

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

MARCH / APRIL 2020

DRAWING A CROWD

Plenty of new kit on view as LAMMA settles into new home and BTME caters to its audience

PICKING A PARTNER

Turney Group tells us about how it signed up to sell, service and support a new ATV franchise

VALUABLE INSIGHTS

Event held convening engineers, dealers and customers to promote servicing and maintenance

RECRUITING THE NEXT GENERATION

BAGMA's Keith Christian on why the industry must work together

ON THE RIGHT VENTRAC

PRICE TURFCARE ON BUILDING A NETWORK



SHAPING THE FUTURE



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CONTENTS

- 4 NEWS**
- 16 RECRUITING THE NEXT GENERATION**
Q&A with BAGMA's Keith Christian
- 22 PICKING A PARTNER**
The Turney Group tells us how it chooses a new franchise
- 27 VALUABLE INSIGHTS**
Event held convening dealers, engineers and customers
- 30 LAMMA '20 REVIEW**
Show settles into its new NEC home
- 36 BUSINESS MONITOR**
Results of Winter Servicing 2020 survey
- 38 ON THE RIGHT VENTRAC**
Interview with Rupert Price of Price Turfcare
- 43 BTME '20 REVIEW**
Confident show caters to its audience
- 48 SME DIGEST**
Latest news for small businesses
- 51 VIEW FROM ACROSS THE POND**
Sara Hey offers advice from a US perspective
- 52 DIARY OF A SEASON**
With Strathbogie Forest & Garden
- 54 NEW PRODUCTS**
Coverage of new equipment to hit the market
- 60 EVENTS**
- 61 IN MY VIEW**
With Chris Biddle
- 62 JIM GREEN**
His view from the edge

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to March/April 2020's edition of *Service Dealer* magazine. It's been an interesting start to the year already – and I'm not even mentioning the bongs, or lack of, at the end of January. No, for our sector the start of the year means a couple of significant trade shows for the ag and groundscare markets.

Both were presenting their sophomore efforts this January in their revised formats and both served their sectors well. You can read reports on LAMMA and BTME in this issue, which give a sense of the optimism and upbeat atmospheres which pervaded the halls of both.

Still undoubtedly a cause for concern though, across both sectors, is the encouragement of new, young recruits, to choose to build a career in the landbased industries. We have a fascinating interview with Keith Christian within these pages, who has plenty of insight on the subject through his work with BAGMA and LE-TEC. Keith knows there's a long way to go and that the industry won't get there until it starts talking with one voice.

Comments we received from dealers who responded to our Winter Servicing survey, the results of which you can find on page 36, highlight the problem which some are still finding when it comes to employing apprentices in their dealerships. However much there may be a desire to take on recruits, either there's a struggle to find interested parties, or if some are taken on, training options in certain parts of the country are limited.

It's a problem which the industry has discussed for many years – perhaps now with an aging workforce, it's a matter which is coming into even sharper focus?



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INDUSTRY



TORO TO BUY VENTRAC MAKER

Agreement to acquire Venture Products, Inc

It was announced recently that The Toro Company has entered into an agreement to acquire the privately-held Venture Products, Inc, the manufacturer of Ventrac-branded products.

In an official statement released by Toro the company said the transaction is subject to regulatory approvals and other customary closing conditions, and is currently anticipated to close before the end of The Toro Company's fiscal 2020 second quarter.

In the UK Ventrac machines are distributed by Price Turfcare and the company was exhibiting at the BTME exhibition in Harrogate the week the news broke. Owner of Price Turfcare, Rupert Price told *Service Dealer* that it was "business as usual" with the company continuing its policy of building a UK dealer network for the machines. You can read a full interview with Rupert Price, starting on page 38 of this issue.

Based in Orrville, Ohio, Ventrac produces articulating turf, landscape, and snow and ice management equipment for the grounds, landscape contractor, golf, municipal and rural acreage markets.

Richard M Olson, The Toro Company's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, said, "This acquisition supports our growth strategy in the professional market with the addition of a strong brand and expanded product offering to customers in the turf, landscape, and snow and ice maintenance categories. We have long respected and admired the Ventrac team, and we look forward to helping them grow on the successful foundation they have built in Orrville, Ohio."

Dallas Steiner, Chief Executive Officer of Venture Products, Inc said, "The Toro Company is committed to a culture that aligns with our employee values, has a rich history of success in the marketplace, and a proven track record of growing their brands. By joining with The Toro Company, it allows us to continue to serve our customers with authentic experiences and trusted products."

The official statement said Toro will purchase Venture Products for \$167.5 million in cash, subject to certain adjustments. The Toro Company said it expects to finance the transaction by borrowing under its existing revolving credit facility.

PEOPLE

KATE JOINS THE TEAM

New Account Manager at TAP

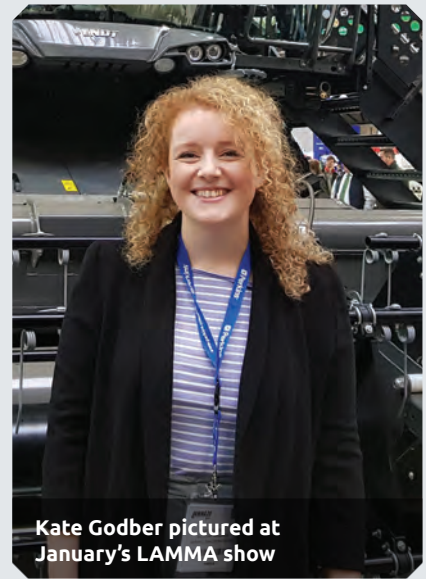
The Ad Plain, which owns *Service Dealer*, is pleased to announce Kate Godber has joined the team as an Account Manager and will be working closely with the *Service Dealer* and TurfPro websites, the Conference, Garden Trader and the launch of My Mower Specialist in the US this spring.

Kate joins from the British Independent Retailers Association (Bira), which owns BAGMA, where

she held the role of Senior Communications and PR Officer. There she oversaw the publishing arm of the business, writing for two membership magazines, arranging interviews and regularly communicating with members.

Duncan Murray-Clarke, MD of The Ad Plain said, "We're delighted that Kate has joined our team. Readers will get to know her through her management of the Garden Trader website, where key, among her many duties is her dealer liaison role. She will also be closely involved across both *Service Dealer* and TurfPro and in the organising of our Conference. In addition, Kate will play an important role in our exciting launch of our US version of Garden Trader, called My Mower Specialist, this spring, acting as UK liaison with the American team."

Kate said, "I'm extremely excited to have joined the great team at The Ad



Kate Godber pictured at January's LAMMA show

Plain and to be working with them to promote the Garden Trader website. I look forward to catching up with dealers on the various areas of the business I'm involved with and I'm thrilled to have started here at such an exciting time, especially with the launch of My Mower Specialist."

DEALERS

HORSCH APPOINTS CARRS BILLINGTON

For Northern England and South Western Scotland

Horsch will be partnering with Carrs Billington Agriculture to provide its full range of cultivators, drills and sprayers to customers in northern England and south-western Scotland.

Machinery Sales Director Ian Gate said, "This is a great franchise for Carrs Billington. It's a great fit with our tractor and grassland franchises, and we look

forward to a long and successful partnership with them."

Horsch machinery will be available from the six Carrs Billington machinery depots at Annan, Barnard Castle, Carlisle, Hexham, Morpeth and Penrith, with service and support from each depot.

Stephen Burcham, General Manager at Horsch UK said, "Carrs Billington has a reputation for excellent customer service and we're delighted to be partnering with them. Our latest range of machinery, including the Hybrid Farming system, enables our customers to meet farming challenges and be more productive. Partnering with Carrs Billington will allow us to effectively deliver those benefits to customers."



PEOPLE

SENIOR APPOINTMENT FOR HUSQVARNA GROUP

New President & CEO



Henric Andersson

The board of directors of Husqvarna AB has appointed Henric Andersson to succeed Kai Wörn as the President and CEO of the Husqvarna Group, effective as of 2 April, following the closing of the 2020 AGM.

Kai Wörn will retire from his role as CEO and Board Member from that date, but will continue as a senior adviser to the Board during 2020.

Tom Johnstone, Chairman of Husqvarna AB said, "I'm delighted that the new President and CEO of Husqvarna Group, Henric Andersson, has been developed within the Group, where he has worked for the last 22 years. Henric is a strong and well-appreciated leader with a very good business and technology focus. He has a very broad experience within the Group having worked in various roles in Commercial Lawn and Garden, the Construction Division and for Group Technology before taking up the role as President of the Construction Division in 2015."

Henric Andersson is currently

President of the Construction Division of Husqvarna and has been a member of Group Management since 2012. He was born in 1973 and has a Master of Science degree in Industrial Engineering and Management from Linköping Institute of Technology.

Kai Wörn, the outgoing President and CEO, said, "I'm proud of what we have achieved during these years in respect of strengthening our competitiveness, especially in areas such as robotics, the petrol-to-battery transition, and technology including connected solutions such as Smart Garden. We have also made important transformative changes in the organisation to increase focus on our end-customers and core brands, achieved through the divisional structure."

DEALERS

TH WHITE RETAINS TOP HAY & FORAGE DEALER TITLE

Wins at New Holland's awards

TH White Agriculture has been named New Holland Hay and Forage Dealer of the Year for the second year in a row, which the dealership says reflects its exceptional performance in baler and forage harvester sales.

The award was announced at the New Holland Dealer Conference, held at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford, on 14 January.

The team at TH White received a number of mentions throughout the New Holland conference commentary. They were positioned

third for overall Dealer Service performance throughout 2019 and fourth in the Dealer of the Year performance league tables. But most notably, three of the top 10 tractor sales representatives in the UK were selling from TH White: Ben Linton, Andy Taylor and Ryan Lanfear.

Commenting on the award and performance, Agricultural Director David Rapkins said, "I'm thrilled with our team's performance. Since joining TH White I've been inspired by the passion and commitment demonstrated by our high-calibre



Adrian Lovegrove, TH White's Operations Director

staff. Their knowledge and dedication to the industry is second to none and this award validates that."

New Holland Business Director UK and Republic of Ireland, Pat Smith, said, "I'm delighted to have made this award to TH White for two consecutive years. It's a very well-deserved recognition of top performance and delivery of New Holland targets."

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DEALERS



Thomas Sherriff & Co Ltd Managing Director Colin Weatherhead (far right) with Sherriff Cramlington Outlet Manager Eric Pattinson (far left) and some of the team at the dealership's Northumberland premises

SHERRIFF ACQUIRES GREENLAY

Dealership takes trading outlets to seven

John Deere agricultural and turf dealer Thomas Sherriff & Co Ltd, whose headquarters are based at Haddington in East Lothian, has bought the professional turf business of Greenlay Ltd in Cramlington, South Northumberland.

This development extends the dealership's trading area and takes to seven the total number of Sherriff outlets serving customers from the River Forth in Scotland, down through the Borders to Durham in North-East England and reaching out West to the Cumbrian border.

Sherriff's head office site at Backburn in Haddington, which replaced the previous facility in Dunbar at the beginning of 2017, brought both the dealership's agricultural and turf divisions under the same roof for the first time. The other Sherriff outlets are based at Alnwick, Coldstream, Hexham, Jedburgh and Stow.

All 17 Greenlay employees have transferred to the renamed Sherriff Cramlington business, with Outlet Manager Eric Pattinson continuing to lead the dealership's experienced sales, service and parts team.

"Originally founded by David Lowes and his wife Judith in 1972, before becoming John Deere Ltd's first

professional groundscape dealer in 1986, Greenlay is a well-established, successful family business," said John Deere Limited Division Sales Manager Chris Meacock. "We would like to thank the Lowes family and especially Geoff Lowes for their commitment to John Deere over the past 33 years – it's great to see this positive outcome for his team."

Sherriff Managing Director Colin Weatherhead said: "This is a key addition to our business and a great fit for our organisation. Following the development of our head office at Haddington as part of our overall expansion and restructuring plans, this latest acquisition represents another considerable investment in our business, allowing us to expand our geographical presence in the North-East of England and the Durham area.

"Most importantly, this means that we will now be serving our total John Deere area of responsibility with both agricultural and turf equipment, from the Forth to Teesside and out to the Cumbrian border. It ensures that we can maintain the highest level of support to our customers in both the important business sectors of agricultural and professional turf equipment sales and service."

PEOPLE

ISEKI UK & IRELAND APPOINTS

Alan Prickett joins

Iseki UK & Ireland has announced that Alan Prickett has joined its growing team in the role of Business Development Manager, responsible for dealers in the central band of the UK, along with key and national account sales.

Alan is a well-known figure in the industry, having previously worked for many years at Ransomes Jacobsen Ltd. Prior to leaving there in July 2019, he held positions ranging from Regional Sales Manager to Managing Director.

In Alan's early career he studied agricultural engineering in Oxfordshire, before commencing a career in the professional turf industry from 1981, initially working for professional machinery dealerships in the midlands, rising to the level of sales management and key accounts.

Commenting on the appointment Iseki UK & Ireland MD David Withers said, "Alan will be a great asset to the team at Iseki, he will be looking to further drive market share gains in the compact tractor and collecting mower categories where Iseki excels."

Iseki UK & Ireland is the distributor of Iseki compact tractors and mowers for UK, Ireland, Iceland, the Middle East, South Africa and Russia.



David Withers and Alan Prickett

KUBOTA UNVEILS DREAM TRACTOR

Fully autonomous concept

Kubota has unveiled a concept tractor, equipped with artificial intelligence and electrification technology, at a product exhibition held in Japan, representing what the manufacturer sees as the future of farming.

Known as the X tractor – cross tractor, the model was on show at an event in Kyoto City on 15-16 January, held to commemorate the 130th anniversary of the company's founding.

The company said it intends to continue developing labour-saving technologies such as this “dream tractor” in order to address the challenges for Japanese agriculture, which include the aging of farmers and labour shortage.

Key features of the concept tractor include completely unmanned operation, driven by artificial intelligence (AI).

Based on various data such as weather information and growth rates, Kubota says AI chooses the appropriate operation and makes actions timely. The goal is to achieve a completely autonomous operation.

The environmental data obtained by tractors in operation can be automatically shared with other

machines at site to realise centrally-managed efficient operation.

Full electrification by a combination of lithium-ion batteries and solar batteries will achieve an environmentally-friendly farm operation.

The company also said the four-wheeled crawler can achieve stable autonomous driving, even on wet paddies and uneven terrains.

The four-wheeled crawler changes its shape to maintain the tractor height at the optimal level, thus being able to perform in various conditions. For conditions which demand high traction, the contact area with the ground would be increased by lowering the tractor height in order to lower its center of gravity. Alternatively, when operating above crops for their management, clearance from the ground could be adjusted by increasing the tractor height.

The in-wheel motor makes it possible to arbitrarily change the rotation speed of the four crawlers (front, rear, right, and left) to achieve a small turning radius for autonomous operation on various types of land.



