

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

March/April 2025

- News
- Industry
- Dealers
- Training
- Shows
- Reviews
- SME Digest

ALL CUSTOMERS ARE KEY CUSTOMERS

So says Evan Hopkins, third-generation operations director of Hopkins Machinery, who discusses new technologies, recruitment and future plans

PUTTING MISCONCEPTIONS TO REST

Makita on the growth of battery-powered products

SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR DEALERS

Small businesses vulnerable when founder retires

EXHIBITION REPORTS

LAMMA, BTME and Denmark's Agromek



UK DEALERS SHOULD VISIT AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR CAREERS

Jo Balmer shares her expert take on the largest outdoor power equipment exhibition in the world

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Letter from the editor **Steve Gibbs**

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Welcome to the March/April 2025 edition of *Service Dealer* magazine.

This issue, we're proud to once again bring you comprehensive coverage of events from around the world - all relevant to our valued dealer readers' areas of specialism. Our internationally roving reporters have been as far afield as the USA! Denmark! And, um... Birmingham! Not forgetting Harrogate, too. Within these pages, our coverage of Equip, Agromek, LAMMA and BTME quickly reveal a common theme of buzzy halls, full of interested punters checking out new machinery innovations.

However, the million-dollar (or krone, or pound) question which stems from these shows is: what does that mean for dealers this coming season?

Whilst I'm sure all will be hoping for a linear equation that says 'packed exhibitions equal huge sales.' I think many would agree that, unfortunately, it isn't ever that simple.

Converting what is undeniably a positive indicator of the market - healthy numbers of visitors - into paying customers is the challenge facing dealers this year. There will be external hurdles

to overcome, such as inflation, fuel prices, customer spending habits and, at the time of writing, potential tariffs from certain (orange) quarters. There will need to be reliability in the supply chain. And - perhaps greatest of all for the sectors that our readers serve - our old friend the weather needs to play its part.

All these elements (or, at least, some of them) need to align this year to put smiles on the faces of our readers. Whilst a packed trade show is an encouraging sign, it is just one piece of the puzzle. Success depends on how well dealers can capitalise on the momentum.

We're already hearing from the network that workshops are busy again at the start of 2025 (see our latest survey results, starting on page 42), but can the service department sustain the business if wholegood sales don't pick up? We know that dealers are an entrepreneurial breed, who will, alongside their suppliers, be following up on the leads generated from these shows with gusto. This year, all will be acutely aware that the key to turning a busy exhibition into a successful season is a proactive follow-up, smart marketing, and long-term relationship building.

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News in brief:

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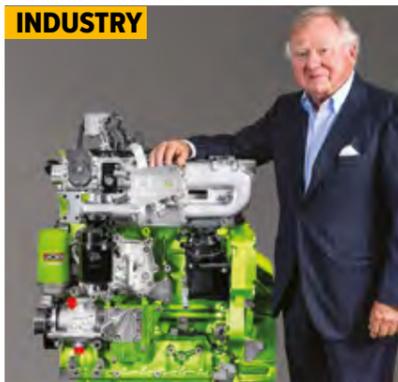
INDUSTRY



Lister Wilder confirmed as new importer

Lister Wilder have announced that they have reached an agreement with Novokraft AG to become the new exclusive UK importer for airtex - described as the world's only continuous and homogenously operating pneumatic soil aerator.

INDUSTRY



Hydrogen engine approved for use

JCB has announced that it has cleared significant hurdles in its development of the world's first hydrogen combustion engine after securing landmark rulings from licensing authorities allowing it to be used commercially in machines, vacuums, and many more.

DEALERS

Henton and Chattell buy site from Farmstar

All staff retained

Henton and Chattell have signed heads of terms to acquire the Newark depot from Farmstar Ltd.

Hentons say this acquisition is a key strategic move for themselves, allowing them to enhance their operations and strengthen their position as a dealer in agricultural, groundcare and garden machinery.

At the time of going to press, while the heads of terms have been agreed, Henton have confirmed that the finalisation of the deal is underway. Plans are in place to ensure a smooth and seamless transition for customers and staff, with uninterrupted service guaranteed throughout the process.

The Newark depot will remain fully operational throughout the transition, with all current staff being retained by Henton and Chattell. The company describe the acquisition as not only preserving the excellent service already provided by Farmstar Newark, but also introducing new product ranges to the region.

Peter Chaloner, managing director at Henton and Chattell, said: "This acquisition represents an exciting opportunity for Henton and Chattell to grow while continuing the exceptional service that Farmstar has provided to customers in the East Midlands. The site offers significant synergies for our business, and ample space to expand, supporting our growth plans.

"We look forward to welcoming the Newark team into the Henton and Chattell family, and bringing new product ranges to the area."

In a statement on social media, Sam Davies, of Farmstar Ltd, added: "This deal represents the best outcome for all parties involved. The key aspect for us is that our loyal staff will transfer over, and we are confident that Henton and Chattell will continue to provide excellent service within the area."

The Newark site will focus on agricultural, groundcare and garden machinery, and further updates have been promised upon completion of the acquisition.



Farmstar's Newark premises

DEALERS



George Browns' depot at Daventry

George Browns adds Deutz Fahr to portfolio

Boosting dealership's power offering

George Browns Ltd – well-known as a Kubota machinery dealer – is adding Deutz-Fahr to its list of farm equipment franchises.

The dealership says the move is designed to underscore its commitment to farming, and expand its product offering to match the needs of large-scale arable farmers and contractors who operate high-output equipment of the type available from Browns' other suppliers. Three of George Browns' branches, stretching across territory from London to Birmingham, are covered by the agreement with Deutz-Fahr parent business SDF UK, and the company's existing franchises are unaffected.

According to Steve Brown, the firm's managing director, pairing with Deutz-Fahr underlines George Browns' intention to grow its agricultural business and strengthen its support for its farmer customers.

"Our other franchises offer our customers four-cylinder tractors of 170hp and below, plus a full line of implements, but, as the latter includes a wide selection of high-output

equipment suited to high-horsepower six-cylinder tractors, we had been considering options that would give us access to the sector above 200hp, and serve our region's large arable farms, in particular," says Steve.

"The Deutz-Fahr range is an ideal fit, giving us models with twice the maximum power output we currently offer, at up to 340hp, with the Deutz-Fahr 9 Series. With the top-end 6 Series models, plus the 7 Series and the 8 Series, we also gain a strong suite of six-cylinder models in the important 200-300hp bracket, enabling us to provide the power farmers and contractors need in a key sector of the market across our region of mid-England, and complementing our top-end arable and forage equipment offerings. We can also offer a wider choice to customers seeking tractors below 200hp."

Steve highlights that the appointment marks the first time for a number of years that Deutz-Fahr tractors have been marketed through a multibranch dealer in the UK – a factor he believes underscores both parties' trust and ambition in the agreement.

"Despite operating four depots, though, we remain very much a family business, with family ownership and management. We span a wide geographical area, and have reshaped our business of late into a 'new-style' George Browns, focusing on our four depots at Chesham in Buckinghamshire, Daventry in Northamptonshire, Dunmow in Essex, and our newest site at Witney in Oxfordshire, but we don't consider ourselves a 'super dealer' in terms of philosophy, or in the way such businesses are often dictated to in which franchises they can hold. Each branch is managed on the same family basis. Farmers, contractors and other customers depend on us for the personal service and support expected from a family business, in which all our team are invested."

Graham Barnwell, SDF UK country manager, added: "The addition of a company of George Browns' standing is a clear illustration of our intentions to bolster Deutz-Fahr's UK dealer network and build on our market share progress, in spite of the tough times being faced by the industry."

DEALERS

From 5K struggles to 12 marathons

'Am I mad?' asks Jason Nettle of WGM

Winchester Garden Machinery director Jason Nettle says that, last year, he struggled to run five kilometres. Now, in 2025, he will embark on a challenge which, he says, makes his knees rattle more than a well-used lawnmower - 12 marathons in 12 months! Here, Jason explains why:

Yes, you've read that right. In the past, I've witnessed the superhuman feats of others driven by worthy causes. Believe me, I'm no marathon runner. I'm more of a 'enjoy-a-good-Sunday-roast' kind of guy. So what could be more ludicrously ambitious than running 26.2 miles every single month for a year? I'm not exactly known for my athletic prowess or renowned for my gazelle-like grace. The thought of running a single marathon is daunting enough, let alone 12. This, my friends, is not going to be a walk in the park, but is, in fact, a recipe for spectacular, self-inflicted pain!

The garden machinery industry can be a bit of a rollercoaster. At times the long hours, high pressure and coffee-fuelled meetings can take their toll. Then, out of season, let's not forget the dealer conferences. You know the drill: late nights, enjoying ourselves a little too much, propping up the bar a bit longer than we should and waking up the next morning feeling less-than-springlike. Let's be honest: traditionally, we men in the garden machinery industry aren't always the best at looking after ourselves.

This 12-marathon challenge is about more than just running - I'm hoping that it's a wake-up call for all of us. It's time to prioritise our health and wellbeing. Whether it's trading in some of those late nights for early-morning exercise, making healthier food choices, or simply scheduling that long-overdue doctor's appointment, let's make a conscious effort to take better care of ourselves.

Service Dealer will be allowing me to share monthly updates on my progress throughout the year via the *Weekly Update*. In these updates, I'll touch on various topics related to health and wellbeing, as well as what I've been doing to keep myself on track. If, in the process, I can encourage even just one person to go and get a simple PSA test (a blood test to check for prostate cancer), then I will have achieved something truly worthwhile. Early detection is key, and it's something we men often neglect.

I'm raising money for four incredible charities: **Cancer Research UK, Prostate Cancer UK, Naomi House** and **St. Michael's Hospice**. These charities do amazing work, both locally and across the UK. I know firsthand how important their work is.

So, how can you help?

- **Sponsor me:** Every penny counts. You can donate directly to my fundraising page: www.justgiving.com/team/jasons-marathon-madness
- **Cheer me on:** Whether it's at the side of a course or from the comfort of your armchair, your support will be invaluable.
- **Get inspired:** Use my challenge as a motivator to get more active yourself. Maybe start with a brisk walk around the block - ditch the lift and take the stairs, or join me!

This is going to be a tough year but I'm determined to see it through. Hopefully, by the end of it, I'll be fitter, stronger and have made a real difference to the lives of others. Plus, maybe I'll even be able to run up a hill without gasping for air.

Wish me luck!

Sponsor Jason at:

www.justgiving.com/team/jasons-marathon-madness



Jason Nettle

DEALERS



The Lister Wilder team on the Baroness stand at BTME 2025

Lister Wilder do the treble!

At Baroness' dealer awards

Baroness UK celebrated their dealers' achievements at BTME 2025 with the return of their annual dealer awards.

For the first time, the three categories of 'Highest Overall Machinery Sales,' 'Highest Growth in Machinery Sales' and 'Salesperson of the Year' were all won by the team at Lister Wilder!

The Baroness UK dealer awards were introduced to recognise the outstanding individual and team efforts across the nationwide network. Lister Wilder emerged as the winners of all three categories, achieving the treble and clean sweep for the very first time. Alongside the team awards for overall sales and highest growth in machinery sales, the individual 'Salesperson of the Year' award was presented to Lister Wilder's David Gray.

"It was a huge surprise, and an incredible honour to find out we'd scooped all three awards," comments Phill Hughes, sales director for Lister Wilder. "I am especially pleased for David Gray, who has championed Baroness and shown his total dedication to our golf customers over the last 12 months. This recognition goes some way to reward him for all the hard work he's put in. Of course, we couldn't achieve what we have without the support of Team Baroness and our aftersales departments, so we'd like to thank them all as we look ahead to another positive year."

Baroness UK sales director Adam Butler added: "All of our dealers have put in an incredible effort throughout 2024, and it becoming our best year yet would simply not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of our entire network."

"We continue to strive for the very best equipment, matched by world-leading backup, and we're getting there year-on-year. The whole team at Baroness UK extend huge congratulations to David and the Lister Wilder team, and we thank all of our dealers and customers for their unwavering and ongoing support."

INDUSTRY

No change at the top of the tractor charts

John Deere were number one again in 2023

The AEA has announced the market share data for 2023 tractor registrations.

The total number of tractors registered in 2023 was 13,343, including both agricultural tractors (over 50hp) and compact tractors (50hp and below).

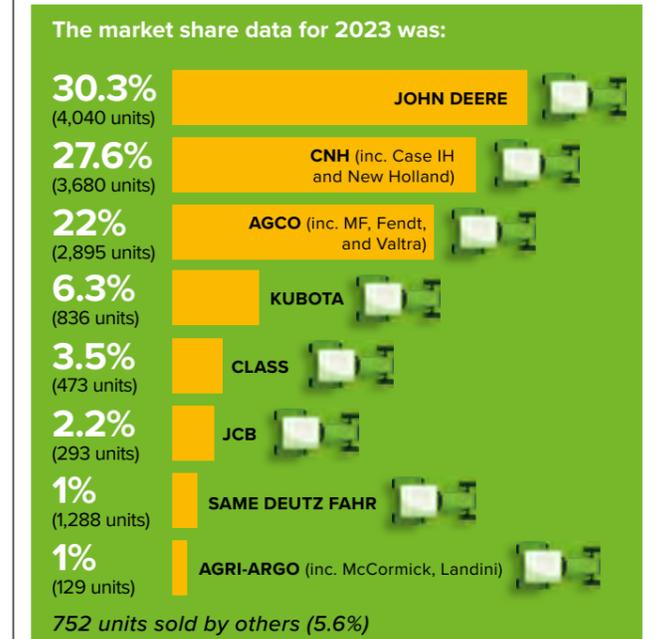
Stephen Howarth, agricultural economist at the Association, offered a word of caution when comparing 2023's figures to those of the year before. He said: "Please note that the market in 2022 was affected by widespread disruption to global supply chains and transportation after the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These may have had an impact on market shares."

The information below shows the number of machines and market share recorded during that year by brand. As always, the data is released after a one-year delay due to competition law restrictions. Figures for 2024 are due to be published in early-2026.

2023 saw John Deere remain at the top of the charts, following its return there in 2022 after two years in second place to CNH. Its market share percentage was almost identical to the previous years', changing only fractionally from 30.4% to 30.3%.

In second place for a consecutive year, CNH saw their share increase slightly from 26.0% to 27.6%.

All the other companies listed on the leaderboard maintained the same position they held in 2022.



EVENTS



Jeremy Clarkson's farm to host Cereals Event

2026's edition to take place at Diddly Squat

Jeremy Clarkson is set to host the Cereals Event next year at Diddly Squat Farm, in what is a new site and collaboration for 2026.

Organisers say that Cereals at Diddly Squat Farm will deliver a technical, progressive arable event, while further raising the profile of British farming. Event director Alli McEntyre said: "Hosting Cereals at the high-profile farm under the auspices of host farmer Jeremy Clarkson will help to draw attention to the ongoing issues that arable farmers, and the wider UK farming industry, are facing."

Over two days (10-11 June 2026), the larger site in Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, will see an estimated 550 exhibitors and upwards of 25,000 visitors call the famed farm home. "Farmers across the country are facing some of the toughest conditions seen in decades," says Jeremy Clarkson. "So we wanted to be involved in something positive, and hosting Cereals was an opportunity for us to run a large-scale, practical event for UK food producers."

"For us, it will be interesting to see how the event's crop plots perform on

our Cotswold brash land, and of course there will be the pop-up Farmer's Dog bar to enjoy."

With a global reach, the goings-on at Diddly Squat Farm have been shared with viewers as far afield as Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa – captivating a broad audience worldwide.

Save the date: Cereals 2025, meanwhile, will be hosted by recent Service Dealer Conference speaker, Andrew Ward at Heath Farm, Lincolnshire, on 11-12 June.

PEOPLE

Richard Walne takes senior Toro role

Managing director of EMEA appointment

The Toro Company has announced that Richard Walne has been named managing director of the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region for its international business.

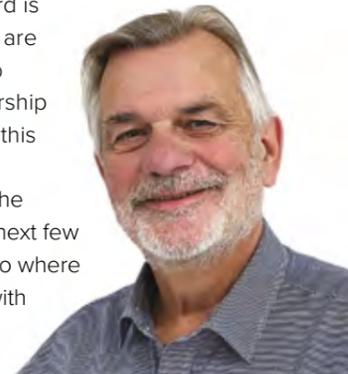
In his new role, Richard will have leadership responsibility for the company's equipment and water businesses in the region.

Richard's career at the Toro Company spans 45 years, during which he has held various roles across the International Business. His journey with Toro began as a technical representative in Europe, and, from there, he has had responsibilities around the world. He held senior marketing and product development roles in the United States. He then transitioned to the Asia Pacific, Australia and China (APAC) region, ultimately serving as managing director, APAC, a position he had held since 2000.

