

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

- News
- Industry
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January/February 2022

SERVICE DEALER CONFERENCE & AWARDS RETURN

Industry comes together to learn how to work smarter and celebrates success through adversity

SALTEX '21 REVIEW

The show the industry needed

EIMA ROUND-UP

What was new at the European show

NATURAL LEADERSHIP

GGM's Chris Gibson on steering a path through the pandemic



FUTURE PROOFING

Ripon Farm Services on the creation of a new branch



GARDEN+ SERIES

40 Volt Series: The new range of battery powered tools for the domestic user.
7 quality tools - 2.0AH & 4.0AH batteries & a charger.



2 + 1 year with product registration



ECHO

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ECHO

2 Stroke range: For over 70 years, ECHO has been designing and building high performance, quality products.



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X - Series: This means ECHO's best in class products. Designed for professionals who demand the best and highest quality tools.



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Letter from the editor Steve Gibbs

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Welcome to the January / February 2022 edition of Service Dealer – and to our fresh new redesign!

It's been a few years since we last had a tidy-up of our pages and we do like to keep our offering to you current and modern. Hopefully you won't find it too wildly different to what you're used to. It's important to us that we're bringing you the best industry content every issue and every Friday with the *Weekly Update* – plus regularly through our social channels, of course. So please do get in touch through any avenue if you have feedback or issues you'd like to raise.

It was fabulous to hear from readers in person at November's Service Dealer Conference & Awards, regarding just how they have been coping these past two years since we were last able to get together. The good news is many dealerships have flourished. You can read some business and individual success stories in the

coverage of our Awards, starting on page 14 in this issue.

Also, in this edition we welcome a new Diarist for the year, Anthony Deacon of MKM Agriculture. Many of you will remember that MKM suffered a devastating fire in April of '21, but they are now in the process of building back stronger. We thank Anthony for allowing us to join them on their journey this year as they create a new dealership from scratch – one that apparently includes the genius idea of an in-house staff pub! I'm looking forward to the opening day already, Anthony!

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Chris Gibson of GGM for his fascinating, candid, and forthright Diary entries throughout 2021. You can hear from Chris one more time this issue, as he speaks to Laurence Gale following his well-deserved Leadership Award, which he collected at Oxford Belfry. Many congratulations to Chris and all the talented winners.

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INDUSTRY



FGM Claymore takes on Echo in the UK

Also distributing the Shindaiwa branded products

FGM Claymore have announced that as of 1st January 2022, they have become the new distributor of the Echo and Shindaiwa brands for the UK market.

"We are delighted with this appointment, which will further strengthen our position in the UK market. We have a long history of importing and distributing 2-stroke hand-held products and our aim is

to build the Echo and Shindaiwa brands to significant levels through a network of independent servicing dealers." Explains Paul Butterly, managing director of FGM Claymore.

The company says it will be launching a new 40V range of consumer products, including lawnmowers and hand-held products, which will be available in Spring 2022. It will also provide the

range of X-Series products with emission-compliant petrol products and its 56V battery, both for use in the professional market.

In addition, the company has announced that Neil Turner will be joining the team as its new sales director to focus on their existing dealer network and new appointments in the coming months.

DEALERS

Scamblers closure leads to distribution changes

For Grasshopper mowers



Grasshopper mowers on display at SALTEX '21

The import of the Grasshopper range of zero-turn mowers for the UK & NI has changed.

Chandlers (Farm Equipment) Ltd has taken over the import of the machines following the retirement and closing of Scamblers, who shut their doors on December 22nd 2021.

Gavin Pell, managing director of Chandlers, said, "We look forward to working with all of Scamblers existing dealers for the supply and promotion of the excellent range of zero-turn Grasshopper mowers.

"We recently attended and exhibited with Grasshopper at SALTEX, which was a great event where we met with many of the existing dealer network and were delighted by the positive response we had about our appointment. We were also pleased with the dealers' and end-users' satisfaction with the popularity, quality and durability of the Grasshopper range."

Chandlers' dealer principal, Les Butters, will be heading up the management of the franchise. He can be contacted on 07885 327477.

Gavin added, "We will be interested in hearing from any dealers who would be interested in adding a zero-turn mower to their range, where there are gaps in the current dealer line-up."

DEALERS

Haynes acquires Oakes Bros

Expands territory across south-east England

Maidstone-based Haynes Bros has bought the trade and assets of neighbouring dealer Oakes Bros, established in 1825 at Hungerford, Berkshire.

This acquisition brings together two long-established businesses holding key franchises for New Holland and JCB, along with Kuhn Farm Machinery, McConnell, Honda, Krone, and Stewart.

Haynes acquires three Oakes agricultural branches, covering parts of Berkshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex and Wiltshire and this will double the size of the Haynes agricultural business. These branches will be re-branded by Haynes Agricultural shortly.

Oakes had previously operated from East Ilsley, Micheldever and Horsham, but a smaller branch at Coombe Bissett near Salisbury will close.

These branches will be added to the three Haynes branches at Uckfield, Wrotham and Ashford holding the New Holland and JCB franchises, plus the branch at Birchington, Kent holding

Case IH and JCB franchises.

Established in 1790 in London, Haynes Bros Ltd is now the holding company for a group of subsidiary companies operating throughout the South East. Moving to Kent in 1832, the company was the first in the county to take on the Ford Motor Company franchise in 1911 and then sell and distribute the complete range of Ford cars, trucks and agricultural machinery.

"We believe this expansion is a natural fit for our agricultural business, giving us increased scale in this key area of our operations," says Andrew Haynes, chairman and CEO of Haynes Bros. "The Oakes business is well known to us and we have been neighbouring dealers for many years following our expansion into Sussex in 2004. This move will provide us with greater economies of scale and resources, which we believe over time will be of considerable benefit to our mutual customers, staff and manufacturers.



The workshop at the Micheldever, Hampshire depot, now owned by Haynes

DEALERS

Reform Metrac appoint

Ben Burgess takes on specialist tractor range

As an addition to its current range of over 25 franchises, the Ben Burgess group has been appointed as Reform Metrac dealers for the east of England.

Chris Pateman, commercial manager for the groundcare sector, said, "We identified a gap in the market in our region and the high-quality and performance capability of the Reform range made it the ideal



Metrac Reform

choice for our business.

"We already have orders in place for two Metrac H75 and two Metrac H60 models, and look forward to introducing these machines to customers from April 2022 at our branches."

Simon Richard, UK Agent for the Reform Werke specialist tractor range, added, "We are delighted to be working with the Ben Burgess group."

DEALERS

Another dealer for Mean Green

Overton appoints Sharrocks

Overton (UK) Ltd have announced Sharrocks as their latest dealer for the Mean Green Mowers.

Steve Hanlon, sales director at Sharrocks, said, "We have been looking at Mean Green electric mowers for the last couple of years, and now was the time as customers are asking to go electric.

"We have had a few demos of the mowers by Overton and were very impressed with the build quality and cut – as were our customers.

"We have known Richard and Guy Overton for 35 years, which gave us comfort, and we're looking forward to working with Overton."



L-R: Richard Overton, MD Overton UK (Ltd); Steve Hanlon sales director, Sharrocks

EXHIBITIONS

SAGE show to host eco expo

For groundcare sector

Organisers of the Sports and Ground Expo announced they have partnered with environmental surface technology specialists, Bio-Circle, and will run a Sustainable Solutions for Ground Care summit at this year's SAGE 2022 event.

The show will take place at Three Counties Showground in Malvern on July 6-7, 2022 after making its debut last summer.

For the first time, it will host a 'Sustainable Solutions for Grounds Specialists Summit', which will hold a live panel event with experts across the industry organisers say more information will be released soon.

SAGE 2022 event manager Vicky Panniers said, "The deadline for becoming sustainable in the world of sports is now looming and our industry must now start to think of the steps it needs to take to become carbon neutral and comply with to the new legislation.

"SAGE is, therefore, delighted to be partnering with Bio Cycle, who have been using a combination of technology, chemistry, biology and service to optimise their customer cleaning processes for the past 30 years."

The show says it will deliver live workshops to help anyone who is looking at how they can become more sustainable for the future.



SAGE entrance 2021

EXHIBITIONS

Agritechnica cancelled

Hannover show will not take place in 2022

As Service Dealer was going to press the organisers of the Agritechnica ag machinery exhibition that was due to take place in Hannover, Germany at the end of February 2022, confirmed that the show will not go ahead as planned.

In an official statement the organisers said, "Unfortunately, due to

the deteriorating pandemic situation in recent weeks and the resulting current official regulations, a situation has arisen which makes the trouble-free execution of Agritechnica no longer possible. Together with the VDMA Agricultural Machinery Association and the trade fair's exhibitor advisory board, we have therefore come to the

decision that Agritechnica 2022 cannot take place in Hanover under these conditions. The health and safety of visitors, exhibitors, partners, members and staff have the highest priority in this situation."

The next edition of Agritechnica will now take place from 12 to 18 November 2023 in its regular cycle.

INDUSTRY

STIHL unveil new HQ plans

Details of new home revealed

STIHL GB has unveiled plans to build a new 11,500m2 purpose-designed headquarters and state-of-the-art warehouse facility near to its current premises in Camberley, Surrey.

Due for completion in December 2022, the site will be home to nearly 100 employees and the company says it will boast dedicated dealer training facilities, an on-site restaurant, flexible collaborative workspaces and a technical workshop.

The new 9,000m2 warehouse space will utilise what the company describe as state-of-the-art picking and storage systems. All logistics will now be consolidated onto one site, which the company says will mean a speedier and more efficient delivery service to the 700 strong STIHL dealer network.

Kay Green, managing director of STIHL GB, commented, "STIHL has enjoyed a sustained period of growth in recent years, and as a consequence we have outgrown our existing warehouse and office facilities. Our new purpose-built headquarters represents a significant capital investment and is a commitment to the future for our dealers and end user customers. We're looking forward to seeing work get underway on the construction of our new premises early in the New Year".

The new HQ, which secured planning permission last year, boasts environmental credentials including BREEAM Certification, the sustainability assessment method for building projects.

It is proposed that two-thirds of the

total roof area (1600m2) will be covered with photovoltaic solar panels to provide power to the new facility. In addition, there will be provision for 26 EV charging points in anticipation of the continued move towards the use of electric vehicles.

The new headquarters will also be connected to Blackwater railway station by a dedicated cycle path and will feature landscaped gardens with native shrubs and trees and a wildflower meadow which forms part of an integrated flood risk mitigation zone on the former Thames Water Utilities site.

The company say they aim to relocate to the new facility from its current premises in Stanhope Road in January 2023.



CGI of the new building

DEALERS

Truro joins McCormick from competitor brand

Following local dealer tractor franchise shuffle

Truro Farm Machinery is the latest dealer to agree to sell and support ARGO Tractors' McCormick brand, with the business having taken on the full franchise for McCormick's 44-310hp range.

The change follows a shuffling of tractor brands amongst dealerships locally. Service Dealer understands that Truro Farm Machinery has switched to McCormick from Case IH, which has chosen to move its franchise to former local John Deere dealer Cornwall Farm Machinery, after the John Deere area the latter held was given to Smallridge Bros in an extension of Smallridge's territory.

A family-run business, Truro Farm Machinery was founded in 1983. In summer 2010, the company outgrew its original premises in the centre of Truro and moved to a purpose-built new site in a more convenient location just off the A30 at Mitchell, complete with larger, better-equipped workshops and parts department complex.

"Our aim has always been to deliver a first-class service to all our customers, large or small," says Kevin Andrews, the company's managing director.

"We had been talking with McCormick's UK team for

some time, but it was the launch of a brand-new range of X7 short wheelbase models due at LAMMA in January '21 that finally convinced us. We feel this is a great time for TFM and our loyal customers to join forces with McCormick.

"This hasn't been a spur of the moment decision on our part but has come from close communication with McCormick Tractors UK and Ireland. McCormick has already been working closely with us, delivering a tractor from its Doncaster headquarters to send out to some of our customers for appraisal. The result was excellent feedback and very good reviews.

"That reinforced our conviction that this is the right franchise for us, and as a committed stocking dealer we already have models in our yard ready for demonstration and sale."

Commenting on the appointment, managing director of Argo Tractors in the UK and Ireland, Adrian Winnett said: "We are delighted to welcome a dealer of TFM's calibre to our rapidly expanding network. The McCormick brand is growing constantly, and our focus on dealers who provide exceptional aftersales service is key to our growth."



DEALERS

Further expansion for Lister Wilder

New depot announced



Artist's impression of the new Keynsham depot

Lister Wilder has announced the opening of a new branch located in Keynsham, between Bristol and Bath, which will open to the public in Spring 2022.

The Kubota dealer has been making considerable changes to its business since its full-line status in October 2020 – previously announcing a new Kubota Centre in Bibury, Gloucestershire.

The new Bristol/Bath branch will offer sales, parts and service support for the entire range of Kubota Groundcare machinery - as well as many other

franchises that Lister Wilder represents.

Alongside this, the company has announced the launch of its new South West Hire Division – supplying an extensive range of specialist groundcare machinery for its customers based in the West, operating from this new premises.

Phill Hughes, sales & hire director, said: "This is a really exciting announcement for us. We had planned to open the branch in 2023 but the increase in the levels of business that we've seen this year made us re-think

the time-scale and bring it forward.

"The Bristol & Bath area is extremely important to our groundcare business and we want to make sure that we can fully support the machines that are being sold into the two cities. The branch located at Burnett Business Park is an ideal location, and we are looking to develop our hire business across the region with local support."

The company says it will also shortly be embarking on a recruitment drive for this new branch.

INDUSTRY

Husqvarna and B&S settle dispute

Engine supply argument resolved

Husqvarna Group and Briggs & Stratton, LLC (B&S) have announced that a settlement has been reached with regards to the supply of engines for ride-on mowers.

Under the terms of the settlement, B&S will provide the majority of the engines needed ahead of the 2022 season. Additionally, the parties have agreed to maintain a modified supply relationship into the 2023 season.

Husqvarna Group previously issued a statement regarding a potential negative financial impact in 2022 because of a lack of engine supply. The settlement means that the lawsuit against B&S is withdrawn, and Husqvarna Group have said they no longer anticipate a material financial impact from this issue.

"We have achieved a satisfactory outcome that allows us to secure products for our customers in 2022," says Glen Instone, acting president of Husqvarna Division and CFO Husqvarna Group.



Husqvarna ride-on mower

DEALERS

CNH enters technology licensing agreement

Multi-year deal with Monarch Tractor

CNH Industrial has entered into an exclusive, multi-year licensing agreement for electrification technologies with Monarch Tractor, a US-based AgTech company specialising in fully electric autonomous tractors.