EXHIBITIONS



OPEI TO OWN GIE+EXPO OUTRIGHT

Change to be implemented by 2022

Following the largest GIE+EXPO ever in 2019, the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) has announced that in 2022 it will move into 100% ownership of the Louisville, USA-based trade show.

Since 2007, GIE+EXPO has been owned by three partners: the OPEI (the majority and managing partner); the NALP (National Association of Landscape Professionals); and the PGMS (Professional Grounds Management Society).

"GIE+EXPO has had an extraordinarily strong run since 2010, posting records in attendance and booth space. Last year's show was the biggest ever, setting record attendance levels," said Kris Kiser,

President of OPEI and Managing Director of GIE+EXPO.

"With this change in ownership structure of the show, OPEI will own the show in its entirety.

"We'll continue to work with our landscape industry partners to provide attendees with training and other programmatic elements at the Kentucky Exposition Center. We look forward to the continued evolution and dynamic growth of GIE+EXPO in Louisville in the future."

2019 was the sixth record-breaking year in a row for GIE+EXPO. The show hosted more than 1,000 exhibitors and more than 20 acres of outdoor demonstration area. This year's show is set for 21-23 October.

You can read more about the show in the *Special Report* included with this issue.



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INDUSTRY

JOHN DEERE TOPS THE 2018 CHARTS

Market shares announced after year delay



The AEA has announced the market share data for 2018 tractor registrations.

The total number of tractors registered in 2018 was 13,795, including both agricultural tractors (over 50hp) and compact tractors (50hp and below).

The information below shows the number of machines and market share recorded during that year by brand. As always, data is released after a one-year delay due to competition law restrictions; figures for 2019 are due to be published in early 2021.

The leading brand in 2018 once again proved to be John Deere, with its percentage market share increasing from the previous year's 28.4% to 31.9% in 2018.

The most significant change in positions in the list from the previous year is that CNH and AGCO swapped places. CNH increased its market share from 23.3% to 29.2%, moving itself up into second place, leapfrogging AGCO whose share slipped from 26.2% in 2017 to 21.3% in 2018.

All other companies on the below list are in the same position they were a year previously, except for Same Deutz-Fahr moving ahead of Agri-Argo.

The market share data for 2017 was:

Units sold	Market share %	Brand
4,405	31.9%	JOHN DEERE
4,032	29.2%	CNH (inc Case IH and New Holland)
2,940	21.3%	AGCO (inc MF, Fendt, and Valtra)
746	5.4%	KUBOTA
528	3.8%	CLAAS
302	2.2%	JCB
209	1.5%	SAME DEUTZ FAHR
131	0.9%	AGRI-ARGO (inc McCormick, Landini)
36	0.3%	ZETOR
466	3.4%	sold by others

DEALERS



GRASSHOPPER EXPANDS DEALER NETWORK

Four new dealers appointed

Scamblers has announced that the Grasshopper network has expanded with a further four dealerships appointed.

Newly joining the network are: Oakes Bros covering Berkshire, Hampshire, Wiltshire and West Sussex; Abrey Agricultural Ltd covering Essex; Peninsula Mowers covering Northern Ireland; and RTC Groundcare Ltd covering North-West Cambridgeshire.

Ed Scambler MD, told *Service Dealer*, "We at Scamblers are extremely pleased to have taken on these extra outlets.

"Oakes are a great addition to our network with their four depots and the way they approach their business with a customer service focus, along with quality products. They are run in a professional manner with a family business ethos.

"Peninsula Mowers are a small but very active company we first met at Saltex. Both Sybil and Neville Stewart have a great understanding of customer care and back-up. Sybil can offer training on machinery and Neville and his team of experienced mechanics are looking into expanding into selling and maintaining more professional machinery.

"Toby of Abrey Agricultural has been around the trade for a number of years and has built up a loyal customer base, but also saw the Grasshopper as a machine that could compliment his portfolio for commercial customers."

This year sees the launch of the new 400D for Grasshopper (pictured) and Ed said they are still actively looking for more dealers.



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INDUSTRY

HUSQVARNA CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF ROBOTIC MOWING

Special edition Automower released

To highlight 25 years in the robotic mower sector, Husqvarna has released a special limited-edition anniversary version of its Automower 315X. Launched in February, it boasts a unique colour.

Sofia Axelsson, Vice President, Husqvarna Division Consumer Unit, said, "We're very proud to have developed the category to reach this business milestone and to release a limited edition 315X to mark the occasion. With Automower we've been determined to continuously innovate our solutions in order to lead the category forward and we're excited about what the future holds for robotic mowing."

In 1995, the company took the first step into a new product segment with the launch of the world's first commercial robotic lawn mower, the Husqvarna Solar mower.

Three years after the launch of the Solar, the company



released its first generation of Automower, a robotic mower which returned to a grid-connected charger to recharge its battery.

The second generation was introduced in 2003. This platform featured a new design and a number of improvements. Later, other models based on this platform were launched. For example, a mower that could manage lawns up to 6,000m² and a hybrid mower with both solar cells and a battery.

The third generation Automower platform arrived in 2011. The first models focused on small lawns and compact sizes. Later came higher-capacity mowers equipped with connectivity. Five years later, 430X and 450X models were introduced, both equipped with the X-line feature package.

INDUSTRY

SPALDINGS TO DISTRIBUTE GENUINE GRIMME PARTS

In parallel with dealers throughout the UK and Ireland

Spaldings has announced that it will distribute original replacement parts for Grimme potato and root crop machinery throughout the UK and Ireland, saying it is to "complement the service provided by Grimme's established dealer networks".

Described as a "strategic collaboration", Spaldings said the move marks a new approach for both companies as machinery manufacturers face increasing competition for their parts business from makers of non-genuine alternatives.

Announcing details at the company's dealer conference, Patrick Graf Grote, Grimme UK Managing Director, said, "Over the years, Grimme dealers have done a great job of supporting our customers in all areas, in particular with after-sales support and especially in meeting peak seasonal demand for fast-moving items like wearing parts.

"This great service will continue to grow throughout our dealer network and will be enhanced through our agreement with Spaldings because it will extend our parts



Steve Constable, Spaldings MD (left) with Patrick Graf Grote, Grimme UK MD

distribution reach to areas of the UK and Ireland beyond our existing network."

For Spaldings, having supplied all makes of after-market alternatives for many years, this first parts distribution deal with a machine manufacturer marks a change of approach.

"Our experience has shown that for Grimme machines, the only realistic option to maintain reliability and efficient operation is to use genuine parts," said Spaldings Managing Director Steve Constable.

"We're not going up against Grimme dealers but complementing their service, supplying original products to customers who would normally choose the grey import route, so they benefit from the best-quality parts backed by first-class technical knowledge and service."

The new agreement covers all types of replacement parts for Grimme seedbed preparation equipment, such as ridgers and stone/clod separators, planters, harvesters and handling equipment.

DEALERS



Paul Vincent receives the award from Rob Wilkins of Kubota on behalf of the Vincent Tractors & Plant team

VINCENT TRACTORS AWARDED

Attains Gold Plus status

Vincent Tractors & Plant has been awarded Gold Plus for Kubota Dealer Service Excellence.

Now in its 53rd year in business, the family-owned machinery dealer with branches in Fraddon, Holsworthy and Smithaleigh, near Ivybridge, is the only full-line dealership in the country to achieve this status.

The awards, which are assessed and presented every two years by Kubota, are based on dealer equipment, facilities, commitment to training and, most importantly, customer service.

The Kubota customer satisfaction survey is submitted to customers after every product sold and is used to rate the service department of every Kubota dealer.

"This fantastic achievement reflects our team's hard work and 'customer first' commitment," remarked Paul Vincent,

Vincent Tractors & Plant Managing Director.

"I would like to thank all the team at Vincent Tractors & Plant for their diligence and dedication. The industry is going through tremendous change and we are working hard to innovate to ensure we can meet and exceed our customers' requirements and expectations.

"It's been a real team effort across all three depots to achieve this level of service!"

Rob Wilkins, Kubota's Regional Service Manager, remarked, "I've been working with Vincent's for a number of years now and in the last five years they have raised the bar with regards to the level of service they offer to their customers as well as their commitment to their own team. We've had our challenges, but we've worked together to resolve them."

INDUSTRY



Des Boyd, Sales Director of Kramp UK (2nd from right) presents Winchester Garden Machinery with their Overall Dealer of the Year Award at 2019's Service Dealer Awards

KRAMP UK RETURN AS PRINCIPAL SPONSOR

Of 2020's Service Dealer Conference & Awards

Returning to the Double Tree by Hilton Oxford Belfry this November, the Service Dealer Conference & Awards will once again benefit from Kramp UK as Principal Sponsor. The date of this year's event has been confirmed as Thursday November 19th 2020.

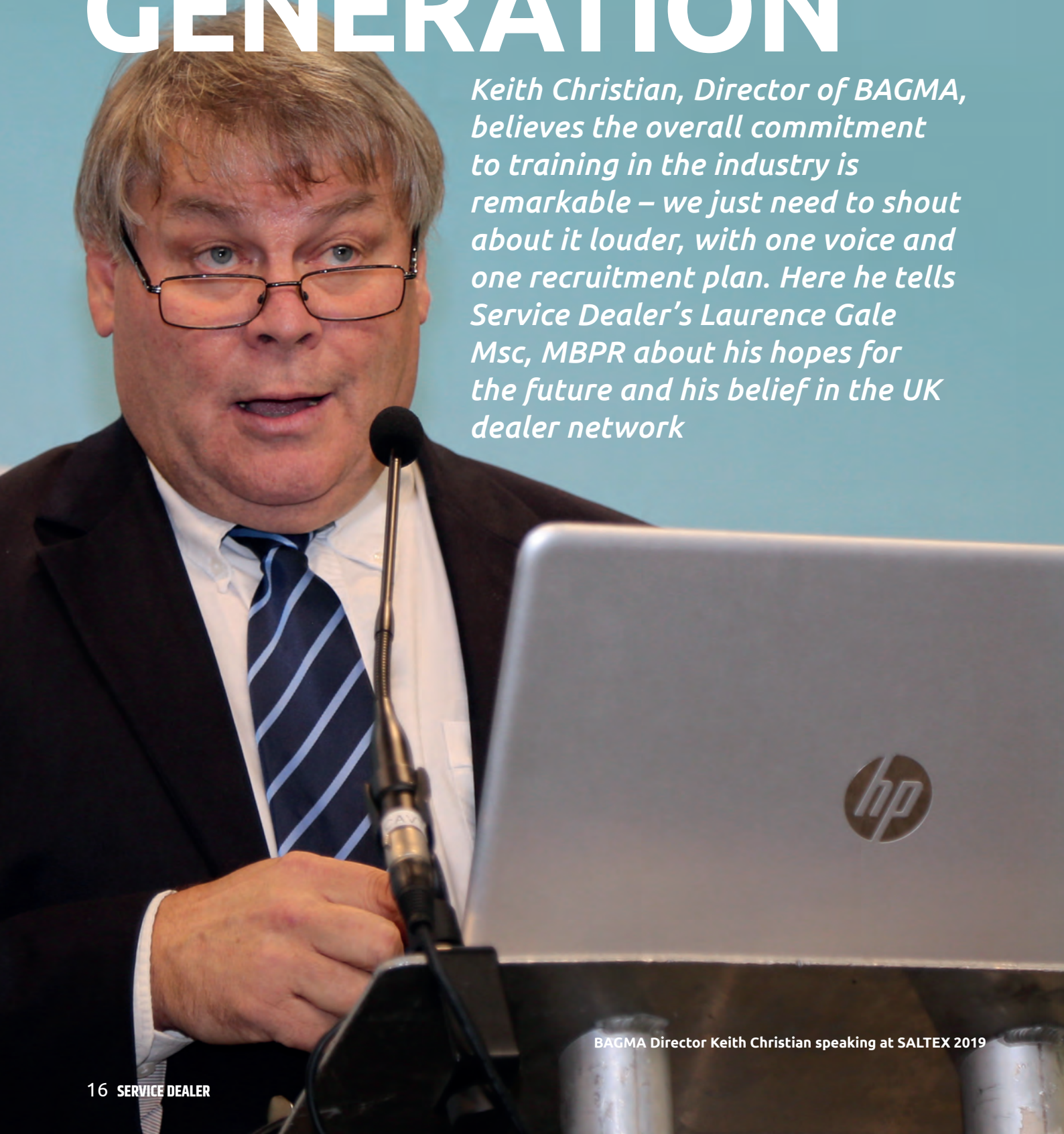
Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke said, "We have established a fabulous relationship with Kramp who have supported our Conference and Awards on five previous occasions, and we couldn't be more pleased that they are returning in November - for what is lining up to be another very valuable day."

Des Boyd, sales director at Kramp UK said the company was again very pleased to be sponsoring an event designed specifically for all members of the independent dealer sector. He said, "We believe the Service Dealer Conference offers great benefits to dealers, not only in the technical side of the presentations which take place, but also in the networking opportunities that it affords. The value of dealers sharing ideas and challenges with one another can't be underestimated."

More details about this year's Service Dealer Conference & Awards will be announced in due course.

RECRUITING THE NEXT GENERATION

Keith Christian, Director of BAGMA, believes the overall commitment to training in the industry is remarkable – we just need to shout about it louder, with one voice and one recruitment plan. Here he tells Service Dealer's Laurence Gale Msc, MBPR about his hopes for the future and his belief in the UK dealer network



BAGMA Director Keith Christian speaking at SALTEX 2019

A familiar figure to dealers across the country, Keith Christian is the Director of The British Agricultural and Garden Machinery Association (BAGMA) which supports thousands of independent agricultural, garden and grounds care machinery dealers across the UK. BAGMA is a specialist division of the British Independent Retailers Association (Bira).

BAGMA's heritage goes back to its 1917 inception as the National Association of Agricultural Engineers and Implement Dealers, becoming BAGMA in 1972. BAGMA represents the interests of its members and the industry as a whole by campaigning to improve the trading conditions for dealers within the UK by working together with other industry partners and various government departments.

The Land-based Engineering Sector has over 3,000 dealers with in excess of 25,000 staff in an industry sector that is worth more than £4 billion a year.

One of the principal roles that BAGMA has performed over the years, and one which Keith himself views as one of the most important the Association is involved with, is ensuring that new people are drawn into careers within the land-based industry sector. Keith believes that new recruits should have access to training and apprentice programs to ensure they are fully equipped to meet the developing technology that our industry benefits from.

To this end BAGMA works with industry and the education system to ensure that there is always new talent entering our sector and that the existing talent has a clear career pathway to follow.

I caught up with Keith recently to discuss the industry and what he believes it needs to do in order to attract and retain fresh blood.

Service Dealer: What are your responsibilities at BAGMA?

Keith Christian: Since May 2017 I have been the Director of BAGMA, responsible for all things to do with BAGMA and its staff. We are a division within Bira, the British Independent Retailers Association. I deal with day-to-day matters, work with other associations and industry partners, work with our marketing and membership departments and with our members and non-members.

SD: What's your background in the industry?

