of basic settings such as adjusting the lower and upper links and securing the rear lower links with the side stabilisers, as well as ensuring that the PTO shaft is the correct length.

CEMOS for Tractors also helps the driver select a suitable conditioner speed and makes recommendations for adjusting the swath drums or swath discs before starting a job. All conventional laying strategies are stored in the system for mowers with swath merging systems. In addition, CEMOS for Tractors suggests suitable settings for the belt or auger speed, while if a mower combination is equipped with hydraulic ground pressure slope adjustment and swath merging, these can also be managed.

To further reduce the driver's workload, CEMOS for Tractors can also help with programming the headland management system and assigning the function buttons, particularly when working with ISOBUS. It also assists with transport position settings for on-road travel, by ensuring that,

for example, the maximum permitted transport height is not exceeded.

The implement assistant for disc mowers is available from spring 2021 for all CEMOS for Tractors systems as an additional feature at no extra cost. This function can be retrofitted to tractors already fitted with CEMOS by means of an update.

There are two models in the Axion 900 range available with rear tracks, the Axion 930TT and 960TT, and these can now be specified with CEMOS. The basic operating principle of CEMOS for Tractors and the integrated implement assistant for ploughs and disc mowers come from that established on the Arion and Axion tractors. However, the half-track Axion TT models required the tyre pressure and ballasting areas to be specially modified, since a far greater proportion of the tractive force is transferred via the rear axle and

crawler track assembly compared with standard tractors, and wheel weights cannot be used on the rear axle.

The system developed for the Axion Terra Trac covers only the internal tyre pressure on the front axle, while the driver simply enters the belt width of the crawler tracks once under basic settings. Since the tracks have a larger footprint than conventional tyres and the track assembly is heavier, extra ballast is not normally needed on the rear axle.

The addition of CEMOS for Tractors further extends the Axion Terra Trac's efficiency and soil-friendliness, suggests Claas, as it helps the operator select the most suitable ballasting strategy to avoid overballasting, while simultaneously helping to achieve optimal traction and so prevent slippage, and helping minimise diesel consumption.



Arion 400 front linkage and factory loader options can be controlled by the multifunction control lever, with loaders optionally controllable via the Claas Electropilot (CIS or CIS+ versions) or Flexpilot joysticks

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L-R: Ross Holloway, Kevin Pugh, Tyler Clifton and Matt Lewis

FINDING THE RIGHT BLEND

Like many dealers, Charlie's Groundcare and Machinery, based in Welshpool, continued to trade through the pandemic and as a consequence picked up new domestic and commercial customers throughout. Service Dealer's LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR, heard how it did it

A trip to mid-Wales in spring 2021 enabled me to meet up with some key members of staff who work for Charlie's Groundcare and Machinery, based in Welshpool. On arrival I was introduced to Ross Holloway, Dealer Principal and Groundcare Manager; Kevin Pugh, Sales Manager and Tyler Clifton, garden machinery and ag machinery buyer.

Ross is one of the family members of the business and has been involved in helping to run the company for over 20 years. Kev is in charge of sales and responsible for sourcing any new machinery and products for the grounds care side of the business. He works closely with the company's

General Buyer, Tyler, who has a mammoth job of buying and securing all garden and ag machinery products for the business to sell.

Charlie's Groundcare and Machinery is an integral part of a flourishing family business that was started some 30 years ago by the company Owner, Chris Lloyd. While the firm has grown, the passion and values it was founded on remain the same. They tell me they only sell products they would be happy to take home themselves, and continually work hard to ensure their customers will always be greeted by friendly, knowledgeable staff.

In the early days there was only a small team, many of whom remain today. Now though, there are about

400-plus team members and several stores across Wales and the borders. In recent years Charlie's has been successful in growing online sales, with Ross saying there are well over 20,000 lines of products for purchase on its website, and they are constantly working on increasing that number to cater for every growing need of its customers.

Being based in rural Powys has enabled the company the opportunity to trade on many fronts. The business serves the private and public sectors of the ag, sports turf and domestic garden markets. As authorised John Deere dealers for the past 11 years, they now specialise in golf, turf, commercial mowing equipment, agricultural machinery, as well as a range of tractors up to 125hp.

As a business, as well as the eight retail stores, the company also owns a state-of-the-art 108,000 square foot head office and distribution centre based in Welshpool. In December 2018 Charlie's moved from its old site in Newtown to a new, purpose-built showroom and workshop facility at its flagship retail outlet, Coed-y-Dinas, which is where I met the team.

Trading through the pandemic

I began by asking Ross Holloway how Charlie's had coped with the pandemic and how it affected the business.

"We remained open during the pandemic to support our agricultural

and grounds customers," Ross told me, "and we found that we were kept remarkably busy throughout the year. While other local dealers chose to close, we seemed to prosper with plenty of unexpected sales and repairs.

"The very nature of our industry means that the grass never stops growing, farmers need to keep growing and harvesting crops, whilst parks, gardens and school grounds need to be maintained. Also, the very fact that many people were isolating at home and began taking an interest in their gardens, led to us keeping extremely busy during this year-long lockdown."

Like many dealers, Charlie's has had to pay special attention to how it markets the business. "We've been using social media, local agricultural shows, specialist open days with our manufacturers and Farm-Trader," says Ross. "Our ever-growing online trading website helps drive our presence and popularity."

As a business, Charlie's pays a lot of attention to the online side. "As a group, online is something we've had at the forefront of our minds for years now," Ross confirms, "and one of the key driving factors behind our new distribution centre was our online sales. We've added a wide range of our domestic products onto our website, Charlie's.co.uk, and we're seeing a huge uptake in sales online. It's something we'll be focusing on growing every year.

"During Covid both our domestic and commercial sales have grown substantially, especially from the fact that we were able to still offer an efficient aftersales service to all of our customers.

"Having a 100,000-square foot warehouse allows us to buy large quantities of stock and that itself enables us to be competitive on prices when selling, both in our stores and online via our website. As far as we are concerned, providing an excellent online experience and the ability to offer a wide range of products, currently around 20,000 lines, is the way forward."

To keep up with all these product lines, as a business Charlie's is keen to make sure staff are kept up to date with the latest training requirements.

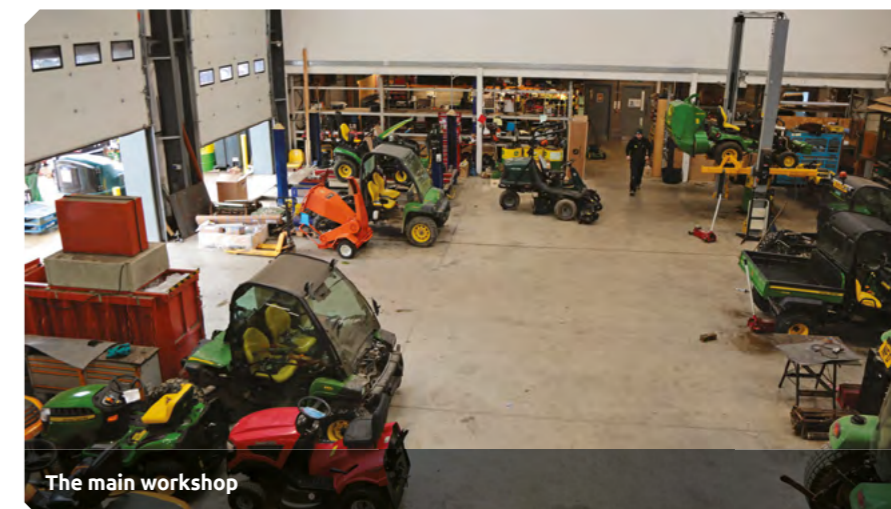
"As John Deere dealers our service technicians are all fully John Deere trained through their academy," Ross says. "Further product training is offered for any new product line we take on to support our staff to offer the best on site and workshop service possible."

In total, Charlie's employs 11 technicians as well as a delivery driver, covering all of its areas. It has one team that looks after professional grounds care customers, a team that looks after domestic customers, and finally a team that is dedicated to looking after the large range of gator/XUV products and agricultural machinery.

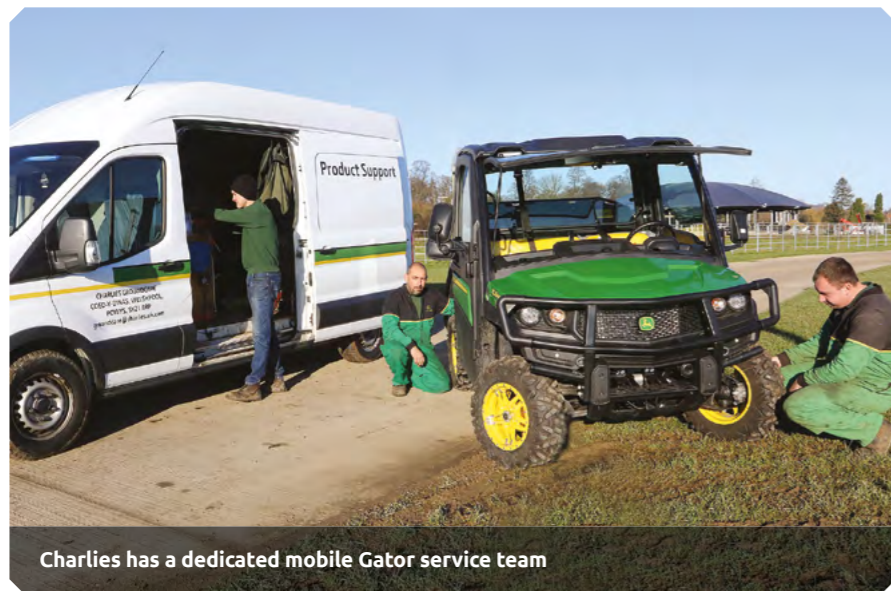
"We try to be as versatile with our



Ross Holloway, dealer principle



The main workshop



Charlies has a dedicated mobile Gator service team

his van servicing and repairing Gators for our customers.”