Amy Dahl, international vice president at the Toro Company, said: "Richard's industry knowledge and

impressive career at the Toro Company have been nothing short of exceptional. His contributions have significantly shaped our international business across the globe, and his dedication to our customers and teams is unparalleled. We are thrilled that Richard is moving into this role, and are confident that he will help expand our market leadership and accelerate growth in this region moving forward."

Richard will relocate to the United Kingdom over the next few months, marking a return to where he first began his career with the Toro Company.



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DEALERS



Chairman and CEO James Thurlow (fifth-generation) and managing director of TNS and TN Will Tew (sixth-generation)

TNS celebrating 150 years

Major milestone this year

Thurlow Nunn Standen (TNS), the family-owned and managed agricultural machinery dealer based in East Anglia, is marking its 150th anniversary this year.

From its origins supplying steam engines and threshing equipment, TNS has grown into one of the leading farm machinery suppliers in the region.

Part of the Thurlow Nunn Group, TNS traces its roots to 1875, when George Thurlow, the great-great-grandfather of current chairman James Thurlow, founded the business in Stowmarket, Suffolk. The company has remained family-owned for six generations, and, with significant growth – achieved from humble beginnings – the group now operates from 17 sites, including 11 Thurlow Nunn car dealerships across East Anglia, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Today, TNS operates agricultural machinery dealerships from five strategically-located branches in Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. As a mainline AGCO dealer, they hold franchises for Fendt, Massey Ferguson and Valtra tractors, along with a diverse range of complementary brands, including Manitou, Kubota, SUMO, HE-VA, Opico, Claydon, Kverneland and Major Equipment. It is also possibly the longest operating distributor of Massey Ferguson (formerly Massey Harris) tractors in the world.

“This business has been successfully run by six generations of the same family, which is an achievement the family is proud to celebrate,” said Will Tew, managing director of Thurlow Nunn and Thurlow Nunn Standen. “We

are thrilled to be commemorating our 150th anniversary in 2025 with special events, to include our colleagues, business partners, family and friends. The Thurlow family’s story is both fascinating and significant, and we are excited to be able to share this occasion with a wider audience. As the business continues to grow and thrive, we are eager to see what the future holds.”

To commemorate this milestone, the Thurlow Nunn Group is launching a number of fundraising events in 2025, with the goal of raising £150,000 for **Dementia UK**, a cause that will be central to its anniversary activities. These celebrations will, however, be tinged with sadness, as James Thurlow’s father, John Thurlow, died from dementia in June 2024.

James Thurlow said: “Father was a dedicated and well-known figure in the East Anglian farming community. He was so proud of our family business, and he would have loved being part of our celebrations. Dementia is a cruel disease, which has a devastating effect on sufferers and their families. We feel fortunate to have this opportunity to raise money to help support others affected by the disease.”

TNS are inviting everyone to join them in raising funds to support those impacted by dementia by visiting www.justgiving.com/page/thurlownunnngroup150



PEOPLE

Hunt Forest appoint new branch manager

Will oversee all aspects of depot

Hunt Forest Group, who provide John Deere agricultural, professional turf and homeowner machinery in the South and South-West of England, have announced the appointment of Andy Symes as branch manager of their Dorchester location.

Andy will oversee all aspects of the Dorchester branch’s operations, including sales, aftermarket support, customer service and team management.

With a diverse background in the agricultural industry, Hunts say Andy

brings a wealth of experience to the role. He has held positions at both machinery manufacturers and dealerships throughout the South-West, demonstrating a strong understanding of the industry’s needs. Furthermore, his hands-on experience with livestock – including working and managing pig units – provides valuable insight into the challenges and requirements of agricultural customers.

“We are thrilled to welcome Andy to the Hunt Forest Group team,” said Tim Hunt, managing director.



Andy Symes

“His extensive industry knowledge and proven leadership skills will be invaluable as we continue to grow our presence from the Dorchester branch and provide exceptional service to our customers.”

Andy added, “I am looking forward to meeting our customers and building upon relationships both old and new.”

DEALERS

Ancroft Tractors celebrate 30 years

As a Merlo dealer

North-East England-based agricultural machinery specialists Ancroft Tractors Ltd recently marked a significant milestone - 30 years as a Merlo dealer.

The achievement was celebrated with a long service award presented to managing director Tom Brown at the recent LAMMA Show.

Founded in 1979, Ancroft Tractors is a family-run business, with a proud tradition of serving the agricultural community. With its head office in



Shaun Groom presenting Merlo’s long service award to Tom Brown for his 30 years with the firm

Berwick-upon-Tweed, along with a depot selling and servicing Merlo’s in Kelso, the dealership ensures coverage across Northumberland, the Scottish Borders, and Mid/East Lothian.

Reflecting on the partnership, Shaun Groom, Merlo UK’s managing director, said: “Ancroft Tractors were one of the first dealers in the UK to sell Merlo machines to the agricultural industry. Merlo owes Ancroft Tractors a debt of gratitude for their loyalty and support,

and we are proud to count them as a valued Merlo dealer.”

Tom Brown, managing director at Ancroft Tractors, added: “As a friendly, family-owned business, backed by the best parts, service and sales teams, we have embraced new products and technologies and introduced them to our customers. It has been a privilege to work with Merlo for the past 30 years, and we look forward to continuing this strong partnership in the future.”

INDUSTRY

Yanmar Agri finds new UK and Ireland distribution

Boss ORV appoint first dealerships

Boss Off-Road Vehicles have been appointed as UK and Ireland distributors for Yanmar Agribusiness.

The contract was finalised at the EIMA exhibition in Bologna in November 2024, and final details were completed by this January.

Yanmar was founded more than 100 years ago, and they say their key aim is “realising a sustainable future through technological development.” Boss say this makes them an ideal fit for themselves as “distributors of practical yet ecologically sustainable machinery for groundcare, agricultural and amenity businesses.”

Boss will use Yanmar Turkey Marine A.S. to manage sales and distribution of the Yanmar Agricultural equipment. They will focus initially on the compact range of tractors from



22hp to 60hp for the UK and the Republic of Ireland. “We will be establishing a dealer network over the next few months,” says Boss ORV managing director Phil Everett, “so I will be pleased if interested dealers contact me directly for more information.” “We are exceptionally happy to become the UK and Ireland Yanmar Agri distributors, and share the same philosophies of striving to exceed customer expectations and deliver exceptional value while maintaining sustainable prosperity.” Boss has also announced the appointment of the first two dealers for Yanmar Agri, Neil Peachey at Used4Turf Ltd. in East Anglia and Phil Davey at Machine Serve in the South-West of England.

News in brief: [Read these stories, and more, in full at: www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk)



DEALERS

Deere announce increased collaboration

Under a strategic marketing agreement covering the UK, Ireland and Europe, Wiedenmann turf equipment is now available for purchase through John Deere dealerships.



AGRICULTURE

European operation established

Monarch Tractor has announced the establishment of Monarch Tractor Europe, N.V., meaning they are now positioned for sales of their driver-optional, electric tractor in the European market.



DEALERS

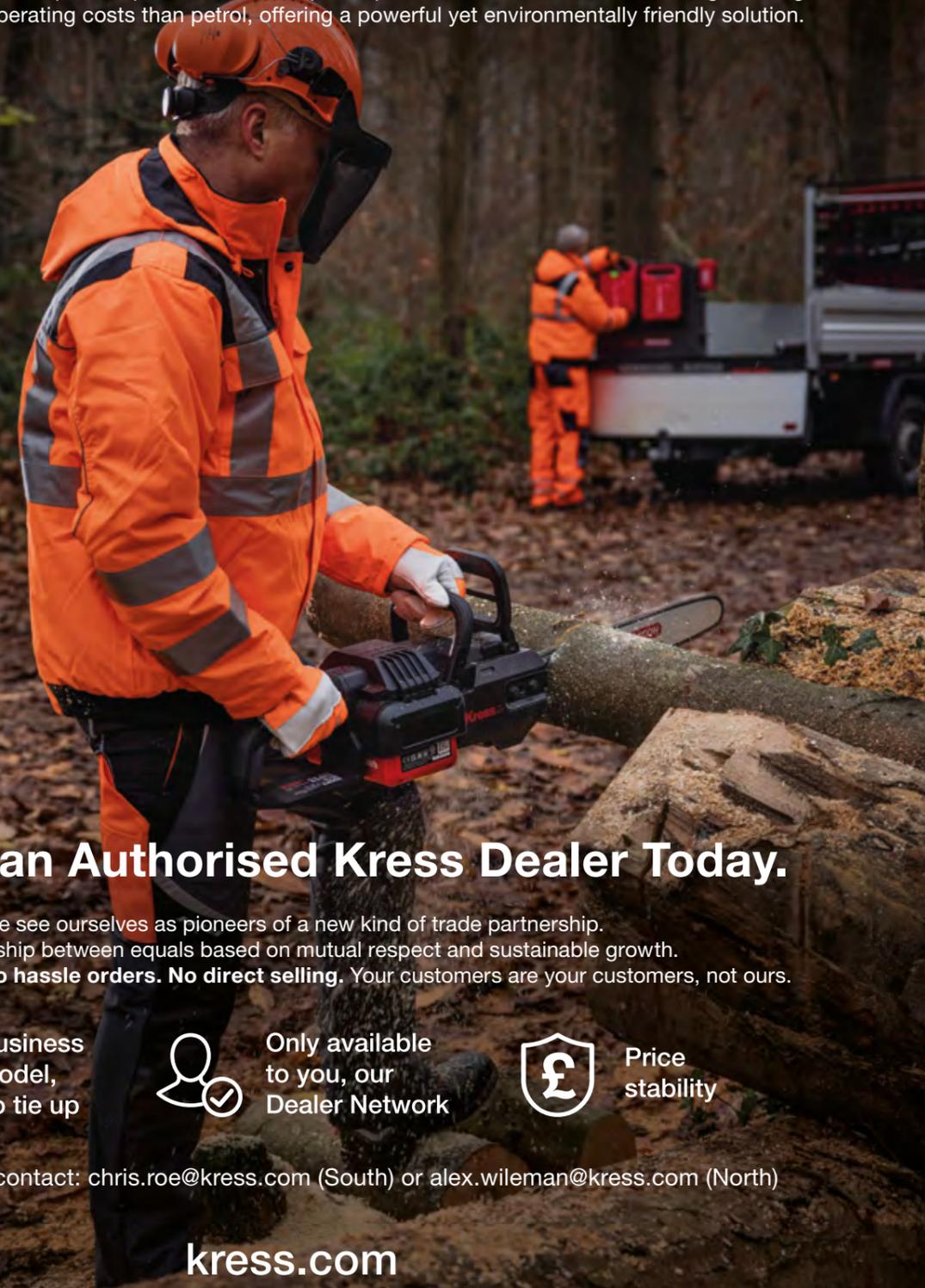
Tuckwells strike major new partnership

The Royal St George’s Golf Club has confirmed what they describe as a “groundbreaking long-term partnership” with local dealer Tuckwells that will see 70 new pieces of John Deere machinery installed at the Kent venue.



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“UK dealers should visit at least once in their careers!”

Last autumn, dealer JO BALMER, of Balmers GM in Burnley, was invited as our diarist of the season to join the *Service Dealer* team at the Equip Exposition in Louisville, Kentucky. Here, she shares her account of the biggest outdoor power exhibition in the world.



Jo Balmer and Duncan Murray-Clarke walking the inside showfloor at the Kentucky Exposition Centre

For those of you who aren't familiar with – or haven't even heard of – Equip Exposition, it takes place in October each year, and quite literally brings together tens of thousands of landscapers, contractors, manufacturers and dealers, who collectively descend on Louisville, Kentucky, USA, for the opportunity to network with their industry counterparts and experience the groundcare industry's latest machinery innovations.

The four-day event is set within the Kentucky Exposition Centre, which, in true American style, is simply colossal, with a huge main hall housing all the major manufacturers that you would expect to be there – John Deere, Toro, Kubota, Husqvarna, STIHL, Kress, Scag, etc. Then there are the additional exhibition halls, which showcase anything and

everything from the world of outdoor power equipment. In addition to the indoor spaces, there is a 30-acre outdoor demonstration area (or 'demo yard,' as our American friends refer to it), which provides attendees the opportunity to get hands-on and test drive the latest kit on offer – and, of course, whilst having lots of fun, too!

It doesn't end there, with hundreds of events happening over the course of the four days, which are a great mix of educational and social events – with my particular favourite being the dog-adoption show (I'll explain more later!).

After travelling from Manchester to Atlanta, then taking another flight back up to Louisville, I met with *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and our amazing camera guy, David Comiskey, around 9pm for a quick bite to eat, before getting our heads down ready for an early start the next day.

📅 Day 1 - Orientation

Although Equip Exposition didn't kick off until 6pm, it gave the *Service Dealer* gang some time to do a bit of exploring around downtown Louisville - which, I have to say, is a lovely city, and probably one that I would never have chosen to visit if it wasn't for this opportunity.

We got a few bits of filming out of the way, then grabbed some lunch whilst sampling the local Bourbon whiskey that Kentucky is world-famous for - and, at this stage, I must make it clear that this was not a holiday (something I found myself saying repeatedly to my colleagues and family back home whenever I connected with them!).

Later that day was when the show really began, with a welcome reception at the famous Churchill Downs Racecourse - home of the Kentucky Derby. There wasn't a horse in sight, just a lot of people who had come from all over the US (and further afield) for the show. This provided a great opportunity to network with other like-minded outdoor power tool professionals.

📅 Day 2 - Dealer and Media Day

The morning of 'Show Day' was set aside for dealers and the media, which gave us the chance to hotfoot it round the main hall and introduce ourselves to some of the manufacturers that we were eager to speak to in more detail over the course of the show.

However, what struck me from the get-go was the amount of battery hand-tool exhibits on display, and, in particular, each manufacturer's own take on charging solutions for professional users, who, as we all know, want all the benefits that battery tools bring, but without the issues surrounding battery run and charge times.

Leading the charge (ahem!) were Milwaukee and Makita, whose one-battery-fits-all system for their range of power tools is nothing new to the market, but, as we all now know, lends itself very well to outdoor power tools, too. So, I guess it's no surprise (and only natural) that power tool manufacturers are expanding their ranges into the garden machinery sector.



Visitors can get hands-on with a vast array of brands



Duncan caught up with Kris Kiser, President and CEO, OPEI, Equip Exposition and the TurfMutt Foundation

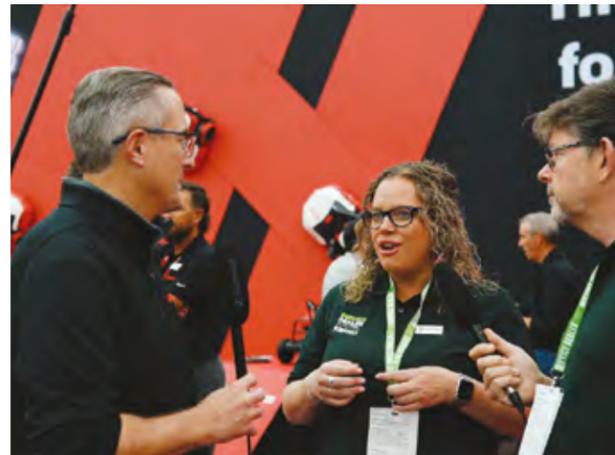


Jo speaking to Ahmed Hamdy, snr. manager, and Paul Beblowski, product manager, MBA of STIHL

There were many 'multiple battery charging walls' on display, with manufacturers all competing to charge the greatest number of batteries simultaneously.

One manufacturer was displaying a massive battery charging wall that, from memory, could charge up to an impressive 120 batteries at once. I'm not quite sure how practical or how much call there is for that in the UK, to be honest – however, it was encouraging to see some of the more 'traditional' manufacturers starting to catch up with their battery charging solutions.

For example, STIHL were exhibiting their latest battery charging port, which can handle around 30 AP batteries being charged all at once. Another battery development that we saw was the various on-vehicle battery charging



Jo and Duncan interviewing Kress' VP of product development, Todd Zimmerman

technologies, which, I'm positive, will only convince more professional users to make the switch from petrol to battery.

Around lunchtime, the doors opened to all remaining delegates, and the place was rammed with, from what I could tell, mostly end users and consumers - but all with the same passion for machinery that we see from our customers here in the UK.

The rest of the afternoon was spent wandering around various stands, and just simply taking it all in. At one point, I remember Duncan asking me, on camera, what my thoughts were as a first-time visitor to Equip Exposition. My reply was: "It's like *Saltex on speed!*" I'm fairly certain that clip will still be on the cutting room floor!

Day 3 - Manufacturer interviews and a roundtable discussion

Fortunately, our hotel was 'just across the road' from the exhibition centre, but, with this being America, it was still a 20-minute walk. And when I say 'road,' it was more akin to crossing the M1 motorway at rush hour! Thankfully, we arrived safely and on time just as the doors opened for Day 3 and another action-packed schedule.