KC: I originally started in the industry with garden machinery retailer H Burlingham. I then moved to Spear and Jackson, selling Stiga and then started Claymore Grass machinery for the Reekie Group in Scotland. I then ran Claymore as an importer and distributor to the garden machinery and ground care dealer industry for 23 years before moving to my current role at BAGMA.

SD: How would you say the industry has changed in the past 20 years?

KC: I started before the internet came into being so in that respect, massively, plus therefore all the issues to do with internet selling and information overload didn't exist, as well as the use of social media.

People have changed but many I know and have dealt with are still around and their values still shine through. We also still have an industry made up of privately owned, independent businesses, and long may that continue.

Distribution has changed in those years though, with dealers becoming importers and distributors as well as retailers and suppliers becoming multi-channel. Fortunately, we still have a solid, dedicated dealer base offering fantastic service, repair and parts support.

Technology has also moved on of course, providing robotic mowers and such. We are also seeing a trend to going back to battery systems but with lighter, better power packs instead of heavy car batteries.

SD: What are your concerns regarding the future of the industry?

KC: I have different concerns for the different industry sectors. Consolidation is a concern in creating larger dealerships that may reduce variety and flexibility with more supplier control. Margin erosion and the issues created by internet selling is a concern. And very importantly, succession in ownership and on the service side of the industry, where newcomers are not enough to replace the outgoing technicians.

SD: Are we getting enough young people choosing to enter our industry sectors?

KC: The short answer is no – and it's an issue the whole of the industry, including all sectors, needs to address together.



SD: How do you believe we should be encouraging fresh blood to join?

KC: This is a big subject that needs an industry solution.

We have a fantastic industry, across all sectors, with some fabulous career opportunities which deals in some very advanced technologies. We just don't seem to do enough to tell people about it and this is stifling recruitment.

We need to shout about the landbased engineering sector and its cutting-edge technology and opportunities – but we have to do it as a whole, with one voice and one recruitment plan, not the fragmented way we have been up until now. We need to challenge ourselves to make the LBE sector better known to young people and those looking for careers.

SD: Do you think the colleges need to work more closely with our businesses?

KC: I think it needs to be a two-way street with industry also working with colleges to support them and let them know what the industry wants both locally and nationally. In my view the bigger problem is that recruitment into the industry is poor so numbers are getting too low for colleges to be interested. Coupled with that is very poor funding from government which means trainers or lecturers are poorly paid and not so easily replaced. It therefore becomes less attractive for training providers to offer what is needed.

We all try but there needs to be a bigger carrot at the end of it. Better links between industry and the colleges would be great, but how to do it is an issue. It needs funding and dedicated people to make it work.

SD: What skills do we need to be teaching the new generation joining our industry?

KC: The overall commitment to training in the industry is remarkable. For technicians all the basic skills need to be taught and the current apprentice programmes

go a long way to do this with a very high standard. Soft skills are really important and basic education levels with maths and English are a must.

Us older guys and gals in the industry need to be mindful of the needs of the younger generations and the up and coming 'millennials' who have new skills with smart phones, social media, instant information access and a whole raft of things – skills which perhaps us 'baby boomers' are slower to latch on to.

We heard the expression at the most recent *Service Dealer Conference*, 'reverse mentoring', where the youngsters should be teaching the older generation a few skills – and that sounds like a great concept to me.

SD: Are the currently available educational qualifications relevant to the needs of our businesses?

KC: Industry apprenticeships are very relevant and have had a lot of time and money spent on them by industry groups such as LE-TEC who are now working on the newer Technical Level Qualifications. Soft skills training, degree apprenticeships and a raft of academic business qualifications exist.

SD: Do you think we need the trade bodies such as IOG, BIGGA, BASIS, RHS and others working more in partnership with the colleges to address the problems of recruitment?

KC: Everyone in the landbased engineering sector needs to work together to improve the industry's visibility and careers opportunities. Crucially this needs to be done with one voice and one campaign. We must work together to compete for new young people with the other engineering industries.

SD: Do you think there should be more cohesion between the manufacturers themselves to ensure we can find and retain the next generation of recruits?

KC: The manufacturers who run training and apprentice



Everyone in the landbased engineering sector needs to work together to improve the industry's visibility and careers opportunities, says Keith Christian



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schemes are probably the glue that keeps the industry from falling apart when it comes to training and the quality of training. Behind the scenes at this level the cohesion does exist, but it usually benefits the bigger dealers who have the size of business that can support trainees.

The industry needs to make an effort to help support the SMEs who need trainees and apprentices but may struggle financially or practically to support them.

SD: Do you have fears for the future of the industry?

KC: No I don't. I have been in the industry long enough to know how resilient and innovative it is through good times and bad. My view is that independent dealers offer an incredible service and enough diversity to be an essential part of the distribution channel and that manufacturers need the dealer network to support them and the customers.

There are and will be challenges, and whilst they may be different than they were 100 years ago, they will be overcome and the industry will benefit from it.

I was having a conversation with a sales manager from a large dealership at a SALTEX show many years ago and we were rambling on about low margins and the effort dealers needed to put into selling and supporting equipment. He stood to his full height, puffed out his rather skinny chest and very loudly and proudly said: "We are good at what we do and we should be proud of it and we should charge properly for it". You needed to be there, but I have never forgotten how and what he said.

SD: What bright spots are you seeing which give you hope for the future?

KC: Innovation, diversity, recruitment when we get our act together, sensible margin retention and profitability.

There were 20 original companies that were at the first meeting in London in 1917 when the original BAGMA trade association was set up at the request of the government to ensure the fair distribution of tractors coming from America for the mechanisation of farming at the end of the war. Six of those companies are still BAGMA members today. The oldest is now over 200 years old, is still trading and is still family owned.

The bright spots that give hope for the future are the longevity and tenacity of the dealer network in the UK and around the world.

I truly believe 'landbased engineering is the best career on Earth'.

SD: Thank you.



Keith at the 2019 Service Dealer Conference with BAGMA colleagues Brian Sangster and Richard Jenkins



Keith believes the industry needs to work together to encourage more young people to join our sectors

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PICKING A PARTNER

Choosing a new supplier to fill a key gap in a dealership's portfolio is no easy task. MARTIN RICKATSON talks to Oxon-based Turney Group about how it signed up to sell, service and support Can-Am ATV and UTV vehicles, and how the agreement is working two years on

Attracting customers from across agriculture and into areas including the game-keeping, equestrian and estate maintenance sectors and beyond, the all-terrain vehicle/utility vehicle (ATV/UTV) sector has become one in which most rurally-based dealers need a presence if they are to compete for business where potential customers are seeking the ability to move themselves and light loads quickly, quietly and lightly from place to place.

When Oxon/Bucks-based agricultural and grounds care dealer Turney Group sought out a new

ATV/UTV franchise back in 2017, a decision based in part on territory conflicts following branch network restructuring, it based its choice not just on a natural gap in the maker's coverage area, but on product range, build quality, existing customer feedback and dealer return, says Dan Coates, the business's agricultural sales manager.

"While we have strong compact tractor offerings from Iseki and New Holland, this is a different market from the ATV/UTV sector with little overlap. We've a good local market for ATV business, particularly in the livestock and



Jeremy Turney, Turney Group MD (right), with agricultural sales manager Dan Coates

arable farm, smallholding, gamekeeper and grounds care sectors, and prior to the consolidation a few years ago of the Turney business, when we refocused on our larger branches, we had another ATV franchise,” explains Dan.

“However, our new branch coverage structure made continuing with that unworkable. In addition, we had a few other issues with our previous supplier, so a combination of these factors meant we wanted a change of product, and something different that would mean we would have a strong exclusive coverage area.”

Staff at Turney Group, which operates Turney Agriculture, Turney Groundcare and Turney Garden Machinery businesses, studied the products from key suppliers at LAMMA 2017, following up with internet research to see what people were saying about different makes.

“At the show, the Can-Am models we saw seemed well-built, and it was a name that kept coming up for good heavy-duty machines. We were also attracted by the fact that they offered an established, competitively-priced side-by-side UTV, something which wasn’t in our previous supplier’s range,” says Dan.

“We then talked to existing customers, who seemed happy with the products, and we could see a trend to Can-Am and the way it appeared to be increasingly regarded as a premium brand to which customers aspired. Few people appeared to get out of them in a hurry, and they seemed to hold their value – the market

didn’t appear flooded with second-hand machines at knock-down prices.

“One of the unique features that appealed was Can-Am’s pioneering of ABS braking in ATVs and UTVs. Without it, machines are limited to 38mph on the road. As customers increasingly want to minimise travelling time between jobs, it has to be part of the future of these machines, just as tractors have become faster. The option costs only a couple of hundred pounds, and Can-Am offers a speed limiting key that can be used where younger and less experienced riders are to be using the machine. It offers a unique selling point that no-one else in the industry currently offers.

“The next step was to examine the dealer package offered by BRP (formerly Bombardier Recreational Products), the Canadian Can-Am parent company, including wholesale prices, parts and service back-up and warranty.

“With Can-Am, manufacturer service is undoubtedly different as it’s centralised at its European HQ in Belgium. But although we were slightly wary of this when we subsequently signed a dealership agreement, it does work well – we are now well used to it. There are regularly Can-Am people in the UK alongside the regional sales team based here, and BRP provides good training courses. Some of these are online based with videos, questionnaires and assessments, and they work well.

“The firm has been very good at working with us to



All branches hold stock and spares, but the full Can-Am display area is at Turney’s Weston-on-the-Green grounds care depot

“PEOPLE ARE DOING MORE RESEARCH THESE DAYS, ESPECIALLY ONLINE, AND NOT JUST BUYING WHAT THEY’VE ALWAYS BOUGHT”

solve any problems that have arisen, or reimburse us and the customer in the rare case it’s been necessary. Sometimes there’s the odd delay in a part coming from Europe, but we know what common spares we need to carry. We have engineers trained on the products, and three have attended BRP’s Rotax engine factory in Austria.”

There were other factors in the maker’s favour, including its focus on petrol power and the fact that it

produces one of the few ranges fully homologated from the factory for on-road use, points out Dan.

“While some agricultural users prefer diesel power, particularly with UTVs, customers today want quick, comfortable and quiet machines, and that means petrol. The lack of a diesel in Can-Am’s UTV range doesn’t seem to have affected us. If you want to do more than a motorised wheelbarrow, then you need petrol in a utility vehicle when applying slug pellets or moving around livestock, for example. And away from agriculture, customers working in urban environments also often prefer petrol vehicles for their quieter operation, while diesel has come under scrutiny for emissions levels.”

Dealer appeal

Paul Wood, BRP’s Can-Am network development manager UK and Ireland, says the fact that Turney Group was in a prime non-covered area, with no competing franchises, meant it was an ideal candidate to focus solely on the brand’s growth across its territory.

“It’s an established business that’s well known, financially stable and with a professional, experienced team that can only help to grow the Can-Am brand. The agreement between us has already led to increased sales avenues and opportunities, and we’d like to find similar dealers to fill open points in the UK and Ireland.”

Since starting as a Can-Am dealer in mid-2017, the switch appears to be going well for Turney, with dealer push being matched by customer pull, reckons Dan.

“Both ATVs and UTVs sold well in our first full year, and we retailed over 20 of each. We’ve increasingly found that people are making enquiries from a wide area after researching the brand, visiting the Can-Am website and looking up their dealer. People are doing



Leisure products are a sideline to Turney Group’s professional ATV business, but the firm does hold leisure ATVs in stock and supplies service and spares

more research these days, especially online, and not just buying what they've always bought.

"This customer pull wasn't something that happened before and it's clear that the name is growing in its prominence and reputation for durability and build quality.

"Trade-ins have come mainly from our own previously-retailed machines from our former ATV franchise, but we've also increasingly been selling to people getting into ATVs or UTVs for the first time. Additionally, more people are looking at moving from ATVs to UTVs, especially as power and speed have improved.

"While our mainline farm machinery purchases tend to be rigidly planned by customers, this type of vehicle is often an impulse purchase, with buyers deciding their machine is getting a bit tired and almost on impulse deciding to enquire about a replacement. While we have dedicated showroom displays for the products, the best way to get customers to consider a machine is to take it to them on a trailer and let them use it for a couple of days.

"It's an easier trade than bigger-ticket items like tractors and combines, with finance rarely requested. But we have a wide variety of buyers, with everything from large farming estates buying multiple machines to single machine users. We are also Logic and Wessex dealers, so can provide all the attachments customers should need."

Another factor in the decision to sign with Can-Am was the standard specification of its machines, says Dan.

"In the commercial business sector, customers don't want to spend on accessories. They buy a machine to do a job. In UTVs, most want a windscreen, a roof, and some will perhaps invest in a full cab, perhaps with doors, but predominantly that's all they require. Few want to add fancy accessories. A ball hitch and the road-legal kit option are now specified on pretty much every machine we sell. That said, most buyers do specify the Pro ATV models with premium spec, including seat covers and heavier-duty suspension. But for customers such as horse owners a standard ATV is usually more than adequate for their needs."

The registered location for the Can-Am agency is Turney's Weston-on-the-Green grounds care depot, not far from its Middleton Stoney agricultural HQ, with service engineers there having the strongest skills and experience with small petrol engines. But the ag and ground care teams work well alongside each other on the product, says Dan.

"Groundcare is usually quiet in summer when people are using equipment, and busy in winter when kit comes in for servicing. The opposite tends to be true on the ag side, so the two balance well. In sales terms, our ag sales representatives sell the most ATVs and UTVs, but they are dealt with from the grounds care depot. We also have an agricultural satellite depot in Bucks, at Princes



Turney Group retains a strong compact tractor business, supported by Iseki and New Holland, alongside its Can-Am ATV offering

DEALER PROFILE

Risborough, where we also sell and service the machines. Our Can-Am area is predominantly Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and a good chunk of Northants, but we also have customers in counties bordering these areas.”

Market traction

Dan believes there are a number of factors which have helped the new franchise gain traction in a market dominated by the big four Japanese makers.

“We can compete – quite spectacularly sometimes – on price and specification. We’re able to price machines often £800 to £900 cheaper than a comparable model from one of the bigger names, without cutting margins. Wholesale pricing is such that it still allows us to operate profitably.

“Can-Am offers a two-year warranty comparable with other makes, and we service on-site where possible, or can collect if a machine needs to come to us.

We place emphasis on supporting customers who may rely on their machine for livestock or field work. There are few specialist ATV dealers in this area, and unlike non-ag specialists who commonly open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday, we understand our customers don’t work regular hours, and we are open on Saturday mornings, and until 7pm most days through harvest.”

Turney holds a stock of around a dozen UTVs and ATVs, explains Dan, with a Traxter UTV and an Outlander ATV demonstrator.

“Our stock ATVs are the 450cc and 570cc models, as they tend to be our best sellers. Prospective customers often try the 450 and then the 570, which has a V-Twin engine, and are often then convinced to invest in the latter. If someone wants to see something different, such as the Can-Am Outlander 650 or 1,000cc ATV models, then we can get one in. Leisure is very much a sideline to

our professional ATV business, but we do get service calls from leisure ATV owners, and don’t turn away these, or the opportunity for new sales – we hold a couple of leisure ATVs in stock.