Since the business acquired the new head office and vast storage warehouse in Welshpool, it has also begun its own in-house training to train staff in the protocols, regulations and operating systems required to run such a large-scale, online sales business – particularly where it requires the use of specialist handling systems to pick and deliver goods to many thousands of customers a week.

In-store and online

Like other progressive dealerships, it is a blend between the online side and the physical stores that drives Charlies. “We purpose-built a showroom and workshop back in 2018,” said Ross, “which was designed with our growth in-mind to allow our commercial and domestic customers to come into the store and see our whole product offering. We continue to look at how we can improve and widen our offering within the store and look for ways to grow the business even further.”

He continued: “The spacious site provides us with ample space to store, showcase and demonstrate a large range of machinery, both outdoors and indoors. We also have a large garage and workshop giving us plenty of working space to store and repair significant numbers of

aftersales care and make sure we can offer the absolutely best possible service to all our customers,” stressed Ross. “Half our technical team have their own mobile vans to allow them to get to breakdowns and onsite servicing work easily and in a timely manner. We take aftersales care very seriously and as business grows, we’re prepared to invest in adding more people to our parts, admin and technicians teams.

“We currently have three apprentices, Jake, Sean and Tom, all three of them at different stages in their careers and all are learning different parts of our diverse business to allow them to have as much knowledge of what we do as possible.”

Back in 2018 a member of the

parts team, Jack Watkin, and one of the technicians, Sean Murphy, graduated through the John Deere apprenticeship scheme after undergoing years of training with the company. Jack now plays a hugely important role within the business as the main parts contact for not only their technicians in the workshop and out on the road, but also to their customers.

On graduating, Sean was awarded Apprentice of the Year by John Deere. “That was a massive credit to Sean after all his hard work,” said Ross, “and is a fantastic achievement for us as a business also. Sean is now one of our most senior members of the technical team and mainly spends his time out on the road in



The busy service workshop



The dealership took on Predator stump grinder products earlier this year



Inside the Country Store

mowers, machinery and equipment.”

Charlies believes that the combination of having the ability to sell a wide range of agricultural, sports turf, amenity and domestic machinery, along with having a well-stocked garden store, means that its eggs are never all in one basket.

I asked Ross if the dealership has been seeing an increase in sales of robotic grasscare machinery lately? “Within the areas we cover we aren’t seeing such an uptake on the robotic mowers,” he replied. He put this down to the customers the company serves with larger gardens mainly choosing to stick to new ride-ons for looking after their lawns.

“However,” he said, “we’re 100% seeing a huge uptake in handheld cordless equipment such as chainsaws, strimmers, hedge cutters and lawn mowers. STIHL products are one of our biggest sellers, both online and through the dealerships.

“Our commercial customers are also now taking on the professional range of STIHL battery-powered equipment. They tell us they like it as it’s lighter, better for the environment and less noisy when they are working in public areas.”

Another area in which the dealership has enjoyed particular success in recent years, has been with the John Deere Gators. Charlies

benefits from an extensive customer base ranging from farmers and smallholders, to full commercial customers such as local councils, private and state schools, as well as golf courses and caravan parks in the Shropshire and mid-Wales areas.

“As a John Deere dealer we specialise in Gators,” Ross pointed out, “holding the largest stock in Wales most of the time. We even have a dedicated mobile service team out and about, supporting our customers.”

The company is also able to build bespoke Gators for whoever requires one, due to carrying such a large stock and range of spares. “During the past three years we’ve seen an ongoing growth in sales of new Gators,” Ross explained.

“Last year our sales were in excess of 50 new vehicles, along with a constant demand for secondhand Gators.”

As a dealership, Charlies is always on the lookout for new and diverse products to complement its vast range of products. “Some years ago,” said Ross, “we took the bold step to sell Grillo machinery, and with the help of our rep John, we managed to grow that business within our area. We found that having the stock on hand and having a full fleet of demo kit allowed our sales team to get customers on the seats of these

fantastic machines and very often that leads to us leaving the machine with the customers.”

At the beginning of this year the company took on the Eliet and Predator stump grinders franchises as another means of targeting different industries.

Looking ahead

As a business Charlies strives to keep its feet well and truly grounded, but the team is constantly looking to the future, aiming to add new products and offerings to their business.

“We continue to look to grow our sales department to allow us to get a wider customer base,” Ross confirmed, “as well as looking to grow our service department to make sure we offer the best aftersales service we can.

“We’re also considering the idea of selling a range of ATVs. It’s a case now of finding a suitable supplier who we feel fits our remit and complements the range of products we currently sell.

“The sales team has grown over the past two years and the guys have done a fantastic job of getting new customers on board, going out of their way to provide the best service possible. Those guys are backed up fantastically by our parts, service and admin departments.

“Having all the teams working well together is a key feature of our business, to make sure the customer experience is second to none!”

I would like to thank the team at Charlies for making me feel very welcome and giving me the opportunity to see at first hand the hard work and commitment required to run a large family business. The size and scale of the operation at Charlies is astonishing – and it’s certainly a well-oiled and well-run business, serving an ever-demanding group of grounds professionals, farmers and domestic customers.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Founder of Agrigem, Kieran Would, explains how the company has coped with Covid, Brexit and customers' rising expectations

Six years since formation, distributor Agrigem says it is putting in place measures that it hopes will set the company on a new level of growth, supplying more than 20 industry sectors.

"We set up the company to service niche sectors often overlooked by other businesses," reports Founder and Managing Director Kieran Would.

These core sectors that the company provides product for span amenity and horticulture. Turf growers are important too, as are sports pitches and grounds, forestry, local authorities, facilities management, airfields, fruit production, professional and DIY lawncare, rail and infrastructure, equine and trade outlets.

The Lincolnshire-based company says it has invested significantly to underpin its next stage for 2021.

Kieran says, "Although 2020 was a challenging year, much of the groundwork we had done prior to this allowed us to continue to grow while fulfilling customers' expectations.

"In our effort to become the largest distributor within the 22 sectors we're involved in, we're putting as much back into the business as possible to ensure we continue to offer the high level of service that our customers have come to expect."



Founder and Managing Director of Agrigem, Kieran Would

Supplier relationships

"The relationships we enjoy with our suppliers are really important," Kieran stresses, "allowing us to give feedback on products and always seeking to improve them.

"We work closely with Hozelock-Exel for example, part of the Exel Industries Group, which manufactures the Cooper Pegler and Berthoud knapsack and hand-held professional sprayers. We want to make sure that its Berthoud Vermorel range's key advantages are known to operators."

Kieran believes the partnership is a successful one. "We support the products heavily, not only because of what we believe is their superior quality but also because as a business they are pushing forwards with new ideas and designs.

"Hozelock-Exel understands that even if you have the best product, you can't rest on your laurels and simply expect customers to continue to support you. You have to innovate and show customers why they should be supporting your brand over others in the marketplace."

How does Kieran see the turf sector developing and adapting post-Covid?

"While the turf industry has largely avoided any real issues, there has been, and will inevitably be, a significant knock-on as people's habits change. This in itself may provide more opportunity for some sports.

"Golf, in particular, has done well recently," he says, with many courses seeing a surge in members.

At distribution level, "Covid has certainly highlighted the importance of holding plenty of stock. Certain items were, and still are, in critically short supply and this will likely continue throughout 2021".

As a business, Agrigem "has hedged significantly," Kieran reports, "mainly due to Brexit but also because of Covid, to ensure we will have the product in stock and ready to go".

Forewarned is forearmed

Laying the pre-Brexit groundwork, Kieran says, has positioned Agrigem to avoid supply issues now the UK has

exited the European Union – while also delivering a post-Covid premium for the distributor.

"In anticipation of Brexit (version 1) we procured a large volume of stock that was sitting in our shed ready for spring 2020," Kieran recalls. "Therefore, when Covid-19 hit, and most hauliers and manufacturers closed or could not supply, we already had plenty of product waiting to ship.

"We'd already invested heavily in our IT infrastructure and in particular remote working and cloud-based systems," he continues. "When Boris Johnson delivered his 'stay at home' message, within a couple of hours all office staff were fully implemented within the safe environment of their homes."

The new stock management system allowed Agrigem to easily increase picker and packer capacity. Kieran also says a switch to 24-hour shift patterns ensured both day and night warehouse teams stayed safe and kept up with demand.

Shifting customer expectations

"Undoubtedly Amazon has set the benchmark for every distributor in the world to follow, regardless of sector," says Kieran. "In fact, our industry should be pioneering this level of service as so many of the products we supply have a narrow applications window, often dictated by the weather, pest or crop growth stage. We're in a position to fulfil customers' high expectations of ordering product as individuals or in volume for rapid dispatch."

To aid this aspect of the business, Kieran says the firm has integrated new CRM (customer relationship management) and WMS (warehouse management system), "to allow greater transparency for the customer in real time to see where their order is. Also, our dispatch team is significantly more efficient, and we've launched a major recruitment drive to underpin all departments of the business."