Duncan (DMC) had an interview set up with Don Gao, global CEO of Kress Tools, which gave me the chance to have a mooch about the Kress stand. I have to say that my mind was blown with the Kress Cyber System and it's ultra-fast eight-minute charging time. I'm sure many of my fellow dealers are already familiar with this charging system, but, as Balmers GM aren't Kress dealers, it was something that I had never come across before. I have to say that I wasn't as impressed with the price of it, though!

Next up was the John Deere stand, and one which, as a UK main dealer, I was very much looking forward to visiting, as the John Deere brand is one that I'm very familiar with.

As always with Deere trade stands, it was packed out with end users and consumers, so all the staff seemed to be rushed off their feet. So unfortunately, I didn't get the chance to speak to them like I had hoped to.



Service Dealer's friends Sara Hey and Bob Clements, of dealer training experts BCI, joined Jo and Duncan for a roundtable discussion

As expected, John Deere's machinery lineup centred heavily on their gas-powered, zero-turn product ranges - which is no surprise, as 'gas' is so much cheaper over in the US. Couple that with the fact the standard American 'yard' tends to be substantially larger than the average UK garden, it's completely understandable why these types of machines are extremely popular stateside and not so much over here in the UK.

With such a busy schedule, we grabbed a bite to eat and headed over to 'Mulligan's Mutt Madness' – a dog adoption event which is held annually in one of the exhibition halls at Equip Exposition. Since its inception six years ago, over 70 dogs have been lucky enough to find their 'fur-ever homes' with show attendees. Personally, I think it's a wonderful idea to incorporate a charity within a major industry show like Equip Exposition, and a great way for the event organisers to give something back - take note, UK!

Later that afternoon, DMC and I sat down with Bob Clements and his daughter, Sara Hey, of Bob Clements International – a Missouri based company that specialise in dealer development, offering support, training and best practices to over 6,000 US dealers which they currently work with.

The idea of the 'roundtable discussion' was to share ideas, learn from and discuss the differences between dealerships in the UK and the US - and, ultimately, to gauge whether there was anything that either party could learn from each-other to take back to our respective countries.

On conclusion, what was very apparent is that the UK market appears to have embraced autonomy and robotic mowing far more than our US counterparts, which was also a fair reflection of what we saw throughout the show - very few robotic mowers (with the exception of the obvious manufacturers, Husqvarna and Kress).

Interestingly, we came across a new robotic brand, Yarbo, who have brought to the market a four-in-one machine. This is essentially a robotic power-unit with various attachments, which turns their tracked power-pack into either a lawnmower, a leaf blower or even a snow blower – all of which we were

rather impressed with, but not quite as convinced of their reliability just yet.

That evening we headed out with Bob, Sara and the BCI team for a bite to eat at an authentic Kentucky restaurant. It would be fair to say that I'm a rather fussy eater, so, with most things arriving from the kitchen deep-fried, it all looked the same to me. You can imagine my surprise (and horror) when I chomped down on a frog's leg! Which apparently, in Kentucky, falls under the category of seafood?!

Though overall, it was a lovely evening with great company, and a fantastic way to round off the final day of the trip – but I can safely say that I won't be hurrying back to Louisville for its local cuisine anytime soon!

Day 4 - Home time

Our final morning was spent back at the Equip Exposition Show to check out their outside 'demo yard,' which, in reality, is a 30-acre playground for grown-ups!

There were utility vehicle tracks, monster trucks, mobile cranes, skid-steers, stand-on mowers, ride-on mowers and everything else you would expect to see from the world of commercial ground-care, but, sadly, we didn't get the chance to have a play with anything, as later that afternoon we all had our planes to catch back home to Blighty.

Summary

Equip Exposition must be the largest show of its kind anywhere on the planet, and one that I would encourage my fellow UK dealers to visit at least once in their careers.

Overall, it's clear to see that America is not ready to give up 'the gas' just yet, so robotics and battery power tools may have to wait patiently in the wings for a little longer before they really start to take over as they have done here in the UK.

I'd like to thank Duncan Murray-Clarke, David 'Camera Guy' Comiskey, Steve Gibbs, Lizzie, and the entire *Service Dealer* team for this amazing opportunity to 'tag along' as their dealer representative. And finally - for anyone at Balmers GM who may be reading this – *it was not a holiday!*



You can watch all of Jo and Duncan's interviews from Equip and much more in our Digital Special Report, which can be found at www.servicedealer.co.uk



Busy halls and an upbeat atmosphere

January saw Harrogate enjoy a positive BTME delivered by BIGGA – but do full aisles equate to strong dealer sales this season, asks *Service Dealer* editor, STEVE GIBBS?



Jim Croxton

he end of January saw what must be described as a positive and upbeat BTME taking place in Harrogate.

Following on from the previous week's packed LAMMA at the NEC (read *Martin Rickatson's* view on this, starting on page 38 this issue), the question was: would the first major professional turfcare show of the year follow suit with a similarly well-attended few days? And, whilst the actual numbers at the agricultural machinery show are, of course, much higher, the factor of busy halls and a buzzy atmosphere certainly remained constant for BIGGA's event.

When I spoke to the Association's

CEO, Jim Croxton, on the morning of the second day, he was rightly delighted with how things had panned out.

After the show the official attendance figures were given as 4,204 across the three days, with aisles heaving by 10am on the first two days of the show. Jim confirmed that exhibitor numbers had risen this year, too.

I asked to what he attributed the show's continued popularity, and he explained that he believed it to be twofold. "Firstly," said Jim, "the golf industry's attitude to the education of its members is forever on the increase. More people pre-registered for our 'Continue to Learn' courses than ever before this year - and those that come along for that will tend to bring some colleagues with them, too. So, this side of our event is constantly driving quality visitors to Harrogate.

"The second element is that Harrogate itself, and the timing of BTME, is perfect."

This encouragement of high-quality, purchasing decisionmakers to attend is clearly a major draw for exhibitors. And, with more exhibitors of specialist machinery comes increasing numbers

of dealers, many of whom bring along their own customers to view the new kit. The presence of more dealers is something that Jim told me the show is particularly pleased about. He said: "We are very keen to have more dealers here. They are a vital part of our industry's food chain. We like to think that BTME has a business-family feeling. Everyone is wanted and welcomed here."

Jim summed up why he feels people return to the Harrogate Conference Centre each year, saying: "People often arrive to the show with problems - but they leave with solutions and a smile on their face."

Busy shows, good sales?

The key question now for our dealer readers, following two buzzy shows at the start of the year, is: do these well-attended exhibitions equate to healthy sales this coming season?

Clearly there is plenty of interest out there amongst professional end-users. The fact that so many are willing to leave their place of work to spend a day or so looking around an exhibition of machinery that our readers sell is

encouraging. Is it, however, a simple equation that showing interest means a willingness to part with oodles of cash this year?

'Possibly not' was the consensus I gathered from asking around.

Perhaps what your suppliers view as more crucial when exhibiting at these events is the generation and enhancement of brand awareness. Busy halls, with visitors poring over machinery, raises profiles and plant seeds in the minds of buyers. The impression I picked up on was just how vital an event like BTME is for making those connections with end-users. It's a great venue for starting, or indeed continuing, conversations with high-profile sporting venues and smaller, less well-known facilities alike. Long-term relationships need to begin somewhere, and then require nurturing. A good trade show like Harrogate experienced this January, can do both these things.

As one manufacturer who I spoke to told me, there will be some quality sales out there this season for dealers, but they will require some serious hard work to achieve.

What was said?

Walking the aisles, I spoke to many of the suppliers that our dealer readers will be familiar with. To generalise, I'd say all seemed pleased with the show, encouraged by the quality of visitors that BIGGA had delivered.



Kress' Tony Macer and Jim Kirkwood speaking with *Service Dealer* editor Steve Gibbs

On the **Kress** stand, Tony Macer and Jim Kirkwood talked about the quality conversations they had at their first BTME a year previously, which had helped the company make great strides in the golf sector over the past 12 months. Their ASMs have been all

over the country, they said, north and south, demoing and installing their robotic mowing solutions, which work especially well on undulating terrain.

New on their stand was a series of handheld tools, including a new blower with a handy waistband for carrying additional batteries. Tony told me that golf clubs are showing rapidly-growing interest in battery kit and robots - for both noise reduction and staff redeployment. He said the transition has happened in the minds of many greenkeepers that robotics can be a real solution for their course - so much so that many are now approaching their dealers asking for robots unprompted.

Husqvarna held a launch on their stand, attended by both invited greenkeepers and press, to promote a new campaign video aimed at the golfing sector. Straplined 'For What Matters,' the short film concentrated on all the robotic solutions the company is now able to offer turf professionals. Jonathan Snowball described how one of their new robots, the 580L EPOS, has been designed entirely with golf usage in mind, being able to cut down to 10mm.

Also new was the 535 AWD EPOS, which can cope with remarkably steep 70% gradients. Jonathan explained how this robot can cover up to 6,000 square metres in 48 hours.



Jonathan Snowball



Rob Edwards

Kubota's Rob Edwards told me they had been pleased with the mix of dealers and end users they had seen

come up to their stand - which the manufacturer had once again shared with Baroness. Rob said events such as these were the perfect opportunity to present their new technological developments to the industry, whilst projecting their highly professional image. He said they can have quality conversations with key customers, allowing them to get to know their business and their needs even better.



Paul Butterly

On the **Echo** stand, Paul Butterly explained to me how they hadn't exhibited at Harrogate for quite a few years, but, with their new Echo robotic mowers, it was important that they promoted them to the sector. He said they had plenty of case studies now of golf courses where the machines have been installed and are doing a great job. "This product is a dream," said Paul, "and is utterly topical in golf, where recruitment of staff is a real issue these days." Paul also confirmed they are always on the lookout for new dealers who can put the work into getting out there and demonstrating these robots.



Chris Meacock

Over on the **John Deere** stand, the company were displaying a Wiedenmann spiker attached to one of their machines, illustrating the fact that the turf maintenance equipment is now available through JD dealers in the UK and Europe. Chris Meacock told me that all their UK dealers now had access to the kit which they are encouraging them to stock. Whilst not exclusive to Deere dealers, the appearance of the additional machinery in showrooms is the result of a cooperation that the two manufacturers began a couple of years ago.



Guy Overton and Stuart Rose

Guy Overton told me that the **Mean Green** Evo 96 had generated an awful lot of interest for themselves and their dealers since its launch at last autumn's GroundsFest. On the stand at BTME, it was gaining plenty of attention from greenkeepers, who perhaps hadn't heard of it before and were looking for a wide-area electric zero-turn. It was their first time exhibiting at this show, and he said he'd been really pleased with the quality conversations they'd had with new contacts and with the customers that had been on their stand.



John McGrady

Cramer's John McGrady said he saw BTME as a golden opportunity to get their company's relatively new name further out there amongst the golf professionals. He told me the firm are doing well in the establishment of their dealer network, and felt it was important to support them with high-profile appearances at shows like BIGGA's.



Cobra's busy stand

Speaking to Peter and Liz Chaloner on their stand, not only were they showing off the latest **Cobra** and **Ego** machinery, they were also keen to tell me about **Henton & Chattell's** purchase of Farmstar's Newark site (see *this issue's 'News' pages*). They were both so happy, they said, that they were able to keep on all staff from the branch - all of whom form such a wonderful, close-knit team.



The new Fairway Falcon

Campey were introducing new products, including the Fairway Falcon brush. This new unit can follow contours well, and can be towed behind a vehicle (such as a Gator or Workman), said Lee Morgado. This particular unit had sold well in the U.S. for the past few years, he explained, but this was the first time it was being used in the UK - so Campey were keen to see how it performed in our conditions.

Show roundup!

Other product news around **BTME '25** included:



Toro Turf Pro

Toro introduced the Turf Pro 500/300 autonomous mowers, which can mow up to 18.5 acres/7.5 hectares three times per week. Also new was Range Pro autonomous golf ball-picking robot, which is capable of collecting over 15,000 balls in 24 hours from the driving range.

Both these introductions feature wireless monitoring and control capabilities, allowing users to track and adjust their performance via computer or mobile device.



PSD ELIET EcoCure

PSD Groundscare displayed the new Eliet EcoCure ZR WS self-propelled topdresser. At 90cm wide, the company said its movement drive is fully hydrostatic, with continuously adjustable forward and reverse speed, making the machine manoeuvrable and allowing optimal topdressing both forwards and reverse.

Amongst the machinery on the **Iseki** stand was the TG6507 IQ Tractor with Loader, equipped with the IQ transmission system. The company said



Iseki Tractor

the IQ dual-clutch gearbox works on the principle of a direct-shift gearbox, which consists of two gearboxes working in unison, offering the control of a manual with the convenience of an automatic.



Price Ventrac ET202

Price Turfcare returned to the show with the Ventrac 4520 compact tractor unit and a selection of attachments, including the pictured ET202 Turbine Blower. This front discharge nozzle can be hydraulically rotated 360 degrees from the comfort of the operator's seat, said the company. The front bumper protects the nozzle from damage.



Redexim Verti-Drain

Redexim's flagship high-speed aerator, the Verti-Drain 2519, made a return to Harrogate. The unit features an easy-to-adjust heave lever and slip clutch PTO drive, offering PTO speed of up to 540rpm. This allows it to cover up to 8739m² per hour.



Infinicut

Infinicut returned to Harrogate with two new patent-pending additions to the range. The new design of the 22" FX and 26" FX featured a brand new cutting system and attachment/removal method, offering what the company described as "unparalleled accuracy of cut and ease of maintenance."



Foley 661

Foley displayed a selection of their automated ACCU-Pro cylinder grinders and ACCU-Pro bedknife grinders. New was the floor-level 642 Quick Spin Reel Grinder, designed to accommodate the widest of mower cylinders and to provide a simple roll-on/roll-off solution to grinding.



Succession planning for dealers

Small businesses are vulnerable when the initial founder retires, and succession plans – whatever they are – need to be in place long before this eventuality if the business is to continue, writes KEITH CHRISTIAN.

Service Dealer have been beating the drum about succession planning over the years, and it is a topic that keeps raising its troublesome head, especially with the many pressures that exist within the land-based engineering sector for all sizes of company.

Our industry is made up of dealers who are large and small, but predominantly family-owned. This makes the matter of succession planning a personal issue, and one that can involve several generations and some hard decision-making when retirement beckons, or ill health calls time on a business that has been built up over a lifetime.

I don't think it is a doom-and-gloom

scenario, but just one that needs consideration in a timely manner. The very large agricultural dealers may have been around for 100 years or more, with family backgrounds that can easily support succession, and planning maybe more a case of succession within the business rather than a decision as to carry on or not.

At the other end of the scale is the much smaller garden machinery dealer that may have been around for the working life of the owners, but which have no family succession to carry on running, making the continuity of the business a more difficult task to ensure. We are now seeing this dilemma within some of the bigger businesses in our industry, where there is no succession, and a lifetime's work is closed or, in some cases, taken over

by a larger company.

In my nearly fifty years in the industry, I have had the privilege to work with many family businesses, from fathers and mothers to their sons and daughters, and, indeed, started my career with H Burlingham's, who were a third-generation company. I find it encouraging nowadays to be able to sit down with the children of many dealers who are working within their parents' business or have taken over. In many cases, these are definitely a chip-off-the-old-block, with the same values and work ethic of their predecessors – but with many different challenges.

What saddens me are those dealers that have worked so hard over the years, and who are unable to pass their businesses onto family or even

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their own staff, and end up having to break up a life's work with the loss of a dealership to our industry.

Whilst the issues of succession may appear to be obvious, and I may be stating the obvious in my ramblings about this subject, it may be helpful for some to just touch on what needs to be considered to be prepared before you hit the road to retirement. Even though I worked for an owner for around 25 years running Claymore Grass Machinery, it was a difficult time to walk away from it when we sold it to what is now FGM Claymore, and the business is still in private family hands. It is great that it is still going strong, and a testament to the strong family that owns and runs it. In this case, the succession of the business has worked well.

Succession planning according to Chat GPT:

“Succession planning is a strategic process that ensures the seamless transition of leadership roles within an organisation. It involves identifying and developing potential successors to fill key positions, ensuring the long-term success and stability of the business.

‘Whether you’re a small business owner or part of a large corporation, succession planning is crucial for preparing for the future and safeguarding your company’s operations, culture, and vision.’

This definition focuses on the

staff elements of a business, and the futureproofing that is needed to ensure the longevity of a business or organisation. This is an easy task for those firms that have multiple staff members in departmental roles, and where internal promotion or external recruitment can ensure the fulfilment of the roles and the ongoing success of the business. But it's not so easy for a business with a small number of employees.