CNH says the agreement foresees the launch of a scalable, modular electrification platform focusing on low horsepower tractors. These will be developed across multiple product families in the coming years. The manufacturer adds that the process will continuously gather farmers' input to ensure developments are aligned to customer needs.

This agreement also furthers CNH Industrial's commitment to decarbonising agriculture through alternative propulsion systems.

CNH says this mutually beneficial partnership will enable them to enhance their internal electrification capabilities and develop new electrified platforms faster. In turn, they say Monarch Tractor will be able to harness the benefits of CNH Industrial's sector expertise in product, brand, distribution, and supply chain strength.

Scott Wine, chief executive officer of CNH Industrial, said, "We are confident that the new pathways provided by Monarch will rapidly strengthen our competitive position in sustainable precision farming. Their talented team, exceptional engineering acumen and Silicon Valley R&D ecosystem will greatly enhance our digital capabilities."

DEALERS

Arwels are Krone's dealer of the year

Awarded at company's dealer conference

In early November, Krone UK held their dealer conference in Stoneleigh, Warwickshire.

As part of the event, the manufacturer staged an awards ceremony to recognise their dealers for their hard work and commitment to the brand throughout the year.

Presented with the title of Krone UK Dealer Of The Year were Arwel Agri Services of Harford, Carmarthenshire, West Wales. Representing the dealership at the ceremony were directors Arwel and Georgina Evans – who were also named as one of the top three dealers in sales and aftersales.

Following the award, Georgina said: "In the two years of being Krone representatives we have strived to drive their quality and value, and supplied a varied and vast array of grassland machinery

spanning the Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire areas – even reaching into South Wales as far afield as Cardiff."

Arwel added, "It was a dream come true to be awarded the franchise as we have always wanted to be a part of the Krone setup. It was a chance of a lifetime for my family and staff who also share passion for the brand."

Georgina continued, "We are extremely grateful and thankful to our loyal and dedicated staff for their work ethic to pull together as one team. It has ensured the company's success and is helping us go from strength to strength."

"We would also like to show our appreciation and thanks to our customers – our most important people - as without their valued support we wouldn't be enjoying this success."



Arwel and Georgina Evans (centre) with their Dealer Of The Year award presented by Krone UK

DEALERS



38 successfully graduated from John Deere's apprenticeship programmes, although not all could attend the event

38 young apprentices graduate

Achievements recognised at special John Deere event

The latest group of talented young service technicians and parts personnel have successfully graduated from John Deere's Ag Tech, Turf Tech and Parts Tech advanced apprenticeship programmes.

The 38-strong cohort passed the national scheme – provided by ProVQ – and their achievements have been recognised at a special event held for them at the Crowne Plaza in Nottingham.

John Deere dealer Ben Burgess saw success for two of its staff, with James Skipper from Beeston in Norfolk winning the Ag/Turf Tech Apprentice of the Year for 2021, while Madeleine Green from the company's Oakham site in Rutland won the Parts Tech award.

Both were presented with new

Apple iPads as their prize by John Deere apprentice centre manager, James Haslam.

Farol saw its Ag/Turf Tech apprentices Ciahran Quick from the company's Shefford Woodlands dealership in Berkshire, and Henry Atkins from Midhurst in West Sussex, pick up the runner-up prizes of a certificate and high street vouchers worth £250.

John Deere branch training manager Allan Cochran said, "Our apprenticeship programme has been running for nearly three decades, and was created because we saw the trend of fewer people coming into the industry. We needed to take steps to ensure that there was new talent to fill our business and dealer network."

"That work is as relevant today as it

was then. To see these fantastic individuals graduating from their courses and taking the next big step in their careers is incredibly rewarding.

"Helping to give these young people their first step on the career ladder builds a strong foundation for their future success, and John Deere places great importance on supporting them to reach their full potential."

"We aim to nurture and mould these enthusiastic apprentices who have the skills and desire to work in our business and across the industry."

The next intake is already being enrolled with 61 Ag Tech and Turf Tech technicians so far signed up for their three-year course, in addition to six Parts Tech apprentices who study for two years.

INDUSTRY

Ransomes announces large brand investment

Sets out vision for '22 and beyond

The manufacturer says its digital investment comes through a new web presence, whilst on the turf, they say the target of electric lithium-powered commercial mowing has been set for launch in 2022.

Ransomes marketing manager, Adam Underwood, said, "We want people to be confident when they are sat on a Ransomes mower that they are sitting on the benchmark for commercial and municipal mowing. It's very important for people to understand the value of incredibly specialist machinery, and we certainly are that. So, the Any Less Costs More campaign is really about the lifetime value of our products and how it pays to invest in us.

"You know exactly where your products are coming from, and you also know that you're going to get superior support from a dealer

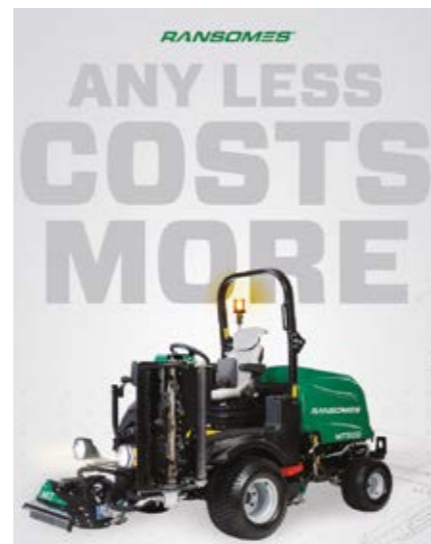
network that has sold our products in some cases for half a century or more.

"Getting that message out is important, but listening is even more important. We spent the last year engaging with consumers, dealer customers and colleagues to understand what Ransomes means to them and what great will look like for the next five and ten years for the brand."

Throughout early 2021 Textron focused all mower manufacturing on Ipswich. Ransomes say this year provided the opportunity for 15 million test hours of lithium battery technology to be integrated into their commercial mower range.

"We're excited about developing new technologies, and Ransomes will borrow a lot of the expertise from other brands within Textron," Adam explains.

"As a result, we will be able to safely put technology that will be good for



the environment, good for everybody and most importantly, gets the work done, into our Ransomes products.

"We're also celebrating the fact that all of our products are Stage V compliant. We feel those clean, green engines are worth shouting about and are important as we look forward to launching electric lithium technology and implementing it safely into the municipal and commercial market in 2022.

"You'll see at our shows, events and launches throughout 2022 that we are going to be expanding our range into electric lithium technology."



Photograph: Cobra MX51S80V, Which? 'Best Buy' May 2021.

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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Cobra reserves the right to change models, specifications & prices without prior notice. E & OE. *Warranty period based on domestic use.

*Stocking Dealer Price ex VAT

INDUSTRY



Timberwolf TW 230DHB

Timberwolf has been acquired by the Alamo Group.

Based at Seguin, Texas, the Alamo Group owns many brands in the agricultural equipment and forestry sector. Timberwolf's position as a designer and manufacturer of woodchippers makes this acquisition a fit for Alamo Group's newly formed Vegetation Management Division

Timberwolf bought by Alamo

New American owners for chipper maker

(which includes forestry and tree care operations).

"The completion of the sale provides enormous opportunity for the business," said Timberwolf managing director, Chris Perry. "Joining such a prestigious organisation will allow Timberwolf to accelerate many of the strategic projects we have already identified. Alamo Group have a clear approach to sustainability, which aligns to our own existing business values so we're very excited about the opportunities that this acquisition will bring."

Timberwolf says they now expect, as a wholly owned business within the

Alamo Group, they will be able to further strengthen their brand and market position by strengthening product innovation to meet future opportunities.

Jeff Leonard, Alamo Group's president and chief executive officer, commented, "Timberwolf builds upon, and compliments, our existing range of tree care products and strengthens our presence in the U.K. and European forestry and tree care markets.

"We are pleased that Timberwolf's management team will remain with the company and we look forward to working closely with them to drive the company's future growth."

Conference & Awards '21

by Steve Gibbs

Service Dealer Award winners honoured

Accolades reflecting the past two years, presented at ceremony following on from 2021's Service Dealer Conference



Comedian and host - Charlie Baker

Following the Service Dealer Conference, the winners of 2021's very special Service Dealer Awards were revealed at a glittering awards ceremony held at the Double Tree by Hilton Oxford Belfry.

Hosted once again by comedian and actor Charlie Baker, the Awards, organised by the team behind Service Dealer magazine, were in their 17th edition and recognised the achievements of independent dealers in the garden machinery, professional turfcare machinery, farm machinery, forestry equipment and ATV/quad industry.

Rather than focusing on sales and service excellence this year, to best reflect the extraordinary circumstances that dealers have coped with during these past two years, the 2021 award categories were modified to reflect the hard work of dealerships and their employees during this time - both within their businesses but also in their communities.

The awards categories were judged by an expert panel, who carefully considered nominations that, as ever, were submitted by dealer principals, dealership staff and supplying manufacturers. Dealerships large or small, multi-branch or single premises were able to enter, and all entries judged on their own merits.

Steve Gibbs, editor of Service Dealer magazine, said, "Through close contact with our readership, we know only too well the ingenuity, resourcefulness and determination of the dealer network during a normal year. Faced with the pressures and complexities of the pandemic though, that resolve was pushed to the limits. Through our awards judging process we have heard remarkable stories of businesses and individuals going above and beyond to not simply stay afloat, but to flourish - all the time making sure their customers of farmers, turf professionals and homeowners could rely on them when they needed their support most."

Best new initiative

Sponsored by AGCO
Presenting Award: Jason Webb,
Parts Sales Manager

Winner:
Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd
Doe Show With A Difference,
19 branches across south-east
England

Ernest Doe were forced to change up a long-established in-person event to fit in with the circumstances at the start of 2021. A brand-new online home for the 61st Doe Show With A Difference had to be designed, built and populated in just ten weeks.

Quantifiably successful in terms of sales, the dealership's whole



The Ernest Doe team, comprising of Neal Heather, Joe Matthews, Graham Parker, Hayley Hill, Andy Turbin and Ken Smyth with Jason Webb plus Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke (r) and comedian host, Charlie Baker (l)

team became part of the endeavour, with each business sector – ag, groundcare, construction & parts – all presenting their own introductions and product videos.

Finalists:
Lister Wilder
Barrow Valley Spares
Hayes Machinery

Extra mile award

Sponsored by Toro UK
Presenting Award: Craig Hoare,
Sales and Marketing Manager

Winner:
Sam Turner & Sons
Northallerton, North Yorkshire

During lockdown, Sam Turner & Sons took the difficult decision to close their store to regular customers to focus purely on keeping their farming and professional customers going – ensuring these essential workers were supported. They massively increased their local deliveries, with staff even using their own transport to serve locals they knew couldn't leave their homes.

For the entire team this meant taking on extra duties and longer hours. On top of this they also ran a PPE campaign for a local maternity unit.



Keith Norman and Charlie Turner with Craig Hoare plus Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke (r) and comedian host, Charlie Baker (l)

Finalists:
Buxtons
Alton Garden Machinery

Leadership award

Sponsored by Kubota UK

Presenting Award: David Hart, Managing Director



Chris Gibson with David Hart

Winner: Chris Gibson

GGM Groundscare, Colne, Lancashire

When the pandemic hit, Chris's priority was ensuring the safety of his staff. He acknowledged that normal working methods needed to quickly adapt, and he never shied away from making difficult decisions in everyone's best interest. Not only have there been no jobs lost, GGM are now a bigger team than before and have achieved business growth during the past two years.

On top of this, Chris has found time to spearhead environmental policies at the dealership, maintain charity fundraising and share his knowledge with the wider industry, contributing to the Dealer Digital Toolkit, writing Service Dealer's Diary of A Season, joining industry panel calls and speaking on sector podcasts.

Finalists:

Jonathan Ireland, Ireland's Farm Machinery
Chris Wood, Mowpower / Mowtastic

Most creative communications

Sponsored by Husqvarna UK

Presenting Award: Jonathan Snowball, UK Business Development Manager



James Hayes with Jonathan Snowball plus Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke

Winner: Hayes Machinery

South Moulton, Devon

Hayes Machinery have embraced the use of YouTube as a primary dealership marketing tool like no one else. They have the views and the stats to prove that their creativity has found mass audience appeal.

Their videos are varied, full of personality and have a uniqueness that keeps viewers and customers coming back for more. Their investment of time, money and effort in their channel is paying off.

Finalists:

Peacock & Binnington,
B&B Tractors

Apprentice of the year

Sponsored by Kramp UK

Presenting Award: Neil Benbow, UK Field Sales Manager

Winner: Iwan Ellis Hughes Bros, Oswestry

Iwan Ellis received a ringing endorsement from the team at Hughes Bros, who are thoroughly impressed with the speed of his improvement, now describing him as an integral member of their service team. Currently in his third year of the Kubota UK Apprentice scheme, he is

well on his way to becoming a qualified agricultural engineer.

Iwan embraces the ever-evolving future of agricultural technologies and has gained a good understanding of the telematics systems seen in new machinery.



Iwan Ellis with Neil Benbow

Finalists:

Robbie Gray, Hamilton Ross Group
Harry Peck, Crawfords

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Star of the dealership

Sponsored by Ibcos/Catalyst

Presenting Award: James Buchanan, Sales Director

Winner: Kelly Burges Buxtons, Teddesley, Staffordshire

Kelly Burgess has not only excelled in her existing role as key accounts manager, but also helped others inside and outside Buxtons.

Trying her hand at shopfitting, project management, and graphic design to help take stress off other members of staff, she has also personally volunteered to help mistreated animals, assist people self-isolating with

Covid-19, created and donated 100s of care packages for the homeless, as well as supporting countless other charities.

Kelly's employers say she has always shown selflessness and drive, but during the pandemic she's truly demonstrated how far she will go to help others, no matter the cost.



Kelly Burgess with James Buchanan

Finalists:

Diane Cowell, GM Groundscare

Hannah Kelsey, R W Crawfords

Overall dealer of the year



James Hayes with Neil Benbow

Sponsored by Kramp UK

Presenting Award: Neil Benbow, UK Field Sales Manager

Winner:

Hayes Machinery
South Moulton, Devon

Hayes Machinery have got themselves noticed these past two years. Following the bold step of closing one branch to fully concentrate on their South Moulton HQ, the company has gone from strength to strength. Raising their profile via countless well-viewed YouTube videos, live launches, Dealer Toolkit appearances and magazine covers, Hayes have evolved the dealership to meet the changing needs and habits of their consumers.

Driven by James Hayes, dynamic leadership, the team has embraced new products and technologies – recently diversifying into new machinery sectors.