As a company Kieran insists their commitment is "to ensure only highest-quality products are supplied – on time and within budget". He says this pledge is backed up by the fact they have recently appointed an operations manager, commercial manager and a customer experience manager.

The company's criteria for taking on a new partnership with manufacturers and suppliers are equally clear cut. "They have to get it," says Kieran. "By that I mean the dynamics of the industry are changing and we constantly seek to work with manufacturers who understand this and see the wider opportunity for their products in different sectors.

"The days of someone loyally giving you their annual order and rarely asking price have gone. It's now a cut-throat industry where loyalty counts for little but customer expectations are extremely high. Certainly a tough challenge to fulfil, especially as the world is there to see your failures with the inevitable social media posts if a product doesn't work."

As Kieran says, "You could sell the product cheaper than anyone but if you can't get it there when it's needed, or the product doesn't work, you've failed to fulfil the customer's requirements."



Berthoud sprayers out for delivery

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Windracers, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) company, has been relying on the Briggs & Stratton-produced Vanguard Small Block engines to help with their aid distribution, both abroad and closer to home

To date, the most reliable and inexpensive means for delivering aid relief is by truck. Windracers, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) company, says it intends to change that.

"We realised that we could use emerging UAV technologies to help solve several key world issues, starting with medical and food aid distribution," said Charles Scates, CEO and co-founder of Windracers.

Charles and his co-founder, Stephen Wright, looked at the international aid landscape and saw that due to poor ground infrastructure, weather and topography challenges, it often takes up to six months for aid to reach recipients in countries such as

South Sudan. "Sadly, millions of people in the UN World Food Programme emergency zones require food aid – and up to six-month delivery times are, in this day and age, unacceptable. UAV technologies can play a real part in closing that gap," says Charles.

Delivering aid via UAV offers advantages not available through traditional distribution means. "UAVs allow you to distribute rapidly across a wide geographic area direct to villages, which a truck or large aircraft couldn't manage," explains Charles. "It's direct, it's diverse and it's an extremely rapid and flexible way to approach aid distribution."

Charles and Stephen founded Windracers in 2017 to provide

UAV-based transportation services to the global humanitarian aid, research and environmental protection communities. What followed was several years of concepting, working in close partnership with Southampton University in England, culminating in the Windracers ULTRA UAV.

Designed to carry 100kg up to 1,000km (220lb up to 621 miles), the ULTRA UAV is designed to be inexpensive, robust and reliable. "There's nothing else like it," says Charles. "We used aluminium for the body, which is highly recyclable, relatively inexpensive and robust. It's smartly built so we can deliver aid at an economic price point – and one day, will be cheaper than a truck."

An ULTRA solution

The first step in designing something no one else has ever attempted is determining the heart of the machine.

"There's no guide to creating a UAV like this, so we started with the engine," says Charles. "Everything revolves around the power solution."

When power is required, and not only that but power that can fly, standards must be high. Windracers' team of aeronautical engineers took the weight and power ratio into consideration, while also thinking about durability, parts availability and the reliability and reach of the power solution manufacturer's service and support.

The company says its driving philosophy – "no single point of failure" – is applied to every component of its work. That includes the engines at the heart of its UAV.

"We needed to find a company that's been in the business for a long time, someone who knows what they're doing and has an excellent reputation," explains Charles. "We determined that company is Briggs & Stratton."

Charles says Briggs & Stratton's line of Vanguard engines ticked all the boxes for Windracers. "It's an engine that's been proven in commercial

applications," he confirms.

"More importantly, the service intervals are much longer than most UAV aviation engines, so we know we can rely on them."

The team worked with Briggs & Stratton to spec two Vanguard V-Twin 23.0 Gross HP Electronic Fuel Injected engines on the ULTRA UAV.

"It's a strong commercial engine that can handle a more rugged environment when needed," points out Mark Kerr, UK OEM Sales Manager Briggs & Stratton. "Plus, Briggs & Stratton ensures parts are globally accessible and support is on hand."

By spec'ing two engines on the drone, Windracers ensures that if one engine encounters an issue, the ULTRA UAV could abort its mission and return to its origin on the second engine's power, eliminating lost aid and/or a lost UAV. "The horsepower available between the two engines is absolutely critical," says Charles.

The Briggs & Stratton team took measures to help Windracers reduce the weight of the two Vanguard Small Block engines by removing non-critical components.

"The engines are highly advanced," stresses Charles. "They're tough, they do the job, and they fit within our

aviation weight constraints"

In line with the "no single point of failure" philosophy, Mark and Charles maintain a close working relationship to ensure the Vanguard engines meet Windracers' needs. The Power Application Centre Europe (PACE), led by Gerhard Ihrig, along with the US PAC team, led by Ron Weber, engine application specialist – international, at Briggs & Stratton, have been heavily involved in the project. "We have a great relationship – we ask questions and Briggs answers them with a solution quickly," says Charles. "It's exactly the partnership we need at this stage in our development."

COVID-19 Aid Relief

Back in 2015, when Windracers was just a concept, the team never imagined the ULTRA UAV would be delivering global pandemic aid, but in 2020, COVID-19 hit the United Kingdom's shores.

"Many island and remote hospitals were worried about getting necessary drugs and PPE, as well as blood samples and tests back and forth from the main logistical and test centres on mainland UK locations," says Charles.

In particular, Southampton City Council began to explore alternative

Briggs & Stratton-made engines are being used to power the unmanned aerial vehicles



The Briggs & Stratton team took measures to help Windracers reduce the weight of the two Vanguard Small Block engines

transportation options to the Isle of Wight off the UK's South coast, but with reduced ferry services and grounded aviation options were limited. "That's where we were called upon and came in with our ULTRA unmanned system," says Charles. Since the Windracers ULTRA UAV was designed to fly 1,000km for a typical aid delivery, they had secured approval from the UK Civil Aviation Authority to conduct Beyond Visual Line of Sight flights.

"That changed the landscape for us. It allowed us to start stretching our legs and – critically – gave us the ability to fly from a mainland to an island," says Charles.

The Southampton City Council engaged the Windracers team to fly

medical supplies with the ULTRA UAV using an air corridor between the mainland and the Isle of Wight. The first flight delivered a 50kg load of supplies to St Mary's NHS in just 20 minutes.

"We found we could provide the quick response needed by the medical teams – they needed something, and we could get it there in a matter of an hour or less," Charles says.

The impact on the communities and hospitals was immediate. The UAV provides pilot-free, weather resistant and efficient medical aid delivery. "It's autonomous, so that helps keep the virus from entering the island through an ill pilot; it can fly during inclement weather,

and is very rapid when compared with a ship-based service," says Charles. "It's absolutely changing medical logistics."

The Windracers team say they are proud to see its ULTRA UAV put to use delivering necessary medical aid to its local community. "The ethos of Windracers is to find a better way of doing things using UAV technologies," says Charles. What better way to demonstrate that than providing critical medical supplies in the midst of a pandemic with its UAV technology.

And at the heart of it all, are the two Vanguard Small Block engines – powering the ULTRA UAV so it can swiftly and reliably deliver aid to those in need.



Ready for takeoff! The ULTRA UAV has secured approval from the UK CAA to deliver aid in this country too

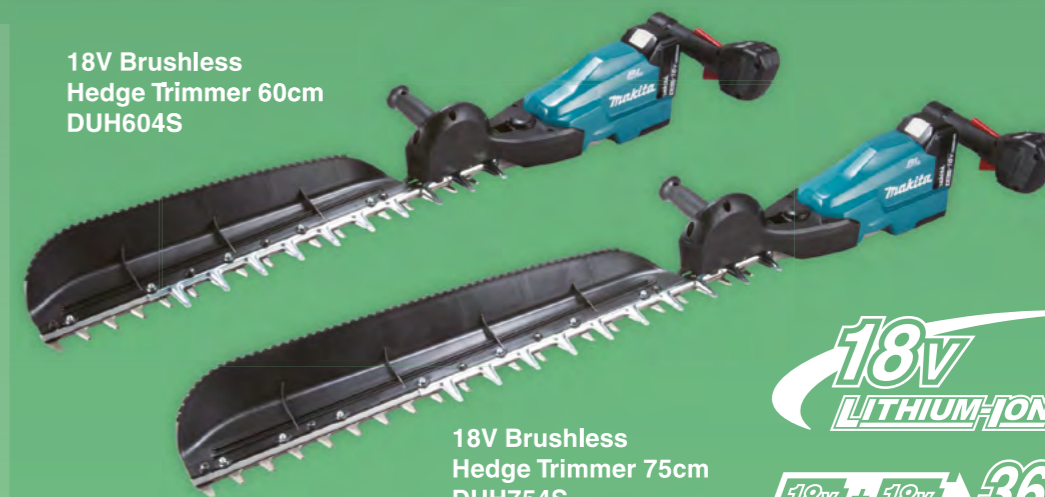
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191A59-5
PDC01 Portable Power Supply
Includes 18v and Twin 18v adaptors.
BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED

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18V Brushless
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DUH604S



18V Brushless
Hedge Trimmer 75cm
DUH754S



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Models UR101C and UR201C are powered by a 36V high power drive system using PDC01 portable power pack only.