It is important for succession to ensure business continuity, employee retention, futureproofing and bringing new ideas to the business – mostly obvious goals and good practice. But! What can one do when the business is going to come to a close and has no real succession plan for the business as a whole? It does seem that ‘modern’ retailing, customer buying trends and the Internet are making it more difficult for smaller companies to survive or be attractive enough to be sold as a going concern. Indeed, it is clear from closures on UK high streets that this difficulty extends to some of the UK's largest retailers, who cannot compete with changing consumer buying patterns.

Succession planning in any company is a huge part of a business strategy, and no doubt many businesses will be undertaking this process as a natural part of their operation. Those who have family members within the business, or who are planning to join the business,

will have plans to ensure this process can benefit the long-term future of the business. Our concern needs to be with those dealers that do not have any natural succession in place for the continuation of the business, and where an exit strategy needs to be considered to either ensure the future of the business or to close it in the most efficient and least painful way.

Business Exit Planning according to Wikipedia:

“With the global proliferation of SMEs, issues of business succession and continuity have become increasingly common. When the owner of a business becomes incapacitated or passes away, it is often necessary to shut down an otherwise healthy business. Or in many instances, successors inherit a healthy business, which is forced into bankruptcy because of lack of available liquidity to pay inheritance taxes and other taxes. Proper planning helps avoid many of the problems associated with succession and transfer of ownership.”

Business Exit Planning is the process of explicitly defining exit-related objectives for the owner(s) of a business, followed by the design of a comprehensive strategy and road map that will take into account all personal, business, financial, legal, and taxation aspects of achieving those objectives.

Family businesses

Our focus, for this article, needs to be on the family business and how it can be helped to continue when the founder or leadership team retires or otherwise leaves the business. Small businesses are vulnerable when the initial founder retires, and succession plans – whatever they are – need to be in place long before this eventuality if the business is to continue.

I have spoken to many people about this over the years (including at recent shows), and there are a variety of reasons that can affect how a business carries on, or if it will have to close. Clearly, if there is no suitable family

succession, alternatives need to be considered. These can be limited to only a few alternatives: management buyouts, the sale of the business, or a closure through bankruptcy.

A management buyout needs a lot of forward planning, but can be a satisfactory way of providing continuity for the business, either by the buyout team financing the buyout privately or commercially, or the outgoing owner helping with a staged buyout, which could be partly funded from the business profits. Hopefully, if the owner also owns the premises, these have been separated from the business and form a type of retirement fund, and can be rented back to the new business or sold to them or another landlord.

Many owners of dealerships consider they have a duty of care to their employees, even if they are retiring or leaving the business, so management buyouts can suit all those concerned and are a very effective way for the business to continue.

Selling to a new owner would be an attractive option, but getting any real value for it other than maybe a straightforward asset purchase may prove difficult in today's climate. A possible sale or takeover by a nearby competitor may be an option, and one that has happened fairly often recently, with agricultural machinery dealers

ensuring that the staff will have a future within the new business.

Running the business down and selling off assets with a view to full closure is a common practice, but usually the owner will have retained the premises and either rented them out for another use or sold them for development. This tends to be the owner's 'pension pot,' or his or her ultimate way of cashing in.

There is a possibility that, in winding down the business, it could go into receivership or bankruptcy,

Falling out with business partners is another. Ill health can be the more sudden reason, and a nightmare when there are no succession plans in place. One partner could want to retire for whatever reason, causing a need to refinance or maybe buy out the partner. Or perhaps the owner or founder might simply want to retire and perhaps liquidate the business for the sake of a pension fund. This will normally be well-planned and expected, but still may result in the closure of the business.

Whatever way we look at it, we have an aging network of dealerships who are being affected by new legislation – higher taxes, lower margins and some very difficult trading conditions

in a more demanding consumer market. At the same time, there are the Zoomers coming into the business that have, generally, a different work ethic to their older counterparts, and a different way of looking at the workplace, which can be a challenge for older generations. It is tough, but we are a tough industry.

In conclusion: to all our family-owned dealerships, I offer the advice that I was once given by a lady taxi driver and an ex-army vet in Troy, New York State. ‘Preparation and planning prevents poor performance.’ As she said, just remember the ‘five Ps’ and you will be OK.

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.”

Benjamin Franklin

but there are longer-term implications in going down this route. If it can be avoided, it should be.

As difficult as it may seem – and as sad as it can be – having a well-planned exit strategy in place long beforehand is required. This can accommodate the unexpected, and will help toward a smooth transition or business closure. Benjamin Franklin has been quoted as saying: ***“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.”***

Those that I have spoken with over the years have many reasons for needing to pass on or close their businesses. The lack of family succession is usually the main issue.



Dealer inspiration from Danish show

It may be 80% smaller than the UK, with 90% fewer people, but Denmark is a significant producer of both farm produce and ag equipment. MARTIN RICKATSON toured its major winter show, Agromek, to see what farm machinery innovations importers and domestic makers have to offer.

There are reckoned to be around 5.8m people in Denmark, but the country's agricultural productivity is such that it is calculated to be capable of feeding three times that number. Its expertise in dairy and pig production is well-known, but the country is also a significant European producer of feed grains and other crops.

From a farm machinery point of view, Denmark is similarly productive. Across a range of equipment, from manure handling to fertiliser spreading to cultivation tools, key manufacturers who retail their products worldwide (including the UK) include the likes of Hardi, Samson, Bogballe and Dalbo. The biennial Agromek show is held every other November in the mid-northern town of Herning. Just as here – and most probably everywhere – the country's farmers (and therefore its farm machinery dealers) are facing some political challenges, with the Danish government having announced details of a long-anticipated 'Green Tripartite' deal just prior to the show. This places limits on farm nitrogen emissions, and offers incentives to put more land down to trees. That sparked some nervousness at the event about the future, but both farmers and the manufacturers and dealers that supply them also seemed determined to adapt and make the best of the legislation now its format is becoming clear.

Loaders and excavators

Weidemann's new three-strong 60 series handler range replaces its LP machines for 2025, with monoboom (3.24m-3.70m max lift height) or telescopic (4.30m-5.04m) versions. The former six-post cab has been replaced by a new four-pillar design that incorporates bigger doors and a wrap-around rear window, with rearward vision further aided by a sloping bonnet. Noise levels have been cut, and air conditioning improved. Power is provided by Kohler Stage V 57-75hp DPF/DEF engines, transversely mounted for



Weidemann's new 60 series handler

better drive efficiency and service access. Diesel capacity has been upped to 80 litres. The EcoDrive hydrostatic transmission includes an eco mode, which automatically lowers engine speed to 2,200rpm once desired forward speed is reached, to minimise fuel consumption and noise in circumstances requiring only low torque. Two other modes are respectively aimed at the use of hydraulically-operated attachments and maximising efficiency in typical in/back/out/return work cycles. Weidemann also showed a new sub-2m high compact 6.0m/2.5t T6025 telehandler, with features including Vertical Lift System automatic boom extension/retraction and auto bucket shaking.

Swedish wheel loader maker Ljungby debuted an electric drivetrain version of the established second-smallest machine in its range, the L11, which has a 10t tipping capacity. Its usual AGCO Power 6.6-litre engine has been replaced by two 100kWh batteries and two ZF electric motors, one serving the ZF-sourced driveline and the other the hydraulic functions. The firm plans electric power options across its other core models of 9, 13, 15, 18 and 20-tonne tipping capacity.

Resulting from parent firm CNH's recent acquisition of



Electric drivetrain version of L11 wheel loader from Ljungby

Italian compact excavator maker Sampierana, **New Holland** displayed new 6-to-12-tonne midi excavators, adding to its existing mini models. There are one short radius and four zero tail swing models, all with rubber or steel track options, and three boom types – a traditional unit, a two-piece boom providing extended reach or dump height on the E75D and E100D models, and a side boom on the E85D for heavy-duty work. Maximum reach spans 6,650-8,040mm, maximum digging depth 4,020-4,670mm, and maximum dump height 4,590-6,270mm.



New 6-to-12-tonne midi excavators from New Holland

Grassland and livestock machinery

Pöttinger's SensoSafe wildlife hazard scanner, designed to reduce the possibility of accidentally striking creatures concealed within grass swards, is now available in a version compatible with equipment of up to 10m working width. The 3m-wide scanner can be mounted on machines including mowers and forage harvesters. It uses infrared light that reflects off the fur of wild animals and the feathers of birds, and is said to be able to distinguish between these and – for example – molehills, while also overcoming the warm day problems that can impair the performance of alternatives, such as thermal imaging cameras.



Wider version of Pöttinger SensoSafe wildlife hazard scanner

Innovations from **Siloking**, the diet feed/mixer wagon arm of Kverneland, included DryScan. Integrated into the Siloking assistance systems and software applications, it enables feeding to be varied according to drymatter rather than fresh weight. In addition, Siloking showed a new magnet design, with a removable housing. This not only aids cleaning, but also eases foreign object removal because the magnet holding force is eliminated, while also cutting injury risk from the mixing auger/knives.



Siloking DryScan drymatter-based feeding development

Arable equipment

Denmark's **Dalbo** has added a 12m model to its existing line of 5m and 8m Powerchain disc cultivators. It is designed to work at around 5cm deep for cover crop destruction, shallow cultivation and control of weed flushes ahead of



New 12m Dalbo Powerchain disc cultivator



Bogballe Dynamic Headland Spreading system for M-Line Plus

crop establishment, 300-350hp is recommended up front to achieve the advised 15km/hr for good soil/trash mixing. Options include a seeder for establishing follow-up cover crops.

Danish fertiliser spreader specialist **Bogballe**, whose products are imported here by Yorks-based KRM, showed its new Dynamic Headland Spreading system for its M-Line Plus spreaders. This allows the tractor driver to switch on-the-go between normal and headland spreading, and choose whether the field border should be on the right or left side in the direction of travel. Based on the company's Section Control Dynamic system, where the spread pattern adapts to field conditions in wedges and at changing tramline distances, Dynamic Headland Spreading is compatible with Bogballe models capable of spreading from 27-42m, and works in connection with the discs rotating in the same direction of rotation as with normal spreading, which, the firm says, maintains the maximum overlap between the left and right spread pattern. The system is retrofittable to current M-Line Plus spreaders with Section Control Dynamic and Calibrator Totz or Isobus Gen II control.



CMN Maskintec DiscSeeder for establishment of cover crops

Designed specifically for cover crop establishment, **CMN Maskintec's** 6.0/9.0/12.0m DiscSeeder incorporates features claimed to help minimise weed growth and save up to 10-15% on seed usage. Low-disturbance double-disc coulters have individual depth control for each seed row, followed by rubber press wheels. The drill can work with



MSR Plant Technology six-row variable implement frame

either GPS or camera-based auto-guidance to ensure precise placement between rows.

Another Danish firm, **MSR Plant Technology**, launched a six-row variable implement frame for mechanical weeding and growth suppression with minimal soil disturbance in row crops such as potatoes. While usually a potato planter and a following inter-row weeder would have to be of matching widths, this implement is adjustable according to requirements. It can also be fitted with the same firm's Crown Crusher for natural haulm destruction. The company also showed the two, four, six or eight-row Opti Weeder, designed for high-speed work at 10-25 km per hour, and reckoned accurate to within 1cm from the crop. Six and eight-row versions are available with fixed or variable frame. While Kverneland and Ovlac are the main players in the UK



Escudero Ecologic shallow plough

market for shallow ploughs, Spain's **Escudero** showed off its shallow design, the Ecologic. Available in five-to-11-furrow mounted versions, plus 11-to-14-furrow semi-mounted models with hydraulic furrow width adjustment, it is designed to work at 10-25cm and with a furrow width of 32-37cm. Shearbolt protection is standard, and hydraulic reset optional. Shallow ploughing, says the firm, retains nutrients and organic matter in the upper soil layer, helps retain moisture on lighter soils, and reduces fuel consumption, while also retaining weed control and seedbed creation benefits.



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All customers are key customers

So says Evan Hopkins, third-generation operations director of Hopkins Machinery, who have four depots across Wales and the west of England. LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR, visited the Newport depot to discuss the business' structure, new technologies, recruitment and future plans.



Evan Hopkins, operations director of Hopkins Machinery

A recent trip to Newport, South Wales saw me meet up with Evan Hopkins, operations director and third-generation family member involved in the Hopkins Machinery business.

Since 1987, the Hopkins family have specialised in agricultural, groundcare, garden and construction machinery hire and sales, forging relationships with leading manufacturers (such as Kubota, Toro, Club Car, STIHL, Kawasaki, Kramer, Dennis, Bomford and many others) to offer high-quality products to their

diverse range of customers.

Evan told me that their aim is to always focus on building long term-relationships, supplying everyone from local groundsmen to major events, clubs, associations and homeowners. They are preferred supplier for a number of top sporting events and bodies, including the European Tour, Ryder Cup, Welsh Rugby Union and Welsh Football Association.

Today, the business runs four depots – two in Wales (at Brecon and Newport), one in Kilcot, Gloucestershire, and one in Devon near Exeter.

Service Dealer: What's the history of the company?

Evan Hopkins: There are two companies - Ted Hopkins Ltd and Tractor Hire Ltd. We advertise them as one company, Hopkins Machinery. Both were started in 1987 by my grandfather, Edwin (Ted) Hopkins, and my father, Chris Hopkins. Ted started servicing and repairing Ferguson tractors in 1954, when he left National Service. He was an agricultural engineer working, for J E Howard in Newport Cattle Market, who later became Western Farm Implements. As group service manager, he was made redundant at

the age of 55 in 1986. Shortly after, he was approached by Colin Gregory to take on the Iseki franchise and start selling around the area of Cardiff and Newport. We gained the Massey Ferguson franchise in 1991, became a Toro dealer in 1996, and, at the same time, we started working with Dennis.

In 2004, we became Club Car dealers, which has led to the expansion of our hire division to include short-term event hire and also long-term contract hire on golf buggies and electric utility vehicles. This is a great product to have, and compliments the Toro franchise and our services we can offer to golf clubs and holiday parks - and now also to agricultural customers that are considering electric vehicles.

Skip to 2005, we were approached by Kubota to take on the agricultural and groundcare products for the Swansea, Cardiff and Newport area. We had to make a choice between Massey Ferguson and Kubota. This led to us resigning as Massey Ferguson dealers and taking on the Kubota franchise. This was the best decision for the company as, due to the foot-and-mouth crisis and a lot of farms disappearing around our Newport area, it meant that agricultural business was getting more difficult.

However, we still wanted to have an agricultural tractor franchise, so we approached Deutz-Fahr in 2006 and became dealers for them. However, due to Kubota's release of the M7 series tractor in 2014/15, Deutz-Fahr thought it best that we should no longer be dealers for their franchise.

SD: How do you manage the business to make sure all four branches are working on the same wavelength?

EH: We have a service manager in each depot that reports to the group aftersales manager. We also have a parts supervisor in each depot that reports to the parts manager. The aftersales manager and parts manager oversee each of those departments across the depots. Sales is allocated to different sales team members, depending on customer type and area. We have two groundcare sales representatives, one for Wales and one based in England, that are focused on golf, local authorities, grounds and sports facilities.

Our other two sales representatives are focused on agriculture, holiday parks, contractors and plant machinery customers. We also have depot-based sales representatives that are responsible for domestic sales, and walk-in customers looking for anything we sell.

All sales and marketing are managed by my father, Chris, and myself. Our hire business, along with our transport, is controlled from our Newport depot by the hire manager and hire controller. Newport has the operator's licence for the trucks and the largest space for the equipment. All warranty goes through our group warranty manger, based in our Newport depot.

SD: What product areas do you specialise in?

EH: We sell a wide range of agricultural tractors, utility vehicles and ground care products. We also run a vast hire business, offering both equipment and transportation vehicles. Over the years, we have been involved in



Evan says their Club Car hire operation probably occupies a third of their 10-acre site



Hire of machinery is a major aspect of the Hopkins business

supplying and hiring to many major sporting events, such as the Open Golf, Ryder Cup in the UK & Europe, and other major tournaments.

SD: Have you embraced battery technologies?

EH: I would say we have, as we do quite a lot of sales of Toro, STIHL and Kramer electric handheld tools. Plus, we have sold a lot of electric golf carts for the last 20 years, with 95% of the buggies we have on our hire fleet being electric. We are now Husqvarna dealers and looking to grow our sales more in the battery-powered tool range with the brand.

SD: How do you recycle spent batteries?

EH: We have our own waste carriers' licence and take them to the recycling centres. We also convert many of our Club Car batteries to

lithium batteries once the lead acid batteries are spent. We have also invested in solar panels on the roofs of our buildings to help reduce our huge electricity bills for charging so many battery-driven products.

SD: Are you selling robotics?

EH: This is something that we are moving into now, and we feel we need to. We have sold a few to domestic customers in the past few years, but have not done it in a big way. More of our commercial customers are looking into this technology, and we feel that it has the potential for us to help grow our domestic business more, with the new Toro and Husqvarna ranges now available to us. We are looking to employ and train up a dedicated robotic mower specialist that will focus on these products.