Outstanding contribution awards

Sponsored by Service Dealer

Presenting Awards: Duncan Murray-Clarke, Service Dealer owner & Pete McArthur, Strathbogie Forest & Garden (via video link)



Robin Lennie with Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke

Winner: Robin Lennie

Retired STIHL UK

Robin Lennie joined STIHL GB in 1990 as finance director and company secretary, being promoted to managing director in 2008. Having studied accountancy, law & economics at The University of Glasgow, Robin qualified as a chartered accountant in 1978 and as an IOD chartered director in 2006.

Robin left the company at the start of 2021 in rude financial health. During his tenure as managing director, the company increased turnover from £57m in 2008 to over £109m in 2019.

Very much a people person, Robin attributes this success to the teamwork he enjoyed with his Camberley colleagues – and of course to the STIHL Approved Dealers who he holds dear to his heart.

Memorable moments for Robin include in 2016, ten years after taking over the reigns as MD, sales hitting the magic £100m for the first time on the last working day of the year. And in October 2018 the celebrations around STIHL Great Britain's 40th anniversary in Liverpool. A special event where Robin was delighted to welcome most of their dealers, the STIHL Board and also Dr Nikolas STIHL to a conference, dinner and awards ceremony.

Recent circumstances dictated that Robin's retirement didn't go exactly as planned. He had intended to spend his last year travelling the country, visiting many of his loyal, experienced dealers with whom he has developed a strong, trusting relationship over the years. Service Dealer hopes this award goes some way to expressing the high regard the industry holds him in.

Winner: Kevin Ashmore

Retired Husqvarna UK

Kevin Ashmore can claim 38 years working in our industry. After school he studied at Nottingham College of Agriculture and Rycotewood College of Engineering, before moving into the dealer sector. He worked at Beeley Grass Machinery in Mansfield for several years before joining Husqvarna as an Area Business manager in 1995.

Staying with the Newton Aycliffe-based manufacturer for a total of 26 years, he was first promoted to Regional Sales Manager for the North before becoming UK Sales Manager in 2009, managing the whole UK sales organisation.

In 2013 Kevin moved across to take on the challenge of UK Commercial Landscape & Groundcare Manager until his retirement. During Kevin's time in this role, he was involved with the launch of many new ventures for Husqvarna, including Automower robotics, Autotune chainsaws, Battery products and Fleet Services.

A popular member of the team, and held in real affection by all his dealers, Service Dealer thanks Kevin for his contribution to the industry.



Kevin Ashmore was unable to attend, pictured: Jonathan Snowball accepted the award on his behalf

Service Dealer Conference '21

by Martin Rickatson



Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke opens the 2021 Conference

Smart working

After coronavirus caused its cancellation in 2020, the easing of restrictions coupled with careful respect for covid protocols meant the Service Dealer conference returned to the calendar in November. With the virus having changed much of how businesses operate, the 'Smart Working' theme underpinned some fascinating talks and seminars, reports MARTIN RICKATSON

From external parts collection points to one-way showrooms to Zoom meetings, the farm, turf, outdoor power and garden machinery trades have adapted to whole new ways of working over the past two years. But whether it's an online sales conference rather than a get-together of multi-branch sales staff, or a novel way of communicating to customers who have moved to getting more of their information online during the pandemic, the benefits provided by new methods of smart working mean they look like they're set to stay.

It was this that set the scene for the 2021 Service Dealer conference

back in November, and underpinned its subtitle, 'Smart Working'. Duncan Murray-Clarke, owner of Service Dealer and its publisher, The Ad Plain, opened proceedings by welcoming attendees and the conference sponsors, including Kramp, Ibcos and Catalyst, AGCO, Husqvarna, Kubota, Toro and Hayter, BAGMA and PSD Groundscare.

"The changes the pandemic brought were soon accepted and adapted to by the dealer network, with some often unique practical problem solving," pointed out Duncan.

"People focused more on homes and gardens, and while it took some time for the turfcare sector to re-open, agriculture carried on almost as

normal. And in the trade publishing industry we set out to bring together ideas and approaches, co-ordinating dealer group calls to share ideas, and launching two digital toolkits to help handle industry changes, with a third imminent."

What does the future look like for your business?

But challenges will, of course, always be a part of the dealership trade, just as they are of life generally. Foreseeing them is far from simple, explained the first speaker of the day, Ed Gillespie, a 'future analyst' who specialises in researching and advising on trends. His presentation, titled 'Smart working in a changing

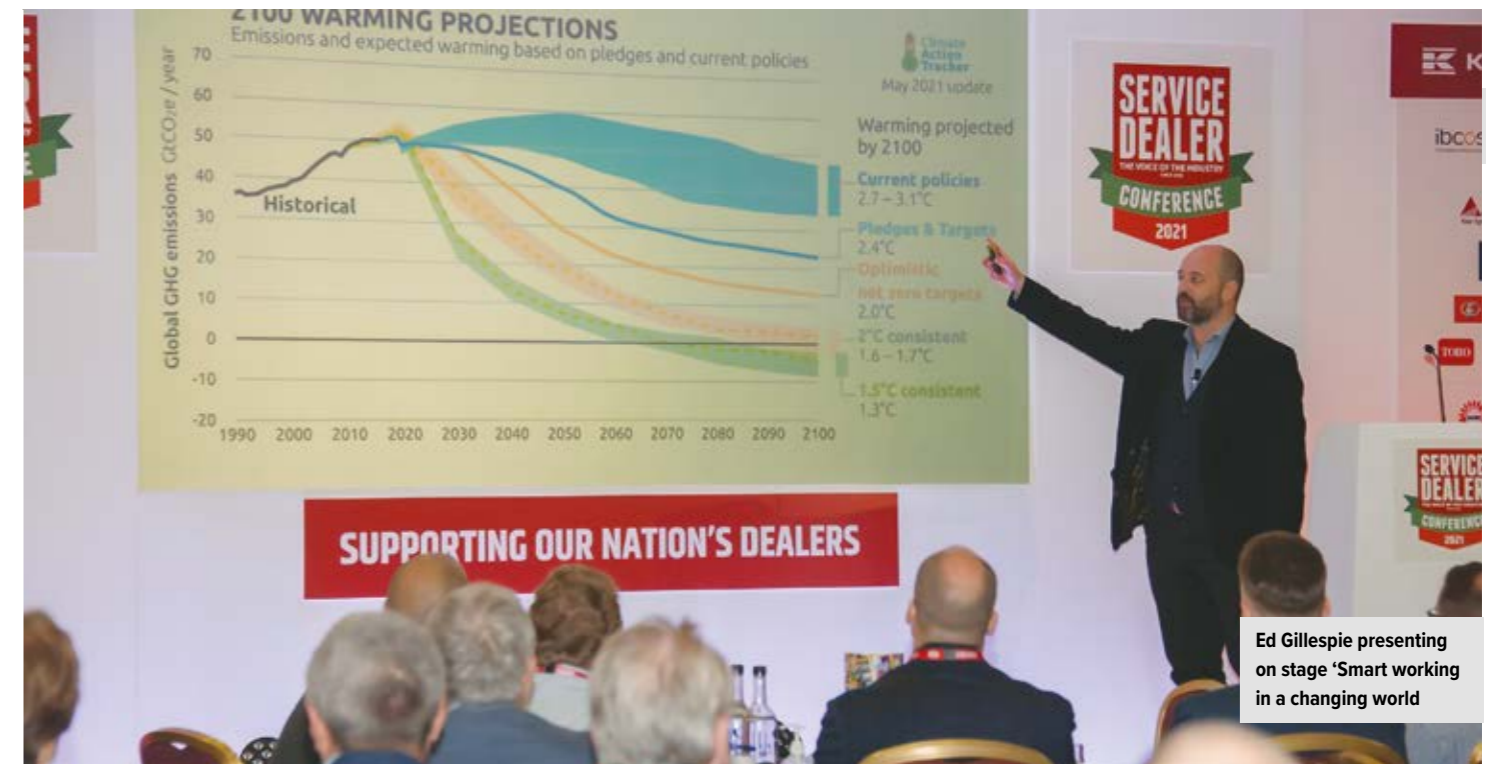
world: What does the future look like for your business?', pointed out that, just like coronavirus, many issues that may affect ag, turf and outdoor power dealer businesses are unpredictable and difficult to prepare for

"On average, a new infectious disease emerges in humans every four months, but while the world can manage issues like coronavirus with self-isolation and inoculation, solutions to issues like population growth and climate change are much more complex – not one thing, but potentially an era. Diversion of investment, plus innovation and fair treatment will be needed to challenge these. Industries and businesses must recognise the need for environmental efficiency and real corporate social

bring more meaning and purpose to the heart of employee care.

"Stratification of jobs isn't helping here, with fewer opportunities to progress, particularly as industries change. As an example, an Uber driver is unlikely to become an Uber computer coder. These issues go some way to explain why the job quit rate is at an all-time high, and why the cost of recruitment is 122% of an average annual salary.

"We can't predict how the move to working from home where possible may pan out, but the pandemic has jolted us into the awareness that, while it may not work for things like mechanically fixing machines, different models of working are possible in many cases. The power of



responsibility, and how it can benefit the bottom line, perhaps by working together more in these areas.

"Some suggest the driver is not population growth as such, but the consumption rise this causes, especially as living standards continue to rise. The poorest 50% of the global population are thought to be responsible for only 10% of CO2 emissions. And doing more online is not necessarily the answer – the online world requires vast amounts of energy, and could represent 20% of global electricity consumption by 2030.

"A lot of businesses talk about sustainability, but this is only really a sticking plaster along the road to the real future of regenerative business. Choices we make now can affect seven generations older and younger than us, and businesses need to recognise this when making decisions.

"This is why employee engagement is so important. Studies show 80% of employees are not engaged – or are actively disengaged – at work. They're not interested in what they are doing. Businesses need to address that. Many organisations talk about mental health, but perhaps need to

technology has enabled us to find new ways of working, both independently and together.

"In a similar vein, people are losing interest in formerly trusted institutions to provide reassurance with things like product testing, and turning to the opinions of others via things like online review sites and putting more faith in the opinions that others have of goods."

The power of tech – and of people, too

Many bosses believe their businesses will not survive in their current forms if they do not adapt to the rapid pace of digitalisation, Ed suggested.

"Digitalisation and data science provides the power to challenge old established habits, through the speed of the analysis they enable, allowing decisions to be made faster, among other benefits. But digital transformation can also fail if goals are unclear, expertise is lacking, there is internal resistance, the focus is solely on the technology, and if the old pre-digital culture is retained. According to the journal Psychology Today, it takes an average 66 days for a new

behaviour to become a habit. That's what's required to change behaviours. The barrier is often the heart and the mindset. The coronavirus pandemic, though, has forced businesses to quickly adapt to multiple changes.

"At the same time, it has brought about consumer changes too. With more working from home, the pandemic could well change the role of men in the family, for example, with associated consequences for things like buying decisions."

But returning to his point about engagement with employees and customers, Ed suggested technology will not be the answer to all of tomorrow's problems.

"Take electric cars. While they may play a part in reducing our impact on the environment, they won't alter issues such as road congestion. You're never 'stuck in' traffic – you 'are' traffic."

"Beyond technology, one of the big drivers of tomorrow will be closer co-operation, an idea that, when it comes to business, is much older than the competition principle that underlies conventional capitalism. By encouraging employees and others involved to take an interest and involvement in a business's management, companies have much greater potential – studies show businesses who engage their employees this way grow on average 28 times faster than others. To do this requires bravery, but there are two kinds

of companies: the brave and the dead."

Make your social media mean something

'How to have social media success and use it to find your next customer' summarised the break-out session talk of social media expert Teresa Heath-Wareing, who opened by suggesting that, although social media is computer/smartphone based in its delivery, the essence of how it's used to say and do things is about building relationships.

"Social media has moved on from 'this is who we are, what we offer, buy from us, goodbye,'" she suggested.

"It's moved beyond gathering 'likes' to become much more about

communication. People now complain and fix things by going onto social media. People don't trust social media, but you have to consistently show up to change that. Ultimately they want engagement and interaction, as people want to buy from people. Spend as much time on engagement as on posting – for example, asking questions that invite replies. Multiple responses will maintain a post's profile.

"Video has a big role to play. It needn't be long or overly professional. Try something different. You need to have the courage to stand-out. Don't fear looking like an idiot.

"From a business product point of view, such as a dealership, a similar approach might be to say, 'What problems do potential customers have that we can fix?' And by that I don't just mean the obvious machine issues, but also other things your customers may be struggling with.

"Be hard on yourself and ask 'who cares?' about what you post. The day you plant the seed is not the day you pick the fruit, and what you put up in any one post should be part of a plan to take your relationship with existing and potential customers to where you want it to be."

Achieving good customer interaction with your social media is one thing, but the media platforms themselves will also give your posts more prominence if their algorithms show they are getting good engagement, pointed out Teresa.

"Algorithms work by identifying

"You don't need to be on every platform. Analyse who your target audience is, and plan accordingly."



Social media expert Teresa Heath-Wareing



Full house - Teresa Heath-Wareing's workshop



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a post that worked really well, and then heightening the profile of other following posts because of that. What you need to do for a post to work well is educate, entertain and make an offer. When you post, in essence you're not up against another dealer, but the next thing on social media, the next thing the viewer can do with their time. That's what gets engagement.

"To educate, you need to display your content – blogs, videos, podcasts, other people's content, tips, stats and facts, awards, accolades and FAQs. Try and be unbiased. To entertain, create content that's perhaps humorous, but also social (as in events and happenings), seasonal, personal – talking about your team – and share your story, offering a glimpse behind the scenes.

"Only then make the offer. Focus on USPs, products and services, competitions, sales and offers, lead magnets, newsletter sign-ups, new products. Remember that you don't own the social media platform you're using, and can easily go against their rules if not careful, for example, with some competitions, so ensure you also gather email addresses to avoid losing the chance to gather contacts. And don't be afraid to tell people what you want them to do, such as 'head to our website and grab one today'."

Teresa also gave a 'social media masterclass', in which she urged audience members not to spread their marketing efforts too thinly.

"You don't need to be on every platform. Analyse who your target audience is, and plan accordingly. Facebook is the largest platform, but is all about communication, community, engagement, interaction. 'Here's my product' posts don't work very well. It's great for community and groups, but has a low organic reach. And only about 1-3% of the people who follow your page read your stuff. Shares and comments are what you need – likes aren't worth much.

"Instagram is owned by Facebook, and is all about images, and therefore good for product businesses. But you cannot share others' posts and there are lots of fake/spam accounts, and people can buy fake followings and engagements.



Ben Scott-Robinson, the Small Robot Company

"Twitter content is easier to create, being shorter, and it's very interactive – as with Instagram you can talk to anyone on the platform. It's also easy to share, with strong use of hashtags. But again there are lots of fake/spam accounts, plus a character limit, and it's very fast-moving."