36V Brushless
Linetrimmer
UR201C

36V Brushless
Brush Cutter
UR101C

Twin 18V
Brushless
Linetrimmer
DUR369L

Twin 18V
Brushless
Brush Cutter
DUR369A



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NEW HOLLAND HAS COMBINE SECTOR IN ITS SIGHTS



There is now a second six-cylinder model in the T6 range, the 135hp (rated) T6.160 Dynamic Command, complementing the 145hp T6.180 DC

During an online press meeting earlier this year, New Holland outlined its key target areas for product focus during 2021 and confirmed details of a number of new products set to hit the market in the next six months. MARTIN RICKATSON reports

With 500 dealers and importers and 1,000 points of sale across Europe, New Holland is a key player in the tractor, combine, forage and materials handling equipment sectors across the Continent. Yet the CNH Industrial brand's management recognises it has more work to do to build upon its market positions, particularly in areas such as combines where there is a close fight for the number-one sales spot.

To this end, New Holland used a recent online press meeting to outline plans to be implemented this year to ramp up its combine sales and support efforts. The move was announced alongside a production push for its methane-powered T6.180 tractor and an extension of the 'full-liner' programme that now includes a broader range of cultivation equipment.

"We have pioneered sustainable tractor power for over 15 years, now, being the first, in 2006, to introduce a range of 100% biodiesel-compatible products," said Carlo Lambro, New Holland's Global Brand President.

"In 2009 we unveiled the NH2 hydrogen-powered tractor concept, and the energy-independent farm model. With our more recent methane development, now in commercial production in a T6.180 tractor, farmers have the opportunity to produce on-farm their own sustainable fuel, protected from fluctuating oil prices, and may create an additional revenue stream by feeding surplus energy back into the grid, or save up to 30% in fuel costs by using the biomethane they generate to power their machines.

"Our methane-powered tractor is the evolution of the gas-powered prototypes New Holland first showed in 2013 that led to development of the production T6.180 machine shown at the latest Agritechnica. The first pre-production units are working with selected customers in the UK, France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries. These markets were chosen for their advanced biogas industries and because the T6 is particularly strong in those countries. By the end of the year the T6.180 methane-powered tractor will be available commercially in all markets.

"We are also working in other areas of alternative drive

technology, including with Italian firm Nobile to create electric drive implements to work with our T4.110 tractor." Sean Lennon, appointed last year as New Holland's Vice President for Commercial Operations in Europe after 18 years with the brand, underlined plans to reinforce New Holland's role as a full-liner, cement its position as the 'clean energy leader' and achieve the 'harvesting supremacy' it lays claim to in technology and productivity in terms of market sales.

"Last year was challenging for all, with sales of new products slowing significantly and plants closed as we dealt initially with coronavirus measures. But customers' businesses of course continued. We reacted by ensuring the safety of employees and dealer teams, and protecting the economic sustainability of customers and dealers.

"Together with CNHI Capital we developed targeted initiatives in different markets across Europe to help. But we also managed to think outside the box to turn a huge problem into an opportunity. We put in place a task force to convert the majority of our portfolio orders to orders from stock, and contacted customers individually through the dealer network to provide alternative solutions where necessary. Logistics was not at full capacity, but our logistics department was able to find delivery alternatives where necessary. Starting from June-July, the resilience of our industry began to show, and in many countries sales began to recover. In the second half of the year total industry volume actually rose by 8%, increasing in tractors and combines but falling back in forage equipment.

"Our market share fell slightly in tractors and combines, but rose in the forage sector. We kept our tractor leadership in Italy, Poland, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands and Portugal, and full year 2020 saw TIV down 4% with brand share just slightly down."

Turning to New Holland's renewed combine focus, Sean

stated that the business was aiming to become the market leader in the European combine segment. "This means winning over new customers and targeting a market share well above our current position. To do this we have developed a new 'combine attack plan'. The first focus will be on the capacity and performance of our flagship models. Starting with France, Germany and the UK, we've put in place specialist harvesting teams responsible for increasing our combine footprint in their markets. These teams will support dealers, with key account management for large customers and contractors, and will be contacting and visiting potential customers to leverage all possible sales opportunities.

"We will also be launching a new fully-comprehensive service approach. Our aim is to make our commercial proposal unbeatable."

Lionel Gleyroux, European Combine Marketing Manager, expanded on the combine attack plan: "In much of northern Europe the combinable crop harvest window may be only 15 days long, and any downtime can compromise the harvest. As part of the new plan, we will be offering a standard three-year combine warranty for engine, after-treatment system and driveline, with extension options. In addition, we offer remote monitoring and a 24-48 hour back-to-work guarantee in the event of a breakdown, or an equivalent unit will be made available. A dedicated team will manage customer requests around the clock, supported by prioritised parts management and a specific 24/7 parts delivery line. This scheme has been tested over the past harvest in several key markets, with 97% of cases solved in 48hrs and 80% in 24hrs. For harvest 2021 the programme will be implemented for all flagship combine sales in most European markets.

"Meanwhile, to target new customers we have given



The new Crossover Harvesting CH7.70 is a key part of New Holland's 'combine attack plan' to target a greater share of the sector



New Holland's D Series wheel loaders are upgraded for 2021, with improvements focused on operator comfort, total cost of ownership and reliability



The first pre-production T6.180 Methane Power tractors are now with selected customers in the UK and across Europe, with full production by the end of the year



The first products to be supplied under New Holland's agreement with Maschio Gaspardo will be the SDM and SDH compact disc cultivators



Included in the New Holland/Maschio agreement is a range of SUM and SUH subsoilers

100 hours free use of flagship combines to selected prospects. Half have indicated they will choose New Holland for their next combine purchase. In the UK, France and Germany, we're also offering a new rental plan for two or three-year periods."

New products for 2021

New Holland's combine push has been bolstered by the extension of its mid-range combine line for 2021 with the launch of a new Crossover Harvesting (CH) range, combining conventional drum-and-concave threshing with twin-rotor separation. Currently there is a single model, the CH7.70, designed to fit a slot between the brand's mid-range conventional and flagship rotary models, and powered by an FPT Cursor 9 engine that develops 374hp, 34hp more than the conventional CX6.90.

Claimed to deliver up to 25% greater throughput than a conventional combine in this segment, the machine features a two-drum threshing system with 600mm

diameter drum – the largest in the sector – and a sectional concave. Drum speed is controlled from the cab by a new heavy-duty hydraulic drum variator, and the threshing system is combined with New Holland's Opti-Thresh system, which adapts to crop conditions and maturity by repositioning the rear part of the concave. As the hinged top section moves away from the drum, rubbing action becomes gentler and straw quality is improved.

For separation there is a specially-designed pair of 0.5m diameter/3.45m long Twin Rotor rotors, said to provide the largest separation area in the segment, at some 2.9m². New Holland's Triple-Clean cascade cleaning system, claimed to boost cleaning capacity by up to 15% via the addition of an extra cascade in the centre of the grain pan, is standard. The double flight cross auger, which transfers grain to the elevator faster, can result in an increase in throughput, says New Holland, further improving capacity.

The SmartSieve system, which automatically compensates for side slopes up to 25%, is fitted, to maintain sieve balance for uniform cleaning. The system also calibrates sieve action based on fan speed and grain size to determine the optimal throwing angle. In addition, New Holland fits its Opti-Fan system, which automatically compensates for fluctuating grain speed across the cleaning shoe when the machine is working on slopes, reducing fan speed when travelling uphill and increasing it when working downhill.

Up front, the CH7.70 can be equipped with New Holland's Varifeed headers up to 9.15m, including a new 8.53m version specifically developed for the CH.

Tractor news includes the full launch of a second six-cylinder addition to the T6 range, the 135hp (rated) T6.160 Dynamic Command, complementing the 145hp T6.180 Dynamic Command. Claimed to be the only compact six-cylinder tractor with a rated power below 140hp, it features the 24x24 Dynamic Command

transmission with eight-step semi-powershift changes using Dual Clutch technology, plus three push-button range changes. Further features include Ground Speed Management II (GSM II), designed to increase efficiency by automatically maintaining the set target speed while minimising fuel consumption, and Smart Range Shift, which ensures the correct gear is engaged when making a range shift, while any overlap gears from one range to the next are skipped.

On the baler front, the BB1290 High Density big baler is now available in a new Packer variant alongside the previous CropCutter model. It features a trio of three-tine packer forks to transfer material to the packer. Other features, such as the two-stage gearbox and the LoopMaster knotting technology that eliminates twine offcuts, remain unchanged.

Also new for 2021 are upgraded D Series wheel loaders, with improvements focused on operator comfort, total cost of ownership and reliability. Major improvements are said to target fuel usage and maintenance costs, with claimed potential savings of

€20,000 during the machine's life cycle. This comes about partly through a doubling of the service interval, from 500 to 1,000 hours, claimed to deliver up to 20% savings.

In the cab, the 8in colour display now features touchscreen control. New configurable quick-access buttons on the armrest allow the operator to also interact with the screen this way. Further features include a headstock self-levelling mode, payload scale, tyre pressure monitoring system, rear-view camera and optional 43,000 lumen enhanced lighting pack.

Meanwhile, New Holland has cemented its partnership with Maschio Gaspardo to offer short disc harrows and subsoilers under the New Holland brand name. For 2021 the first products to be supplied under the agreement will be the SDM and SDH compact disc cultivators, and the SUM and SUH subsoilers, which will come to key European markets including the UK and Ireland, as well as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and Spain. Further details are expected later in the year.



On the baler front, the BB1290 High Density big baler is now available in a new Packer variant alongside the previous CropCutter model

WHEN TO ADD OR DROP A LINE?

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, considering changes to your product offering



Sara Hey

As we work with dealers, one conversation that comes up often is the product lines that a dealer carries. For many dealers, the lines they carry can easily become their identity, they put so much effort into making sure that the brand is known and respected in the community.