“Whoever the customer, we like to sell a package of machine and any accessories or attachments they might need, and then put full support behind the product to keep the customer returning when needing something more or a replacement. The Can-Am agreement, supported by BRP’s regular promotions and incentives such as their NFU discount deal, has undoubtedly helped us to attract new custom and keep existing professional buyers coming back.”



People are increasingly looking at moving from ATVs to UTVs, especially as power and speed have improved, says Dan Coates

VALUABLE INSIGHTS

Each year Kubota holds an event convening engineers, dealers and customers to promote servicing and maintenance. Last time out it was held at dealership CC Powell's in Banff, Aberdeenshire

The Kubota Insights Programme (KIP) is an event which takes place annually, bringing together the manufacturer's expert engineers, dealers and customers to promote knowledge of servicing and maintenance for the Kubota range of agricultural machinery.

As part of the event, the company's engineering team from Japan, who Kubota considers to be the best of the best, are flown in specially to run open days and workshops in dealerships across Europe. The team test and assess several customer machines and give presentations on how to keep agricultural machinery in the best possible condition, at the same time imparting knowledge to customers as to why this is critical if they want to ensure a long working life for their machinery.

At the back end of 2019, the UK leg was held in Scotland for the first time with Kubota dealer CC Powell which is based at Montbleton, Banff, Aberdeenshire hosting.

CC Powell was established in February 2010 by Chris Powell. Chris says the company is founded on a strong and determined ethos to support its customers in sales, spare parts and service in the franchises which it holds – all facets which made the dealership a suitable venue to host the Insight Programme.

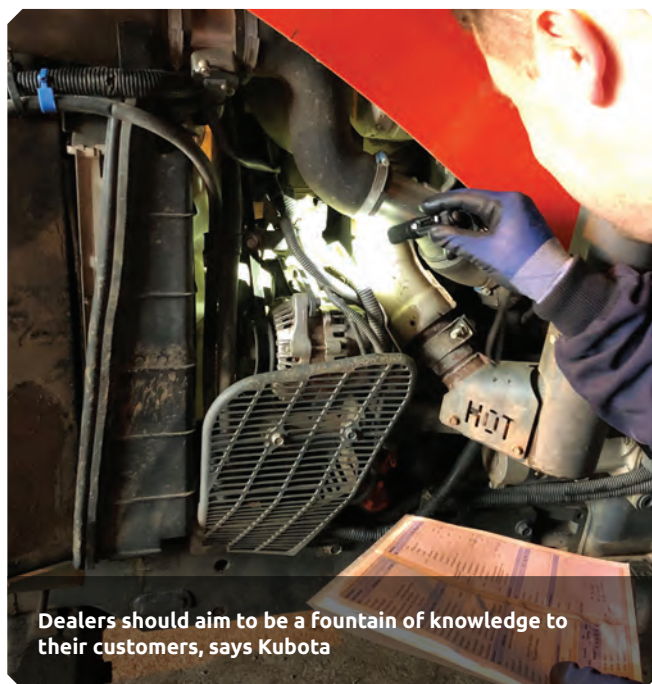
The Kubota Insight Programme has been running since 2006, with KIP activity having taken place across 10 European countries, inspecting over 1,000 Kubota tractors and engaging with well over 2,000 customers and end users.



The most recent Kubota Insight Programme which took place at CC Powells, brought together engineers, dealers and customers



Members of Kubota's engineering team are flown in from Japan



Dealers should aim to be a fountain of knowledge to their customers, says Kubota

The company says their initial intention was to use the scheme in order to check the machines that they had in the field and gather customer feedback on the products in order to inform their development teams. This ties in with one of the company's corporate promises to listen to their customers in order to produce machinery which stands the test of time.

As the programme has evolved, Kubota says this has still remained a key objective. However, the company also now uses it to update their dealers and educate their customers around the importance of machine maintenance.

Martin Tyler, Business Development Manager, Service at Kubota UK explained why CC Powell was chosen to host the most recent edition. He said, "Another of our key objectives when we run the Kubota Insights Programme is to reach customers all over the UK and Ireland. In order to do this, we need our dealer network. They are ultimately that front line when it comes to communicating with our customers and advising on our machines.

"In 2019, we decided to run the programme from CC Powell in Scotland. We chose this dealer specifically because they have great facilities for some of the workshops we run. They also sell to a wide customer area and many of the tractors within that area have worked for several thousand hours, providing a good base of machines for which maintenance is important."

Asked why events like this are important for dealerships and their customers across the UK, Martin said, "We believe they are important for a few reasons. They help to build relationships by bringing end users and dealerships closer together, granting them a platform to communicate and continue to build on the relationship that they already have. They also provide the team at Kubota with an opportunity to build closer ties with both our dealerships and the customers that they serve.

"Another benefit of these types of events is that they

help to promote individual dealerships and the wider dealer network. This is because they offer customers a unique, first-hand experience and insight into the types of professional services that a skilled dealer can offer them, including the use of advanced technologies and diagnostic tooling. For example, the dealerships are able to analyse tractor fluids for contaminants, digitally monitor the engines' performance including fuel pressure, temperatures and engine horsepower output via dynamo-meter tests. All of this enables them to ensure machinery is maintained to the highest level in order to produce more profitable working hours."

EDUCATING CUSTOMERS

Kubota's aim with the programme is to educate end users that without an effective machine maintenance plan they risk breakdowns. They are wanting to get the message across that these breakdowns will have a negative impact on any company's bottom line, regardless of size.

Martin Tyler explains, "Unnecessary downtime and reduced productivity are just one part of the puzzle when it comes to damaged machinery. When customers factor in the cost of replacing broken parts, as well as the repair bills that are likely to go alongside them, it's clear to see that not maintaining your machine from the outset can have devastating financial implications further down the line. This is why extended warranty programmes, such as our Kubota Care, are useful. We say that Kubota Care enables dealers to offer customers piece of mind, with five years' manufacturer's warranty.

"Over the years, we've also seen a growing number of customers wanting to move towards planned maintenance programmes, provided by dealers. We've met this need with Dealer Maintenance Contracts. Coupled with Kubota Care, they provide customers with a known cost of ownership for five years as well as a level of trust that all maintenance and repairs are being carried out by skilled, Kubota-trained

technicians, using genuine parts and lubricants. As part of our finance package, this offers customers peace of mind with no hidden costs and provides a better residual value to the tractor when they decide to trade it in for a new Kubota tractor.”

Martin also believes there is an important safety aspect to maintenance. “Having a regular service provided by a dealer or the manufacturer,” he says, “significantly reduces the effects of faulty machinery by checking all parts are in working order. These services can also help those carrying them out to identify and rectify any faults during a routine maintenance time schedule, rather than in the middle of the working period – ensuring end users maximum productivity and minimum down time.”

The manufacturer says they pride themselves on supporting their dealer network when it comes to helping them assist their customers with machinery maintenance.

Martin says, “We see our dealer network as an extension of our own team. Therefore, we want to empower them with the skill set to effectively and efficiently service their end users. We provide each dealer extensive technical training by our own skilled technicians. We also offer detailed check sheets and service kits to help complete the maintenance checks.”

The company also believes that dealers have a vital part to play in informing and educating end users about the importance of maintenance. This should begin during the initial handover and installation and continue throughout

each customer or site visit.

“Dealers should aim to be a fountain of knowledge and as such share some simple top tips with their end user customers,” says Martin, “but also explain what impact their actions could have on the overall machine life.”

Tips which Kubota recommends dealers pass on to their customers, include:

- Daily checks and blowing out of cooler packs and radiators – preventing overheating of the engine and possible engine seize-up.
- Daily checks and blowing out of engine air filters – enabling the engine to work in its optimal and most efficient way. Dirty or blocked air filters not only reduce air flow into the engine but may allow dirty particles into the combustion chamber which may cause cylinder damage, resulting in loss of engine power and possible expensive engine overhaul repairs.
- Daily checks and lubricating of all moving parts – mitigating the risk of parts seizing up or failing which may result in both downtime and the possibility of expensive repair bills.

“It might feel like you’re consistently banging the same drum,” concludes Martin, “but it’s important and can’t be stressed enough. By spending a couple of minutes with a customer or operator advising on daily maintenance points, you could potentially prevent breakdowns and downtime.”



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LAMMA SETTLES INTO NEW HOME

The second LAMMA farm equipment show at Birmingham's NEC saw strong visitor numbers, some new exhibitors and guarded optimism among farmers, dealers and manufacturers. MARTIN RICKATSON walked the halls

Healthy crowds and a rise in exhibitor numbers and stand space at January's LAMMA appeared to vindicate show organiser AgriBriefing's move last year to shift the agricultural machinery and services exhibition indoors, with the second show to be held at the NEC in Birmingham supported by good visitor and stand holder attendances, despite some notable manufacturers staying away.

There was a strong presence from the likes of AGCO's Fendt and Valtra brands, SDF – which showed off Deutz-Fahr and, marking a LAMMA return for the marque, Same products – ARGO with its McCormick and Landini tractors, JCB and Kubota. The UK arm of the Japanese firm chose to return to the show after staying away from the first NEC event last year, but invested in a large stand at this event with a full line of tractors. It included

the latest third generation of its 130-170hp M7 series, with Stage V engines and variable-rate steering, plus smaller models, alongside an array of arable and grassland implements.

Others made a more tentative return, with New Holland, for example, choosing not to bring tractors, combines or balers but showing a small selection of the tillage and forage equipment it now offers following parent firm CNH Industrials acquisition of these lines from Kongskilde. However, key multinationals remained absent, including John Deere, Claas, Case IH, AGCO's Massey Ferguson arm, Kverneland, Amazone and Horsch. Their reasoning was said to be based largely on a common decision to invest elsewhere – dealer support is a commonly quoted target – the money that would otherwise have gone on stand and staff costs.

Many visitors were heard to praise the facilities provided, including

good accessibility, parking and food outlets, and the free entry format, requiring attendees to fill in their farm data on a form in exchange for an entry badge, appeared to continue to work well, with many having pre-registered, leading to reasonably short queues at the entrance desks. As with many shows, the strongest crowds appeared to throng the halls in mid-morning, with a notable lull from lunchtime onwards. While it didn't release detailed figures, Agribriefing suggested visitor numbers ended slightly up on the year before, topping 40,000, while there were just over 700 exhibitors. All of the available exhibition space, totalling just over 56,000 sq m, was said to have been sold this year, with 40 additional companies coming on board.

"The mood was surprisingly positive, considering the tough time the industry has had and the uncertain outlook, and a number of exhibitors reported very positive conversations

and leads," said Kate Walsh, event manager at LAMMA, which gathered the following exhibitor quotes.

Martin Holden of grassland machinery specialist SIP said his firm had doubled its stand space from last year:

"It's important to be here as we are flying the flag for a relative unknown in the machinery market. We've seen a lot of interest from dealers, as well as end users not yet familiar with the manufacturer."

SDF UK's Graham Barnwell reported a positive couple of days:

"LAMMA is a good place to kick things off for the new year. We've been talking to people who are looking to make decisions, do deals and buy equipment."

Tim Lowden of New Holland said LAMMA provided a great opportunity to show the company's new implement range:

"We had some really good feedback, some good quality conversations and



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some serious enquiries. It's been a good show and the mood has been generally positive."

Drill and cultivator manufacturer Bednar FMT used the show as its official UK launch, and showed products including its seed/fertiliser Omega OO-FL disc coulters drill. The firm's Warren Rivers-Scott said:

"We were given some excellent support and spoke to visitors who gave us good comments, good questions and a lot of valuable leads."

Next year's show dates move forward one week to the second full week of January rather than the first, in a move that appears to have been welcomed by the vast majority of exhibitors, following the back-to-work new year rush to get show stands prepared for the show this year and last. LAMMA dates for 2021 have been confirmed as 12-13 January.

TRACTOR UNVEILINGS

Many visitors got their first look at tractors unveiled at last year's key international shows, including Fendt's revised 900 series which made its debut at Agritechnica, the new Varioterminal for 700 series models, and the 314 that now heads the 300 series. SDF showed Deutz-Fahr's newest offering for orchard and vineyard growers, the 5100 series with TTV continuously-variable transmission, while JCB unveiled new heavier-duty axles for its 4000 series Fastracs and a new version tailored to alternative uses such as airport duties. The 8000 series models also now get hydraulic double-acting suspension at the front as well as the rear, raising maximum permitted operating weight by 13% to 18,000kg and doubling load deck

capacity to 5,000kg.

Turfcare equipment specialist Reesink UK announced its deal to become UK supplier for Farmtrac ag and turf-targeted tractors, manufactured by Escorts Group, India's third largest tractor manufacturer. The 20-113hp range incorporates Carraro transmissions and MITA hydraulic systems, with all models featuring independent rear PTO, and mid PTO available on tractors equipped with hydrostatic transmission. Up to five years warranty, said to be an industry first, is available.

In addition to revised McCormick X7 Series tractors, ARGO showed a new range of Landini equal-wheel tractors targeted in part at users looking for an alternative to self-propelled high-clearance sprayers, as well as those seeking machines



AS Tractors now offers Turkish-made Basak tractors and handlers alongside its ArmaTrac models



The Zetor Compax range spans 25-40hp, with 2wd and 4wd, cabbed and less-cab options

for use in vegetable applications or even raised growing mediums in glasshouses and polytunnels. The new High Clearance version of the Landini 5 series tractor replaces the former models based on the superseded 5D series. Key upgrades include a change of power unit to a 3.6-litre Deutz four-cylinder, a new cab, increased hydraulic oil flow and a number of other tweaks. Under-axle clearance measures up to 695mm (27.5in), while there's also a more spacious cab, increased oil flow for the steering and main hydraulics, and a slightly longer wheelbase.

The show also garnered strong support from companies seeking UK importers and dealers, including the likes of AS Tractors. A strong supporter of LAMMA via its basic spec ArmaTrac tractor import deal, the Staffs firm, which is wanting dealers, is now bringing in further lines of farm equipment from Turkey. These include a new line of Deutz-powered Basak premium specification tractors of up to 120hp with four-step powershift, and the same maker's 4t/6.35m telehandler from its sister firm Sanko, plus a full machinery line from fellow Turkish maker Alpler, including disc and drum mowers, rakes, tedders, reversible ploughs with up to 15 furrows, cultivation equipment and trailed fertiliser/lime spreaders. AS Tractors also suggested it was close to inking a deal to become the new UK importer for a complementary compact tractor range.

Other tractor debuts included a new compact line from Zetor, courtesy of its established agreement with South Korean maker TYM, which already supplies the Czech company with its 43-67hp Utilix and Hortus models. The new Compax range spans 25-40hp, and is available in two- and four-wheel drive formats. There



Iseki showed a new 40hp TH5420 hydrostatic tractor and new TXGS24 garden tractor



JCB unveiled 8000 and 4000 series Fastrac upgrades and a new 4000 version for alternative uses

LAMMA IS A GOOD PLACE TO KICK THINGS OFF FOR THE NEW YEAR

is a choice of cabbled and less-cab variants, and mechanical or hydrostatic transmissions. Zetor also showed models from its updated 80-110hp Proxima range, with new styling, revised cab interior and new 16/16 transmission.