Kubota RTV are Hopkins' most popular products believes Evan



Domestic machinery inside the showroom



Hopkins sell and service machinery for several sporting facilities and bodies

Our Club Car hire operations probably occupies a third of our 10-acre site in terms of providing storage, repair areas and PDI of the vast range of products we have. The sheer size of this part of the business is staggering.

SD: Do you sell much online?

EH: Yes, we do. I started an online shop around Covid. This was done primarily due to having the time, and to capture business due to people not visiting the showrooms. Also, to help move aged stock - and the fact is, this is how people tend to shop in the modern world. With more and more manufacturers beginning to go down this root, I feel it is important that we are able to offer the same services.

SD: Have you suffered much from theft at your depots?

EH: Unfortunately, yes. We have been targeted in the past, with various break-ins to steal machinery from our depots. Notably, it was after a substantial loss of five RTV Kubota's at our Newport depot a few years ago - by a professional organised gang - that we reviewed our security measures and invested heavily in fencing, security cameras and surveillance equipment at all our depots. Touch wood - since then, we have not been targeted.

SD: So, what would you say are your most popular products?

EH: I think the most popular product we do is the Kubota RTV X1110. We believe this is an unrivalled machine in terms of specification and price in the market sector. We have been very successful with this product with all customer types, and, with our hire fleet running 100-plus of these machines, we get a good number of good-quality, low-hour machines that we can sell on once we need to refresh our fleet. It has a great residual value that has always held steady, as the Kubota is a very reliable, hard-wearing machine. We are also doing very well selling

some basic sports pitch maintenance machinery packages.

SD: Who are your key customers?

EH: All customers are key customers. However, we do a large volume of our business with local authorities and golf clubs due to the size of our Toro area, combined with our Kubota dealership and the fact that we do Club Car as well. Second to that, I would say that we are our biggest customer - our hire division has grown year-on-year, and we supply some major events on our short-term hire business, and we also have some good customers from the tourism industry on our long-term hire business.

SD: Do you find it easy to recruit staff?

EH: Not really. I think this is one of the most difficult aspects of the business and industry. Mainly with engineers - it is hard to find well-qualified staff with experience of having worked on machines in the agricultural and groundcare industry.

The government's new NI contributions tax is also likely to affect many businesses, in terms of their recruitment policy and requirements.

Having four depots, we generally find the recruitment of staff will differ from area to area. We may find it hard to recruit engineers in Newport, but find it easier in Bristol. Demographics play a huge part in our recruitment strategies.

SD: What do you think the biggest challenges will be for dealers in 2025?

EH: Succession planning will be a headache for many dealers. As a family-run business, the fact that I am only 33 means my own children are years away from the thought of them coming into the business. So, we need to look at our current staff and external professionals that may have the relevant skills to help run the business in the coming years.

We have some long-term, loyal staff who have been with the company



Evan in the Newport branch's workshop

many years, who would, in my eyes, be the first point of call for consideration to help develop and take the company forward.

SD: What plans do you have for the company?

EH: Having recently taken on Kubota & Kverneland and Toro at our new depot at Kilcot, with sales of both ag and groundcare equipment going really well, we will be looking to develop into the construction side of the business on both the sales and hire sides.

We are also looking at the possibility of opening another depot to meet the needs of customers in the coming years. There are areas in Wales that in the future may warrant our services.

As for robotic technologies, I

have already said the acquisition of Husqvarna will open a wealth of opportunities in supplying their vast range of robotic mowers. We are seeing several golf courses assessing the advantages of using this new technology, to free up staff to enable them to undertake other works.

SD: Thank you.

"I would like to thank Evan for taking the time to show me around their main depot site. The sheer size of this dealership is staggering, and a testament to what can be achieved. This is certainly one of the biggest dealers I have visited. Under the leadership and support from their dedicated staff, the future of the company looks very bright."

Putting misconceptions to rest

Since Makita shifted to solely producing battery-powered tools, Mark Earles, business development manager for outdoor power equipment, believes professional-users have proved the technology's capabilities via real-world applications. Here he speaks to *Service Dealer* editor, STEVE GIBBS, about the developing market, overcoming dealer concerns, and his year as AEA president.



Makita's business development manager for outdoor power equipment, Mark Earles

Service Dealer: It has been several years since Makita announced they would only produce battery-powered machinery. How has business developed for you since then?

Mark Earles: We announced that we would cease to manufacture petrol products in 2020, and we experienced a really positive response from the market. Users are well-educated on the benefits of battery-powered

equipment – both from a versatility and safety point of view, and also from an environmental perspective, where the use of batteries eliminate the concerns around emissions and high levels of carbon dioxide that are associated with petrol machinery. It wasn't long before our cordless volumes exceeded the combined sales of both battery and petrol-powered products.

SD: Have you seen a shift in the attitudes of professional users to battery-powered equipment in those intervening years?

ME: As modern lithium-ion battery technology has advanced to be incredibly energy efficient and long-lasting, so too has the possibilities that it offers - meaning today's battery-powered tools can achieve torque and speed outputs that are comparable to their corded, petrol or pneumatic counterparts, with categories of cordless tools now available that were once considered unthinkable.

As such, attitudes have indeed shifted positively across all specialisms. For example, the arboriculture sector has been a really keen adopter, with a lot of users moving over to battery-powered hedge trimmers, pole saws, pole hedge trimmers, top-handle chainsaws and rear-handle saws. Grounds maintenance professionals, as another example, are also increasingly moving over to battery-powered products for certain lines.

The rise in popularity is unsurprising, given the number of benefits that cordless offers. Tasks can be completed anywhere onsite, without the restriction of a power lead or need to transport petrol. There is no need to manage cables and associated trip hazards, or to store fuel safely. Battery-powered machines are often lighter and better balanced, so users have better control, and they produce lower vibration and noise levels, which is ideal when working in highly populated areas.



The company's Factory Service Centre in Blakelands, Milton Keynes

For many professionals, the proof has really been in putting battery-powered products to the test in real-world applications, meaning some of the old misconceptions about battery power are being laid to rest.

SD: And what about domestic users?

ME: Battery power is now a common feature for everyday life, with households incorporating everything from battery-powered home appliances to electric vehicles. Consumer emphasis on convenience and portability means cordless power tools and outdoor equipment are therefore a natural fit and we have seen many DIYers and domestic users adopting battery-powered products across the range.

SD: Would you say that the battery-powered outdoor equipment market is becoming more competitive?

ME: Most definitely. There has been a significant increase in the number of manufacturers and distributors entering this market, including many well-known power tool brands and manufacturers that have never sold petrol machines now offering cordless outdoor solutions.

SD: What do you do to differentiate your tools in the minds of professional end-users?

ME: Our expertise and heritage play a huge role in providing end-users

with confidence in the performance and quality of our products. We have over 100 years' engineering experience, and launched our first battery-powered tool in the late '70s. We strive to remain at the forefront for innovation, and our dedicated research and development centre in Japan works to constantly improve our products in all aspects, from power consumption and performance through to ergonomic design and function.

Our battery platforms - 18V LXT and more the recent 40VMax XGT system – provide end users with ultimate versatility when working. Professionals can switch between jobs and tools simply by swapping the battery over. And this extends to products beyond the outdoor product landscape, so, no matter the task, there is a battery-powered Makita tool that can tackle it.

We don't see ourselves as just a manufacturer, but as a partner to the trade. We offer regular training and support for professional end-users, either onsite or at our Factory Service Centres, on a wide variety of topics, including new product launches, safety courses, and workshops specially aimed at students and apprentices.

Having a regular roadmap of new product introductions is also important in demonstrating that we are listening to the market and constantly innovating. We talk to end-users and dealers alike, so that we understand what the market wants – and we strive to deliver.

SD: How has your dealer network developed over the past couple of years?

ME: We are always looking at ways to adapt and evolve our operations to provide a high level of service to our network. Over the past few years, we have worked on being more visible with our traditional dealers, and we are seeing positive growth in this area.

We also introduced a contracts team of product specialists, who work closely with contractors and end-users to promote our products, provide demonstrations and training and support with product specification – all with the aim of generating leads for our dealer network.

SD: What feedback have you received from your dealers who have taken on the brand?

ME: The ability to buy into Makita's wider portfolio is a huge tick for many dealers, and we hear this feedback across the board. Our total LXT range features over 300 cordless products, and our high-performance XGT 40VMax and 80VMax range now includes over 100 products. Access to this broader catalogue opens up more revenue opportunities - once a user has invested into the kit with a product, a battery and a charger, they will more than likely continue to build their collection, offering upsell and increased spend.

Dealers also wanted a SSP-based price list from us, which we have listened to and delivered

SD: What do you expect from your Makita dealers, and what can they expect back in return from yourselves?

ME: Like any good partnership, we want both parties to be happy and grow together. That means honesty and having a plan for the future.

We have invested in opening Factory Service Centres throughout the UK as dedicated sites, to offer training as well as product servicing and repair support. We feel this offers huge value for both our dealers and end-users, with increased levels of regional support within the market. Our Wigan site, which opened in 2022, also incorporates a new 35,000-square-foot warehouse to support supply chain requirements, enabling us to support the UK market with quick access to stocked lines.

Dealers are welcome to visit our Factory Service Centres to learn more about our products and technologies. We believe this higher level of insight and service is a great asset that can be passed on to their end-user customers in-store.

For Makita UK ASAs (Approved Service Agents), we also run courses in maintaining, servicing and repairing our products, which we see as a valuable

way for dealers to provide an extra level of service and support for their customers, as well as an additional revenue stream.

For our authorised PDI dealers, our garden machinery equipment is offered with an extended, additional 24-month warranty, totalling three years for the end-user if the end-user brings the products back for a service within 12 months of the initial purchase. The service offers an extra revenue opportunity – plus, recognising the value in this service for both our network and the end-userbase, Makita will pay dealers for all machines they cover with a pre-delivery inspection. For construction power tools, Makita UK offer a standard one-year warranty, which can be extended by a further two years if the end-user customer registers the product online via the Makita UK website.

SD: Some dealers tell us they are uneasy with the transition from petrol to battery-powered tools – what would you say to them?

ME: I can understand the unease, and it is a major transition. I recently attended a conference where a prominent scientist claimed that the battery is the next industrial revolution, and it's easy to see why, with battery-powered technology and products now entrenched in every part of our lives and in every type of industry.

The concerns regarding battery power are being overcome, and the cost of running the products is many times lower than petrol. That, and the health benefits for the user and environment, mean it's here for the foreseeable.

I would encourage dealers to try the kit for themselves, and work with trusted, proven manufacturers that can discuss – and help alleviate – those concerns.

SD: A dealer reader wrote to us last year, saying: "Electric propulsion does not adequately replace internal combustion, yet there seems to be some blind faith that the technology will miraculously get better." How do you respond to that?

ME: I don't think blind faith is what most see. Volvo Construction Equipment has been working on battery-powered quarries, Liebherr is manufacturing heavy-duty construction equipment that is battery-powered. Fortesque – formerly Williams Advanced Engineering – is another example of progressing battery technology for heavy transport, including rail.

Battery cell technology, motor technology, motor controllers and charging solutions are evolving daily across all industries, and that applies to us, too. Adapting to new technology is essential for progress

- those who resist change risk being left behind in a rapidly evolving world.

SD: The lack of service work with battery tools is also something that some of our dealer readers have expressed concerns about. What do you say to them?

ME: This has been an area of concern for many, and we recognise that this is especially important as an additional revenue stream in quieter months. I urge dealers to consider offering a winter tool and battery health check at the sale of the machine. Makita supplies service dealers with a battery checker, which identifies if there is any abnormality in the cells, and provides data on the number of charge cycles and the level of degradation over time.

Also, as part of this service, new accessories can be supplied in preparation for the up-and-coming peak season, and safety items can be checked and fitted.

SD: How are you helping dealers with the disposal of used, end-of-life batteries?

ME: Makita is a member of EPTA (European Power Tool Association), which includes an agreement to accept used and waste batteries – from any brand, including competitors. Where possible, we ensure that any healthy components are repurposed efficiently, rather than instantly disposing of them.

SD: On a personal note, Mark, what has your year as President of the AEA entailed?

ME: It has been a whirlwind, and I can't believe I am approaching the end! Over the past year, I have had the pleasure of being actively involved in a range of initiatives to support and promote the industry.

Key highlights include lobbying the government on key issues, securing significant funding for Level 2 and Level 3 technician apprenticeships - the highest allocation for our programme to date – and championing the success of the 'We Are Land-Based Engineering' initiative, which highlights the connection between food origins and our sector

Additionally, I have spent time promoting careers in the industry, as well as being involved in discussions on AI and other technical advancements at both UK and European levels, all while preparing to celebrate the AEA's 150th anniversary this year, marking a significant milestone for our association.

SD: What has being in this role revealed to you about the UK market in general – and, specifically, the battery-powered market?

ME: I have observed a great desire for progress, innovation and adaptation.

Clearly, the battery-powered market represents a significant revenue stream, given the number of new entrants to market and those diversifying their ranges to evolve with the end-users' demands. For example, there are a number of tractor suppliers now looking at developing small compact battery-powered models.

One thing is for sure: battery-power is here to stay, and it's exciting to be part of this movement.

SD: What do you see as the future for Makita in the UK?

ME: Makita has a strong foundation, philosophy and desire to succeed. We are the only power tool brand with manufacturing facilities in the UK, demonstrating our commitment to the UK market.

As mentioned, we are constantly refining our battery and charging technologies, to support greener and cleaner products for the industry, as well as providing the performance and power that tradespeople need. Our XGT range of 40VMax and 80VMax machines, which are ideal for professionals working on high-demand applications, will continue to expand, and we will continue to develop our long-established LXT platform of 18V and 36V cordless.

Our aim is to enable a truly cordless worksite, and the possibilities of interchangeable battery systems continue to expand. It's not all about tools - we recently launched a cordless battery-powered kettle, for example, as well as a range of DAB radios, work lights, heated jackets and fans.

Our dealers play a vital role in offering invaluable insights into their customer base, making them a key pillar of our UK strategy. Dealers can look forward to increased engagement, exciting new product launches, and an expanded focus on battery-powered solutions!

SD: Thank you.



The UV001G scarifier



The DUC305 chainsaw in action



Mark believes battery-powered tools have proven themselves to professional end-users



The manufacturer has only produced battery powered equipment for several years now



LAMMA '25 leaves cause for optimism

At the end of LAMMA's two-day January tenure at Birmingham's NEC, there was at least a little light at the end of the tunnel for farm machinery makers, importers and dealers, as a strong attendance from potential customers was accompanied by some evidence of intention to invest. MARTIN RICKATSON was there.

There's little reason to dispute that UK agriculture is currently facing some significant challenges, with suppliers - and the dealer trade at the sharp end - consequently enduring some tough times as farmers restrain their spending. But, on the evidence of the 40,000-strong attendance at LAMMA 2025 back in January, there is reason for dealers to be cautiously optimistic that a corner may be about to be turned, and that some customers are looking to invest.

While manufacturers' marketing budgets are undoubtedly under pressure, the event maintained its exhibitor numbers, with more than 650 spread across over 85,000 square

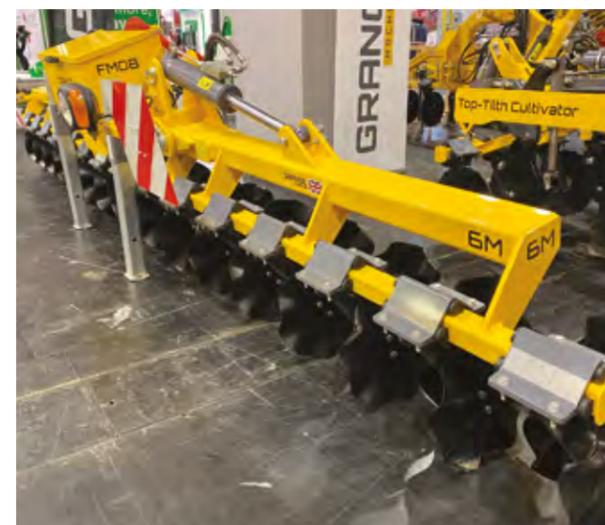
metres of hall floors. While big players, such as John Deere and Claas, continue to choose to stay away, other multinationals - including CNH, AGCO, Kubota and SDF - chose the event to give UK debuts to a number of machines launched internationally during 2024.

LAMMA is, though, also about providing a launchpad for developments from domestic manufacturers, and, to this end, there were plenty of new products from UK makers across such sectors as cultivators, drills, sprayers and trailers. Only the coming months will show how many of those visitors were making plans for investments - and how many were window shoppers on a deserved day's break from work.

Arable equipment

Still a relatively new name in farm equipment, **Grange Machinery** continues to steadily expand its offering beyond the toolbar line on which it built its brand. At LAMMA, it showed a new front-mounted disc bar, designed to create a tilth and/or process cover crop ahead of a cultivator or drill on the tractor's rear.