"Pinterest is more of an image-led search engine, and is perfect for driving website traffic. It's easy to find things, and posts have a very long lifespan. You don't have to do much engagement, if any.

New technology will empower and not replace you – dealers' place in the robot revolution

Ben Scott-Robinson, business partner of Sam Watson-Jones at the autonomous start-up the Small Robot Company, was the second break-out session speaker, and began by suggesting that agriculture may be coming to the point many other sectors already have, where chasing economies of scale has begun to result in diminishing returns.

"Developments in computing power and digital tech are completely changing the structure of how many industries work," he pointed out.

"The gains made from achieving greater yields via more inputs and machinery all but ceased around the year 2000, and more recently there's been a gradual decline. This is coupled with a support transition towards more environmentally sustainable and regenerative farming methods.

"This has been the background to our Small Robot machine development. It's wasteful and expensive to target whole fields, so we've focused on per-plant application, and on also giving farmers the confidence to not take action where it's not required.

"We know technology is useless unless it can be put in the hands of people who need it, and they are supported in its use. It's not the machine that matters in itself – it's the customer happiness."

The firm already has its robots, Tom, Dick and Harry, which are programmed to identify and later treat field issue areas, at work on UK farms. As it expands, it is seeking to identify how it will sell, service and support these on a full commercial basis.

Dealers in the audience suggested the firm would need to break down barriers, such as suspicion of driverless technology, and the issue of what key franchise manufacturers may think and whether they would perceive robot sales as a threat, plus questions over parts, service and support. One suggested dealers would need as many touch points as possible in order to make a profit from supporting such machines, while another suggested that alternative sales and support methods may be necessary, particularly as residual values have yet to be established. It was suggested that a 'power by the hour' rental agreement may be preferable, particularly as farmers generally do not want to worry about service issues, instead usually sourcing full warranties for the lifespan of a machine. Another audience member pointed out that lighter and more agile machines were likely to result in less service and parts revenue – not a problem for the farmer, but perhaps difficult to base a service model and profitable service income around. Revenue from sales/leasing/hire would have to be higher to replace this, it was suggested.

The fourth agricultural revolution – sooner than you think

Ben Scott-Robinson also gave a later talk on the robotic revolution that looks

set to potentially overhaul the machinery market in the long term. Pointing to data which suggests 85% of UK farms are not profitable without support, and that there has been a 150% increase in farm costs over the past 20 years, plus an 84% increase in resistant weeds and £1bn lost earnings from soil compaction, he suggests that per-plant farming will be dominant in the next two decades.

"Autonomous fieldwork using a robot-powered system of per-plant

analysis and per-plant action is already possible, and is more cost-effective as it strips out waste.

"Our Tom robot weighs just 200kg, with an impact of a third of a human foot. It's electrically powered, and its biggest energy consumer is its processing power. Our second robot, Dick, takes the info that Tom has provided and acts on it via technologies such as electrical destruction of weeds. By gathering data on a two-weekly basis, we determine

every plant in the field – crop and non-crop. We already have Toms on three farms in Hants generating per-plant data, and currently put this into spot-spray maps. On one estate it's helped reduce herbicide use by 60%. A Tom can easily fit into a Transit van, and can operate up to the critical growth stage 31 in cereals.

"We are ready with this technology – we simply need to determine how to support it on a wide scale."



The Conference discussion panel on stage (L) Duncan Murray-Clarke, Geoff Thompson, Teresa Heath-Wareing, Graham Parker and Ed Gillespie

Where do we go now?

The day's concluding panel discussion saw the conference speakers joined by a couple of additional contributors from the audience. To kick off, Ed Gillespie asked what those present had learned from the new ways of working they had adapted to over the past two years, and how much of what had changed was likely to stay that way, or be part of a new hybrid way of working.

"We now run sales meetings more regularly on line, holding more of them, but with the result they are shorter, faster and more effective – and, of course, cheaper," explained Graham Parker, sales director at Ernest Doe.

"But I think meeting personally remains important, and we'll probably work on a 4:1 ratio of on:offline meetings. Care is needed, though, with the working from home idea – it's not just about trust to get the job done,

but also isolation and motivation, and some prefer the office. We now have a broader approach to people's situations and are more sympathetic. If the job gets done it doesn't matter where people are. But physical premises will always be important in this business – we've recently opened a new branch.

"The pandemic has driven us to become better with technology than perhaps we were. But being a large business meant we had marketing people in place to help."

Geoff Thompson, part of the sales team at Oxon John Deere dealer Farol, suggested that having a supplier already very progressive in remote working and remote customer support had helped his firm's business.

"But initiatives of our own, such as an established online shop, also helped – sales via that went through the roof when the pandemic struck, as did sales of service kits to people

looking for lawn equipment service." He echoed Graham Parker's comments that some staff who could work from home wanted to return to the office.

"It's important to listen to staff and work with them. And we shouldn't forget how much can be done face-to-face – email, for example, can be used too much, and sometimes a call or meeting may be preferable. But longer-term it will be interesting to see what changes might affect issues such as rates for those working from home."

Geoff and Graham also agreed that, with people being creatures of habit, there is a danger some businesses may revert to old habits post-pandemic and slip away from the best of the changed practices that have been adopted. Ed also raised the issue of some organisations' distrust of employee autonomy. All in all, there was plenty of food for thought.

Natural leadership

Winning this year's Leadership Award at the Service Dealer Awards was GGM Groundscare's Chris Gibson. LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR, spoke to him to discover what new ways of working he implemented during the pandemic and how the customer experience has changed in store

In November I attended Service Dealer's Conference & Awards and was able to meet up with over 120 delegates largely made up of personnel who either own, run or work at UK-based professional dealerships.

I personally think that it is vitally important we recognise the hard work, endeavour and commitment of the experts in our sector. This year saw six categories up for grabs, all of which reflected the trading conditions dealers have had to contend with these past two years. One of the worthy winners to take to the stage to receive his accolade was Chris Gibson, managing director of GGM Groundscare and PSD Groundscare of Colne in Lancashire, who won this year's Leadership Award. I have been lucky enough to have met Chris several times at various shows and demonstrations over the years.

His award was centred on the work achieved during these pandemic times – which is covered briefly in the Awards section of this magazine (see page 16). However, I was keen to find out more about his role and what drives him on to deliver the wide range of services he provides through his successful dealership.

Service Dealer: Tell me about the history of the company?

Chris Gibson: The origin of the company goes back to 1976 when my father bought a business based in Kirkham, Lancashire and created Gibsons Garden Machinery Ltd. Current shareholders took over the business in 2000 and relocated the business to Colne, Lancashire and 45 years on we now have a team of 36, with depots in Colne and Haydock.

My family have an association within the groundscare sector that goes back over 40 years when my father was first in the UK to sign up as a dealer for Kubota Compact Tractors. Prior to joining the family business, I studied Agricultural Mechanisation at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, where I graduated in 1986 with a 2:1. Following this, in order to broaden my experience, I worked for the Shuker Group in Shropshire, who at the time were both an agricultural and motor dealer group. I then returned to Lancashire where I undertook various roles in sales, accounts and general management, working alongside my father, before taking over as managing director when my father retired.

PSD was launched at the BTME

exhibition in 2004 when myself and Stuart Mercer started looking for a service lift for the workshops of our dealership business, GGM Groundscare. Finding nothing suitable in the UK, we contacted Scott Fore of Heftee Industries in Illinois, USA and after much discussion and a lot of hard work in the US to ensure the machines were CE compliant, we commenced distribution. Also, alongside this, we offered a range of universal spare parts from American universal parts supplier STENS. Ultimately, we decided to pivot PSD towards the machinery distribution, and over the years have established very successful long-standing relationships with a number of innovative European manufacturers, including AS Motor and Eliet.

The selection of the right partners would ultimately prove to be a key element of the success of our business. This, coupled with our passion to do our best for our customers, offering on-site demonstrations, genuine advice and preferring to walk away from a sale that offers an inappropriate solution for the customer, have all helped us gain our reputation.

However, we understand that

whatever groundscare machine you purchase you will require parts and service, and at some point repair, so with our business being part of a dealership group we firmly believe that the best place to receive this is through a reputable local dealership partner.

From our base in Colne, Lancashire, we maintain a large stock of both new and demonstration machinery to support our dealers, along with a large stockholding of spare parts. When service and technical assistance is required, we have an on-site and mobile service department that can back up our customers wherever they are.

SD: What new ways of working have you put in place since Covid?

CG: Quite a lot, actually! We have completely reworked the way we've used technology to be more efficient, productive and, of course, green. Zoom and Teams meetings are now very much the norm - when back in March 2020 the platform was almost unheard of.

It has also made way for a new way of tracking business, with weekly operations meetings and better planning at the click of a button.

We've introduced new workshop

scheduling so we can better allocate resources and see any spare capacity more easily, which has had a knock-on effect on our productivity.

We've revamped our inbound marketing strategy and made it easier for customers to find us, with technology including SEO, blogs, website development and social media.

Lastly, the appointment of a new sales manager has helped us develop and work more closely with the sales team.

SD: How have you coped with the pandemic as a business?

CG: As with everyone else in the industry, it has been a huge challenge to say the least – but there have also been some positives. It has given us the opportunity to completely relook at our business and modernise and improve how we do things.

Notably, we've developed and introduced new service contracts, embarked on our journey to becoming more 'green', and we've invested in new business processes to improve customer service. The pause the pandemic forced on us gave us the time to take stock and implement these things. It has paid

dividends – all of these have played their part in us continuing to grow the business, such that 2021 has proved to be a record year.

SD: Have you had to change the customer experience in your premises?

CG: On the whole, we've tried to create a safer, more spacious environment for reopening after Covid. We implemented strict procedures for customers visiting the depot, and we have actually found this new way of working makes for a better customer experience – so we are keeping many elements of it going forward.

In addition to that, we've been investing in being more environmentally friendly, with the instillation of new LED lights, solar panels on the roof and new EV charging points.

SD: How have the changing weather patterns effected the dealership?

CG: With a business based in East Lancashire, one thing we can be sure of in this time of great uncertainty, is that it will rain!

While we've been fortunate that we've not seen the extremes of heat



GGM's Chris Gibson at the 2021 Service Dealer Conference & Awards



The Covid secure markings in the showroom



GGM's Colne depot



A Kubota ride-on in the workshop

witnessed in other areas of the country for some time, we have been subject to some terrible, destructive flooding. I don't think this has had a major impact on business, although some customers have deferred purchases while they wait for both their businesses and their turf to recover.

SD: How are you marketing and promoting the business?

CG: We're huge advocates of utilising the whole marketing mix, with a combination of online and offline activity, and we're lucky to have an in-house marketing team.

Our Dealer Days are still very important to us as a business, and we had well over a hundred people attend our recent event at Leigh which was a great turn-out given recent restrictions.

As the world went online during the pandemic, we upped our online presence, placing a far greater focus on social media, email campaigns and our website, including blogs – we're continually looking at our customer engagement and ensuring it is where it needs to be.

Use of video marketing is something we have introduced and hope to build on in 2022, which we have found to be highly effective.

That said, there is still a real need for some printed material to support face-to-face sales visits, and we continue to invest in this area.

SD: Do you still see the value in attending trade and local shows?

CG: Yes, absolutely! Having said that, we decided not to attend local shows in 2021, and we don't feel like we have missed out on much. It has allowed our sales team to spend more time on their patch, meeting with customers rather than manning a stand and asking children to get off the machines!

SD: Do you find it difficult to recruit new staff?

CG: It can be – engineers in particular are always a challenge. However, once people do join us, they tend to stick around for a long time! We have a fantastic, close-knit team with a real family feel. We work hard to ensure that everyone feels valued and that they work in a fun environment. We reward our staff well and we're proud to be a living wage employer.

Our culture is very much team focussed and this is apparent in our charity fundraising - last year we raised over £10,000 through activities

including a cycling and walking challenge covering 104 miles. It's common sense, but if people enjoy what they do, they work better – and in addition, this helps us to recruit. Many of our newer employees were recommended by existing members of the team.

SD: What should we be doing as an industry to encourage fresh blood to join?

CG: It's essential for the industry to recruit new blood and to train up the next generation. However, it's not easy to do things nationally and make yourself attractive when competing with global brands.

BAGMA and AEA do fantastic work to promote our industry, but it's also the responsibility of individual organisations to do their bit locally too. During the pandemic, it hasn't been easy to engage with schools and colleges, but moving forward we shall continue to develop these relationships.

SD: What training do you offer your staff to help them in their roles?

CG: We take a collaborative approach with our staff, with open lines of

communication. During development reviews we agree both what they need and what they would like in terms of personal and professional development.

We use a mix of in-house and manufacture-based training. This can include IT training, both on our systems and getting more from Office to increase productivity and efficiency at work, and apprentice training with the support of local colleges.

SD: Are you seeing an increased demand for robotic and battery-driven products?

CG: Absolutely, yes! There has been a noticeable increase in demand for both robotic and battery-driven products and we have recently completed an install of five Husqvarna robot mowers with a large Premier League football club for their new training facility.

There is undoubtedly big potential in both for growth.

SD: What are your thoughts regarding online selling?

CG: It has its place, particularly in these strange times. We find online is great for the promotion of used

equipment and promotion of our new offering. However, selling machines boxed and at heavily discounted prices isn't really in line with our business values. We aim to build a long-term relationship with the customer, through communication and ongoing service and support.

That said, given the current supply issues the industry is facing, the demand for used machinery has never been as high, so we find the used section of our website, is the perfect platform to market this and receives a lot of interest.

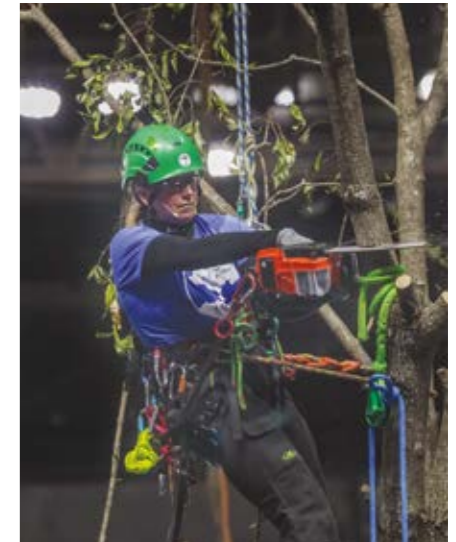
SD: How do you see the future for your business?

CG: We're incredibly positive about the future of our business and the industry itself. For us, 2021 has been a record year in terms of sales, and we see this only improving, as with the demand for robotic and battery-driven machines.