Also at the compact end of the market, Iseki unveiled a new 40hp TH5420 model with Stage V engine and hydrostatic transmission. Lift capacity of 1,200kg, while further specification includes a two-speed rear and a mid-mount PTO. It also showed a new TXGS24 garden tractor replacement for the 23hp TXG237.

IMPLEMENT DEBUTS

Among the implements making their UK debut at the show was a new Fusion 3 Plus variant of McHale's combination baler/wrapper, featuring improved net roll loading, bale density adjustment and net adjustment.

The firm also showed new V6 round balers with claimed higher intake rates courtesy of a new pick-up design, larger lateral feed augers and a bigger rotor, as well as selectable knives, a drop-floor unblocking system and two bale chamber options

with higher density.

Landquip is now the UK agent for the Dutch-designed Wingssprayer, a twin wing application system designed to reduce drift whilst improving crop penetration. It uses 25cm-spaced wide-angle nozzles positioned between two aerofoil wings, utilising the aerodynamic air streams created by forward motion and head winds to create a downward swirl of fine droplets. User experience suggests the improved contact means potential savings of 20% in herbicide and 10-20% in fungicide volumes, says Landquip.



McHale showed new V6 round balers with a new pick-up design

Bunning revealed a smaller model for its Farmstar HBD spinning disc muck spreader range, targeted at small- to medium-sized farms requiring a wider spread pattern than is possible with a vertical beater machine, particularly with materials such as chicken manure, gypsum and composts, as well as general farmyard manure. The 8.0 cu m model can be equipped with extension sides to increase heaped capacity to 10.2 cu m, and maximum payload is 8.5 tonnes. Manufactured from Hardox steel, the 1.0m-diameter spinning discs feature adjustable blade angles.



The new High Clearance version of Landini's 5 Series has under-axle clearance of up to 695mm



New from Landquip is the Dutch-made Wingsprayer system, designed to improve spray penetration of the crop



AS Tractors is seeking dealers for the Turkish-made range of Alpler arable and grass machinery

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WINTER SERVICING SURVEY 2020

Workshop levels looking healthy this winter

According to the dealers who responded to our most recent survey, levels in workshops across the country have held up well this winter – with many reporting increased business.

An impressive 41% of respondents described service levels as being up this winter, with 19% actually describing it as well up. Only 11% reported a downturn.

Unsurprisingly, once again the weather was cited by most respondents as the single greatest factor which affects their workshop levels; 48% of dealers who responded listed that as the number-one decider this year. Interestingly though, 26% listed capacity as the major factor affecting their ability to process work.

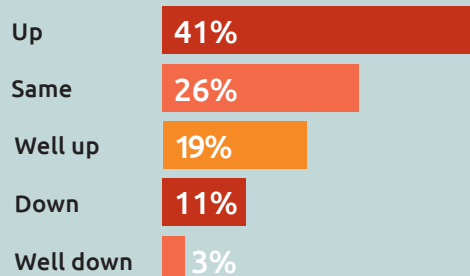
More dealers told us they had increased their labour

rates in the past year, with 44% saying they had done so. Of those, a majority of 64% said they had increased their prices by up to 5%.

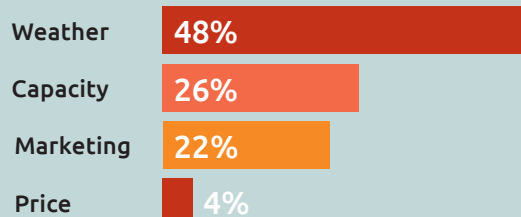
As we have heard many times before, dealers who responded to the survey told us they are struggling to find staff for their workshops; 79% of respondents described the recruitment as hard with 21% considering it moderately hard. Absolutely no one told us they found the process easy.

Finally, there wasn't exactly a ringing endorsement from dealers who answered our survey regarding the training courses available to their workshop staff; 44% felt they were average and 44%, worryingly, felt they were inadequate.

How are servicing levels this winter compared with last?



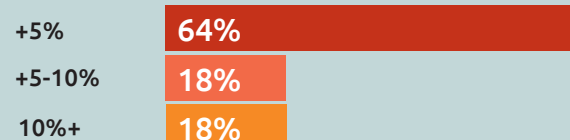
What factors most influence your winter servicing levels?



Have you increased your labour rates in the past year?



If you have increased your labour rates this past year, by how much?



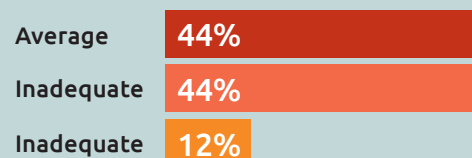
Have you increased your service staffing levels this past year?



When you increase service staffing levels, how do you find the process?



How do you find the standard of training courses available to your service staff?



YOUR SAY...

We asked you: are there any key issues which are currently impacting on the service side of your business?

- Nothing has changed in the past year in the way of recruitment but what is changing now at a rapid pace is the speed at which 'traditional' service technicians, who won't be motivated into learning about modern technology, are being left behind. The skills shortage to support modern cordless and robotic machinery is very worrying. Our service technicians are very good at what they do but many of them just don't want to move into the digital world. We know what we have to do to bring our technicians up to speed both with modern technology and improving workshop efficiencies. What we seem to struggle with is how to make it happen. We have led our horses to the water numerous times, but we just can't make them drink!
- There are no northern colleges running apprenticeship courses. We have 16 year-olds that have to travel 200 miles by train on a Sunday. They are then away for three weeks at a time. Not ideal! Also, machinery sales are slowish because of Brexit, with fewer new machines being sold.
- In terms of looking for staff for our workshop we are very much lacking the applicants with good qualifications or ability.
- We find it quite simply impossible to find reliable, qualified technicians.
- Employing decent technicians will be the single largest issue for agricultural machinery dealers in the years to come.



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ON THE RIGHT VENTRAC

Rupert Price, MD of UK distributor of the Ventrac range of professional turfcare equipment, Price Turfcare, has steadily built up a market for the machines over the past three years. He is now looking to push on and add to the growing network of dealers. Editor STEVE GIBBS caught up with him just as some big news for the company broke...

I met with Rupert Price of Price Turfcare on the second morning of January's BTME exhibition in Harrogate. It was less than 24 hours since news had emerged from the States that the Toro Corporation intended to buy Venture Products, Inc, the manufacturer of Ventrac products – the equipment which Price Turfcare has built up a market and dealer network for in the UK over the past three years.

Rupert and his small team were understandably surprised by the news and while there was, of course, some speculation regarding what this acquisition might mean exactly for Price Turfcare in the UK, Rupert was adamant that it was "business as usual".

This confidence was born out in the days following the show with word coming out of Toro that it intends to continue running Ventrac as a separate entity. There are no plans for painting all the machines red and assimilating them into the Toro range.

Which is good news for Rupert and a sensible move for Toro – as, from a standing start, the Ventrac

machines are building an excellent reputation among professional end-users the length of the UK, supported by a growing dealer network.

Rupert Price has been the Managing Director of Price Turfcare since he launched the business at a previous BTME back in 2017. Prior to this he had spent nearly 20 years with Ransomes Jacobsen, beginning his career as a graduate trainee, eventually rising to the position of International Sales Director responsible for the UK, Europe, Middle East, Africa and India.

Rupert has worked tirelessly with his small team over these past three years to build the Ventrac brand in the UK, admitting that it has been harder than he had initially envisaged. "Until I started the business in 2017," he says, "Ventrac had very little presence in the UK, apart from spasmodic distribution with a couple of major companies who did very little with it."

Rupert quickly realised that the only way to build awareness of the brand was to get out there and

demonstrate the equipment. "I was very fortunate to have made some serious business relationships during my time at Ransomes," he says, "and there were guys out there who were willing to at least let me show it to them. Obviously, I was now a one-trick pony and didn't have the huge portfolio of machinery as in my previous job, but I shall be eternally grateful for their support."

Rupert cites key turf professionals including Darren Baldwin at Tottenham Hotspur, Chris Brook at The Club Company and Peter Pattenden at Carden Park as vital to the story of Ventrac taking off in the UK, simply for letting him into their facilities to show them the machines.

"I remember travelling around the M25, returning home after an early demonstration in Surrey," he recalls. "On the off-chance I called Darren at Spurs and asked if I could pop in for a coffee and show him my new product. He agreed, but when I got to his maintenance facility and he saw the machine he told me, in no uncertain terms, not to bother taking it off the trailer. Over coffee I managed to persuade him to have a look at it and take me to what he considered the toughest area at the training ground."

Part of Spurs' community legacy is to provide pitches for local use and Darren Baldwin was looking at an overgrown area at the western end of the complex, which had a large perimeter bank and had not been touched since they moved there from their old Training Centre in Chigwell. Rupert had the Tough Cut deck on the tractor unit at the time and says that Darren was blown away by its performance.

"It knocked down and mulched vegetation that was probably two metres high and on some very severe slopes," Rupert remembers. "He went from sceptic to convert in the space of half an hour and now has two tractor units and numerous attachments."

It was a similar situation with The Club Company. Chris Brook was apparently sceptical at first, but now has four machines across the group, used at the clubs that have particularly wet courses, while Peter Pattenden at Carden Park, who Rupert claims he was unable to sell any machines to during his time at Ransomes, purchased a Ventrac immediately after the initial demonstration!

Building a network – an ongoing task

Rupert says he knew from day one that he could not build up a market for Ventrac in the UK alone. His team could do a lot of the initial groundwork, getting out and demoing the machine, but they realised they needed a dealer network to take some of the load.

He is honest about not having fully cracked a robust dealer network yet in the three years they have been in operation, freely admitting it's an ongoing task.

Asked what sort of dealers he is after, Rupert confesses to still be in a quandary and does not mind sharing the dilemma. "Do I appoint large dealers with multiple franchises," he wonders, "or do I look to smaller, family-run dealers as my route to market?"

"Big, multi-franchise dealers by definition have a large product portfolio and a sales force that sells



Darren Baldwin, Head Groundsman at Tottenham Hotspur, on the club's Ventrac, with Rupert Price



A Ventrac 4500 with Tough Cut deck supplied by Ernest Doe & Sons, being used by Norse Commercial Services, maintaining the embankments of the new Broadland Northway in Norfolk

“REACHING THREE-FIGURE SALES IN LESS THAN THREE YEARS, FROM A STANDING START, IS SOMETHING WE CAN BE PROUD OF”

across many, or all, of the franchises,” he says. “They are also in a position to invest in demonstration stock. Smaller dealers, however, have a limited product portfolio and, hopefully, can put more sales time into my product, but some in this category won’t be able to take demo equipment.”

Ideally, Rupert explains, he would like the larger dealers to have a dedicated Ventrac salesperson or product specialist, who has excellent product knowledge and demonstration skills. He would want them to commit to demonstration equipment and be capable of going out and demonstrating a range of attachments without their support. They would also demand that the dealership’s aftersales should be first-class.

“Our equipment has proved to be robust and we’ve had very few issues,” he says, “but should anything happen we want to be able to respond immediately.”

Conversely, Price Turfcare would want a smaller dealer who commits to Ventrac to “wake up in the morning with a mission to sell a machine”. Rupert says they would then support them with demonstrations in their territory.

“They would grow their business as we grow ours,” he explains. The plan would be that eventually the smaller dealer would be in a position to take demo stock and become more self-sufficient. Price Turfcare would also expect a high level of aftersales support

with additional support from themselves.

“Essentially,” says Rupert, “what we want is a mixture of the larger and the smaller dealerships – and regardless of size, we want dealers to be engaged. We want dealers who are interested in actually selling this equipment – partners who are proactive, who go out looking to sell the equipment. We need all our dealers to be hungry to make the sales.”

I ask Rupert what he is offering dealers in return for this level of commitment and he is emphatic in his reply. “Time,” he says. “Time and support.”

Demonstrating support

To illustrate the level of commitment that Rupert says Price Turfcare is prepared to offer dealers, he tells me that in the past three years he and his small team have clocked up something like 400,000 miles, driving up and down the country doing demos – an activity which Rupert believes is vital to the success of the equipment.

“The Ventrac machines are a unique product,” Rupert says. “It might not be an easy sell initially, but it’s a pleasurable item to go out and demonstrate.

“When we go and do demos, we’re there for two or three hours. You tend to arrive and the greens staff might be rather sceptical, but at the end of it they can’t believe what they’ve just seen.”

Rupert boasts that Price Turfcare has done 400-500 demos over the past three years and estimates that just 4-5% of those would be ones he would describe as bad, where the client believes the machine is not suitable for their needs. The rest, he claims, see the customers at least interested in receiving a quote.

“The satisfaction of showing a product which works as well as this, is immense,” he says.

Rupert continues, “Everyone said to me initially that the Ventrac product is a niche product and you won’t be able to sell them. Well, it’s not niche in the slightest. You can sell this product to a myriad customers. You can sell to golf, commercial, private – and we have. There isn’t a sector of grounds care where that machine can’t be used somewhere.

“With its attachments it can be used all year round, so a customer is not spending 40 grand on a machine that can only be used in the summer.”

Rupert is also insistent that it is a myth that only affluent golf clubs or facilities can afford the brand. “Some of what you would describe as the truly lower-end golf clubs might initially consider it as expensive,” he says, “but then you can prove to them that with all its attachments it can carry out multiple tasks. You just need to show people what it can do.”

I ask Rupert if he has any particular gaps in his dealer network map that he’s looking to fill. South-East

England, the Midlands and Ireland are mentioned. "But to be honest," he says, "there are opportunities everywhere. I don't think we want as many dealers as some of the other brands, but at the same time we need coverage.

"The other thing is, we now have some dealers covering exactly the same geographic area, but the different companies have different sectors in which they specialise. For example, we have dealers in the same place, but one covers golf and one covers municipal. In this particular case I'm thinking of, they have not crossed over in two years – and between them they have made good sales. Every dealer has their sector which they are good in."

Asked why he believes the Ventrac machines are proving successful once they've been demoed to turf professionals, Rupert is quick to answer that it's due to their versatility. The "Swiss army knife" of the grounds care sector is how they choose to categorise the kit.

With its host of cutting decks and attachments, is there the risk that users might see the machines as somewhat of a gimmick, I ask?

"Absolutely not," insists Rupert.

"All the attachments and decks have been designed to be 100% compatible and 100% effective on the tractor unit. They all work as well as, or better than, other proprietary products. Therefore, using a single power unit with a choice of implements keeps the cost of ownership down. Why should a customer use a number of individual machines, when they can have a

Ventrac plus attachments?

"Depreciation is a factor when buying equipment, so why have a dedicated piece of machinery sitting in a maintenance facility doing nothing for ages, instead of a machine that could be out working on numerous applications, year-round?"