The unit is equipped with eight-wave 450mm discs, which offer 60mm surface deflection, while straight discs or 460mm 24-wave turbo discs can also be specified. Discs can be lined up with the coulter spacing, or set at centres to customer requirements. Standard features include a front weight box and lighting kit, while a tombstone ballast is optional. There are 3m rigid or 4m, 5m and 6m folding models.



Grange front-mounted disc bar

Grange now has another competitor in the market for close-coupled toolbars, with the unveiling at LAMMA of a new design from **Sumo**. The new implement - which is still in development and is as yet unnamed (Sumo was inviting visitor suggestions) - is designed for either front or rear mounting, and will be available in 3-6m models.

A bank of discs slices open the land to ease the way for a row of auto-reset legs mounted on adjustable pivots which permit 3° of side-to-side movement each way in case of particularly hard or stony conditions. For buyers who choose to use the tool for more than loosening, the legs can be equipped with depth-adjustable seed boots for placement of cover crops or of seedbed fertiliser ahead of a rear-mounted drill. Working depth is adjustable mechanically via turnbuckles or hydraulically as an option, with pin adjustment of discs and legs. For rear-mounted work in combination with a close-coupled drill, an optional hydraulic and PTO extension package is available.

Grass machinery

McHale's F5 fixed chamber round balers succeed its F5000 range. The F5-540 is a standard machine without chopper, and the F5-550 has a 15-knife chopper and semi-automatic operation. There is also an F5-560, with a



Sumo toolbar

25-knife chopping unit and full automation, and an F5-560 Plus, which adds film-on-film binding to the standard F5-560 spec. On all models, a new Profi-Flo pick-up can be specified with five bar cam track design or a six-tine bar camless configuration. A tapered feed channels crop to the rotor, while an 'adaptive intake' design automatically adjusts intake area to incoming crop volume.

Standard PTO is 540rpm, with a 1,000rpm option designed with a clutch that features 10% more capacity to cut blockage risk, and which can be operated at 890rpm to minimise fuel use. Net tension is boosted thanks to a dual feed system and a combination of rubber and steel rollers used for application. Density can now be altered on all models via Mchale's i-Control 5 terminal, with 10 degrees of adjustment. On the top three models, bale size is adjustable from 1.25-1.30m. The F5-560/F5-560 Plus are ISOBUS compatible (F5-550 optional) via a tractor's ISOBUS screen or Mchale's ISO-Play 7/12 terminals, enabling such features as automated unblocking and auto drop floor closing.



McHale F5 baler



Malone Proline 610 rake

McHale also showed a new 10-rotor trailed flagship for its Propel tedder range. With a 12.6m working width, the T10-1260 is based around a carriage frame, which links the tedder to the tractor via the latter's lower link arms. Each rotor features seven tine arms. Two double-acting spools manage all hydraulic functions.

Following its move further into silage-making equipment with the development of its own trailed eight-rotor tedder, fellow Irish grassland kit maker **Malone** used LAMMA to show off its first rake, the twin-rotor Proline 610. A centre-delivery model with a fixed working width of 6.1m, its 2.8m rotors are mounted on four-wheel bogies with 340/55 R16 tyres, and are equipped with 11 tine arms apiece, each of which features four cranked tines. Swath width is manually adjustable from 1.3-1.7m. To avoid obstacles, each rotor can be individually lifted, and, to prevent crabbing, the rake can be manually steered. Malone says larger contractor-targeted 7.2-8.8m adjustable models are in development.

Another Irish firm, **Grass Technology**, showed its flagship large unit/contractor-targeted ST Super 6 Zero Grazer for dairy units looking to bring fresh grass to their cows. Equipped with a 2.6m Kuhn disc mower unit, it rides on four 650/55 R22.5 tyres on ten-stud wheels, with rear steering



Grass Technology ST Super 6 Zero Grazer

and air-over-hydraulic braking. Grass is conveyed via a 2m-wide hydraulically-powered elevator to a trailer body, which holds approximately 8t of fresh material. Unloading is via a walking floor powered by twin hydraulic motors, with discharge to the rear or a side elevator. Elsewhere on its stand, the firm also showed a new development, a range of 9,000-to-13,500-litre slurry tankers. The firm is seeking to fill dealer gaps for both product types.

Manure developments



J Riley Kumm tanker

Contractors and those operating AD plants are the target market for the new **Kumm-Technik KTS** transport tanker from J Riley – best-known as UK agent for Vervaet beet harvesters, but also an importer of German firm Kumm's slurry-handling equipment. The base of the new KTS 32 Light is an articulated lorry semi-trailer on tri-axle running gear with leading axle lift, a fixed mid axle, and third axle steering with auto lock above 30kph. Further features include air suspension and a WABCO ABS EBS brake system.

A stainless steel, fully-welded, baffled tank of 32m3 capacity can be specified with stirrers to keep gloop from

solidifying. Filling power is provided by a Vogelsang pump with a maximum intake capacity of 6,000l/min slurry pump and an auto shut-off function.

Materials handlers and trailers

Designed to what the firm says are demands for a simple-specification high-capacity general monocoque trailer, **Richard Western** revealed a new stripped-back design under the Weeks brand, a company Western purchased in the 1980s and whose name it reserves for more basic models. Currently available in just the one version with an 11-tonne/15m³ capacity (25m³ with silage sides), the firm says the WK11 is designed to meet the needs of smaller farms where manoeuvrability in tight spaces is important. Manufactured at Richard Western's Suffolk factory, the WK11 features a 5m-long post-less monocoque tapered body is made from S355 steel, with a 4mm floor and 3mm sides, retaining strength. A five-stage single ram tips the trailer body to a maximum 50-degree angle, and a hydraulic



Richard Western Weeks WK11 trailer



Kubota RT305T-2 loader

tailgate is fitted. Standard ride enhancement features include a rubber-cushioned height-adjustable drawbar and 80mm single-leaf suspension.

Kubota continues to grow its articulated handler line, and its largest model – developed in cooperation with Dutch firm Tobroco Giant – is now the telescopic RT305T-2, which has maximum lift capacity/lift height stats of 1.2t/4.3m. At the machine's full 3m reach, load capacity is 750kg load. At the machine's heart is Kubota's own powerplant, a four-cylinder turbocharged 65hp unit. The twin-range hydrostatic transmission provides a maximum 30kph/20mph top travel speed. A Bosch Rexroth hydraulic motor drives both Carraro axles through mechanical driveshafts, with 0-15kph and 0-30kph speed ranges. The 4wd system is permanent, and there are selectable differential locks on both axles.

All-terrain vehicles

Among the ATV news at LAMMA was a number of new import agreements for Staffs-based distributor **Boss ORV**. Already an agent for Corvus diesel and electric UTVs, Powerland electric ATVs, Paxster electric UTVs and Danish compact implement maker Faunamaster, the firm also revealed a new import deal for petrol and electric ATVs and UTVs from Chinese firm Aodes. Powered by V-twin petrol engines, its Pathcross ATVs are available in 525cc, 650cc and 1,000cc sizes, with a range of single or double cab Workcross UTVs sharing the same engines but benefiting from a fully-appointed cab with from a heater, wind-down windows and folding windscreen.

Boss ORV is also now the UK importer for Yanmar compact tractors from Japan, spanning 22-60hp models. Stafford-based Boss Off-Road Vehicles (ORV) is the new UK and Ireland distributor for Yanmar agricultural equipment. Phil Everett, MD of Boss ORV, says the firm is looking to build on its existing small network of dealers, which currently includes Essex-based Used4Turf and Devon firm Machine Serve, both of which cover areas into their neighbouring counties.



Boss ORV Aodes ATVs



BUSINESS MONITOR

Taking the temperature of the dealer network, sponsored by STIHL

Workshops just as busy this season

With staffing and capacity causing holdups

Hearing from our dealer readers who participated in this year's Winter Servicing Survey – published in the *Weekly Update* at the end of January – it was encouraging to learn that workshops have been as busy as ever this season. However, concerns about sourcing technician staff, as well as capacity, remain high.

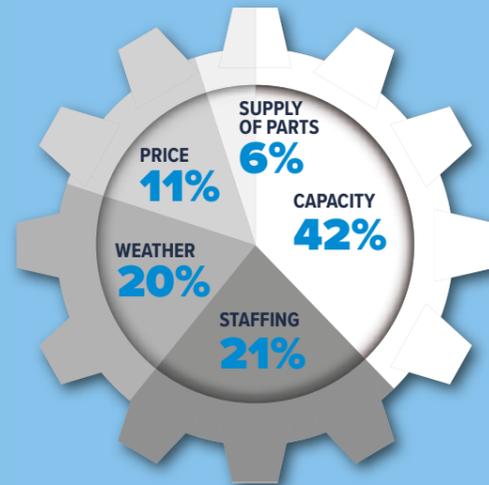
Most dealers who chose to respond (53%) described their service departments as experiencing roughly the same business levels as last year, with only 10% saying levels had fallen.

As last year when we asked, staffing issues continue to impact dealers' ability to run their workshops as smoothly as they like – although interestingly, this year, perhaps with the rise of remote selling, physical capacity in dealerships has become a concern for many (42%).

Many who chose to respond to the survey said they had increased their service rates these past 12 months (74%) – and, of those who had, an increase of up to 5% was our most common answer (47%).

Most respondents hadn't increased their staffing levels in the workshop (84%), and literally no one thought the process of hiring had become easier!

What factors have most influenced your winter servicing levels this year?



How are servicing levels this winter compared with last?



Have you increased your labour rates in the past year?



Have you increased your service staffing levels this past year?



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



Has the recruitment process for your workshop improved?

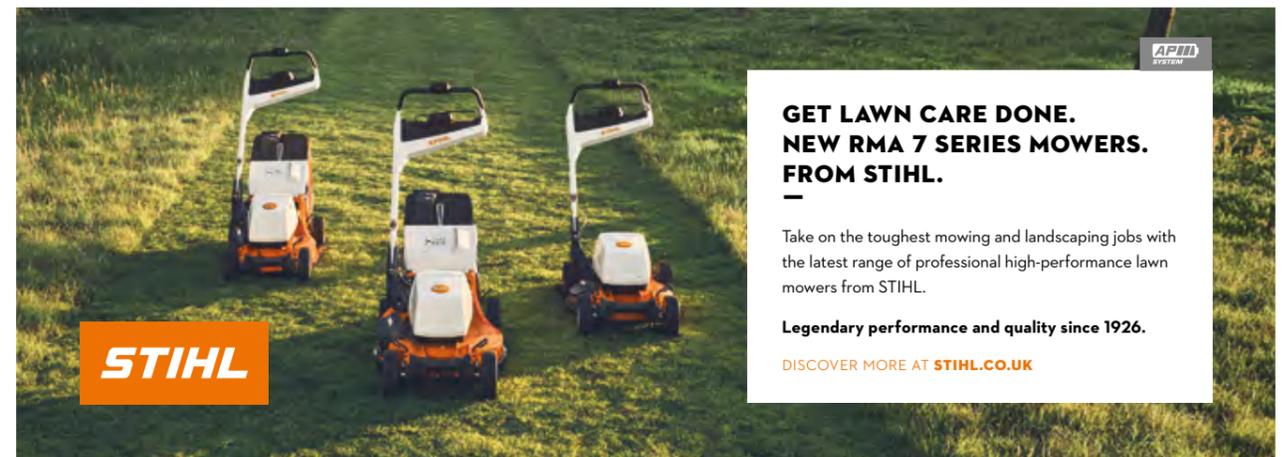


Your say...

We asked you: how is the service side of your business faring currently?

Are any issues impacting your service business?

- “ We're in the fortunate position of having more work than we can cope with. That, in itself, brings with it problems of how to manage customer expectations. Longstanding customers are happy to wait their turn, however, with dealerships closing and companies restructuring, we're finding we are left dealing with the issues of warranty and long-distance selling. Customers are quite happy to buy the cheapest at the other end of the country, have never used us before, but expect us to jump through hoops to get their machinery done in record time. One other big issue for us: completed work can sit here for the month because no-one wants to come and collect it. We're already selective on what we work on, but staffing is the biggest issue.
- “ Still having to wait weeks for some parts, meaning machines taking up space for longer than would be ideal.
- “ Servicing this winter is much better than this time last year. Also, better-quality service work is coming in. However, still a small issue with availability of parts and customers taking longer to pay invoices.
- “ Farmers have tightened the purse strings, and are trying to do servicing themselves. There has also been a massive increase of independents in vans, who have low overheads and don't have to use workshop profit to pay the extortionate interest rates to stock whole goods.
- “ Supply of parts is always a big issue, since space is always going to be at a premium. Weather also can not be underestimated. Getting cold later and warm earlier reduces the calm time to carry out winter servicing. Another factor this year is sometimes just accessing the machines. This latest downpour has made the ground too wet to access some of our customers tractors.
- “ Lack of trained individuals this year; people don't want to pay to get the job done – delay in parts.
- “ The weather can delay cleaning when freezing, so delays work movement. Spares supply seems OK, but just a few delays in supply covering all manufacturers.
- “ Service levels are the same, but impact from battery machines is having some effect, as customers' expectation is of lower service charges (i.e. they feel there is less work involved in servicing battery machines). So managing expectations can be a challenge.
- “ Very busy, with increasing margins, as labour can be increased due to lack of servicing dealers in the country and an abundance of work.
- “ Inundated already!



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Struggling to balance inventory and customer needs?



Sara Hey, president of business development at Bob Clements International – the dealership development company based in Missouri – shares the insights she offers U.S. dealers with Service Dealer’s UK readership every issue. This issue, Sara considers how to stock the right parts without losing your mind!

Running a parts department is no small task. It’s the first impression for many customers, the lifeline for your service department, and can sometimes feel like a juggling act.

Some days, you’re trying to make everyone happy while keeping a thousand spinning plates from crashing to the ground. But don’t worry. Getting your parts department running like a well-oiled machine comes down to three simple processes: stocking the right parts, knowing when to add or drop inventory, and maintaining proper stock levels.

Let’s break it down so that it won’t make your head spin.

1 Stock the right parts: your ‘fill rate out of stocking inventory’ matters

Your parts department has one big job: making sure your customers and your service team get what they need, when they need it. This is where your fill rate out of stocking inventory comes in. Think of it as your batting average for having the right parts on the shelf. A good fill rate means fewer annoyed customers, fewer emergency orders, and way less stress.

To calculate it, subtract emergency purchases and customer orders from the cost of parts sales, then divide by the cost of sales plus lost sales.

Aim for a fill rate in the high 80s to low 90s to minimise “we don’t have that part” situations that no-one enjoys.

2 Know when to keep or kick parts: Phase in and phase out like a pro

Your parts inventory is like a service technician’s toolbox. Essential tools – like wrenches and sockets – are always within arm’s reach, while specialty tools that only come out once a year stay in the bottom drawer.

Phase In

A part earns its spot when it proves it deserves to be there. Track lost sales every time a customer or the service department asks for a part you don’t have. When a part gets three requests (including lost sales) in 90 days, it’s time to welcome it to the team.

Phase Out

We start the process of phasing out a part when it hasn’t had a demand in, you guessed it, 90 days.

My one caveat to this is that the service department – the parts department’s biggest customer – can ask for hard-to-find parts that haven’t been requested in 90 days, but they will pay a little more for that opportunity. More on that in a minute.

Parts that are in high demand should always be stocked and ready to go, while rarely-used ones can be removed to make space for what’s needed most.

3 Restock like a boss

Even the best parts department can grind to a halt without a solid restocking process. This is where your dealership software can save the day. Use it to set minimum and maximum stock levels for every part. For example, if mower blades are

flying off your shelves, set a minimum stock level of six and a maximum of 18. Once your inventory dips to six, your system will nudge you to reorder. No more running out at the worst possible moment. This keeps your shelves efficient, minimises emergency orders, and avoids the dreaded ‘we’re out of stock’ conversation.

Bonus Process: handle service department requests like a pro

The service department has a habit of requesting parts that may not have long-term demand. To make sure these one-off requests don’t mess up your inventory, add five percent onto the price of all parts that the service department sells. This provides a cushion to help cover the cost of returns or dead inventory, so you stay in the black while keeping the service team happy.

Why these processes matter

Having the right parts, phasing inventory in and out smartly, and restocking like a champ isn’t just about organisation. It’s about making life easier for your customers, your team, and – most importantly – you. When your parts department runs smoothly, everything else falls into place.

So, embrace your inner inventory ninja. Focus on your fill rate out of stocking inventory, give parts a fair shot to prove themselves, and keep restocking levels on point. You’ll not only turn chaos into order, but you’ll also turn your parts department into a profit-making machine.

Let’s make your parts department thrive!

Navigating the challenges and appreciating the wins



Les Gammie, of Gammies Groundcare, says it is vital to plan ahead for the coming season across all departments of the dealership.