No doubt 2022 will come with its own set of challenges, including the supply chain and delays in machines arriving, but we will continue to be proactive and innovative in all that we do, as well as looking at investing in our growing team, particularly in after-sales. Here's to the future!



GGM's The showroom at the Haydock premises depot



A 60ft tree was installed for climbing demos

US trade show successfully restarts and launches new branding for 2022

With UK dealers and suppliers unable to travel to the US back in October, Service Dealer hears from the OPEI about their first trade show back in person – and their plans to develop the huge show even further in 2022

Boasting significant attendance numbers, GIE+EXPO, the trade show from the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, returned as in-person event to Louisville, Kentucky back in October 2021.

Service Dealer should have been in attendance along with some UK dealer and turf professional representatives, but as travel restrictions were still in place at that time, the trip had to be postponed once again. As it was, the OPEI told us the event saw an increase in attendees from all segments of the outdoor power equipment and lawn and garden industry.

The tradeshow drew 23,922 total attendees for the October '21 edition, which they say is actually an increase from the shows in both 2019 and 2018.

“This year’s strong showing is huge for us and the industry,” said Kris Kiser, President of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute and managing partner of the show. “The trade show remains the best place to connect with peers, network, and gain a competitive business edge. We’re excited to evolve the show and can’t wait to see everyone in Louisville, October 19-21 in 2022.”

The 2021 show was the final one to be sponsored by OPEI along with the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) and National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP).

Highlights of the 2021 show included:

- Education sessions which saw a dramatic increase in registrants, with a 47% increase over 2019 and a 92% increase over 2018.
- An indoor, hands-on Drone Zone where attendees could fly drones with expert trainers.
- An outdoor UTV Driving Experience where attendees could drive and compare the latest vehicles while putting them through their paces on curves, hills and rocks.
- In-Tree Arborist Demos in a 60-foot tree inside the expo center, and Classroom Courses, presented

by the Women’s Tree Climbing Workshop, sponsored by Davey Tree and ECHO.

- The 3rd annual Lucky’s Mutt Madness, a national dog adoption event sponsored by the TurfMutt Foundation and in partnership with the Kentucky Humane Society.

New identity for 2022



Announced on the eve of the show was the news that

GIE+EXPO is rebranding and will relaunch in 2022 as Equip Exposition. This announcement took place alongside the OPEI taking on sole organisation of the show, starting with the '22 edition as well as opening new offices in downtown Louisville. The Institute said the move will start a new chapter for the event while reinvesting in its host city.

“We’re excited to announce this evolution of our industry-leading tradeshow,” confirmed Kris Kiser. “The opening of our new office shows the investment our industry has in the event and in its long-standing location of Louisville. With OPEI bringing the management of the show wholly under the association’s umbrella, it was time to re-envision the event while honouring its long history.”

Concurrent with the launch of Equip Exposition, the OPEI Board of Directors and Kris, joined by Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer and other invited guests, cut the ribbon on new show offices on Main Street in Louisville during show week in October.

The OPEI say plans are already underway to expand education opportunities and enhance the attendee and exhibitor experience in Louisville for this October. Lined up for the event are:

David Feherty, former professional golfer and current golf broadcaster, will give the opening keynote.

Landscape Management magazine, **Bob Clements International**, and the **Professional Grounds Management Society** will host a series of educational workshops.

The TurfMutt Foundation will launch the first-ever Mulligan’s 5K and Fun Run in downtown Louisville

“Equip Exposition is where the landscape changes, and is the place for landscape contractors, outdoor power equipment dealers, distributors, and manufacturers to connect, learn, and grow,” Kris said. “We’re excited to evolve the show and can’t wait to see you in Louisville from October 19-21.”

Service Dealer sincerely hopes that a UK contingent will be able to attend in person this time!



The show benefits from a large indoor exhibition space



New for 2021 was a UTV demo track

Registration is now open at www.equipexposition.com

Future proofing

When Ripon Farm Services began making plans for the creation of a new branch in Malton, ensuring it met the technological and environmental demands of the future was high on their agenda. Phil Gregg, group operations manager, spoke to editor STEVE GIBBS regarding their thinking



Phil Gregg, Ripon's group operations manager

Service Dealer: What was the initial impetus behind the creation of a new branch?

Phil Gregg: Quite simply, the current site was too small. We needed to ensure we had a premium site to service the needs of our customers.

SD: What were you looking for in terms of location?

PG: Near the top of our list of requirements was easy access from all directions. We needed to be close to a major road network for passing trade.

SD: When you were planning the new building from scratch, what were the key elements you wanted to incorporate?

PG: We wanted to ensure that our product portfolio could be clearly displayed inside. We also needed the ability to hold customer events and to guarantee that the workshop was large enough to allow for growth in market share. The building alone has been designed to be over 22,000 square feet.

SD: How have you future-proofed the building's design, and have you incorporated 'green' elements?

PG: Absolutely. We have ensured there is a large enough power supply with infrastructure already laid to allow for repair, servicing and charging of electrified machinery. We also have vehicle charging points inside and outside of the building for when our support fleet moves to battery-powered vehicles.

On top of this, there is to be a crane and gantry system to allow for speedier and safer removal of major components. There is also extra capacity in office space, and

the aftermarket departments to allow for expansion. We have also ensured there is a large meeting room with facilities to allow for working events, with a rest area and kitchen. We may even consider hiring out this provision.

SD: Did you have particular goals in regard to workshop and showroom layout? Were there any problems you've had in the past which this can be an opportunity to resolve?

PG: We have ensured there is a raised mezzanine workshop area for storage of special tools, warranty returns, and removed parts to make sure that the workshop working area is free of clutter and remains pristine. We have created areas for computer work, welding, and clean areas for engine/gearbox repair. There are also four entry doors to give free and easy movement.

The showroom has been specifically designed to enable a combine harvester or 9RX to take pride of place inside, to allow for open days and customer contact points to be held more often in a warm and pleasant environment.



An artist's impression of the new building, due to open in summer 2022

SD: How do you hope the new design will benefit both your customers and your staff?

PG: The new dealership will benefit our customers with an improved road network, increased parking, a more comprehensive showroom display and an increased parts inventory. We believe that this, coupled with more technicians and a larger workshop, will allow us to serve our customers even better.

The staff on the other hand are excited to be moving to the new premises. We have made sure they will benefit from improved rest areas and facilities – plus the layout allows for the safest of working practices.

SD: Has the major supplier you represent (John Deere) had any

input or approved the designs? Does it tie in with their Dealer of the Future policy?

PG: John Deere have seen our designs and are happy with our vision and layout.

SD: Are you concerned about getting hold of product in 2022 to fill the showroom?

PG: We have already forward ordered machinery in line with the recommendations of John Deere and the other major franchises we hold. We are hoping that their supply of machinery will be maintained.

SD: When are you planning to open? Do you need to find more staff to populate the branch?

PG: The building is due to be completed in late summer 2022, and we are planning on recruiting additional staff to further support our customer base.

SD: Do you have any advice that you'd pass on to other dealers thinking of starting the process of building a new depot from scratch?

PG: We visited several other dealers and sites to gain an insight. It was with their help and guidance that made our designs easier to establish. I'd like to offer thanks to those involved.

SD: Thank you.

The show the industry needed

The first real opportunity the groundcare industry had to meet up in-person again, came with November's SALTEX at the NEC. Editor STEVE GIBBS found a buoyant sector, keen to get back to business

Before attending November 2020's SALTEX, I felt the show had some serious questions to answer.

I wondered if it would appeal to punters to attend an indoor show in the autumn, and would the exhibitors be pushing new products to dealers and the commercial end-users considering the ongoing supply chain crisis?

Following the event, I can safely say that I felt a resounding yes to both.

I was thoroughly impressed by SALTEX 2021. First off, a huge congratulations must go to the GMA and their organising teams for putting on an event that clearly ticked all the right boxes for both visitors and exhibitors. It truly felt like the show that the end-users wanted and the industry needed. Commenting after the show, Service Dealer owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke, said, "Planning events during this time have been problematic to say the least. I can only imagine the issues - both contractual and political, as well as the dilemmas faced - of running a large event at the NEC."



The Service Dealer & TurfPro team. L-R: Iain Robinson, designer; Kate Godber, account manager; Duncan Murray-Clarke, owner; Laurence Gale, TurfPro editor; Steve Gibbs, Service Dealer editor

"Geoff Webb and his team at the GMA have done an amazing job in the circumstances and SALTEX was very much a success. I am sure it will also jump start other considered gatherings in the groundcare industry. Thanks, and well done, Geoff."

Upbeat mood

First too foremost, visitors turned up - and a decent number of them. A little after the show the GMA announced the figures as "almost 7,500 attendees across two days". This is a little down from the 9000-odd, who visited the 2019 edition - but in the context of this event, it didn't really matter. What was important was the feel of the show - which was busy, buzzy and upbeat. There was a palpable sense around the halls that everyone just wanted to get on with business.

Every stand holder I spoke to pretty much held the same view. None of them knew beforehand what the show was going to be like. It's probably fair to say that going into the first day, expectations were not the highest. There was a real cloud of the unknown hanging over the NEC before the doors opened.

However, as day one progressed, it became apparent that any misgivings were unwarranted. The halls filled up quickly. I'd say by 10am the aisles and stands felt properly busy. Most exhibitors I spoke to told me that they didn't have a chance to catch their breath from around 10 till pretty much 2.30-ish that afternoon. A similar pattern was repeated on day two, although with perhaps ever so slightly lower numbers.

Crucially though, what all the exhibitors I spoke to told me, was that the quality of visitor they had coming on to talk to them was outstanding. Both in terms of the professional end-users they met, and the good number of dealers who



The halls felt comfortably busy across the two days

also attended the show.

It was actual decision-makers for professional establishments who were coming over, making genuine enquiries about the purchase of new machinery. Everyone was talking about the number of fantastic new leads they had picked up. Whilst in terms of dealer interactions, I bumped into several of our readers who were on the lookout for new professional franchises to stock in their stores and who were impressed with the new machinery options on display.

The word I would use to describe the mood in Birmingham during SALTEX was enthusiastic. People appeared delighted to be out once again, meeting friends, colleagues and customers in a safe, real-life environment. But beyond this, there was a real enthusiasm for business. Deals were being struck and there was clearly money to be made - by both suppliers and dealers.

I think it's fair to say that despite the obvious hardships and struggles of the past two years, most in our sector have performed - and continue to perform - rather well. Several people I spoke with at the show said they had been concerned that 2021 might have seen a drop-off in demand for outdoor powered machinery following the spike seen during the initial lockdowns with people 'cocoon-ing' at home. But that never happened. The demand is still there. Of course, now the issue is getting hold of this fancy new machinery - not helped of course by the emergence

of Omicron and any localised shutdowns that may cause worldwide.

A paradigm shift to battery

In terms of the new kit that was on display at Birmingham, it was heartening to see that there were lots of new launches across the halls - with battery the clear order of the day.

As anyone who attended the show could attest to, the technology was everywhere. There were several manufacturers who aren't known as being battery-only producers, who didn't have a single petrol-powered piece on their stand - Husqvarna and Allett being examples. It



Husqvarna's new large-scale commercial robotic mower, Ceora, gained plenty of attention



“The word I would use to describe the mood in Birmingham during SA LTEX was enthusiastic.”



The Ego power unit, as seen on the AS Motor mower, and the Allett Sterling – with Peter Melrose, managing director EMEA at EGO, and Service Dealer's Steve Gibbs

almost felt like a clandestine operation if someone offered to show a machine with a traditional power source. They weren't exactly whispering and asking visitors to creep round the back of the stand to look at it under a blanket – but almost!

The cordless technology was undeniably dominant. And perhaps most significant for future developments, were the products on display where a battery power source had been bolted on as a direct replacement for a petrol engine. I'm thinking here of Ego's power unit seen on the AS Motor mower, and the newly revealed Sterling mower from Allett.

This development truly felt like a game-changer. The scope for these units - and others like them that will surely follow - to slot into outdoor powered equipment where before we'd only seen a petrol engine, is mind-boggling. There must be some properly nervous engine-manufacturers

around the world, taking a long hard look at their portfolio.

With COP-26 in the news at the time, it brought into sharper focus the need for consumers and manufacturers alike to alter their longstanding habits. We all know that change is both necessary and inevitable. With this power source development on show at the NEC, perhaps the countdown clock is now well and truly ticking for the petrol engine in the groundcare sector?

We have been talking for years now about how the proliferation of battery machinery will affect specialist dealers' workshops. I think it's fair to say, however, that the conversation has moved on from when phrases such as 'the death knell for the sector' were being used. It's understandable that there would be worries at how businesses would be affected by the technology shift, but progressive and adaptable dealers know that non-traditional options are the future. They will tell you there's profit to be made in sales of the equipment and there is servicing work to be gained.

Of course, there are on going debates regarding whether battery is the alternative power source for the long-term



Lewis and Stewart Anderson, who were constantly busy with end-users and dealers on the Weibang stand, talking to Service Dealer editor, Steve Gibbs

engineers and manufacturers, will hydrogen or methane power, for example, turn out to be the fuel that is the real solution? Quite possibly.

But for the immediate future, it's battery kit that will be filling showrooms. The momentum has been growing. They are popular now – they will soon become ubiquitous.

Best ever?

With the fascinating new machinery on show at SALTEX and the overall positive atmosphere that pervaded, the only negative comment I heard across the two days – and I heard it from both dealers and manufacturers – wasn't anything to do with the show itself. It was more pointed towards the companies who were notable by their absence.

There was a sense of perhaps they were not showing active support for the industry, by choosing not to attend. The feeling seemed to be, "we're all here for each other following a period of crisis and uncertainty, so why aren't they?"

Geoff Webb, the Grounds Management Association's CEO, released a statement following the event saying, "On behalf of all of us at the GMA, we really want to extend

our thanks to all our exhibitors and visitors that have showed their support for SALTEX this year. It has been a turbulent period for us all and we are delighted that we got the opportunity to celebrate the 75th edition with so many of you.

"I believe SALTEX 2021 has brought hope for the future and has showcased what our industry is capable of overcoming."

I think in the final analysis, those missing from the NEC in November might be kicking themselves. Those who were there, exhibitor and visitor alike, benefited from what turned out to be an excellent event.

Everyone who contributed by putting on the exhibition, by showing off their wares and by attending with the positive mindset to get business done, should all give themselves a huge pat on the back.

Many people commented the same to me, that they thought this was the best SALTEX they had ever attended. That's a bold statement, but it's hard to find reasons to disagree.