Rupert knows that Price Turfcare now needs to build on the good start that it has made.

"Reaching three-figure sales in less than three years, from a standing start, is something we can be proud of," he says. "I'm confident that this year is going to be our best yet. In the last quarter of 2019, we attended Turf Maintenance Live and SALTEX in quick succession and achieved a significant number of demonstration requests.

"For the past two years at SALTEX and BTME we've been exposing the Ventrac brand to the grounds care sector, but with these most recent shows there's clearly been a significant change. Visitors know of us now, having seen our marketing initiatives, social media platforms and the editorial coverage we've received in the trade media. Now they want to see the equipment in action."

Looking forward, what does Rupert see for the company? "Year five, I would like to see the business in a really stable position. I'd also like to see a larger and more proactive dealer network with total commitment to the brand, a loyal customer base and the opportunity to take a long holiday!

"I certainly believe there are very interesting times ahead for Ventrac in the UK."



Rupert Price pictured on Price Turfcare's stand at BTME 2020



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CONFIDENT BTME FINDS ITS AUDIENCE

Harrogate Convention Centre saw good business this January, with plenty to occupy dealers of professional turfcare equipment, reports Editor STEVE GIBBS

BTME took place from 21-23 January at the Harrogate Convention Centre with a mostly positive atmosphere pervading the halls.

Certainly, there wasn't the same mood as 2019, when the newly redesigned layout tended to dominate the discourse. As far as I could tell, the configuration was accepted this year, with people used to the fairly idiosyncratic formation the show has now adopted. From a personal viewpoint, I do feel that the different halls all have quite distinct feels and atmospheres. It almost plays like a series of separate shows, which I suppose isn't necessarily a bad thing.

I still heard some grumblings from certain stand holders in the Red hall, and in particular the Blue hall, that they weren't quite getting the footfall they would desire. Certainly, the Blue hall, where STIHL, Iseki and Ernest Doe Hire were located, felt like the end of the natural route around the complex and therefore it was taking longer for the crowds to filter through.

The Purple hall upstairs, conversely, which most visitors would've happened upon first, where Ransomes and Toro among others were situated, always felt busy and buzzy. That may have been helped by having a cafe area located in front of it which appeared to keep a good number of people hanging around.

But that said, I think the show organisers were happy that all the halls were seeing their aisles fill up quicker than they had in 2019. At the time of going to press actual attendance figures had not yet been released by the organisers, but addressing the press on the morning of day two of the show, BIGGA's Director, Jim Croxton, said that Tuesday's attendance was very close to what they'd had on the first day last year.

He did also mention that stand space sales were about 7% down on the previous year. Walking around the halls you could see a few areas that clearly had a few tables and chairs hastily arranged within them to fill a gap that an exhibitor could have been taking up.

An interesting comparison that I had a couple of exhibitors make to me, was with the LAMMA show at the NEC which had taken place a couple of weeks previously (see Martin Rickatson's report starting on page 27 of this issue). One or two companies that had exhibited at both of these January shows talked about how, when the doors open to visitors of a morning at the NEC, an absolute flood rush in and swamp their stands immediately. At Harrogate the doors open and a few begin to trickle in slowly, eventually making their way around the exhibits.

There were some notable absentees this year, Husqvarna being an obvious one. Jim Croxton mentioned that some companies might be attending the show on a biennial basis from now on. It will be interesting to see next January whether there are any returning names – or if any companies that weren't exactly delighted with their stand positioning are able to exert any influence over the organisers to be moved to a more favoured location.

Around the halls

One aspect of the composition of punters at the show this year that was noticeable, was that there appeared to be a healthy number of visitors from overseas. Jeremy Vincent on the **Trilo** stand commented upon it early on day 1, saying how good it was that they were seeing so many international customers coming on to their stand. Walking the halls, one's ears were picking up conversations comprising many Euro and Irish accents.

In terms of what got the show talking this year, the news that broke on the first day that Toro is to buy Ventrac was understandably quite a surprise, to say the least. It created quite a stir and no little chat among the exhibitors and visitors. As you can read from page 38 of this issue, Rupert Price of **Price Turfcare** told me at the show that it was very much "business as usual" for them as they continue their policy of building up a dealer network.

There were other brands at Harrogate this year which were also looking to make appointments to their dealer networks. The newly launched **Bluebird** range had an impressive stand displaying a mixture of battery and petrol products. Caroline Brown, the company's Marketing Executive, told me it is looking to recruit and had seen a good number of dealers



John Coleman and Vinny Tarbox, who are looking to establish a dealer network for the Infinituc mowers

come on to their stand with some encouraging enquiries being made.

Also looking for more dealers was **Cub Cadet** with the Infinituc range of professional mowers. Vinny Tarbox, Sales Manager for MTD Specialty Turf Products, said that due to rapid growth during 2018-19 the company has started a dealer recruitment programme. He said this had always been planned upon reaching a certain annual turnover of equipment. Some appointments have been made already, but the company is looking to secure more in certain areas. Dealers would have access to the full range, he assured me.

An interesting development was **Kubota** teaming up with **Baroness** to offer packages to golf clubs – not an official merger or anything like that, more of a gentlemen's agreement. UK MD David Hart told me that not all of the two companies' dealers are aligned, but where the opportunities present themselves, their dealers can offer a package of



Adam Butler, Baroness Sales Director with David Hart, Kubota UK MD, who had teamed up at the show to offer packages to golf clubs

equipment to golfing facilities, many of whom want both tractors and cutting equipment.

Steven Greenup, on the **STIHL** stand, told me that BTME is a valuable show for it to get its message out to greenkeepers – especially regarding their professional battery offerings. Similar to last autumn's SALTEX, the company's new professional walk-behind battery mower was garnering a lot of attention from visitors.

From what I could gather, quite a number of dealers had made the trip to the show; many stand holders remarked how pleased they had been with the numbers who they had seen come through. I think dealers would have found a trip to Harrogate worthwhile, with plenty of new products to see combined, of course, with the value of being able to catch up with a bunch of suppliers all under one roof.

It's been mentioned before, but the town itself is a big part of the appeal of the show. Perhaps some stand holders might feel slightly disappointed as the halls do clear out noticeably after say 2pm – but the local publicans certainly don't!

BIGGA deserves congratulations for putting on a show so perfectly geared towards the needs of its greenkeeper members, while for dealers of professional turfcare equipment, there is more than enough of interest to justify a day or two away from the business.



The new Bluebird range offers a mix of battery and petrol products



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NEW AT THE SHOW

INDUSTRY'S FIRST RIDE-ON LITHIUM-ION GREENS MOWER

Launched by Toro in Harrogate

Unveiled for the first time in the UK at BTME by Reesink Turfcare was Toro's new all-electric Greensmaster eTriFlex 3370 ride-on mower.

Described by the company as boasting the industry's first lithium-ion battery-powered unit, Toro says it's the quietest ride-on greensmower and incorporates features that will "revolutionise the market".

The company was keen to point out that the unit includes a range of patented or patent-pending features, bringing a host of benefits and solutions for greenkeepers.

It said Toro's 'radius dependent speed system' delivers an optimal perimeter cut by monitoring each individual cylinder and traction wheel speed during turns and that, in conjunction with the 'lift-in-turn' cutting unit levelling feature, standardises the clip rate of each individual cylinder and virtually eliminates the effect known as 'Triplex-Ring'. The double A-Arm suspension system, with Flex



technology, means the cutting units float freely and closely over any terrain and deliver superior contour-following, while the 'lift-gate footrest' and 'tool-free quick change' cutting units simplify service and maintenance.

On that all-electric point, the company says that lower emissions and fuel savings mean customers can respond to business demands for increased revenue by cutting earlier and therefore delivering earlier tee times to customers.

DOUBLE LAUNCH ON ISEKI STAND

New tractor & mower



The TH5420 compact tractor

ISEKI showcased a new compact tractor alongside its established tractor range, plus a new mower.

Joining the TH range of compact tractors was the brand new TH5420. The company said this unit comes complete with a Stage V compliant engine, low emissions and a new range of accessories. Its 1,200kg lift capacity with three-speed hydrostatic transmission allows for ease of control while powering implements. Iseki said high torque and low fuel consumption, along with two-speed rear PTO, two-mode engagement and auto-stop function, plus a mid PTO allows for

a huge range of turf maintenance equipment to be used on the golf course. All of this can be done while in the comfort of the factory-fitted cab with air conditioning.

Alongside this new tractor the stand featured the SF450, a large-capacity centre-collect mower that is now also available with a Muthing Flail deck. Its large outfront deck and 1,300-litre high-tip collector allows the user to tackle thick grass while collecting and leaving a pristine finish. It also benefits from the ability to cut and collect without blocking, due to its turbine-driven straight through chute.

NEXT GENERATION OF VERTI-DRAIN ON SHOW

Charterhouse chose BTME for launch



The Verti-Drain 2519

Offering a 1.9m working width, the new model is known as the Verti-Drain 2519.

The 2519 brings a new high-speed machine into the company's portfolio. Offering a PTO speed of up to 540rpm, it can cover up to 8,739sq m per hour when spaced at 165mm. As standard, the model comes with 12mm solid tines, but it can accept a range of solid tine options up to 19mm, and hollow tines for coring. According to Charterhouse, this versatility, combined with a variable working depth of up to 250mm, makes it suitable for an array of end-users.

Together with a new draw-rod system, it features an easy-to-adjust heave lever and slip clutch PTO drive. It also features new livery and styling.

Charterhouse also used the show to introduce the Redexim Top-Brush,

a 6m-wide triple poly-brush suitable for course presentation, organic matter removal and dispersal of worm casts. With more and more chemicals being withdrawn from the market, the company said turf managers are turning to mechanical methods of maintenance to reduce contributory factors to disease. Regular brushing helps to remove dew from the surface and stands the grass plant upright, helping to ensure a better cut, remove excess moisture and ensure optimum airflow into the turf canopy.

Suitable for large areas such as golf fairways, the three poly brushes can be adjusted to the desired depth, depending on whether a light surface brush or a deeper agitation is required. Its independent 'wings' can then be hydraulically lifted and folded for convenient transportation and storage.



JOHN DEERE EXPANDS FAIRWAY MOWER LINE-UP

Two new additions to 6000A Series

John Deere previewed two new additions to the 6000A Series fairway mower line-up at the exhibition.

Sharing technologies with the A Model mower range, the 6080A and 6500A E-Cut hybrid electric fairway mowers feature electric reel drive, which the company says greatly reduces the number of potential hydraulic leak points. In addition to their economical price, these new mowers can be operated at lower engine speeds, which further reduces operating costs by decreasing fuel consumption.

Equipped with a 24.7hp (18.4kW) diesel engine, the 6080A and 6500A E-Cut hybrid mowers feature a three-wheel smooth tyre configuration on a durable chassis. Width of cut is 80in on the 6080A and 100in on the 6500A, with 18 and 22in QA5 cutting units respectively.

These new models include the eHydro transmission and LoadMatch as standard, which maintains a high quality cut even when working on slopes. There's a mowing speed of 8mph on both models.

Another feature adopted from the A Model range is the password-protected TechControl display. This gives turf managers and technicians complete control over cut quality and performance by enabling them to input commands such as mowing speed, transport speed and service times, while also capturing on-board service diagnostics.

Cut quality on the new hybrid electric fairway mowers is further enhanced with rear-attaching yokes on the cutting units and standard hydraulic down pressure. Additionally, the hybrid reel drive system allows more power to be available for the standard GRIP all-wheel drive traction system, to further improve performance on slopes.

Other operator-friendly features include internal hydraulic wet disk brakes, which eliminate linkage adjustments and grease points in the brake system, and a comfortable operator station with CommandArm-mounted controls that move with the seat.

SME DIGEST

ADVICE FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES



Edited by Adam Bernstein

LATE PAYMENTS

RECOVERING WHAT'S OWED

According to risk manager Atradius in its October 2018 Payment Practices Barometer, the UK has the highest proportion of overdue invoices in Europe at a staggering 48.7%, writes *SME Digest* Editor Adam Bernstein. The next worst is France at 47.45% followed by Switzerland at 46.5%.

The problem for firms when dealing with late payments is what to do to speed up the process.

For lawyers, a good contract goes to the core of excising delays and it's recommended that firms insert two key provisions into their contracts: a right to suspend further deliveries if there is no payment and the terms have been exceeded; and secondly, that a contract can be terminated if payment is late.

These terms are critical as the law does not provide a right to cease supply when payment is late – even if a company is likely to be insolvent, suppliers are generally not entitled to stop the contract; if they do, the customer would be entitled to terminate the contract and claim compensation.

Other useful clauses to include are that the undisputed part of any invoice should be paid regardless; there is no set-off so a customer in dispute must pay without deduction and then bring a separate claim; limitation of liability and exclusion of indirect and consequential losses and ideally loss of profit too; and a right to claim interest.

The key to getting paid is knowing who the customer is. Credit checks, for instance, are vastly underused; businesses should be routinely checking existing customers as well as new

customers and a useful tool for this is an account opening form. Businesses can use it to gather all the information they need at the outset, including contact details of key personnel and company registration numbers, while also getting the customer to agree to and sign the terms and conditions of sale.

DO-IT-YOURSELF?

Dealing with recalcitrant debtors isn't easy, but the process can be started in-house.

Ideally creditors should make contact and try to agree a repayment structure that fits. But creditors should remain firm and not become a pushover – they should insist that all new orders are paid up front but allow debtors to pay the outstanding amount over a period of time.

Another tip is to record payment run cut-off dates. Many businesses process invoices in the month that they are received so changing when invoices are sent out can make a considerable difference.

A final notice letter on company letterhead is another weapon to consider. There are many templates to choose from and letters should be delivered with proof of postage or with email delivery and read receipts. The letter should restate what is owed and that it must be paid immediately or by a set date.

BRINGING IN THE PROFESSIONALS

But where debts are disputed and have not been resolved within two to three months, it will probably have to go legal to resolve it.

As to the cost, solicitors either work on the basis of hourly rates with estimates, fixed cost, or on a no win no fee basis. Many recovery agents operate on a success fee basis, taking only a minimal upfront administration fee. Further, under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act businesses have the right to compensation and statutory interest on any overdue invoices to help cover debt collection costs.

Few businesses take advantage of the Act or their own terms and conditions which entitles them to charge interest, until the debt has gone 'legal'.

If the matter is being handed on, time is of the essence; leaving a debt too late can mean that other firms have already started their own legal action leaving a creditor at the back of the queue or worse, a client that has become insolvent.

Often, though, a first stage legal letter might just do the trick. But some seasoned late payers won't pay up without further action. Taking the claim to court may be the last, and only, option. But once judgment is obtained then the process really starts; some debtors don't realise the power of a county court judgment.

IN SUMMARY

Ultimately, the earlier a business takes action to recover an overdue invoice, the better chance there will be of avoiding a bad debt.



SICKNESS & ABSENCE

A certain degree of employee sickness absence is a fact of life, but when absence becomes persistent or long-term it can start to cause issues for the business in a number of ways, says Suzanne Treen, an employment lawyer at Walker Morris LLP. So, what does the law say about employee sickness and absence?