The start of the new year followed on from 2024’s busy backend, and it doesn’t seem to be slowing down! After the festive period, the beginning of 2025 kicked off for me with planning – planning for the season ahead in all aspects, across all departments.

One of these tasks is planning departmental meetings designed to motivate staff for the forthcoming season. Despite the doom and gloom of the current economy, and the various challenges ahead of us, ensuring that the staff are fully equipped to deal with these issues, and that they continue to develop their departments, is imperative.

On the financial side, I am challenged with trying to plan for the extra income required to cover minimum wage and national insurance

rises later in the year, while also sparring with an increasingly consumer-biased environment and navigating the complex economy.

On a more positive note, January took us to Birmingham, where I attended the Polaris 2025 Annual Conference. This was a busy conference, which various other familiar dealers attended. It was good to catch up with old and new friends, sharing each other’s woes and challenges for the year ahead - as well take taking in and discussing all of the news and changes Polaris and other brands had in store for us this year.

Following on from the conference, I attended my very first LAMMA exhibition, which coincided with the conference. It was definitely an event to remember. I was blown away by the sheer size of the exhibition, the

amount of machinery and brands on show, and just how many attendees there were. Fair to say it will be one to attend again!

Arriving back at the depot, expectations of a dip back into a quiet season didn’t quite manifest, and instead the mood in business seems to be better than anticipated. With all departments keeping up a busy workflow of new and existing customer enquiries (despite the low temperatures) while maintaining a focus on preparation for the year ahead. This includes the abundance of machinery from winter stocking beginning to arrive at the depot, and the monumental task of finding space to store it!

All in all, the year ahead is off to a promising start, and our depot will continue to navigate the challenges and appreciate the wins thrown our way.

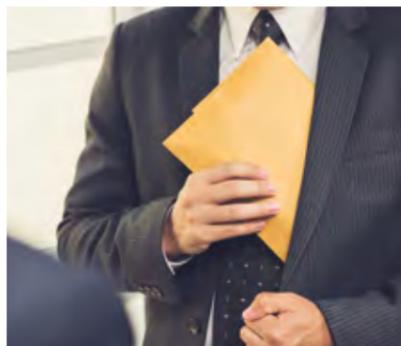




STAFFING

Protecting your business from ex-employees

People are a key business asset, but, once the relationship with an employee or contractor ends, they may become a liability. Their right to work does not outweigh the right to protect legitimate business interests, but employers need to properly use the available safeguards to ensure their enforceability, writes Rhys Jarman, partner and head of IP for technology and manufacturing disputes at Wright Hassall.



Under attack

Imagine this: your firm spends years training and developing John, a star and senior employee. John creates a new team to support him. He has access to your marketing databases, including details of prospective clients, and knowledge of all the secrets that make your business a success.

However, John left six weeks ago. You thought that he was taking up a challenge in a different sector, but he has just reappeared - working for a key competitor. Worse still, he is in contact with clients and is apparently talking to members of his old team, encouraging them to join him. What can you do?

Unfortunately, in today's fluid employment market, this scenario is all too common. The solution is the inclusion of some 'restrictive covenants' in John's employment contract along with legal measures.

What is a restrictive covenant?

Many employment contracts contain clauses that restrict an individual's working activity when the contract ends. These are known as restrictive covenants. They are intended to prevent or limit damage to a business by an ex-employee and so are also called 'post-termination restrictive covenants'.

The most common restrictions in employment contracts are:

- **Non-compete clauses** – to prevent an ex-employee from working for a competitor for the length of time specified in the clause.
- **Non-solicitation of clients/customers clause** – to stop an ex-employee from approaching customers/clients to entice them away.

- **Non-dealing clause** – to prevent an ex-employee from any dealings with clients, customers, or suppliers, even if that person approaches the ex-employee first.
- **Non-poaching of staff clause** – should stop John approaching his former colleagues and enticing them to join his new company.

Are restrictive covenants enforceable?

A badly-drafted covenant is not likely to be enforceable. However, a good clause, appropriate to the employee in question, may well be enforced by a court.

Usually, a clause in an agreement that restrains trade and prevents an individual earning a living is against public interest and should not be enforced. But the law recognises that it is also in the public interest to allow businesses to legitimately protect themselves. Restrictive covenants may therefore be enforced if they are shown to be reasonable when considering the interests of all the parties.

A reasonable restrictive covenant

To effectively use restrictive covenants to protect a business, they should have the following characteristics:

- They should be in a written agreement between you and your employee/contractor that is signed by both of you.
- They should clearly protect a legitimate business interest, such as a trade secret, confidential information, a client database, supplier terms, or the retention of other key members of your workforce.
- The restriction should be as narrow as possible in relation to the length of time of the restriction, the geographic area of

restriction, and the definition of the restricted activity. The exact extent of these will depend on the specific business interest that you are trying to protect, and may vary from case to case.

- They should be reviewed and altered if the employee is promoted.

What if an ex-employee ignores a restrictive covenant?

If it becomes clear that an ex-employee has disregarded the terms of the contract, you need to act quickly to limit the damage to your legitimate business interests. An appropriately-worded letter often produces the desired result. If this does not work, a court order, called an injunction, may be applied for urgently. An injunction may lead them to desist from such actions as working for your competitor, using your data, or calling your clients, or it may compel them to do such things as return your documents and data.

However, an injunction may only be obtained at this early stage if there is real urgency, and if financial compensation at a later point will not be adequate to cover the damage that your business will suffer if the action takes place. Delaying by even a few weeks could mean the injunction is not granted, because a high degree of urgency is not demonstrated.

Making an injunction effective

In our example, if you prove that the

restrictive covenants in your agreement are enforceable, and the court grants you an injunction, John should take this seriously. If he fails to comply with the injunction, he will be in contempt of court, and may be imprisoned for up to six months.

You may also join John's new employer in the court proceedings, as well as any of your staff members who appear to be conspiring with John to join your competitor. This may effectively prevent further unlawful activity by all those people.

My business has already been damaged

Damages to compensate any loss may be claimed from your ex-employee. Strategically, if that ex-employee will not be able to pay this amount, stopping the damage in the first place via an injunction will be the best course of action. If John's new employer knew about the restrictions, and encouraged him to break them, it may be possible to bring a separate claim against that company – it may have deeper pockets.

No restrictive covenants (that are enforceable)

Restrictive covenants are not the only way to protect your business from ex-employees. There is an implied duty of good faith in all employment relationships, and a duty not to use or disclose confidential information gained in the course of employment.

You may also demand the return of any information that John has retained which belongs to you.

A court will also impose restrictions on John misusing or disclosing confidential information (such as your trade secrets), even though he is no longer in your employment. Your business is also protected by other intellectual property laws relating to your trademark and patent. Copyright law prevents John from copying written works created in the course of his employment, and the design rights for work created during employment continue to belong to you.

However, if you do not currently have restrictive covenants in your employment contracts, take advice urgently and introduce them at an appropriate point. You may need to give affected employees salary increases or other compensation to show that you have been reasonable when introducing the restrictions, but this may be money well-spent to avoid damaging your business in the future.

Summary

There are other laws that protect from attacks by ex-employees, but well-drafted restrictive covenants offer you the best protection before too much damage is done. Taking legal advice early will enable you to navigate a safer path to achieving a fair result from the end of an employment relationship.

EMPLOYMENT LAW

Sexual harassment in the workplace

Sexual harassment in the workplace has been an issue for some time, with countless cases being reported in the media – cases that have involved some high-profile individuals, most recently the late former owner of Harrods, Mohamed Al-Fayed, says GARETH EDWARDS, a partner in the employment team at VWV.

Many employers will have a tried-and-tested approach to dealing with workplace sexual harassment. This is likely to involve staff training, the maintenance of up-to-date policy documentation, and an approach to ensuring issues are dealt with robustly when they arise.

New law

However, since 26 October, 2024, employers have had a new duty, and are required to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent the sexual harassment of staff at work. Those that fail to take such steps risk a compensation uplift of up to 25 percent in

the event of a successful claim against them. Given that compensation awards for harassment claims are uncapped, there could be a high cost of failure to comply with the new duty.

But determining what constitutes 'reasonable steps' for an employer will depend on individual circumstances. Such factors as the employer's size, the sector in which it operates, and the way it identifies and manages risks are all likely to be material. Employers should reflect on their current sexual harassment strategy, and make improvements where necessary. It is also sensible to make contemporaneous records to explain an employer's strategy and approach over time. This ensures that appropriate evidence can be presented to a tribunal in the event of a future claim.

The new mandatory duty is a much broader duty than any other obligation existing under existing anti-harassment law. The question of what will constitute 'reasonable steps' for any individual employer merits careful consideration, and will depend on such factors as the type of organisation and the harassment risks that are present at that workplace.

Changing defence

Employers and HR professionals might be aware that, under the law, there is a potential defence available to employers facing harassment claims, where the employer can show they took "all reasonable steps" to prevent the employee from carrying out the harassment. Where the reasonable steps defence succeeds, the employer will escape liability, leaving the harasser potentially personally liable if they have been named as a respondent in the litigation.

The new mandatory duty is different from the existing reasonable steps defence. The reasonable steps defence applies in a much narrower context (i.e. in demonstrating that an employer took necessary action to prevent a particular employee from displaying a particular behaviour). In contrast, the mandatory duty will apply on an organisation-wide basis to all employees, and is likely to call into question the organisation's culture and approach, more generally.

Third-party harassment

Employers should note that, although the explicit third-party harassment provisions were removed from the bill, the new mandatory duty may still encompass a requirement to manage the risk of third-party harassment where relevant. Again, the requirements of any given organisation will depend on the particular risk of staff being exposed to third-party harassment at work. Employers should, therefore, consider the risk of third-party harassment as part of the general requirement to comply with the mandatory duty.



Enforcement

There are two ways the new mandatory duty will be enforced. Either the Employment Tribunal may apply a compensation uplift of up to 25 percent for breach of the mandatory duty in successful sexual harassment claims, or the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) will be able to take direct enforcement action against employers who breach the mandatory duty.

In terms of the compensation uplift, to pursue an employer for breach of the mandatory duty, an employee will need to bring a successful harassment claim under the Equality Act. If that claim succeeds, a tribunal may apply the compensation uplift at an appropriate percentage to reflect the extent to which the employer has breached the mandatory duty.

A tribunal may be likely to apply the compensation uplift precisely because, for the claim to succeed in the first place, the employer will either have failed to invoke the reasonable steps defence or will have been unsuccessful in doing so. If an employer has failed in the reasonable steps defence, it is likely to also fail to show that it has complied with the mandatory duty. In real terms, the practical impact of the mandatory duty is likely to be a compensation uplift of up to 25 percent in almost any successful sexual harassment claim. Given that sexual harassment is a claim for which a tribunal has the power to award unlimited compensation, a failure to comply with the mandatory duty could prove very costly.

EHRC enforcement action

The EHRC has the power to investigate alleged noncompliance with equality law. In the event of a breach, the EHRC can issue notices to organisations in relation to their unlawful acts. A notice would require the organisation to prepare a draft action plan setting out how it will remedy its breach. The EHRC may approve the plan or require improvements to be made to it. The EHRC takes enforcement action against individual employers rarely but may do so in the event of serious breaches of equality law.

The EHRC is the only entity able to bring standalone enforcement action against an employer for failing to comply with the mandatory duty. As employees will need to first bring a successful sexual harassment claim before accessing the compensation uplift, they will not be able to enforce the mandatory duty without also having suffered harassment.

Summary

Employers need to take notice and recognise their new duty. It is going to be enforced, and employers that ignore the law could find themselves paying expensive awards made against them.

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NEW GARDENCARE MOWERS FOR 2025

This year, the Gardencare range becomes more versatile than ever with the addition of four new mowers. The LMX51M dedicated mulcher delivers high performance at a great price, perfect for customers who don't plan on collecting clippings. For lawns with tricky obstacles, the LMX51ZT zero-turn provides unmatched precision and manoeuvrability. The LMX53SPRV with its rear roller creates a sleek striped finish, while the LMX53SPXV stands as a heavy-duty powerhouse with its reinforced steel deck, ready to handle the toughest tasks with ease.



LMX51M

Dedicated mulcher
51cm (20") cut width
25-75mm cut height
170cc engine

LMX51ZT

Zero-turn wheels
51cm (20") cut width
25-75mm cut height
196cc engine

LMX53SPRV

Rear roller
Variable speed
53cm (21") cut width
25-75mm cut height
196cc engine

LMX53SPXV

Reinforced steel deck
Variable speed
53cm (21") cut width
25-75mm cut height
170cc engine



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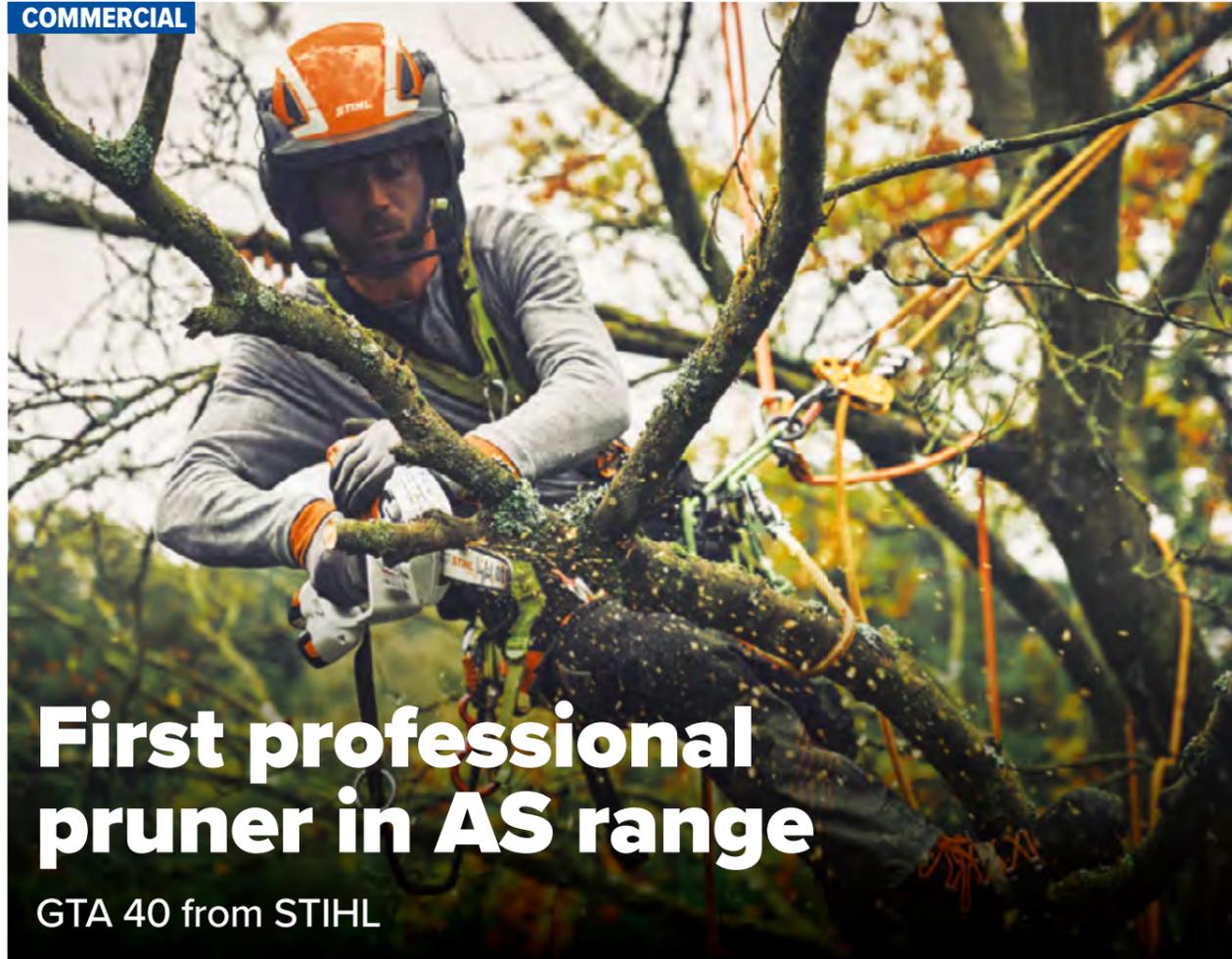
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Products

COMMERCIAL



First professional pruner in AS range

GTA 40 from STIHL

Designed for tree care, the GTA 40 is the first professional pruner available in the STIHL AS System of battery-powered tools.

Due to the low weight, balance and cutting speed, the manufacturer says the unit is a viable alternative to using top-handled chainsaws for tree canopy maintenance. In areas of overgrown and dense foliage, STIHL say the compact and slim design of the GTA 40 is an advantage.