A struggle typically emerges when a dealer starts thinking about bringing on an additional line or removing a line.

How do you know it's the right move? How do you do it in a way that doesn't jeopardise your customers' experience with your dealership?

Seasonality of your line-up

The first thing I would encourage you to look at is the seasonality of your current line-up. Typically, one of the reasons we would encourage a dealer to take on a new product line is to help with the seasonality that happens in the dealership.

For example, we have many compact tractor dealers that have added a trailer line. Not only is this a product that they can sell in conjunction with their current equipment, but it also has less seasonality in some areas of the country.

Another complementary item with limited seasonality is generators. Many of our dealers have the technicians to support a line of generators in their business, and there is minimal seasonality to the item.



Competing lines

When thinking about your line-up, you need to ask the question: "What lines do I have that are competing?" By this I mean, do you have two premium products that are competing for the same customer? The goal should be to have several lines at different price points.

We know that the customer who buys a budget-friendly piece of equipment will probably come back in a few years and want to upgrade. Do you have different options for customers, no matter what their budget might dictate?

The other thing we often see when a dealer has competing lines is that one of the lines will get most of your attention. You will be more comfortable with a particular group of products, and you will be more inclined to move your customer towards those. Bringing on a line just so that a competitor can't carry it, is not a good reason to bring on a new line. Each line you bring on eats up not only your floor plan, but your focus as well.

Where are you taking your business? Who is your customer?

The third thing you should ask yourself is a bigger question: "Where are you taking your business and who will be your target customer as you move your business in that direction?"

If your goal is to move your business to where you are laser-focused on the commercial customer, it won't serve you in the long run to have several residential lines.

If your goal is a focus on the rural lifestyle market, however, the make-up of your lines will be different again.

We also have to keep in mind that if we do decide to get rid of a line, it is our responsibility to our customers who have bought from us that we have the parts on hand for those products for at least the next 24 months.

There is not a hard and fast rule for adding or removing a line from your dealership, however, when you look at all the products you carry in an objective manner and clarify what your goal is for the dealership over the next 10 years, your ability to make decisions regarding product lines will become easier.

KEEPING OUR COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMERS

Chris Gibson, MD of GGM Groundscare, says consumer demand has remained high and customer loyalty strong, despite some issues with supply



Chris Gibson

It's hard to believe that it's now over a year since the first lockdown back in March 2020, when we, like all other businesses, had to quickly adapt our working practices to operate within some very tight trading restrictions. Our priority has always been to ensure we protect our staff, customers and suppliers, which remains the case today.

Throughout the first quarter we've continued to adapt to ensure we work safely whilst working hard to keep our commitments to both our commercial and domestic customers and prepare their machines ready for the spring season.

We've seen demand for machinery remaining strong, with our sales team seeing a continuation of the popularity of good-quality used equipment.

New machinery sales have also remained strong, with a steady flow of enquiries and orders in line with previous years and our expectations.

Unfortunately, this year there have been some supply issues from manufacturers, which whether as a result of the knock-on effects of the pandemic or as a result of a differing approach to Brexit, have resulted in longer lead times for our customers. Thankfully, the majority have been very understanding and this has not had the negative impact on our sales figures we'd feared.

Spring is always a busy time for us but with demonstration events and open days all having to be placed on hold due to the pandemic, we've continued to shift our efforts online

and have increased our activity on social media platforms and on our website. These have included some short demonstration and machinery walk-around videos. It's been interesting how talking to a camera has taken some of the team out of their comfort zone, but everyone has soon got used to it and the results have been very well received with customers and a tool that we'll continue to use.

We've also been working hard behind the scenes to get our showrooms back in order ready for customers to return. We'll obviously have to continue to promote social distancing and good hygiene to maintain customer confidence, but hopefully we can once again start to refocus our attentions on the machinery we promote.

We have introduced several new product lines to our portfolio that support some of our environmental initiatives. Battery technology seems to continue to improve and provide a range of low-noise, zero-emission solutions for our customers. These not only include an ever-growing range of battery handheld equipment and pedestrian mowers, but with the introduction of the Ariens Zenith E to our range, we have a fully commercial lithium battery-powered mower with a realistic run time.

As this technology continues to evolve, I don't think it will be long before fully autonomous mowing solutions with much greater capacity, precision and output will

provide commercial customers with a future-proof alternative to traditional diesel ride-on technology.

The annual show season will soon be upon us, but there's still a big question over what will happen this summer, with many shows either cancelling or changing their format substantially; in the case of the Great Yorkshire Show, by planning to extend it over four days!

This raises the question, what do we do? Do we exhibit and hope customers attend? Will customers really attend such a public gathering so soon after restrictions are lifted? Only time will tell, but one thing is certain: we like all other exhibitors will look at the costs versus returns of exhibiting and plan for 2022 accordingly.

As we move through spring, I do feel that there is plenty to be positive about; the weather is improving, temperatures are rising, the days are lighter, golf and outdoor sports are back and there is the smell of freshly-cut grass in the air. There's the new super deduction capital allowance available to encourage investment in machinery, so it's a great opportunity for us to talk to our customers about investing in equipment to improve their productivity.

If the COVID situation continues to improve and as the hospitality and leisure sectors get back into full swing, I'm sure there will be some late spring business to be had and we'll get back to some form of normality by the end of June.



STOCKING CRISIS HITS ACROSS THE BOARD

Dealers of all specialisms feeling the effects

We had a very healthy response to our recent survey, asking our dealer readers how the supply issues of early 2021 had affected their dealership – and it appears the problems are hitting across the board.

An overwhelming 92% of respondents, when asked if their dealership is facing issues regarding the availability of stock currently, replied that they were. *Service Dealer* has never asked a question with such a definitive response before.

There was a clear leader regarding which product area was causing the most difficulties to get hold

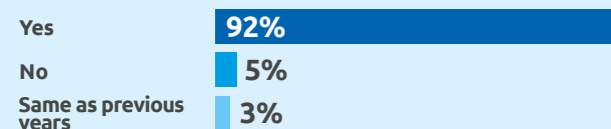
of right now, with 30% citing petrol mowers as the hardest to come by. Tractors also scored highly.

Interestingly, for a clear majority of respondents, (74%) the current supply situation had not forced them to rethink their pricing policy for customers – most said that they were staying broadly the same.

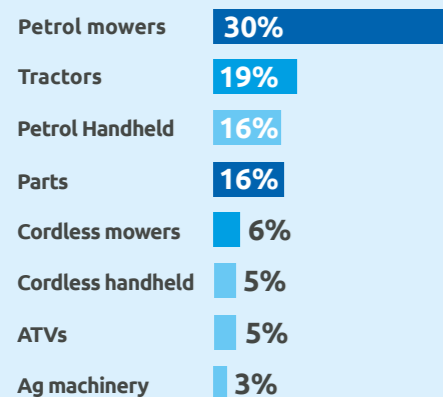
Of some concern was that more than half of the dealers who answered the survey said that the communication they are receiving from their suppliers has been “patchy”.

Slightly better news was that 37% said their customer response to delays had been “reasonable”.

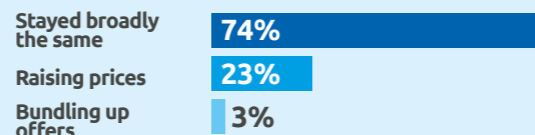
Is your dealership facing issues regarding the availability of stock currently?



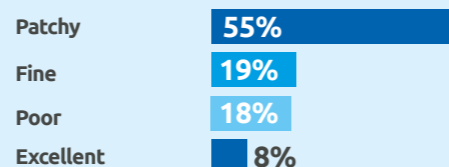
If you had to pick one, which area is worst effected in terms of availability?



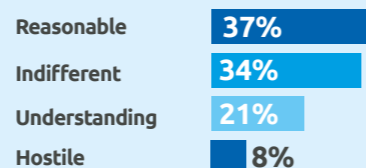
Has the current stocking situation made you consider your pricing strategy to customers?



How would you describe the communication you receive from your suppliers regarding any stock delays?



How are your customers reacting to any increased lead times?



YOUR SAY...

How is the stocking situation impacting your dealership right now – and what do you feel the rest of the year will be like?

- The stocking situation is having a big impact at the moment and we feel like we are losing sales because of it. I think this situation is going to get worse before it gets better this year. Unfortunately, this industry has a weird obsession with discounting their products heavily with little profit. Question is, how long can these dealerships survive doing that this year? I think it's going to be a time for everyone to keep their prices high on the stock they do have in order to survive.
- It is hard to see this resolving until the autumn when the sales pressures subside and give the manufacturing sites a chance to rebuild inventory. In the interim we will seek to carry increased stocks of fast-moving machines and will regularly place orders to keep some sort of flow of product during the period of back orders.
- It has meant we have been selling different brands to suit customers' requirements. This is okay until other suppliers run out of stock. We have also found and set up additional parts suppliers to make sure we can at least get parts from somewhere if others are out of stock.
- The hardest thing for me is assessing how much I need to order now to fend off supply issues later in the year. In many cases I can see today's shortages and can plan accordingly, but the tricky part is knowing how to plan for what's beyond the current shortage? Some suppliers have good systems that we can access to keep us abreast of ETAs. Others seem to have no system at all. Good communication from suppliers is key, but sadly some suppliers don't seem to appreciate that. Stock shortages are manageable IF we are given the information and it is kept up to date. When we don't get information, the situation is immeasurably worse because dealers then have to chase for information and that's taking up valuable time we don't have.
- We are trying to only sell what we have on the shop floor today and avoid mentioning options that we don't stock. We have switched brands in some cases to keep product available, but I can see this year being difficult with lost sales etc.
- It's very time-consuming chasing down machines and we are getting constant phone calls with customers ringing round. Very frustrating as sales are there but we can't get stock.
- Hard to keep sales staff motivated. Difficult to sell stuff whenever you're not sure when you're going to get it.
- It's manageable at the moment with most customers being aware of the issues. Very often “do you have one” is the first question rather than “how much” and customers seem to be more willing to order and wait once they have checked to see the online merchants are also out of stock. With many people not having holidays last year and winter holidays, there seems to be a bit more money in the system – but let's not get ahead of ourselves!
- Stocking was planned well in advance because of Covid19, and before Brexit. The main issues we are finding is with Customs and getting consignments released. Suppliers have the stock – we order and they despatch the same day, but some deliveries are taking 3-5 days or more, instead of the expected 24 hours.