Milwaukee UK launched at the show. On the stand are the company's Paul Strong and Michael Hind, pictured with Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and dealer James Hayes

Italians restart ag show programme

With the world slowly learning how to cope with restraining the spread of Covid, the Italian EIMA exhibition restarted the international ag show calendar back in November 2021. A fully jabbed and masked MARTIN RICKATSON attended to seek out some machinery highlights

With some strong domestic manufacturers and Italian-linked brands – think New Holland, Maschio, Merlo, and the like – Italy's farm equipment industry remains a strong player in the global marketplace.

And that's before considering its multitude of component suppliers in

specialist areas such as axles, pumps and PTO shafts. So the organiser of EIMA, FederUnacoma – the Italian agricultural machinery manufacturers' federation – was keen to put its wares physically in front of potential buyers and dealers once it felt covid protocols could be safely adhered to. Despite the need for statutory in-hall mask-wearing and vaccination card checks, November's event went ahead much

as usual, although a few manufacturers decided they could not commit this time around. A 270,700 attendance over the five-day event was more than respectable in the circumstances, especially as it included a number from overseas who had endured the necessary extra checks, tests and form-filling. Luckily for them, there were more than a few new machines on display.



The New T5 from New Holland

New Holland T5

Stage V 101/110/117hp T5 tractors from New Holland feature a new 3.6-litre four-cylinder engine, replacing the former 3.4-litre unit, with benefits for power (by up to 5hp) and torque (10%). Combustion is reckoned to be optimised and SCR dimensions minimised by an exhaust gas recirculation system that uses less than 10% of emitted gas, said to help make the SCR system maintenance-free. Oil check and filter replacement are now all on the tractor's left side.

McCormick X7 SWB

McCormick X7 SWB tractors comprise the four-cylinder (2.65m wheelbase) X7.417 P6-Drive (165hp max) and X7.418 P6-Drive (175hp) with five-range/six-step powershift, plus the six-cylinder (2.76m wheelbase) X7.617 and X7.618 with the same power ratings. In addition, there are two VT-Drive CVT tractors, the 165hp/four-cyl X7.418 and the 175hp/six-cyl X7.618. All are FPT-engined, and feature common rail electronic fuel injection and a new engine brake.



McCormick X7 SWB

Landini Rex 4 Electra

Landini's 'Electra' version of its Rex 4 fruit tractor combines a 110hp diesel engine with a generator and battery arrangement to power the two electric motors that drive the front wheels and recover energy created under braking and deceleration. Front axle electric drive benefits are said to include potential fuel savings of up to 10% and a 15% wider steering angle. Power ratio between front and rear wheels can be selected to suit task and terrain. The axle is fully suspended.



Landini Rex 4 Electra



Merlo Multifarmer 44.9

Merlo Multifarmer 44.9

The 40.9 is succeeded by the new 44.9 – or more precisely the MF 44.9 CS-170 CVT – as flagship of Merlo's four-model Multifarmer range, with boom lift capacity rising 400kg to 4,400kg. Hydraulic system flow is 150 l/min and pressure 210 bar. At 9.0m, there is no change to maximum lift height, and the category III rear linkage lift capacity stays at 7,000kg. Also retained are the CVTronic hydrostatic transmission, and 4.5-litre FPT N45 Stage V four-cylinder 170hp engine. The three smaller models in the range – the 34.7, 34.9 and 40.7 – remain unchanged.



Manitou MT930H

Manitou MT930H

Manitou's MT930H Comfort is powered by a 3.3-litre, four-cylinder Kubota Stage V engine that produces 75hp, driving through a dual-range hydrostatic transmission. It measures 1.99m in both height and width, and can hoist a full load of 3.0 tonnes up to a maximum of 8.85m. Maximum reach is 6.05m. A new cab is designed with 'walk-in' step-free access, with operating information provided by a new terminal and control via a redesigned joystick.



Dieci Adaptive Load Sensing

Dieci Adaptive Load Sensing

The Adaptive Load Sensing (ALS) system from Dieci and hydraulics specialist Walvoil minimises hydraulic system energy use according to demand. Engineers have combined a directional control valve, an electronic joystick and an electronic control unit, with customisable modular software. In-house tests suggest a 28% decrease in energy losses during boom operations, and up to 45% during vehicle manoeuvres.

New Holland Smart-Steer

A new SmartSteer camera-based self-steering range of inter-row weeders complements New Holland's existing range of 4 to 18-row mechanically guided models. The SRC SmartSteer models comprise eight variants from 8 to 18 rows with chassis widths of either 6.7m or 9.9m, each folding to 3.0m for transport in either three or five sections, each parallelogram-mounted. A colour-sensitive camera detects differences between soil and weeds.



New Holland Smart-Steer



Merlo electric compact telehandlers

Merlo electric compact telehandlers

Merlo's first full-electric telehandlers come in 2wd and 4wd versions, both with maximum lift capacities of 2,500kg and maximum lift heights of 4.8m. The transmission design incorporates two electric motors at the front on 2wd models, with a third motor, positioned vertically and flanged on the rear axle, on 4wd versions. Battery capacity is 960Ah/48V, and on an average workload a single charge is good for eight hours' work.



The new Isotronic versions of Maschio 5-7m Toro models

ISOBUS control for Maschio harrows

With Italian maker Maschio's introduction of new Isotronic versions of its 5-7m Toro models, control is possible via the touchscreen terminals of ISOBUS-equipped tractors. The broad benefits are said to be two-fold, with simpler operation and optimised component lifetimes. A series of

sensors throughout the machine constantly monitor key functions and critical data, including gearbox oil temperatures, rotor speeds, cardan slip, actual working depth, hours worked and hectares covered.

First show for Roc under new owners

In October it was announced Kubota had acquired 80% of Italian grass-swath merger maker Roc via its Kverneland subsidiary. Despite the absence of both Kubota and Kverneland from the event, Roc itself was present with two models on its stand, and was keen to emphasise that its brand, colours and distribution partners – including in the UK, where the importer is Derbyshire-based Shutts Farm Machinery – remain unchanged. Joining the 870 model on the stand was the new 11.5m 1150.



The new 11.5m 1150 from ROC

Makita

40V^{Li-Ion}max

XGT 80V^{max}

80V MAX. 6,400 RPM. 480MM DIA. IPX4 RATED.







80V MAX XGT BRUSHLESS BRUSH CUTTER: UR012G

Spindle Size M10 x 1.25 Left, No Load Speed 3,500/5,000/6,400rpm, Cutting diameter 480mm, Maximum Output 2,000W, Noise sound power 91.6 dB(A), Noise sound pressure 79.9 dB(A), Noise K factor 1.8 dB(A), Vibration K factor 1.5 m/sec², Net weight 8.0-9.3kg. Powered by two 40Vmax XGT Li-Ion batteries in series, Electronic current limiter for overload protection, Electric brake, Electronic 3-speed (Hi/Med/Low), Variable speed control function, Soft start, Constant speed control, Reverse switch for easy removal of grass clippings stuck, IPX4 level water resistant, Compatible with a variety of blades, Offset bike handle, Low noise level for comfortable working, Applicable to heavy-duty operation due to high output power similar to 40cc class engine grass trimmers, Active Feedback Sensing Technology (AFT), Automatic Torque Drive Technology.

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We've got a huge range of garden machinery from leading manufacturers, as well as a giant range of spare parts and consumables.

PARTS DIAGRAMS

Just like before, we have a massive selection of parts diagrams to help you find exactly the right part you need for your workshop.

MULTIPLE USER ACCOUNTS

Now you can have separate user accounts with different levels of access. You'll be able to hide visibility of invoices and sales history, as well as block ordering for certain users on your account.

DASHBOARD

There's now new features on your dashboard, including the ability to view outstanding invoices.

Three common pitfalls when hiring

Sara Hey, vice president of operations and development at Bob Clements Inc, the dealership development company based in Missouri, shares the insights she offers U.S. dealers with Service Dealer's UK readership every issue



THIS ISSUE: Ideas to consider when employing

It's probably no surprise to most owners and managers, but typically, the biggest expense in a dealership are the people you employ. In the heat of the battle, when you feel the pain of needing another set of hands, it can be easy to justify adding another body to the dealership and another person to payroll. However, in the slower moments you may find yourself questioning the decisions you have made around adding the additional people.

As we work with dealers, through our Dealer Success Groups, we have seen three major pitfalls when it comes to hiring.

You don't know who you need

The first major pitfall is that you aren't clear on who you actually need in the position. So often, owners and managers fill the position to take care of the pain they are feeling in the moment but don't look at who they will need down the road.

For example, you may feel like you need an additional parts person to help with the chaos that ensues at the parts counter. When, in reality, what you need is a parts support person who helps by putting away stocking parts orders and allows the parts people you have to focus on taking care of the customers.



Take time to call and check references

You don't have a process in place for hiring or training

Many dealers don't have in place a process for hiring or training employees once they are hired. The most important thing you do as an owner is to hire right and develop your people.

We encourage the dealers we work with to utilise a five-step process in hiring. This includes: having a clear job description and benchmarking the position, finding candidates, phone interview, in-person interview and then the final interview. When you are able to have a repeatable process in place in hiring, it allows you to have consistent results with the people you are adding to your team.

The other piece of the puzzle, is that owners and managers don't typically have a process in place for training their new hires.

You, as an owner or manager, have spent a substantial amount of time and money to bring this person onto your team, and will only set them up for failure if you don't have a training plan in place. We have seen the best way to set your new employees up for success in your dealership is to train them early and keep them engaged in the training process. Maybe in your dealership the process looks like you, as the owner, working alongside them for the first week. You might have them attend online service or parts workshops, or even send them off-site for training. Here is what we have learned: if you want to have your people perform at or above your expectations, you have to train them early and often.

You ignore the references

One of the most overlooked parts of the hiring process is having conversations with the references of the applicant. You wouldn't ever make a decision on a new piece of technology without getting the opinion of others before the purchase. However, when we are in the midst of hiring, all of this conventional wisdom goes out the window. Take time to call references.

As you get ready to add a person to your team, be sure to avoid these pitfalls, and success will be yours!

Opportunity of a lifetime

Anthony Deacon In his first diary entry, Anthony Deacon of MKM Agriculture, explains his dealership's exciting plans as they build back stronger following last year's devastating fire



Thank you Service Dealer for giving me the opportunity to share my 2022 with you. I hope over the next 6 issues I can offer an interesting read.

I'm Anthony Deacon, managing director of MKM Agriculture, which was established by my father the year after I was born in 1986, on my grandfather's small farm in the village of Marston Moretaine, Bedfordshire (made famous by our past resident hero Sir Captain Tom Moore). We specialise in ATVs and UTVs and currently are breaking our way into the groundcare machinery market – but it may not stop there. We currently employ 18 members of staff over 2 branches. The second (little brother) branch opened in 2019 in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.

Many of you will probably have heard of our devastating fire, which destroyed our workshop and storage building during the early hours of the morning of 7th April last year. This event put me through the toughest time of my working career. I was not prepared for the weeks and months that followed. I was, however, determined to not let this awful event get in the way of my expansion plans. I knew that if I could concentrate on conducting a recovery plan and use the strengths and support of my staff and the close people around me, we could pull through this and the Phoenix would eventually rise from the ashes.

I felt instantly that my team needed reassurance and guidance. I could not show them an ounce of weakness. They needed direction fast, and we put together a short-term recovery plan – swiftly followed by a mid- and then a long-term plan.



Clear-up after the fire, which destroyed MKM's workshop

Our short-term plan was to make some workshop space, buy basic tools and create a service desk. This we did within 2-3 days of the fire. The mid-term plan was to build a temporary workshop, and 12 weeks after the fire we moved into a 3230 ft/sq brand-new temporary building, using some funding from the Increased Cost of Working cover we have with our insurers. We completely kitted out with new tools, ramps, consumables etc. In fact, everything down to the last split pin was brand new. Now it's time to work on our long-term plan and you have joined me at a very interesting time. We are at the early stages of constructing a new dealership building. So far, drawings have been produced ready to submit a planning application to the local authorities for a 65ft x 165ft two-storey building to comprising a showroom, workshop, offices, training room, parts area and a pub for rewarding our staff. What an opportunity! Some may say it's an opportunity of a lifetime. I have spoken to many people I know in the industry for advice on size and layout in fear of getting it wrong, and I believe the model we have now is correct for us. There are some very exciting times ahead for MKM as we plan to build this summer and I'm very happy to share my journey with you.

It's not all 'glam and glitter' though. There are two big challenges to overcome – permission and financing. At the time of writing, a planning application is almost ready for submission to Central Bedfordshire Council. Let's hope by the time of my next diary, I can share the good news that we have permission granted. I've had an 'estimate' for the build, but in the current climate with increasing materials costs, our builder cannot offer a fixed price. The recent increases are huge and we are estimating a build cost of around £550,000. I have had meetings with our bank and they are happy to lend the money we need based on the last couple of years' accounts. This is very scary, but the recent Service Dealer Conference was positive, and I felt comfort and reassurance that our industry is thriving, with fellow dealerships and manufacturers investing growth. I will share more on our growth plans next time.

I promise to continue my 'Diary of a Season' with no mention of COVID-19 or the lack of stock – it's onwards and upwards.

Happy New Year!



Employee health

The long march of Covid

There just seems to be no escape from Covid, writes SME Digest editor, Adam Bernstein. For some, there was furlough, job loss, business turndown or failure. For others, hospitalisation, and death. But what about those left with Long Covid?

Rising concern

The illness is a real problem. John Palmer, a Senior Adviser at ACAS, points to data from June (2021) where “the ONS published statistics that said nearly a million people in the UK had self-reported Long Covid... a considerable number of employees have been, or will be, diagnosed with it and therefore the condition is likely to be a factor for many employers in all different manners of workplaces.”

In her day-to-day role, Jennifer Mann, Principal Associate in the Employment Department of Eversheds Sutherland, says the matter usually arises when handling long-term sick leave. When it arises, she says, “it is important the employer meets with the employee to understand their views on their condition and when they anticipate a return to work.” From there, she advises seeking medical evidence via a report from the employee’s GP, or occupational health therapist.

The reason for this is because, as Mann points out, it’s “unclear whether Long Covid amounts to a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010.”

Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on a person’s ability to do normal day-to-day activities.

“Substantial”, says Mann, “is something which that is more than minor or trivial. ‘Long-term’ means a condition that has lasted or is likely to last 12 months or more.”

Dealing with a claim

So, how should employers deal with employees claiming Long Covid, especially where symptoms aren’t obvious?

Mann’s view is surprisingly simple. She says that “it is not for an employer to diagnose or ‘disprove’ a condition and the impact it has on the employee. Rather, it is incumbent upon them to understand the employee’s view and the medical evidence.” This will allow an assessment of where a

return to work is likely in the reasonably foreseeable future, and whether there is anything they can do to assist the employee.