CHECKING ON STAFF

When an employee phones in sick the employer should take the illness at face value unless there is a good reason to suspect otherwise. Employers should have a sickness procedure that is applied consistently to all staff that sets out the procedure that employees must follow if they are too unwell to attend work and which makes provision for how Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and any additional company sick pay will be paid. As a minimum, the employee will be required to self-certify the first few days of their absence and then provide a sick note from their GP.

As long as the employee has complied with the sickness notification procedures and supplied the appropriate GP sick notes, they should not be put under any undue pressure to return until they are well enough.

AN EMPLOYER'S RIGHTS

The first thing to consider with employees who are often unwell is whether there is any underlying medical condition at play. If the employee is suffering from a long-term physical or mental impairment which adversely affects their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, they may classify as 'disabled' under the Equality Act 2010. If they do, they will have additional legal protection against disability discrimination, such as the right not to be treated less favourably and the right to reasonable adjustments. Disability discrimination claims are not subject to any compensation limit.

SUSPICION OF ABUSE OF PROCESS

Sometimes an employer has a suspicion that the employee may not actually be unwell and is simply malingering. It is important that employers do not act hastily because this could lead to an employment claim. Also remember that not every condition (or disability) is visible and that many doctors recommend that employees suffering from stress or anxiety spend time on hobbies such as gardening or even taking a trip away.

Decisions should always be based on hard evidence and, if dishonesty is suspected, deal with it as a

disciplinary issue giving the employee a chance to make representations before making any final decision.

GENUINE LONG-TERM ILLNESSES

Where an employee has been diagnosed with a terminal illness, it is important for the employer to keep in communication with the employee. The employee may feel well enough to continue working and actively wish to do so. It is likely that medical input will be necessary from the employee's GP and consultant and possibly from the company's occupational health advisers.

One of the questions that can be explored with the medical professional is "when is the employee likely to be able to return to work?" If the employee is disabled, then the employer may be legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments, but many employers will consider adjustments for non-disabled staff as a matter of good practice.

Also, if an employee becomes disabled, as mentioned earlier, they would be protected under the Equality Act 2010 against disability discrimination.

Employees on long-term sick leave will receive the pay as set out in the contract of employment whether that be SSP or an additional amount of company sick pay for a period of time. In the absence of any provision in a contract, the basic legal entitlement will be to SSP, and if a company car or laptop is provided under the contract for both personal and business use, then the employer would not normally be entitled to take them back during the absence.

HOLIDAYS AND SICKNESS AT THE SAME TIME

Finally, an employee cannot take holiday and sickness at the same time. The absence must be treated as either one or the other. If an employee is sick during holiday, then they would need to notify their sickness in the usual way and obtain a sickness certificate from their GP. It is important that sickness procedures make it clear how the employer will deal with sickness during holiday periods.

SAVING TAX ON RENOVATIONS

If a business wants to grow, it will need to invest in its premises and if it follows the rules much of the investment can be offset against tax, writes SME Digest Editor, Adam Bernstein

Understandably, businesses may take the opportunity to carry out improvements at the same time as repairs, but to Helen Thornley, a Technical Officer at the Association of Taxation Technicians, there are distinct differences between repairing and improving business premises.

She says that, “the question of whether expenditure on a building is a repair or an improvement is a classic tax problem. Relief for building repair costs is generally given against revenue in the period that the cost is incurred. In contrast, money spent on improvements to premises is considered to be capital and the business will only get relief when it sells or otherwise disposes of the premises.”

Yen-Pei Chen, Manager of Corporate Reporting and Tax at the ACCA, agrees. She says that essentially, replacing or fixing something to get premises back into working order is fine as a repair, “but do anything further and you could stray into capital expenditure”.

CAPITAL ALLOWANCES ON CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

If a firm ends up with capital expenditure and can't set that expenditure against taxable profit, it may still get tax deductions in the form of capital allowances.

The key to this is the Annual Investment Allowance (AIA) which allows businesses to claim tax deductions up front on the full amount of qualifying expenditure in the year it's incurred. Chen says that those wanting to invest should not dawdle; the AIA was increased to £1m, up from £200,000, from 1 January 2019, but will drop back down to £200,000 from 1 January 2021.

For an item to qualify as plant and machinery, it “has to be kept ‘for permanent employment in the business’ – so, this excludes stock or expendable equipment with a life of less than two years; and function as ‘an apparatus employed in carrying out the activities of the business’ and not as part of the premises in which the business is carried on.” This latter point is problematic says Chen – “whether something consists of the apparatus used in carrying out the business or the business premises is surprisingly hard to pin down in case law”.

For Chen, the basic principle is that anything which can reasonably be expected to form part of a building – for example, walls, partitions, ceilings, floors, doors, windows and lighting – should be considered premises and not plant. But, of course, there might be exceptions if they are moveable, and/or designed to fulfil a special function.

TAX ALLOWANCES AND WHAT CAN BE CLAIMED FOR

Integral features

To reclaim some of the cost of repairs, firms need to pay attention to what the system actually permits. As Thornley points out, there wasn't always tax relief for the acquisition, construction or improvement of buildings. However, she says that, “since 2008 relief for what are known as integral features within the building has been available through the system of capital allowances”.

Just as with plant and machinery, the law is very prescriptive and there is a fixed list of integral features. Thornley says it includes space and water heating systems; air-conditioning and air-cooling systems; hot and cold water systems (but not toilet and kitchen facilities); electrical systems,

including lighting systems; and external solar shading.

And here's where matters get murky suggests Thornley. “The problem is that most businesses do not spend more in a year on qualifying plant or integral features than the AIA. If they do, then any expenditure exceeding the AIA will be eligible for writing down allowances instead. For integral features, the writing down allowance is 6%, compared with 18% for most other qualifying plant.” It's for this reason that where a business spends more than the AIA, Thornley says it makes sense to allocate the AIA against integral features first because they get a lower writing down allowance and it takes much longer to get relief for the costs incurred.

Structures and Buildings Allowance

Budget 2018 saw the then Chancellor, Philip Hammond, pull a rabbit out of his hat with the introduction of the new Structures and Buildings Allowance (SBA), giving a 2% flat rate annual allowance on commercial structures and buildings over a period of 50 years. The new SBA, says Chen, “is available to offices, retail and wholesale premises, walls, bridges, tunnels, factories and warehouses – as well as renovations and conversions started after 29 October 2018.” However, she warns that buildings covered by the SBA won't then qualify for the AIA.

PARTING ADVICE

Rather than amalgamating all costs under one-line item called ‘shop fittings’ in the tax return, firms have a much better chance of claiming capital allowances successfully if they break down costs into specific headings – shelving, lighting and electrical wiring for air conditioning.



TAKE TIME TO EVALUATE YOUR INSURANCE THIS YEAR

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

While I don't know of many owners that are excited about paying for insurance, in my years of experience working with dealerships across the United States, insurance is one area that most owners fail to evaluate properly each year based upon ownership changes or changes in increased or decreased levels of risk. While it might be tempting to evaluate insurance based upon the cost of the policy, it's just as important to make sure that you have the right coverage and not just a policy that is the right price. We had two different dealerships in 2019 that unfortunately had major claims on their insurance policies. One had the right coverage, the other did not, and the difference in how it impacted their dealerships was stark.

SO, WHERE DO YOU START?

Get a copy of your insurance policies and read them instead of depending on your insurance agent to tell you what is in them. Make sure that as you go through the policies that the dealership name is correct, the address is correct, and the coverage is

what you were told by your insurance agent it would be. If there is any one thing wrong with the name, the location or coverage, and you need to file a claim, the insurance company is going to use the policy, not what the agent told you, as the basis for how they will settle your claim.

EVALUATE THE DEDUCTIBLE

Most owners look at a high deductible to reduce the cost of the policy. If you are a struggling new dealer with tight cash flow you might be better off with a lower deductible. While the premium will be higher, it will reduce the potential out of pocket expenses that you may not be able to afford if the claim happens during your slow, low cash flow part of the season. If you are an established dealer with good cash flow and reserves, then taking on more of the risk with a high deductible might make sense. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to your insurance deductible. Make sure what you have is something that you could live with if a claim had to be made on your

policy at the worst possible time for your cash flow.

FINALLY...

I encourage dealers to over-estimate what level of coverage they should have, not under-estimate it. We had a specific situation with a dealership in the States where one of their drivers rear-ended a car, one of the passengers was killed, and the other seriously injured. When it came time for the lawsuit, the dealer found that they did not have nearly enough coverage to deal with the claim that the survivor and their family was asking for. It took several years to settle and for those years, the dealership, the owners and the employee were in limbo. It is my experience that it is better to be over-insured than under-insured.

While insurance may not be an exciting part of running your dealership, having the correct insurance to minimise the risk that you take will help you sleep at night and ensure that if you do have a claim at some point in the future, your dealership and your employees will be able to continue on.

MAKING PLANS

Pete McArthur of Strathbogie Forest & Garden has had a positive start to the year and is already making plans to connect with more local customers this year



Pete McArthur

As we start this new decade, I personally think we will see massive changes in all industries, with technologies and lifestyles changing at a pace we have never experienced before.

This year we decided the festive break would stretch until 6th January to give more time to be at home with the family and get the batteries recharged. This can, however, cause a few issues due to most companies we work with being English-based and starting back on the 2nd. We sometimes experienced couriers arriving at the store and then parcels being returned to the depot and not reappearing for another 10 days!

The new decade certainly kicked off in style with enquiries, sales and service work rolling in, but I do think this was due to the weather we experienced at the start of the year in the North-East of Scotland where, believe it or not, we were cutting grass in January.

The growth from last year continued into 2020 with very limited frosts to stint growing, and seeing the temperature rising to a dizzy 14°C we can say it was a most certainly unseasonable start. Our own Automower, cutting in front of the shop, had a week off in November due to the minor flooding on the grass, but has continued ever since. We even had to move the height adjuster up a level to cope with the growth.

It has proved to be a conversation starter, with customers noticing the mower out cutting and realising the potential

of the Automower in these changeable conditions we are experiencing.

Things have proved challenging in both sales and servicing areas as we normally look to rotate the showroom according to season with feature products and promotions, but we realise now that keeping the showroom stocked and fresh is the way forward. Winter servicing is underway, but we're finding that many customers are still using their machinery, thus making the window for return a lot shorter. On one hand the snow would be welcomed, but on the other, snow would be a killer to the buoyant start for sales and enquiries.

Pre-season orders are now starting to arrive in flurries, making us realise that space is at a premium at this time of year, causing a logistical nightmare for a few weeks. Everyone is always keen to 'unbox' the new products to take a look, with the STIHL childrens' helmet being a big hit. It's like Christmas all over again – could this be a YouTube opportunity?!

This year again our core focus is on Automower and battery products. We very much see these as key areas to develop within the business, as well as ones that are proving to be most lucrative. We have our technicians away on courses to enhance their knowledge throughout the winter months, so when the season is kicking off our staff are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the products they are working with. Marketing is always an interesting subject. We need to consider what is the best option for our customer base and how best to entice new customers to our products and services. In previous years we've focussed quite heavily on glossy magazines, local newspapers and social media, however, we are now finding that social media is proving to be a more responsive channel to work with.

We have decided to hold an Automower/battery open evening to drive sales, showcasing new products from both our main manufacturer suppliers. It's something a little different for us, but we're hoping the weather stays settled and consumer confidence high. We'll also be holding our bi-annual open weekend, which is just at the planning stage now, but based on previous years this has been a great success in generating customer loyalty.



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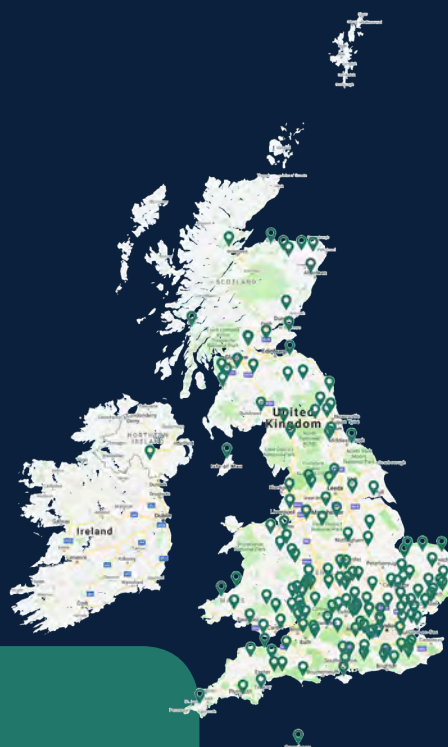
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COMMERCIAL



HUSQVARNA EXTENDS PRO BATTERY MOWER RANGE

New LB 548i and LC 551iV with dual batteries

Husqvarna has extended its range of battery walk-behind lawnmowers for professionals with the new LB 548i and LC 551iV, featuring dual batteries, an aluminium deck with cooling effect and the possibility to fit a bracket for an additional battery.

Equipped with a 1,500W cutting motor, both mowers boast built-in Power-boost technology which the company says offers power equivalent to petrol when needed.

The keypad system with digital interface and user controls gives the operator an overview of the remaining runtime.

On the LC 551iV, it is also possible to choose between four speeds, depending on the users' needs.

The SAVE mode on the models has been designed to lower the RPM while retaining torque to preserve battery life and reduce sound levels. By pushing the button on the keypad, the energy saving mode is activated or deactivated.

The central height adjustment feature allows the operator to change the cutting height with one operation, while the addition of metal rims and rubber wheels ensures traction and efficiency.

The one battery system feature allows for cost-efficiency as the operator can work with all Husqvarna battery products utilising two batteries for a longer runtime. Dual battery slots let the user continue

mowing without having to stop to switch batteries. Continuous drive with two batteries means longer runtime and more efficient mowing while the option of a backpack battery solution enables a longer run time.

The products are prepared for use with Husqvarna Fleet sensor, which allows the user to be connected to Husqvarna Fleet Services to allow for tracking of units and productivity. The mowers can also be paired with Husqvarna Connect, allowing users to get information and tips on maintenance and troubleshooting as well as finding guides and manuals. The Common Service Tool software provides possibilities for digital troubleshooting when needed.

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COMMERCIAL

SCH PRODUCES COMPACT FLAIL

New FM48 is a towed, long grass cutter with a working width of 1,220mm

SCH has produced the new FM48 towed, long grass cutter with a working width of 1,220mm (48"). A 13hp Honda engine with an electric start drives two V belts and 42 cutting flails. These sharpened flails are easily replaceable to extend the lifetime of the machine.

As of 2020, the FM48's transport wheels situate at the rear of the machine, instead of the side. By mounting the transport wheels in the new position, the mower cuts closer to the edge and can squeeze through narrow pathways.

Mounted at the rear of the cutter is a one-piece roller. This roller is easily adjusted to fine-tune the cutting height and alleviates scalping by ensuring the flails lift above the highest peaks on uneven ground.