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STAFFING

THE MANAGEMENT OF MANAGERS

There are countless examples of poor management, writes SME Digest Editor, Adam Bernstein. One, Robert Maxwell, the late publisher and owner of Mirror Group Newspapers, was well known for being both demanding and domineering. He created an empire, but it fell apart in scandal

We have all come across the individual who really shouldn't be a manager. They may be technically competent, but they don't have the people skills to be able to command respect.

Appoint on merit

Managers should be appointed on their ability to manage rather than their seniority or their technical expertise. Their job is to facilitate others to succeed and in order to do this they must understand people.

The problem is that experts in a given field are often promoted to a management position based solely on their expertise or seniority. Some are appointed purely on the basis that they are available. These accidental managers often have no management skills, or little to no training opportunities; they are unintentionally set up to fail and tend to 'leave' the organisation.

This is expensive with the cost of recruitment – twice, fall-out resulting from the individual's lack of management skills, loss of morale among those being 'managed', loss of business performance, and the cost to the wellbeing of the manager concerned.

Learn from common mistakes

Inexperienced and accidental managers make mistakes, many of them common and they all tend to revolve around relationships. The failure to communicate effectively is by far the biggest; they often work on the basis of 'I tell you what to do and you do it'. Managers must not lose sight of the fact that they need to listen and build trusting respectful relationships

with the people they manage.

But inexperienced and untrained managers can also believe that they are either experts or know everything.

Some corporate cultures enhance mistakes and normalise them. Managers can also forget that they are there to organise and support others and manage by consent; a manager that overlooks the fact that staff are not bound and can leave for other roles is a fool.

Build relationships

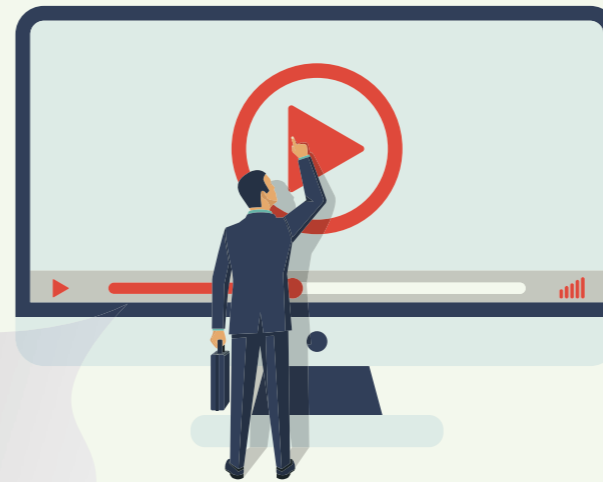
Management is all about relationships, trust and respect, which takes time to build. No one will trust a manager simply because of their position – they need a reason to do so.

To build trust means delivering on promises, supporting staff – both when they succeed and when they fail, demonstrating personal and organisation values, communicating, and demonstrating empathy, consistency, and clarity.

Communicating with honesty and integrity will pay dividends. Staff need to understand what their objectives are and why, how they are to be met, and what the outcomes are likely to be. Inexperienced or ineffective managers can fall into the trap of only communicating good news or treating communication on a need-to-know basis. Managers could do worse than taking the view of telling everyone everything unless there is a good reason not to.



But while managers should be outgoing and inclusive, they also need to be reflective to understand the impact they have on others while looking at their strengths and weaknesses and being certain that they recognise what levels of power they hold and how they utilise that power. Misuse of power will take time to repair team spirit.



Remember training

There is one option that not many firms consider: apprenticeships for managers. These can form individuals in the mould of an organisation while training staff internally. Off-the-job training must be included or else replicas of existing staff who follow tired and out-of-date processes, procedures and policies will result.

Training is something that firms should undertake because if done well it is very valuable; trained managers perform better, deliver, facilitate others, and achieve better outcomes for all.

Management isn't necessarily just for board-level appointees, but for any level of a business where there's a supervisory role. It's important to note that some management grade courses have been rebadged so as to take advantage of apprenticeship levy funding – employers should be careful to ensure that courses are fit for purpose.

Not all training is equal, and organisations need to consider why they are training individuals, what training each individual requires, and what the expected outcomes are. They also need to be able to demonstrate the value of any training they are requiring staff to undertake.

Training should be seen as continuous development and investment both in the success of the individual, and in the wider organisation. It is not a singular process, but a series of iterations which build one on the other, each developing the individual according to both personal and organisational need.

Ultimately, as managers receive training, so the organisation should be willing to look at new ways of working.

To finish

Management is both a skill and an art. Firms that take the 'warm body' approach to appointment are letting the individual and the business down. Time and thought are essential for success.

TAXATION

TAX MISTAKES CARRY COST

Technology has made it easier for HMRC to understand how taxpayers manage their affairs, says SME Digest Editor, Adam Bernstein



The use of technology means that HMRC frequently finds errors. While there's not necessarily any suggestion of deceit, it doesn't hurt to look at the most common reasons for official intervention.

Failing to keep records

The consequences of failing to keep records can be significant. In a relatively recent tribunal case, a vehicle repairer failed to keep records for a number of years. HMRC raised an assessment of lost VAT amounting to over £46,000 based on only two invoices – the only information available to it over the period. The taxpayer challenged this, but the tribunal upheld the assessment as the judge considered that HMRC had made a reasonable estimate on the limited evidence available.

Records are everything and businesses need to retain enough information to accurately calculate their tax position. Although they can keep their records in any form, owners need to think about what taxes they pay and the implications of HMRC's Making Tax Digital when they are considering how they keep business records.

As for how far back records must go, the self-employed should keep records for at least five years after the 31 January submission deadline for the relevant tax year. In comparison, a company must preserve its financial and accounting records for six years from the end of the financial year that they relate to.

Poor record keeping can lead to HMRC charging penalties of up to £3,000 for each failure to keep and preserve suitable records. Worse, a director risks disqualification.

Missing income off from self-assessment

A common mistake made by self-employed individuals who also have earnings through PAYE is to complete their self-assessment for the business income but leave off the PAYE earnings, thinking it has already been taxed.

The problem is that while tax may well have been taken from the salary under PAYE, it is quite possible that this is not the right amount as an individual's tax rate depends on their total income, including PAYE, self-employment and any other income, such as dividends.

Missing reporting deadlines

Different taxes have different reporting requirements and deadlines and missing them can prove expensive.

Very simply, those within self-assessment must report their taxable income annually via self-assessment. The deadline to report is 31 January following the tax year – so for the current 2020-21 tax year ending on 5 April 2021, the deadline to complete a self-assessment return is 31 January 2022.

In contrast, the deadline for filing a corporation tax return is 12 months from the end of the accounting period. VAT is generally reported quarterly.

For any business with employees, reports on payments must be made through the Real Time Information (RTI) system on or before each payday.

There are penalties for non-compliance, and they vary on the nature and sometimes the amount of tax. For example, for self-assessment that is up to three months late, the initial penalty is £100. After that are penalties of £10/day for the next 90 days. If the return is still outstanding after six months, the penalty will be the greater of £300 or 5% of the tax outstanding.

For corporation tax, penalties start at £100, with a further £100 once a return is over three months late. After six months HMRC will estimate the corporation tax due and add a penalty of 10% of the unpaid tax.

Failing to save for tax

While taxpayers have a duty to report, they also need to pay the tax on time. But payment schedules are complex. For self-assessment, tax is payable in instalments in July and January each year. The first payment on account is due on 31 January in the tax year, the second by 31 July after the tax year, and the final balancing payment on the

31 January following the end of the tax year – the same time as payment on account for the next tax year. Further complexity is added in that payments on account are based on previous year's profits.

As for corporation tax, it is payable nine months and one day after the end of the accounting period.

Taxpayers would do well to pay into a separate account monies purely for tax bills.

Claiming tax reliefs wrongly

Another problem is claiming for costs which are not allowable. An example is a self-employed individual who can claim tax relief on the costs of training which refreshes existing knowledge, but not for learning a new skill.

The rules are more generous for companies; a company can pay for an employee or director to learn new skills relevant to their work and claim against their corporation tax without creating a benefit in kind for the individual.

Another point to consider is not claiming for costs which do not relate to the business. Adjustments should be made for private use of business assets in an unincorporated business. And for an incorporated business, where a benefit is made available, it must be taxed and reported to HMRC.

But just as overclaims can be made, it is very easy to miss off genuine business expenses, especially where the business has not kept detailed records of its expenses; this will unnecessarily increase a tax bill.