Palmer takes a similar line. He says that “when it comes to supporting an employee directly, the best starting point is to keep channels open between the manager and the employee so an ongoing conversation can take place about ways to offer support.”

Long Covid needs to be treated in the same way as any other illness or long-term incapacity. With a period of sickness absence for longer than seven calendar days, no matter how many days they work each week, employees should get a fit note from their doctor.

There is a legal duty placed upon employers, which Palmer details, “to consider making reasonable adjustments when they know, or could be expected to know, an employee or job applicant has a disability and if an employee or job applicant with a disability asks for adjustments.”

But as to what amounts to a ‘reasonable’ adjustment will, says Mann, depend on the information from the employee and the medical evidence and what the business can feasibly accommodate.

Dismissal?

Can an employer dismiss an employee in this situation? Both Palmer and Mann say the same: an employer dealing with Long Covid needs to follow a fair process and should have regard to its own absence management policy.

Mann says that “usually, a fair process will involve meeting the employee a number of times, as the prognosis may change, and understanding the medical evidence.” She adds that if it becomes clear that there is unlikely to be a

return to work in the reasonably foreseeable future, and there is nothing the employer can do to support the employee in a return – and any reasonable adjustments have been explored – then it may be appropriate to dismiss.

Palmer approaches this from a slightly different angle – that the employee has not done anything wrong. “But something has still happened that means they are no longer able to carry out the job they were employed to do.”

Nevertheless, Mann says that “the employee should be warned that the viability of their employment is in question, and prior to the potential final meeting, they should be advised that one outcome of the meeting may be dismissal.” That said, it can be difficult for an employer to justify a dismissal taking place before company sick pay has been exhausted. Similarly, if there is a group income protection policy in place, whether the employee could benefit should be explored before any dismissal.

Employee rights

If an employer does not follow a full and fair procedure, an employee could have a case for unfair dismissal, even if the

reason for dismissing them was valid.

Employers should be under no illusion that if a case is brought before an Employment Tribunal, and it finds that an employee has been unfairly dismissed, compensation could be awarded based on an employee’s loss of earnings. As Mann outlines, compensation is made up of a basic award, which uses the same formula as a statutory redundancy payment, and a compensatory award of up to one year’s pay, capped at £89,493.

And if the treatment is found to be discriminatory, or reasonable adjustments have not been made, compensation will be uncapped, and will, reflect likely ongoing loss of earnings and an award for injury to feelings.

Round up

Covid is the stuff of science fiction. But it is with us, and while the majority deal with it, many will suffer well into the future; it’s a problem that they, their families and their employers will have to deal with for some time.

Remuneration

Following National Minimum Wage legislation

The National Minimum Wage (NMW) has been a part of UK law for decades, says Adam Bernstein, SME Digest editor. A key part of the Labour Party’s 1997 election manifesto, it finally came into force in April 1999. Back then, it required employers to pay those aged 22 and over £3.60 an hour and £3 an hour for those aged 18-22. With the passage of time, new rates and age bands have been introduced, along with the National Living Wage (NLW), in 2016, for those aged over 23

The detail

Presently, the rate from 1 April 2021 stands at £4.30 an hour for an apprentice, £4.62 for those under 18, £6.56 an hour for those aged 18-20, £8.36 for those aged 21 and 22, and £8.91 for those aged 23 and over and on the NLW.

Employers must consider what should and shouldn’t be included in the NMW and NLW calculation. There’s plenty of detail on the GOV.UK and Acas websites, but thought should be given to hours worked, commission paid, tools and meals and compulsory time spent at work before and after the working day.

The regime is self-policed by employers but with oversight from HMRC, which, if it finds an underpayment – either through its own investigations or a tip-off from a disgruntled employee –

can take an employer to court. It should be noted that HMRC’s compliance officers have the power to take information away from an employer’s premises (or the premises where the information is held) to copy it.

The maximum fine for non-payment is £20,000 per worker. Employers who fail to pay can also be banned from being a company director for up to 15 years.

Beyond that, employers can be taken to an employment tribunal or civil court if an employee or worker feels they have not been receiving NMW or NLW; have been dismissed or experienced unfair treatment because of their right to the NMW or NLW; or have been discriminated against because their age means they are entitled to a higher minimum wage rate.



Poor excuses

Periodically, HMRC publishes reports on those employers that have been caught out for not paying the NMW or NLW – these employers are publicly named and shamed. Similarly, HMRC publishes the excuses that employers give when confronted about their non-payment.

And non-payment is quite widespread. In the 2020 to 2021 tax year, HMRC’s investigators helped more than 155,000 workers recover more than £16m in pay. HMRC also issued more than £14m in penalties for non-payment.

As for the most outlandish excuses for not paying NMW or NLW, HMRC’s top ten make for interesting reading:

- *She does not deserve the National Minimum Wage because she only makes the teas and sweeps the floors.*
- *The employee was not a good worker, so I did not think they deserved to be paid the National Minimum Wage.*
- *My accountant and I speak a different language – he does not understand me, and that is why he does not pay my workers the correct wages.*

- *My employee is still learning so they are not entitled to the National Minimum Wage.*

- *It is part of UK culture not to pay young workers for the first three months as they have to prove their ‘worth’ first.*

- *The National Minimum Wage does not apply to my business.*

- *I have got an agreement with my workers that I will not pay them the National Minimum Wage; they understand, and they even signed a contract to this effect.*

- *I thought it was okay to pay young workers below the National Minimum Wage as they are not British and therefore do not have the right to be paid it.*

- *My workers like to think of themselves as being self-employed and the National Minimum Wage does not apply to people who work for themselves.*

- *My workers are often just on standby when there are no customers in the shop; I only pay them for when they are actually serving someone.*

Maintaining employees’ rights

It’s worth noting that employees cannot be asked or told to sign-away their rights. Further, HMRC says that it reviews every complaint it receives about the minimum wage. It also encourages employees who think that they “are being short-changed or are a business that is unsure of the rules or needs help to get things right, to get in touch.”

HMRC has also gone on record to state that “any employer deliberately or unapologetically underpaying their staff will face hefty fines and other enforcement action.”

Employees can lodge complaints via GOV.UK or the confidential Acas Pay and Work Rights Helpline on 0300 123 1100; calls can be transferred to HMRC.

In summary

Employers should be worried that employees have rights and know how to exercise them. The law is clear here – NMW and NLW must be appropriately paid, and if they’re not, employers can expect trouble.



BUSINESS MONITOR

Taking the temperature of the dealer network, sponsored by Garden Trader

Dissatisfaction with warranty rates voiced

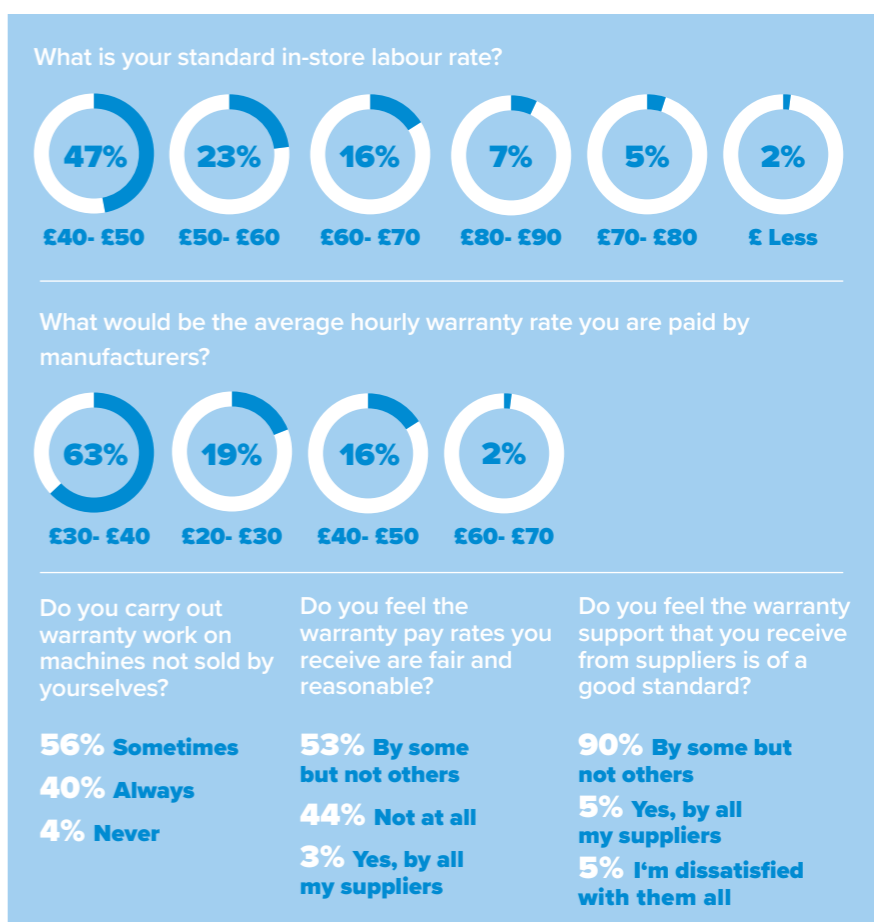
Survey respondents indicate a disparity in treatment from suppliers

The results received from dealers who responded to our warranty rates survey, conducted in December 2021, indicated that there’s a dissatisfaction regarding the treatment they receive by certain suppliers.

To the key question of do you feel the warranty pay rates you receive are fair and reasonable, almost all respondents indicated that they were not from all their suppliers. 53% said that they were paid fairly by some but not others, whilst concerningly, 44% felt that none of their suppliers were paying them fairly.

In terms of whether warranty support (prompt responses, tech help etc) received from suppliers is of a good standard, an overwhelming majority of 90% said it was by some but not others.

Every single comment received by dealer respondents could be described as expressing discontent. Not one single comment praised manufacturers.



“Your say”

**What is your take on the warranty situation currently?
Is there anything you'd like manufacturers to change to make your life easier?**

- I believe it is accepted within the industry when you sell a machine the margin made should be sufficient to cover any shortfall in warranty payments. Unfortunately, with so many machines being sold online in a box, the margin is so small these companies are unable or unwilling to complete warranty work and the manufacturers call on the dealer network to complete this work is without the buffer of the sales margin. I believe the solution would be to make the seller of the item pay this shortfall to the repairer. I think this would subsequently see a reduction in discounts given.
- I think manufacturers need to recognise that the dealer network is there to support the industry and their products. We try to support all product that is supplied online and not by ourselves, but the sad truth of the matter is, when you don't profit from the original sale, then resentment towards an online warranty job does exist. Higher labour rates with easy admin and not having to mess about registering product that has been supplied online would be a start.
- Manufacturers should be paying at least £50 net per labour hour. Example – we had a complete ride on gearbox replacement to carry out for one of the largest brands in the market (they were orange/white). We were paid £31.50 labour for a two-hour job. When questioned, we were told “it is what it is”. No wonder a lot of dealers refuse to do warranty work if they did not sell it, as they would be at a loss.
- The rates are poor and outdated. We are a big online seller with a shop as well. It's no wonder we hear the complaints from the average dealer, as they are not being supported by the manufactures. With the news that Stihl will be going direct to end,users on all products, surely it's time for them to look at this if they want the support of the dealers.
- Most implement, horticultural and handheld manufacturers pay ridiculously low hourly rates. On the plus side the actual tractor manufacturers pay

- a fair rate. Also, the factory FRT times are mostly unachievable in a dealership environment, so you lose out there as well.
- Manufacturers could improve if they pay my retail rate, allow a reasonable amount of time for the repair, and take into account parts lookup, ordering and admin.
- Manufacturers need to pay a realistic rate for warranty work and get away from the 'set times' for jobs as they invariably take longer, especially if the diagnosis is not clear at the outset. We rarely do 'outside' warranty work as we lose money on nearly every job.
- Some of the suppliers set specific times for completing warranty jobs but they are unrealistic e.g. 24 minutes on a job that has taken nearly one hour to complete from start to finish for a mechanic with 20+ years' experience in the industry! They just do not allow the full amount of time for check over, diagnosis, repair and re-assembly. We have also had instances where we know a job is not warranty and have informed the customer, they have then phoned the suppliers who have overruled us just to stop the customer complaining – this then makes us look like we don't know what we are doing.
- The main problem with warranty is that the manufacturers do not have any real understanding of warranty work and the time, effort and cost that goes into it. It is a common feeling in my opinion that the manufacturer believes the dealer should just get on with it and accept that is the way it has always been done, will continue to be done and we should appreciate that we have the brand in the first place. The labour rate paid is not only on most occasions far less than the dealer charges out, but when that is combined with what they think that repair time should have been, you may get paid a very small amount. So if the dealer charges £60 per hour and the manufacturer pays £30 per hour and it takes an hour to do the repair but the manufacturer says it should only take 30mins you only get £15.

- If a manufacturer fits a branded engine, such as Briggs or Honda, for example, then it is they that should honour any warranty issues and then seek settlement from the engine manufacturer. You have situations with mowers whereby a customer buys a Mountfield mower with a Honda engine and it comes with two different sets of warranties, which isn't explained to the customer. The customer thinks everything is covered by the Mountfield warranty, gets an engine issue, and is informed they have to go to a Honda agent to get it sorted. Kawasaki is a good one where Toro is concerned – engine issue? Deal with Kawasaki. No account with Kawasaki? Tough, you will have to open one, and all the extra admin involved with that. I spent years in the motor trade and we were selling new vehicles such as Rover 200's with Honda engines. If a customer had an engine issue we didn't tell them to go to Honda to get it sorted.
- In a certain state in the USA the dealers are allowed by law to treat warranty work as they would an end-user and bill the manufacturer/supplier accordingly. Is this the way forward?
- Normally we never get the full hours claimed. They are always cut.
- Warranty has become a profit centre for manufacturers, and to an extent their service personnel as they have their bonuses incorporated into warranty. Also, manufacturers have set warranty times for each type of warranty repair and I would like them to have to perform the same repair in the same environment / conditions we work in and see if they can carry out the work in the time frame they set out for their dealers. Finally, there are so many caveats and conditions included in warranty terms now, that if the manufacturer is so inclined, and applies their own warranty terms strictly, there could in reality be no warranty for the end-user.