A screw jack raises or lowers the transport wheels, allowing the user to travel to and from storage on pneumatic wheels, before dropping the mower onto

its steel roller. This steel roller flattens and neatens the ground behind it, protects the user from the rear of the flail mower and is invulnerable to punctures.

The tow bar is typically mounted central to the mower but can be offset to the side of the vehicle when it's desirable not to flatten the grass by running it over.

The throttle control and engine emergency stop switch are reached easily from the tractor seat. Full skirt guards are provided to stop the operator's feet from being accidentally offered to the flails.

A jockey wheel is mounted onto the tow bar to help manually move the 245kg machine in and out of storage.

The SCH FM42 flail mower is identical in many ways to the FM48, however, instead of having a width of 48", its width is 42".



COMMERCIAL

NEW HYDRO LAUNCHED BY ETESIA

80 MKHP5 model has added benefit of a differential lock

The new model joins the Hydro 80 range and will give operators extra traction and stability on difficult, uneven and undulating terrain by reducing wheel spin, reducing damage to the grass and aid in cutting presentation.

The mower also benefits from a mulching insert included as standard, an 80cm cutting width, 240-litre collecting box and a Kawasaki FS481H 11.7kW engine.

Due to a range of additional accessories including a snow plough, users are able to extend the versatility of the machine so that it is usable year round.

The machine cuts and collects both long and short grass without clogging.

Its compact dimensions measuring 1.98m x 0.90m wide, means it is easily transported in a van or trailer. It can pass



through most gateways and its tight turning circle makes it suitable for small or awkward areas.

Cutting height and emptying of the grass collector can be adjusted or carried out from the driving seat, while the steering console is fitted with a timer, rev counter and electric starter.

A hose pipe fitting makes cleaning the cutting system quick and easy, while the tool-free access to the engine allows for easy maintenance due to quick access to all mechanical parts.

The new Hydro 80 MKHP5 ride-on mower comes standard with a comprehensive two-year commercial and three-year domestic warranty.

AGRICULTURAL



LOWER CAPACITY MODEL JOINS BUNNING RANGE

New spreader for 2020

Norfolk-based muck spreader specialist GT Bunning and Sons Ltd has unveiled an addition to its Farmstar HBD spinning disc range, targeted at small- to medium-sized farms requiring a wider spread pattern than is possible with a vertical beater machine, particularly with materials such as chicken manure, gypsum and composts, as well as general farmyard manure.

Designed as a light yet robust spreader capable of

sustained workloads in conjunction with smaller tractors, the 8.0 cu m model can be equipped with extension sides to increase heaped capacity to 10.2 cum. Maximum payload is 8.5 tonnes.

The new machine uses the same body and floor construction as the established Bunning TVA models, and blends this with a new design of HBD (Horizontal Beater and spinning Disc) spreading mechanism, using the same spinning discs as those fitted to larger HBD models. This helps the new model to achieve the same spread patterns as the larger machines in the range.

Design features include heat-treated boron beater flighting and reversible boron beater blades, plus heavy-duty beater roller drive chains. Individual dynamic balancing of the beaters takes place after their production at the factory. Manufactured from Hardox steel, the 1.0m-diameter spinning discs feature adjustable blade angles. The new model is fitted as standard with a single axle rated to 13 tonnes, equipped with 406 x 120mm brakes with slack adjusters.

The launch follows almost two years of development, with a pre-production machine being built in May 2018 and pre-production testing taking place across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Holland, spreading materials ranging from lime, straw bales and gypsum to compost, sewage sludge, chicken, pig and cow manure.

AGRICULTURAL



VADERSTAD RUNS A DEEP LOOSENING MARATHON

New sub-soiling point

The new sub-soiling Deep Loosening Marathon point from Vaderstad gives TopDown and Opus cultivators a breaking capacity down to 40cm.

The new point can be fitted retrospectively to the cultivator tines.

“Combining Deep Loosening Marathon with a mixing point provides deep drainage and capillarity restoration at 40cm depth, while fully mixing down to

30cm depth,” says Marketing Manager Andy Gamble. “With the unique BreakMix point, Deep Loosening Marathon only mixes in the topsoil, while breaking down to 40cm depth.”

The new point is constructed with hard metal Marathon reinforcements for extended life in the field. To maximise output the Deep Loosening Marathon points are fitted to the last tine row of the cultivator.

DOMESTIC / COMMERCIAL

WORLD'S FIRST CHAINSAW WITH AUTO CHOKE

Launched by Echo

The CS-352AC is described by the company as an all-round rear-handle chainsaw, with the patented Auto Choke feature enabling quicker, easier and safer starting. All that's needed, says Echo, is one pull, regardless of the engine temperature, and the chainsaw starts first time – without the risk of flooding the engine.

The chainsaw has a 34cc professional-grade Echo two-stroke engine with low emissions and low noise levels. The Auto Choke comprises a solenoid valve on the engine's carburettor to control the amount of fuel depending on the engine temperature. The usual steps of pulling and pushing the choke, starting with partial throttle and pulling the throttle trigger are all dispensed with. The chainsaw is started on idle speed, making it simpler for infrequent users who want to operate their chainsaw without the need to adjust the choke before starting. Combined with the manufacturer's ES-Start system users get fast and effortless starting.



The CS-352AC is suitable for pruning and cutting firewood.

Another key feature of this saw is the professional-grade anti-vibration system. The inboard clutch enables both easy bar and chain replacement and easy maintenance. Additionally, a large cassette-type air filter, with an aerodynamic air passage, reduces dust discharge entering the airflow into the engine. The CS-352AC comes with a 90PX (0.043 gauge) chain for smoother and faster cutting.

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EVENTS 2020

MARCH 2020

- 27-13 **Ideal Home Show, Olympia, London**
www.idealhomeshow.co.uk
- 21-22 **West of England Game Fair, Bath & West Showground**
www.westofenglandgamefair.co.uk

APRIL 2020

- 9 **CountryTastic, Three Counties Showground, Malvern**
www.countrytastic.co.uk
- 23-26 **Harrogate Spring Flower Show**
www.flowershow.org.uk/spring-show-2020
- 28-30 **The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC**
www.cvshow.com

MAY 2020

- 3 **North Somerset Show**
www.nsas.org.uk
- 9-10 **Nottinghamshire County Show**
www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com
- 11 **Scotgrass, Dumfries**
www.scotgrass.co.uk
- 13-16 **Balmoral Show, Belfast**
www.balmoralshow.co.uk
- 16-17 **Smallholding & Countryside Festival, Royal Welsh Showground**
<https://rwas.wales/smallholding-and-countryside-festival>
- 19-23 **Chelsea Flower Show**
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events
- 20-21 **Grassland & Muck, Ragley Estate**
www.grasslandevent.co.uk/
- 21-23 **Devon County Show**
<http://devoncountyshow.co.uk>
- 23-24 **Herts County Show**
www.hertsshow.com

- 25 **Surrey County Show**
www.surreycountyshow.co.uk/surrey-county-show
- 27-28 **Staffordshire County Show**
www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show
- 27-28 **Suffolk County Show**
<http://suffolkshow.co.uk/>
- 28-30 **Royal Bath & West Show**
www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show
- 29-31 **Gardening Scotland, Royal Highland Centre, Edinburgh**
www.gardeningscotland.com
- 31 **Rutland Show**
www.rutlandcountyshow.com

JUNE 2020

- 4-6 **Royal Cornwall Show**
www.royalcornwallshow.org
- 11-13 **South of England Show**
www.seas.org.uk/south-of-england-show
- 10-11 **Cereals 2020, Duxford**
www.cerealsevent.co.uk
- 12-14 **Three Counties Show, Malvern**
www.royalthreecounties.co.uk
- 16-17 **Cheshire County Show**
www.cheshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 18-21 **BBC Gardeners' World Live – Birmingham NEC**
www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com
- 18-21 **Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh**
www.royalhighlandshow.org
- 24-25 **Lincolnshire Show**
<https://lincolnshireshow.co.uk/>
- 28 **Derbyshire County Show**
www.derbyshirecountyshow.org.uk
- 28 **Royal Isle of Wight County Show**
<https://iwcshow.co.uk/>
- 29 **Cranleigh Show**
www.cranleighshow.co.uk

JULY 2020

- 1-2 **Royal Norfolk Show**
www.royalnorfolkshow.co.uk
- 7-12 **Hampton Court Flower Show**
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-hampton-court-palace-flower-show
- 10-11 **Kent County Show**
<http://kentshowground.co.uk>
- 14-16 **Great Yorkshire Show**
www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk
- 11 **Newport Show**
<http://www.newportshow.co.uk/>
- 20-23 **Royal Welsh Show**
www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh-show/
- 22-26 **RHS Flower Show – Tatton Park**
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-flower-show-tatton-park
- 24-25 **Border Union Show**
<http://www.buas.org/>
- 24-26 **The Game Fair, Hatfield House, Hertfordshire**
www.thegamefair.org
- 25 **Mid Devon Show**
www.middevonshow.co.uk
- 28-30 **New Forest & Hampshire County Show**
www.newforestshow.co.uk

AUGUST 2020

- 6-9 **BBC Countryfile Live, Castle Howard**
www.countryfilelive.com
- 1 **Dumfries Agricultural Show**
www.dumfriesshow.co.uk
- 5 **North Devon Show**
www.northdevonshow.com
- 9 **Ripley Show**
www.ripleyshow.co.uk
- 14-15 **Shrewsbury Flower Show**
www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk
- 18-20 **Pembrokeshire County Show**
www.pembsshow.org
- 20-23 **BBC Countryfile Live, Windsor Great Park**
www.countryfilelive.com

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ALL DEALERS GREAT & SMALL

Franchise 'churn' will result in winners and losers

It was in March 2004 that Jim Dance, owner of successful John Deere dealership Risborough Agricultural, received a phone call from one of his customers. "I think you may be about to lose your Deere franchise, I've spotted Deere decals being applied to vehicles at Farols (the nearby Case dealership)," he was told.

Shocked and mystified, Jim immediately rang Deere which hotly denied the rumour. Within hours, however, the company was back on the phone, making an urgent appointment for an on-site meeting where he was told that his Deere franchise, which he had held for 20 years, was to be terminated the following October. "It was brutal, there was no warning, no discussion, no explanation," said Jim. Risborough Ag was to be part of a 'domino' effect that also saw the franchise removed from two other Deere dealers in the region, with Farol then 'sacking' Case, which they had represented since 1988, becoming one of its top four UK dealers.

In recent years, there have been a number of co-operative and convenient mergers of Deere

dealerships in the UK, such as Tallis Amos, Ripon & RBM Agricultural and Hunt Forest, but Deere has made no secret of the fact that it wants to accelerate the consolidation process. It told its European dealer network at a meeting at Agritechnica in November that it expected to reduce its 350 Europe dealer groups to between 235 and 280 (a third to one-fifth reduction).

Note the use of the word 'groups'. Single outlets are seemingly history. Now relatively large multi-branch dealerships would be at risk. Last December, Sharmans, which operates five branches across the East Midlands, announced that it had been terminated by Deere, effective from next October. Like Jim Dance, they described the move as 'brutal'. "Despite being number-one in our area for the last 25 years and never missing a target, this is now our harsh reality..." they wrote.

SHARK OR BAIT?

The recent announcement by Deere is merely a progression of a policy it has been pursuing since the start of the 2000s. In 2002, the company told a series of US dealer meetings that they should plan for

a future in which they would either be a buyer or a seller, which left many speculating whether their dealership would be 'shark or bait?'

"For years, we talked about Deere as a family," former Deere CEO Robert Lane told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2007. "The fact is, we are not a family, we are a high-performance team."

It is often said that being a John Deere dealer is "not for the faint-hearted". Can a single outlet dealer have the financial resources required? And who can argue with policy decisions that have propelled Deere to be a market-leading brand in markets around the world?

As ever, it's a two-way street. Suppliers sack dealers. Dealers sack suppliers. As technology increases, as age becomes a factor, there will always be churn in franchise retention. Indeed, combining operations suits some dealers.

However, there is enough resilience, enough entrepreneurship, enough spirit, and enough product, to ensure that most dealers, big and small, can forge a future in this industry by offering a service that their customers demand in this changing technological age.

JIM GREEN



SPREADING THE WORD

HAVING A POSITIVE INFLUENCER

Start of the year sees potential for how future industry interest could be generated

No sooner had Mrs Green and I taken down our sustainable, organic, non-denominational Winterville tree, did it seem like it was time to get back into industry show mode. Our sector's year certainly isn't slow in kicking off.

First up, at the start of January, it was great to hear all the positive buzz coming out of LAMMA. Thankfully, nothing occurred like last year when a storm-in-a-Twitter-cup brewed, with a company having some skimpily dressed young ladies draped over exhibits on their stand causing a bit of a fuss. It appears that kind of show marketing has disappeared for good now.

I for one haven't seen any of that sort of thing at any show now for a while – and believe me, I've been looking very carefully – in order to Tweet furiously about it, obviously.

Nope, January's show was abuzz with positivity and upbeat folks both manning stands and walking around the halls. The silly old B-word was, of course, getting bandied around somewhat, but this time more in the sense that at least some clarity might be coming our way after all this time. For a speccy old duffer such as myself, anything which helps me see just that little bit clearer, must be welcomed (I suppose!).

But word was, with this upbeat outlook, punters might this year be willing to pop their hands into their pockets a little bit more freely – certainly more so than they have these last couple of years.

Also, what was encouraging at the NEC was the focus on innovation and young people – two things which I



haven't been accused of having or being for a many a long year.

Large crowds gathered at the show to hear, what I'm reliably informed, are called 'influencers' speak. I have to say the last person to influence me was Clement Attlee – but that's by-the-by. The chaps and chapesses who packed them in, do their influencing on the internet nowadays – with social channels which are, as I believe they say, blowing up right now.

As you can see from the picture, Tom Pemberton (Tom Pemberton Farm Life), Oliver Roberts (Olly's Farm) and Hannah Jackson (RedShepherdess) all appeared on Can-Am's stand, creating quite the moment.

It's scenes like this which make my old bones optimistic for the future. There's clearly interest and expertise out there amongst the next generation to be involved in the land-based industries in all its forms. This was seen in Harrogate too, at the BTME show, with the number of young greenkeepers walking the show floor and attending the myriad educational sessions on offer.

As my old mate Keith Christian says elsewhere in this issue, for our machinery sectors specifically, it's just a question of getting our message out there, in the right form and to the right audience.

Maybe these influencer types are the way to go? Not that I'm volunteering for the role. I can't even influence what noise I make when I get up out of a chair!

But there'll be someone out there who'll fit the requirements perfectly. There needs to be.

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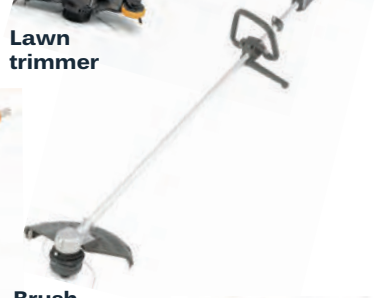
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