In summary

Tax has the potential to be difficult and expensive if errors are made, however, taking professional advice or reviewing the rules on GOV.UK will pay dividends.



Please take proper advice before acting on anything written here.

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COMMERCIAL

ELECTRIC PERFORMANCE FROM ARIENS' ZENITH E

Company's first commercial, all-electric zero-turn mower for the UK market

Ariens has introduced its first commercial, all-electric zero-turn mower for the UK market. The Zenith E is powered by a FusionCore lithium-ion battery system, an exclusive technology developed by Ariens. It is designed to provide the operator with a continuous cutting time of up to 5.5 hours on a full charge, and coverage of up to 62,726 sq/m (15.5 acres).

The Zenith E is built upon the fully commercial Ariens Zenith platform. It is one of the first battery-powered commercial zero-turn mowers developed by an outdoor power equipment company.

Fully electric, the mower's FusionCore lithium-ion 56V DC battery system has four interchangeable, easily removable, sealed-for-life batteries, each with a 4kWh capacity. The manufacturer says operators can work with minimum interruption by swapping depleted batteries with fully charged ones in seconds.

Where a mix of charge levels is detected in the four batteries, the patent-pending management system prioritises how the Zenith E balances power. It will only draw from the full batteries until they reach the same level as those with less charge. Once all four are at the same charge level, the machine will draw power from them equally, thus ensuring consistent power and cutting performance throughout. The system is IP65 rated, sealed from moisture, dust and debris and is safe to use in wet conditions. Batteries can be charged in 12 hours with a standard charger or in 5.3 hours using an optional quick charger.

The model features patent-pending spindle technology.



This system is designed to protect the spindle motors from damage in the event the blade strikes a hard object, such as a manhole cover or large rock. The two proprietary hub and wheel electric motors work with a dual reduction planetary gearbox to produce torque, providing the operator, Ariens says, with the same feel and driving experience as a petrol zero-turn.

There are two configurations for the 152cm (60") deck: side discharge and rear discharge. Both are fabricated from 10-gauge steel. The Zenith E boasts 15 cutting positions, easily selected with a vertical pin drop and foot-operated deck lift system. The high-back, full suspension seat with padded armrests offers all-day operator comfort. The frame features a large formed tubular steel chassis for durability.

The Rollover Protection System (ROPS) is fitted as standard. A range of optional accessories is available including LED lights, beacon light, mulch kit, rapid charger and an off-board charger. The Zenith E comes with a five-year/1,500-hour warranty with no hour limit on the first two years and a three-year warranty for the batteries.

COMMERCIAL/AGRICULTURAL

TYM FOR NEW AND IMPROVED MODELS

T255 subcompact and T555 compact tractors

In response to Stage V emissions regulations and customer feedback, TYM says it is launching a new range of tractors with a host of improvements and features. First off the blocks are the T255 subcompact and T555 compact tractors.

Replacing the TS25 in the subcompact tractor market, is the T255. With the same features as the TS25, TYM claims the T255 offers more with its fresh new design. Its 25.3hp Yanmar diesel engine is Stage V compliant but avoids the need for expensive exhaust treatments such as a DPF filter, keeping costs down for the customer. Available with a twin range HST, the new model is also equipped with auto throttle response as standard, which synchronises the HST pedals with the engine throttle for simpler and less fatiguing operation.

A 540rpm rear PTO and 2,000rpm mid PTO can be used together simultaneously to allow for efficient and multi-functional combinations such as a mid-deck and grass collector. Plus, following customer feedback, the T255 now comes with one set of spool valves as standard, rather than as an optional accessory.

The successor to the T503, the T555 comes with even more power in the same compact

frame, redefining what a compact utility tractor can do and avoiding the need to compromise on manoeuvrability.

The T555's main attraction, says the manufacturer, and where it differs most from the T503, is its high-efficiency 55.9hp Yanmar four-cylinder diesel engine, that produces more power while still maximising fuel efficiency. It comes with two transmission options, a 16x16 manual with dash-mounted forward/reverse shuttle lever, or a three-range HST with auto throttle control. Plus, an updated panel with a new digital element shows the tractor hours, fuel gauge and information on the engine and emission system for improved user control.

Also available is a new TX55L loader that features self-levelling arms as standard, along with a pre-installed third function kit, and comes with a Euro fitment front bucket.



The subcompact T255

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DOMESTIC/COMMERCIAL



QUIET GARDEN REVOLUTION

New battery range from Mountfield

Mountfield says a quiet revolution will be taking place in Britain's gardens this year with its launch of an extensive and competitively priced range of cordless lawnmowers and hand-held products, powered by what the company describes as "the smartest intelligent battery on the market".

The cordless Freedom range features fully interchangeable batteries and is designed, says the manufacturer, to make gardening easy. The machines are described as lightweight, clean and energy efficient.

Mountfield claims the Freedom 100 and Freedom 500 products make cordless mowing available to every garden in Britain – regardless of size.

The lithium-ion battery at the heart of the range 'talks' to the lawnmower, hedge cutter or leaf

blower and automatically delivers the right amount of power for the task in hand, thus saving energy. This is achieved through its smart ID microchip and the battery management system. The high-performance cells ensure extended run times and rapid recharging.

"From neat verdant stripes to meandering paths through wildlife havens of longer grass, there is a Freedom mower to suit all needs and budgets, plus a full armoury of hand-held cordless products," says Gary Whitney, Managing Director of STIGA Ltd, owner of the Mountfield brand.

Mountfield says all products have extended run times, rapid recharging and attractive promotional launch prices starting at £119 including battery and charger.

COMMERCIAL



ROTOCUT ATTACHMENT ADDS TO PRO RANGE

Ego increase Multi-Tool's capabilities

Adding to the capabilities of its Multi-Tool, Ego is launching a new Multi-Tool Rotocut attachment (RTA2300) as part of its growing Professional range.

The company says the new tool cuts through grass, weeds and moss on concrete and grass verges, while the intelligent design maximises safety and flexibility.

Featuring two counter-rotating, high-strength alloy steel blades, the Rotocut is designed to ensure clean and efficient cutting with a long service life. The design also allows a close cut, while ensuring no debris is thrown.

The 23cm cutting width and low-profile gear box offers greater flexibility claims Ego, by making it easier to work in tight or difficult to reach areas.

With a weight of 2kg, low vibration, zero emissions and low noise levels, the RTA2300 is built with operator safety in mind.

One of a range of nine attachments for the Multi-Tool, the tool-free coupling makes switching attachments – which include lawn edgers, hedge trimmers and cultivators – a quick job. The variable speed trigger also ensures the right amount of power when needed.

COMMERCIAL



Patent-pending Fine Cut and Fast Cut mowing decks

Ventrac has added two flail mowers to its growing list of dedicated attachments.

The new patent-pending Fine Cut and Fast Cut mowing decks feature out-front mounted couplings unique to Ventrac. These attachments, say the manufacturer, provide a quality finish on tall or dense areas of vegetation for fast and efficient turf management.

The two available models, Fine Cut (MW series) and Fast Cut (MY series), feature unique knife choices and offer two width options for more versatility of cut, speed, and application. Cutting widths for the decks are 1.42m (56") and 1.83m (72").

The Fine Cut Flails (MW560/MW720) are equipped with scoop knives and says Ventrac, will achieve a quality cut with a more finished look on grassed areas mowed between three and eight times per year.

The Fast Cut Flails (MY560/MY720) feature Y-shaped knives for taming dense and brush-type material. The Fast Cut is a suitable choice for areas of overgrown brush and woodland margins that do not require regular mowing, while providing a superior finish to that of

a typical rotary rough-cut mower.

"The introduction of these two new flail options complements our Tough Cut rotary mowing deck," says Rupert Price, of Price Turfcare, the distributor of Ventrac products for the UK and Ireland. "All decks have a flip-up option for easy maintenance, enabling access to the knives for sharpening or replacement.

"Although powered by a sub-25hp Kubota diesel engine, we have enough residual power to provide a rotor speed of 3,000rpm. This is vitally important as it's the speed of rotor that dictates the speed and efficiency of the cutting knives and, ultimately, the quality of cut and finish.

"Ventrac has made a conscious decision to keep the power unit of their 4500 tractor unit below the 25hp emissions threshold of Tier 4 legislation. It continues to surprise end-users with the power generated by a relatively small engine and its ability to effortlessly drive every attachment. Very rarely do you hear a change in the engine note or experience a loss of power. It is one of the major selling points of the machine."

DOMESTIC/COMMERCIAL



INFINICUT ADAPT

Kit transforms JD 2500 Triplex into 85" sports turf mower

Infinicut is introducing an adaptation kit to transform a JD 2500 Triplex into an 85" wide dedicated sports turf mower.

The company say the simple-to-fit kit was designed to specifically meet the criteria required to maintain sports turf and address the failings of current options – traditionally repurposed golf turf units.

The new kit includes all that is required to affix 30" Infinicut cutting reels and large-capacity grass boxes to a JD power unit with zero fabrication/hole drilling or other modification required to the original traction unit.

In addition, a selection of maintenance cassettes from the TMSYSTEM range are also compatible with the new set-up.

The JD 2500 was chosen as the donor traction unit because it would fulfil the strict design brief set out by the Infinicut design team. The company says thought was given to ensure the end product was lightweight, gentle to turf through torquing and turning, and minimised soil surface compaction.

It also features a functional, forward-facing middle grass basket, with a generous capacity that is easy to install and remove.