- It would be good if online companies offered their own after-sales support rather than directing their customers with warranty issues to the customer's nearest dealer. We then undertake warranty work for that brand at a low hourly rate and sometimes need to supply replacement equipment from stock at cost price to the customer, as when we go back to the online company they don't want to know.
- Warranty claims and work is far different in reality to how it is sold. The manufacturer often uses warranty as a selling point and expects dealers to do the same. However, machinery and tractor companies, such as KUK, for example, will then have a policy of 'nothing is warranty until agreed by them'.
- Frankly we are custodians of the manufacturers' errors and sometimes bad design. Our reputation is tarnished when something goes wrong. Two statements are often thrown at us – “you sold it” or “my contract is with you, the supplier”. Warranty would be much fairer if they paid proper diagnostic times, admin times, more generous repair times and not this clinical surgery operation they all strive for. They are, as always, not in tune with the environment we work in.
- Although our main two franchises pay close to our hourly rate, the time allowed for the work is ridiculously low. Many claims don't even compensate for the time taken to complete the claim online, let alone do the work, collect the machine, discuss it with the owner, etc. Many hours of our time are wasted doing work we don't get paid for, which tends to make us avoid warranty work if possible.
- Paperwork for some manufacturers is terrible and long-winded. Some, like Mountfield/Stiga, is simple, online with payment within hours or days, not weeks or months. Stihl & Briggs & Stratton should be ashamed of themselves. Wouldn't do their warranty anymore if they paid me, ha ha!

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COMMERCIAL

Ferris make a stand

FB1000 with Dual Air Flow system

Ferris say their new FB1000CE Hurricane Stand-on Blower moves three to five times more leaves and debris compared to back-pack leaf blowers.

The operator stands on an ergonomically suspended platform, has a view of the work, and control over the patented left and right outlets with patented split airflow. Suitable in parks and to clean up large festival areas, due to its narrow perimeters it is also viable in private gardens

or public green spaces with narrow access.

The Blow Force is up to 132 N (force needed to physically lift the packed leaves from the soil and push them away by volume of air), the Vanguard 18HP in conjunction with the Hydrogear ZT3100 delivers zero turn abilities and 12.8km/h ground speed, and the 20x8.00-8 rear tires can climb curbs up to 15 cm.



5 SECOND INFO

- The Blow Force is up to 132 N
- 12.8km/h ground speed

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COMMERCIAL

Cordless pro hedge trimmers updated

STIHL reduces vibration and sound levels



STIHL has updated its HSA 94 R and HSA 94 T hedge trimmers, now offering professional users reduced vibration and sound levels, as well as a new EC motor and the ability to connect to their new Smart Connector 2 A.

The company say its their most powerful cordless hedge trimmers now boast a new EC motor featuring embedded magnets, leading to improved durability. The new motor also has an automatic motor rotation reversal feature, meaning the blades can be released if they become jammed in an extreme application, preventing blade damage and downtime.

STIHL says the HSA 94 R delivers a lower blade speed for cutting thicker growth and managing tougher hedges, while the HSA 94 T offers a faster blade speed more suited to

trimming ornamental hedges neatly to leave a fine finish. Both tools feature three blade speed settings; up to 3,200 rpm on the R version and 5,000 rpm on the T version.

Both models include rotating multi-function control handles for side and top cutting that are quick and easy to adjust.

With a weight of 3.9kg for the T version and 4.1kg for the R version, both hedge trimmers feature a loop handle with an inner switch that prevents one-handed operation and improves safety levels.

STIHL's AP batteries and AR backpack batteries can power both tools – and both trimmers will be ready for use with the company's Smart Connector 2 A, plugging directly into the machines control unit where data can be transmitted to any smartphone or tablet within range via Bluetooth.

COMMERCIAL



Makita brush up on power

Available for professionals from January 2022

Delivering up to 6,400rpm and a maximum power output at 2.0kW, Makita has launched the 80VMax (40Vx2) XGT Brushless Brush Cutter, that they say it provides users with performance similar to a 40cc class engine grass trimmer.

Speed can be adjusted with three-stage control, and due to Automatic Torque Drive Technology (ADT), which adapts the cutting speed according to the load conditions, Makita says users can trust that the machine is always working at its optimum.

The UR012GZ04 also features Active Feedback Sensing Technology (AFT) that shuts down the tool if the rotation

speed suddenly slows, protecting the user against kickback. And the reverse switch removes any material that gets stuck in the blade, reducing user downtime.

Kevin Brannigan, marketing manager at Makita UK, said, "Our XGT platform was designed to provide professionals with even more power to meet high demand applications with ease. All of our XGT solutions are engineered with built-in programming, that provides digital communication between the battery and the tool, so that both work together for optimum performance and sustained power."

COMMERCIAL

EGO unveil their first ride-on

Available for professionals from January 2022

EGO unveiled the Z6 at October's SALTEX, the first ride-on lawn mower in their range.

Demonstrating the capability of battery power, the company says the zero turn mower allows users to load up to six ordinary EGO batteries, combining their power to cut up to three acres on a single charge. The manufacturer, says the Z6 ensures consistent quality of cut and provides users with a number of useful features – from three driving modes through to ten height adjustments.

Vince Brauns, group product manager at EGO, said, "As



our first major exhibition since the easing of restrictions, we were really excited to come to SALTEX with brand-new products to share with visitors, including something very special. EGO's new Z6 Zero Turn ride-on mower is now launching across Europe, and we're pleased to pull back the covers on this exciting product."



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FORESTRY

GreenMech on to a SURE thing

Introduction of the EVO 205D SURE-Trak

Following on from the launch of the road-tow version earlier in the year, GreenMech have introduced the EVO 205D SURE-Trak.

The company's SURE-Trak system (patent pending) allows each track to be raised or lowered independently on the move, ensuring the machine maintains a horizontal position when climbing or descending slopes. Providing up to 540mm of ground clearance, the unit will provide manoeuvrability for the operator and stability when traversing uneven ground, together with protecting machine components and engine lubrication.

Featuring a 50hp, Stage V Compliant Kubota Diesel

engine, the latest model in the EVO series benefits from horizontal rollers and a six-blade heavy-duty flywheel to cope with bulky brush and timber. In addition, the new 'Smart Sense' controller provides overload protection to ensure chipping performance.

As with the 19-28 SURE-Trak model, the new machine comes with a range of factory-fitted optional extras to allow the operator to tailor the final specification of the machine to fit their requirements. Amongst the range of additional options are a winch, lighting tower, recovery kit, remote control and fitted toolboxes.



AGRICULTURAL



Vicon's non-stop round baler-wrapper combination, the FastBale, is now available with film-on-film capability, in addition to traditional net-tying.
The company says film-tying is

exactly the same as net-tying – only the material used to secure the bale is different. The revised process sees film used to tie the bale before it leaves the chamber, and with it

comes several advantages.

Due to film's pre-stretch capabilities, the film-on-film process reduces bale expansion as it leaves the chamber, creating a denser bale than the net-wrapped equivalent. And with it, less oxygen is trapped inside the bale, contributing to an improvement in forage quality.

When it comes to waste recycling, the manufacturer says film-on-film provides additional benefits for farmers. Disposal requires users only to deal with plastic as a single waste stream – not a combination of plastic with net.

FastBale's revised film-on-film injection system can also be used with rolls of net, for those operators who prefer total flexibility with silage quality. Including rolls in use, according to the company the non-stop baler-wrapper has the capacity to carry up to 10 rolls of bale wrap, plus two rolls of either net or film for tying.

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The ride of your life?

If Covid-19 was Becher's Brook, will supply issues be The Chair?

Chris Biddle



A Happy New Year! Are you getting ready for a season (or two) that may prove to be the ride of your life?

That's three question marks in the headlines and the first paragraph. Which sums up the head-scratching and crystal-ball gazing currently working over-time in the ag and turfcare machinery sector – and in virtually every other industry as well.

The problem is not a lack of business, it is a lack of products impacting on the whole of the supply chain, from manufacturer to dealer to customer.

I have been reflecting recently on the business cycle, and concluded that it is rather like the Grand National.

It's a long race, an endurance test with many hurdles or fences of varying difficulty to negotiate, interspersed with stretches of relative plain-sailing. The only difference being that there is no finishing post (you hope).

During their life, businesses must overcome regular obstacles, some of which are easily managed, others are much more testing. The weather and the economy are a fact of life, always have been, always will be. Can't influence either, so move on.

It's the ones that come from out-of-the-blue that are always the most testing. As businesses glide fairly easily over the early fences, Brexit caused a much sterner test, aptly compared with the Water Jump.

Soon the next big hurdle came into view, just like Becher's Brook – overcoming the trading restrictions imposed by Covid-19. However, many of the runners and riders are skilled professionals, and whilst certainly it was testing, the majority cleared it successfully.

But now, rounding the Canal Turn, the next big obstacle is in sight, The Chair. A formidable fence, full of unknown dangers – as indeed is the period we are now entering.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that the current crisis regarding the supply of products is the most concerning that many businesses will have faced for a very long time.

The concerns from all sides of the industry were spelled out in a recent episode of my Inside Agri-Turf podcast. "I've never known a more testing time during my long years in the industry," said Shaun Groom, general manager of Merlo UK, and current president of the AEA.

For the dealer trade, Jason Nettle of Winchester Garden Machinery reckoned that he could see a lack of free supply

of stock being around for a couple of years, whilst Angus Lindsay who oversees the machinery and vehicle assets for landscape services company idVerde said the problem was that the company was still winning business. He had real concerns about having sufficient machines and vehicles to service them. And we are talking big numbers, 17,000 machines, and over 2000 vehicles are under his control.

Over-ordering

There is no question that coming off the back of Covid-19, demand for equipment is extremely high as the economy starts to recover. But one of the problems is that suppliers don't really know the true extent of the demand. Dealers are, not unnaturally, ordering more than they need on the basis that they are unlikely to get everything.

Look at what happened in the fuel shortage recently. Say there will be shortages, and everybody piled in whether they needed fuel or not. One dealer told me that if suppliers

delivered everything he had ordered, he would have to lease another warehouse.

This is a time for the most careful, most open, most trusting communication to

take place between manufacturers, dealers and customers. Angus Lindsay said that he flagged up his requirements for 2022 with suppliers some time ago.

There are a few upsides – second-hand values are going through the roof. Demand for service will be high, and ingenuity and skills to keep machines working will be tested.

Everybody, but everybody, will have to be kept 'in the loop' all the way down the supply chain. Honest communication will be required. Every machine order will be 'urgent', but there must be flexibility.

In situations like these, margins will be under pressure. Heavy discounting ought to be totally out of order. How can it be when products are scarce? It's a difficult call for dealers, give away too much and margins will suffer, jack-up-prices to compensate and risk being accused of profiteering.

Dealers once again will be the 'piggy in the middle', but they are used to that. Manufacturers will be working overtime to try and ease the supply crisis. Let's hope it is more short-lived than the predictions suggest at the moment. Just a thought. During the Grand National Becher's Brook (aka Covid) is jumped twice, but The Chair (supply crisis) only once!

“Over-ordering by dealers means suppliers do not know the true demand.”

What's on?

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we advise checking with organiser's websites and social media channels

JANUARY 2022

Oxford Farming Conference www.ofc.org.uk	5-7
LAMMA 2022, Birmingham NEC www.lammashow.com	11-12
BTME 2022, Harrogate International Centre www.btme.org.uk	25-27

FEBRUARY 2022

Doe Show 2022, Ulting www.ernestdoe.com	1-3
GCSAA Conference & Trade Show, San Diego www.golfindustryshow.com	5-10
Spring Fair 2022, Birmingham NEC www.springfair.com	6-9
World Ag Expo, Tulare, California www.worldagexpo.com	8-10
AgriScot, The Royal Highland Centre www.agriscot.co.uk	9
Executive Hire Show, Ricoh Arena, Coventry www.executivehireshow.co.uk	9-10
Agritechnica, Hanover www.agritechnica.com	CANCELLED 27/2 -5/3

MARCH 2022

Ideal Home Exhibition, Olympia, London www.idealhomeshow.co.uk	11-27
West of England Game Fair, Bath & West Showground www.westofenglandgamefair.co.uk	5-10

APRIL 2022

Springtime Live, Great Yorkshire Showground www.springtimelive.co.uk	2
Harrogate Spring Flower Show www.flowershow.org.uk	21-24

MAY 2022

North Somerset Show www.nsas.org.uk	2
Nottinghamshire County Show www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com	14
Balmoral Show, Belfast www.balmoralshow.co.uk	14
Scotgrass, Dumfries www.scotgrass.co.uk	18
Smallholding & Countryside Festival Royal Welsh Showground www.rwas.wales/whats-on/smallholding-countryside-festival	21-22
Chelsea Flower Show www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show	24-28
The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC www.cvshow.com	24-26
Herts County Show www.hertsshow.com	28-29
Suffolk County Show www.suffolkshow.co.uk	31/5 -1/6

Status of the events listed here are correct at the time of going to press.



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Reasons to be proud

Our sector can point to outstanding acts of kindness and generosity

Focusing on the positive

Look at my page and the rest of the magazine all smartened up for 2022! It's like being in a utopian future, where everything is shiny and perfect. A true reflection of where we find ourselves at the start of this new year!

Although a quick look at your rolling 24-hours news channel of choice will inevitably bring you back down to earth with a bump. To badly paraphrase Michael Corleone from Godfather Part 3, just when we thought we were out, they've dragged us back in! As I was writing this column, Omicron was the variant *de jour*, throwing doubt over the outlook for the first few months of the year – which, even with my biggest optimist hat on, wasn't exactly all sunshine and roses in the first place!

But my role here isn't to dwell on such things. As the magazine's dedicated cheerleader for all things positive, I want my first piece of 2022 to shine a light on the marvellous and kind elements that define our industry. And I tell you what, at the Service Dealer Awards, that spotlight didn't just focus on the regular outstanding work that's been achieved in dealerships up and down the country every day of the year. No – for the 2021 awards, focus was also placed on those businesses and individuals who had gone above and beyond to help their customers and wider communities when they had needed them the most.

Kelly Burgess of Buxtons, who won



Service Dealer's Jenni Green (left) presenting the cheque to Lisa Long, regional corporate fundraising manager of Farms For City Children

the Star Of The Dealership award, for example, illustrated this attitude perfectly, being recognised for helping others both inside and outside of work.

Also, Sam Turner & Sons, who won the Extra Mile award, had an equally inspiring story, keeping their farming and professional customers going above all else – ensuring vital support to essential workers.

This generosity of spirit (as well as cold hard cash) was also made apparent on awards night when the dealers and manufacturers in the room, raised £3428.50 for the nominated charity, Farms For City

Children – who enable kids from disadvantaged communities to experience life on a farm in the heart of the British countryside.

Following the event, our illustrious leader, Duncan Murray-Clarke, said, "Raising almost £3,500 for such a worthwhile charity is awesome! I'd like to thank everyone who contributed so generously."

Hopefully this year we can focus more keenly on these awesome aspects of our sector. The boring stuff will be there lurking, of course – but let's try our hardest not to let it distract us from our great work.

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