AGRICULTURAL



EU STAGE V COMPLIANT M4 AND M5 TRACTORS

New from Kubota

Kubota (UK) Ltd has launched the M5002 and M4003 series tractor ranges, with several upgrades over their predecessors, the M5001 and M4002.

Introduced to meet EU Stage V emissions compliance, these updated models include the 66hp M4063, the 74hp M4073, the 96hp M5092 and the 115hp M5112. Where the M4063 can be specified in open-station format with ROPS frame or equipped with a fully-glazed safety cab, the remaining models are only available with a fully-glazed safety cab.

Power for the M4 comes from a 3.3-litre, four-cylinder engine. It meets EU Stage V emissions using a diesel particulate filter (DPF) combined with a diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC) in a single canister. The after-treatment package has been integrated beneath the bonnet, delivering low emissions without compromising on visibility to the front and sides of the tractor.

While the engine benefits from 500-hour oil change intervals, the DPF comes with a 6,000-hour cleaning interval – twice that of its predecessor, contributing to lower cost of ownership.

DPF regeneration now occurs using lower engine rpm, typically 1,100rpm instead of 2,000rpm.

The M4's gearbox uses six synchronised speeds in three ranges, creating an 18x18 transmission. With the addition of a Hi-Lo powersplit, this transmission is also available as a 36x36 on the larger M4073 model. All models benefit from an overdrive gear, which delivers a 40kph road speed at 1,945 engine rpm. Cabbed models benefit from the Hi-Lo and declutch button located on the gear lever.

The more powerful M5 version uses a diesel particulate filter (DPF), diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC) and selective catalytic reduction (SCR) for exhaust after-treatment for its

3.8-litre, four-cylinder engine, to comfortably achieve Stage V emissions regulations.

It too boasts an extended interval of 6,000 hours for DPF servicing, up from 3,000 hours, with regeneration achieved at lower operating revs, thanks to improved filter performance.

Maximum power is 96hp for the M5092 and 115hp for the M5112, with power put down through a 36x36 transmission with an over-drive ratio creating a 40kph road speed at reduced engine revs. Operator convenience includes dual engine rpm memory settings, hydraulic shuttle control and the inclusion of an LED work light package.

A 64.3-litre hydraulic pump and Cat II rear linkage provides a 4.1t lift capacity. Both M5002 models can also be fitted with a Kubota LA1854 front-end loader, and an optional fourth service, to improve versatility with attachments.



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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.



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MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Changes in the pecking order at dealerships?

It's strange how news stories sometimes collide to prove the worth of a particular new set of ideas or change of direction.

In the past few weeks and months, there has been the ongoing impact of COVID-19, and its knock-on effect on business practices and disruption to supply of goods and components. Then the story of the huge container ship attempting a three-point turn in the Suez Canal, causing a tail-back of more than 400 vessels en route to European destinations.

Add the continuing impact on the supply and escalating costs of goods to and from the UK due to Brexit – and, yes, Ford's decision to axe the Mondeo.

So what links a container ship with the demise of the Mondeo?

When I was running a multi-branch dealership 'back in the day', the sales reps were like Richard Sharp of the rugby world, Jimmy Greaves from football, or David Gower's effortless batting; they toured the countryside in their Mondeos, they were the face of the dealership, smartly attired (sometimes), they knew the location of every Little Chef – and they were envied or despised in equal measure by the 'heavy lifters', the workshop staff who considered that they were putting in the real graft.

Our language reflected this class disparity. Business cards with impressive titles for the sales reps, meanwhile a description on a repair invoice would read 'Our fitter attended the breakdown and had to return to the stores to obtain parts'.

They were fitters (second-class citizens) and we had stores and storemen (third-class citizens).

The language has improved over the years. Service technician is the accepted title today, and the spare parts department has more often than not become a multi-faceted retail shop offering much, much more than filters or gaskets. Stores are just that, a place where you store stuff. Gone (hopefully) are the days when the thought process was 'We'll order one for the customer, and one for stock – just in case'.

Ingenuity

But it's still probably not enough. What links those news stories is that the supply of products is likely to be impacted by external factors for some while.

Many companies are indeed questioning their reliance on sourcing from the Far East, particularly China, for logistical or geo-political reasons. All of which may see a resurgence of home-grown manufacturing, particularly for components.

In the meantime, whilst the supply of products is likely to be 'lumpy' (Matt Hancock's favoured phrase about vaccine supply) the demands on the service side of a business will intensify – repair rather than replace. The ingenuity of service technicians will be tested to the limit as shortages of spare parts and components will require substitutions and a fair degree of lateral thinking.

Fortunately, that is part of the DNA of this industry, which is not cocooned under cover in bland service bays, armed with a computer and servicing by numbers, as in the car business. Technicians throughout the ages have needed to be resourceful, and often to think on their feet with a customer breathing down their neck.

No, we are surely witnessing a reversal in the pecking order at dealerships. The stars of the business will be highly trained technical staff with excellent communication skills who will be listened to by customers above all others.

And whilst on the subject of language, should we be reconsidering the use of the word 'dealer'? Apart from other dubious meanings, it suggests someone 'doing a deal'. Admittedly that has been part of the farmers' armoury for ever, but is it time to consider a more contemporary description which reflects a professional sales and service operation?



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

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

MAY 2021

- 3 North Somerset Show
www.nsas.org.uk
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 6 Grassland UK, Bath & West Showground
www.bathandwest.com/grassland-uk
CANCELLED
- 25-26 LAMMA 2021, Birmingham NEC
www.lammashow.com
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 29-30 Herts County Show
www.hertsshow.com

JUNE 2021

- 17-20 Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org
CANCELLED - MOVED ONLINE
- 18-20 Royal Three Counties Show, Malvern
www.royalthreecounties.co.uk
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 23-24 Lincolnshire Show
www.lincolnshireshow.co.uk
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 26 Derbyshire County Show
www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 30-1 Royal Norfolk Show /07
www.royalnorfolkshow.rnaa.org.uk
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 30-1 Cereals 2021, Boothby Graffoe /07
www.cerealsevent.co.uk
- 31 Royal Cheshire County Show
www.royalcheshireshow.org

JULY 2021

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

AUGUST 2021

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

SEPTEMBER 2021

- 4 Alresford Show
www.alresfordshow.co.uk
- 5 Cranleigh Show
www.cranleighshow.co.uk
- 5-8 Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC
www.autumnfair.com
- 9-11 Royal Cornwall Show
www.royalcornwallshow.org
POSTPONED TO 2022
- 11 Usk Show
www.uskshow.co.uk
- 11 Romsey Show
www.romseyshow.co.uk
- 14-16 Glee 2021
www.gleebirmingham.com
- 21-26 Chelsea Flower Show
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show/
- 22-25 Balmoral Show, Belfast
www.balmoralshow.co.uk
- 23-25 APF Exhibition 2021, Ragely Estate
www.apfexhibition.co.uk
POSTPONED TO 2022

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INDUSTRY EVENTS UNDER PRESSURE



NO SHOW BUSINESS?

Organisers need to overcome exhibitor cynicism and visitor nervousness

Now that the old gaffers like me have been fully jabbed up two times, surely it won't be long before we're all back once again in an over-lit sports hall, looking at machinery, complaining about the price of parking and counting down the hours until we can legitimately visit the bar? It certainly feels like an exceptionally long time since the industry has had an opportunity to get together and take stock.

But perhaps I shouldn't speak too soon? I've picked up a fair degree of chatter recently on the street – or let's be honest, the internet – regarding feelings towards industry shows and events this year.

Firstly, it does appear that a degree of hostility is harboured towards just how many different shows exist and how often they take place, by some exhibitors. I heard the phrase 'an industry tax' used to describe how some regarded them – which when you consider the amount it must cost a company to take a stand at one of these things and then add in staff travel, accommodation, food, the aforementioned bar – this is a not insignificant investment!

So, I can understand why some are letting their feelings be known that perhaps this enforced hiatus should be used to fundamentally assess the industry scene. Maybe time has come to have a bit of a rethink? Although to be fair, the show organisers who rely on these incomes would argue against this.

The other issue for the success or otherwise of any show that does choose to open its gates at some point this year – after they've persuaded manufacturers to exhibit – is to encourage visitors to come along and attend. At this stage it's incredibly difficult to guess just what sort of appetite there will be for this.

When *Service Dealer* recently asked you, our dealer readers, what you felt about going to a show later in the year, there appeared to be a near-equal split between 'definitely', 'no way' and 'not sure', which doesn't help much with my predictions!

The opinions shared varied from:

- **the decidedly anti** – *"Is anyone going to die if there are no shows? Definitely NOT. Are machinery suppliers going to lose sales? Definitely NOT. If shows go ahead it will be impossible to limit numbers or socially distance, so there will be a high risk of passing the virus on and consequently it's likely that people will get very ill and possibly die."*
- **to those positively in favour** – *"Customers are getting very tired of virtual events, some in fact unwilling to engage with them. To rebuild business to normal levels there is a desperate need for face-to-face contact. Some such events must go ahead!"*
- **to somewhere in between** – *"It's a very difficult call. Trade shows were sorely missed last year, they're a big part of the year. If you're a service dealer, distributor or OEM, they are events you have to get involved with. Looking towards the end of this year, it may just be possible to put on a show."*

It will be interesting as we move through the months ahead, to see just what happens on the exhibitions front. It's probably a safe bet to assume that some currently in the calendar will happen, whilst others will fall by the wayside. Maybe a better indication of the long-term future for the sector will be what takes place in 2022?

One thing I do know: I'm about done with talking to a laptop!

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