Two AS System batteries provide enough charge for up to 190 cuts when cutting spruce with a diameter of 5x5cm. Like all STIHL professional battery-powered tools, the batteries and the pruner are IPX4 certified.

Equipped with a 6" Light O1 guide bar with low-friction sprocket nose and a narrow 1/4" Picco saw chain, the pruner offers fast cutting performance and a smooth cutting result. The partially transparent chain oil tank ensures the operator is always aware of when the tank needs to be refilled.

The company says the tool is so quiet that no hearing protection is required, and, to ensure the tool fits comfortably in the hand, the grip points are coated with a durable non-slip soft material. Other features include a lateral chain tensioner and charge level indicator.

Suspension eyelets on both sides allow a lanyard to be attached. Alternatively, a holster is available as part of STIHL's X-Flex Harness System. A heavy-duty storage and transport case is included with all GTA 40 sets, with room for the AL 5-2 multi-charger and up to six AS 2 batteries.

The GTA 40 pruner can be integrated into the cloud-based STIHL Connected system solution via a Smart Connector attached to the motor housing. This digital fleet management system offers professional users a detailed overview of the operating time of the tool, as well as upcoming maintenance tasks and maintenance history records.

UTILITY VEHICLES

Cross paths with Boss

Latest ATV from manufacturer Aodes



New via Boss Off-Road Vehicles is the PathCross ATV, which is described by its manufacturer, Aodes, as its newest sensation, and as a trailblazer in their offroad series.

The PathCross boasts a modular design and a choice of several models, featuring V-Twin engines in 650cc, 1000cc, as well as the new single-cylinder 525cc displacements.

The main features include an Active Emission Cooling (AEC) system, superior ground clearance and suspension travel, hydraulic breaking operating four-wheel disc brakes, and an adjustable front and automatic rear differential system.

Boss says the PathCross complements the range of vehicles they distribute and support in the UK.

sunseeker
elite

Join the AI robotic mower revolution



FGM Claymore is excited to announce we are now the exclusive distributor in the UK and Ireland for the **Sunseeker elite** robotic mower range.

We are seeking to appoint dealers to sell the next generation of AI-powered premium robot mowers. Here are just a few unique features found on the Sunseeker elite X Series range:

- **AONavi™** Positioning & Navigation System
- **Vision AI** smart obstacle avoidance
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Amazone ploughs its own integrated Furrow Press

Collaboration with VSS Machinebouw B.V

Amazone-Werke is starting a collaboration with VSS Machinebouw B.V. from Oudelande in the Netherlands – a known manufacturer of packers and rollers under brand name VSS Agro.

For use with a plough, the integrated VSS Agro Furrow Press packer system, with its different levels of equipment, is now available through Amazone. The mounting kit is compatible with both the Teres 300 and Teres 300V models (but not when fitted with hydraulic overload protection), as well as for the Cayros XMS with three or four furrows (likewise without hydraulic overload protection).

The company says the Furrow Press packer runs parallel to the plough and automatically adapts to the working width, preventing the repeat reconsolidation of part areas. This, they say, ensures uniform reconsolidation, even when there are changes in the working width.

VSS Machinebouw offers packer rings in different sizes. The rings – with a diameter of 710mm – in combination with the Amazone plough, enable effective reconsolidation, especially on heavy ground. The pressure on the packer can either be adjusted mechanically, using stop screws, or hydraulically.

The fixed connection to the plough offers a time advantage during transport between the yard and field, as the packer does not need to be transported separately.

DOMESTIC

Handy new vac and cleaners

With wet and dry capability



British garden equipment manufacturer The Handy has announced a new addition to The Handy brand in the form of Stainless-Steel Vacuum Cleaners and Ash Cleaners with wet and dry capability.

Described by the manufacturer as featuring a durable and easy-to-clean large 15-litre stainless-steel tank for increased resistance to corrosion, there are three mains-powered models in the range: The Handy 15-Litre Wet and Dry Stainless-Steel Vacuum Cleaner, The Handy 15-Litre Stainless-Steel Ash Cleaner, and The Handy 10-Litre Stainless-Steel Ash Cleaner.

The Handy 15-Litre Wet and Dry Vacuum Cleaner features a flexible design and achieves impressive suction power, with a 1250W motor to efficiently handle heavy-duty cleaning of liquids, dust, DIY, debris, and more. Equipped with a stainless-steel 15-Litre container and a 15-meter cable, the new unit is suitable for various environments, including the home, workshop, garage or car.

For cleaning of fireplaces, barbecues, log burners and garden chimneys, the range also includes two new products designed to safely and efficiently vacuum fine ash particles.

The 15-Litre Stainless-Steel Ash Cleaner features a 1200W motor with a suction strength of 18 kPa. Additionally, the 10-Litre Stainless-Steel Ash Cleaner comes equipped with an 800W motor and steady suction power of 15 kPa. Both come equipped with a one-meter hose and six-meter-long cable.

Described by Handy as being lightweight and easy to use, the range offers a robust alternative to manual cleaning methods. Also featuring an ergonomic design for comfortable handling, all models come with a large stainless-steel storage capacity designed to reduce the need for frequent emptying.



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Segway Navimow unveils X3 Series

Expands robotic mower lineup

Segway Navimow – the robotic lawn mower arm of Segway – presented its latest flagship, the Segway Navimow X3 Series, at the CES 2025 exhibition in Las Vegas this January.

The new robot mowers, coming to market in spring 2025, feature improvements, including a larger cutting width and accelerated mowing speed for faster, more precise maintenance of a broader range of lawn sizes - up to 2.5 acres. These capabilities allow the X3 Series to cover lawns up to 5,000m² in 24 hours.

Segway say the X3 Series, powered by the company's self-developed EFLS 3.0 - enhanced RTK coverage, vSLAM (Visual Simultaneous Localisation and Mapping) and VIO (Visual Inertial Odometry) technologies, delivers stability and precision.

Based on the upgraded 300-degree wide-angle camera and AI-enhanced algorithm, the mowers also offer enhanced VisionFence technology, extending its field of view, enabling AI-driven route planning and reliable obstacle avoidance.

The manufacturer also says the series offers a suite of capabilities, including:

- 27° Climbing Capability
- Anti-Theft Design, featuring a robust sound alarm, app-based GPS location tracking, and an AirTag compartment
- Animal Protection AI algorithm to ensure that pets and wildlife stay safe while the mower is running
- Real-Time Insights with an integrated screen providing users with immediate status update
- Smart Home Integration

It also features intelligent site selection, optimising the placement of the charging station and antenna for enhanced performance. Once installed, the system operates autonomously, managing mowing, recharging, and scheduling.



Registration open for data sharing technology

To all owners of Fendt machinery

Fendt has thrown the doors of data-sharing technology open to all owners of Fendt machinery, using both the old and new FendtONE operating systems.

Launched in 2020, the FendtONE onboard system has grown to encompass the full range of Fendt tractors. The later addition of FendtONE offboard has enabled data-sharing between machines, and the ability to export data to other software.

"Fendt now offers free FendtONE offboard registration to all operators of tractors and machinery that use the FendtONE interface. This will enable the machines to send data to the farm office, and for that data to be interpreted and exported to improve farming efficiencies in all areas of agriculture," explains Fendt's Ed Dennett.

To help those with older machines, Fendt has also enabled FendtONE to take data from S4 tractors, or other Fendt machines that run the 10.4" (NT01) terminal.

"This is crucial to broadening the user base for FendtONE, as it will enable thousands more operators to take advantage of the free offboard software," he adds.

Historically, Fendt dealers were tasked with integrating the on and offboard technology. However, the process of registering a Fendt machine and installing the offboard management system can now be done in minutes by any Fendt customer.

"All customers need are an email address and a Fendt machine that uses the FendtONE onboard interface. The registration process is accessed via Fendt's website (www.fendt.com/fendt-one-offboard) and, once registered, users are offered a variety of helpful video guides to get started," he adds.

With both onboard and offboard systems set up, operators will benefit from recording technology, including time and fuel for each job. Machines can also share field maps and boundaries with data from other machinery, such as sprayers, being able to benefit from tractor data.

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Grumpy old man!



The SPROCKET has been let out of his box this issue, and wants to give it both barrels to all that has been annoying him! So, strap in . . .

People (Paul Weller) say that, if you're still angry at 52, you're not an angry young man, just a grumpy old git.

Well, I think I qualify for the above. I certainly get called a grumpy old git often enough - even when I say something that, coming from a much younger person, would be considered to be insightful, interesting, intelligent and even useful. Trouble with being older is that, whatever you say, it just sounds like a moan. Then so be it - I am going to have a moan!

The editor and I were at a recent show talking about what subjects we could cover in the magazine. After kicking through a load of topics and their merits, I asked if I could just use a page or two to have a moan about things. I am, after all, qualified by age and experience. Ed said it was OK, if it had a bearing on industry issues. I said it might - but we moan about most of the bad issues in the industry all the time!

So here we go - first one out of the bag. I've recently been to LAMMA. A great show, very busy, with loads of exhibitors. Lots and lots of vehicles in the car parks, but some greedy git at the NEC is charging £18.95 per car to park for a day! It used to be a fiver. Daylight robbery, and I forgot they were charging for parking at LAMMA, which they never used to. Started last year, apparently. The Motorhome and Caravan Show don't charge for parking, so what is going on here?

Anyone been run down by an electric scooter? They seem to be flying around everywhere, and particularly on pavements and pedestrian areas. Nearly got hit by one as I walked out of my front gate. No lights, no horn, no helmet, and no idea! Hopeless and completely illegal. These come under the general term of Powered Transporters, and fall within the legal definition of a motor vehicle, and are therefore covered by the laws that apply to motor vehicles - riders need a licence. I doubt that the idiotic cabbages that are riding them have any idea this is the case, and that it is a

criminal offence to ride them in a public area or on the road unless they can meet road traffic regulations. Don't let your kids ride them outside of private areas - it is illegal if they do.

The same rule applies to certain types of electrically-assisted pedal cycles, but is a bit more involved in terms of power and speed. The thing is, these powered transporters should be insured, taxed and obey the rule of the road. They should not be driven in pedestrian areas, and they are certainly not to be used as chariots of fire to mow down unsuspecting pedestrians in the dark of the night, or even broad daylight. You get winged by one of these, and it will hurt you - and they are unlikely to be insured.

I believe council-operated ones are street-legal, and users must meet the legal criteria before they can be released for hire. Trouble is, if users of these 'powered transporters' park them in their hallways and leave them on charge, they may find they burst into flames, because they have a nasty little foreign lithium ion battery in them. Nightmare!

Got to have a motorbike moan, as the Sprocket and I am sure there are a lot of motorbike riders in the industry who can relate to this. So, for you car drivers, monster pickup drivers and trailer towers who don't know the law: here goes. In the UK and many other countries, it is completely legal for a motorbike to filter in slow-moving, queuing traffic on any type of road. It is an action that comes under the unwritten rule of 'reasonable'. Meaning that, as long as your speed is reasonable to the conditions, you can filter or weave in and out of traffic on a motorbike and make reasonable progress.

Make no bones about it: that filtering on a bike is hard work and potentially dangerous, but can be made worse by some anti-bike motorist who thinks the biker has no right to do this and decides to close up the gap or make a jerky manoeuvre to put the biker off. I have experienced it on a number of occasions, and you just want to stop and batter the motorist to make up for his naïve stupidity. I may not be the best rider in the world, but I have been on a

police bike course, and they were very clear about the law relating to filtering. So, all you bikers out there: be careful, as always, and watch out for the odd brainless motorist who envies your ability to get through the traffic.

Industry moans!

Back to industry stuff. Not sure if a moan about certain industry issues is old hat, but here goes. It

is high time that those manufacturers or suppliers who skimp on warranty reimbursement to dealers got their act together and adjusted labour rates and workshop times to fit in with the reality of what it costs a dealer to carry out warranty work. If you made it or supplied it, and it goes wrong as result of a manufacturing or design problems, you should be paying to get it fixed at close to the dealer's charge-out rate.

Many manufacturers and suppliers cover dealer costs for warranty, so why don't others? It is not reasonable to expect a dealer to pick up the tab for what a manufacturer gets wrong. Man up and put your hand in your pocket, and make it right. Wrapping a dealer up in a contract, not looking after them properly, and then hiding behind the contract is disgraceful. Its tough out there, and your dealers need your help.

I was at the BTME show, and had forgotten to preregister online. I thought I could just get a form, fill it in, and walk on through. No chance. I had to download an app, fill in a load of stuff online, create an account with a password I am never going to remember, and then go and check in. No surprises, but that didn't work that well. Fat fingers and a small phone didn't help. Nearly rang my four-year-old grandson to get his help. In the end, one of the registration staff sorted me out. She had smaller fingers than me, and could see the tiny print on the form. Should have gone to Specsavers!

BTME was a great show, by the way. Busy all day on the first day, and, as always, Harrogate is a great place to have a beer and dinner in January after a day at the show. Well done, BIGGA. Got no moans about that one.

Last one. Nice and fresh in my mind, driving to and from Harrogate. What is the matter with selfish, idiotic lane hoggers? The Highway Code requires vehicles to move back over to the inside lanes once they have

overtaken. Lane hoggers cause tailbacks, frustration and accidents. Some gormless driver clutching the

steering wheel doing 60 miles an hour in the middle lane of a busy motorway is just ridiculous. Worse still are white van men in hire vans that clearly cannot drive on a UK road. We are not in America - we are not allowed to undertake!

For pity's sake, move over.

It sort of makes me laugh that we now have miles of 'smart' motorways. Taking out the hard shoulder to create a fourth lane just means you now have lane hoggers in the two middle lanes causing even more grief and probably affecting the Smart technology on the motorway by the speeds changing up and down because the lane hoggers look like slow-moving traffic jams. Oh, and whose bright idea was it to put in 'emergency' laybys instead of the hard shoulder? I am sure most of us cried out in frustration about breaking down between the emergency bays because we could not control a blowout or engine failure at the right moment.

So, two or three years of slow speeds while they 'smartened' the motorways up and built the emergency bays. Then what did they do? Closed them down again for another two years while they built more emergency bays because breakdowns were causing accidents between the emergency bays. Well, that will still happen with even more bays opened up. So, hundreds of miles of motorway running at 50 miles an hour because some drongo thought it would be safe to remove the hard shoulder.

What has all this cost? It probably would have been cheaper to just widen the motorway. One thing is for sure: it has not helped congestion, as the number of vehicles in the UK increases all the time.

I've got one more just for the pensioners that can still read small print. Billions overbudget for the little bit of HS2 they are going to complete. Pay increases for certain railway workers to keep the trains running, a black hole in the budget that has been partially filled in by robbing pensioners of their winter fuel allowance.

Nine billion pounds taken off pensioners to spend on what? Disgraceful.

I know. I'm a grumpy old git.



What's on?

Status of the events correct at the time of going to press, but we advise confirming with organisers' websites and social media channels.

MARCH 2025

The Scots Turf Show, Hamilton Park Racecourse www.scotsturfshow.com	5
Low Carbon Agriculture 2025, NAEC Stoneleigh www.lowcarbonagricultureshow.co.uk	5-6
South Turf UK Show, Windsor Racecourse www.southturfuk.com	12
Ideal Home Exhibition, Olympia London www.idealhomeshow.co.uk	21-6

Smallholding & Countryside Festival, Royal Welsh Showground rwas.wales/smallholding-and-countryside-festival	17-18
Chelsea Flower Show www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show	20-24
Shropshire County Agricultural Show, West Midlands Showground www.shropshirecountyshow.com	24

APRIL 2025

AEA Conference 2025 One Great George Street, London www.aea.uk.com	1
Harrogate Spring Flower Show www.flowershow.org.uk	24-27
Newark Garden Show, Newark Showground www.newarkgardenshow.co.uk	25-27

Northumberland County Show www.northcountyshow.co.uk	24
Suffolk County Show www.suffolkshow.co.uk	28-29
Staffordshire County Show www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show	28-29
Royal Bath & West Show www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show	29-31

East Anglian Game & Country Fair Euston Estate, Thetford www.ukgamefair.co.uk	26-27
The Commercial Vehicle Show NEC Birmingham www.cvshow.com	29-1/05

JUNE 2025

Royal Cornwall Show www.royalcornwallshow.org	5-7
South of England Show www.seas.org.uk/south-of-england-show	6-8
Cereals 2025, Roy Ward Farms, Leadenham, Lincs www.cerealsevent.co.uk	11-12

MAY 2025

North Somerset Show www.nsas.org.uk	5
Nottinghamshire County Show www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com	10
Balmoral Show, Belfast www.balmoralshow.co.uk	14-17
Hadleigh Show www.hadleighshow.co.uk	17

BBC Gardeners' World Live, NEC Birmingham www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com	12-15
Royal Three Counties Show, Malvern www.royalthreecounties.co.uk	13-15
Royal Cheshire County Show www.royalcheshireshow.org	17-18
Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh www.royalhighlandshow.org	19-22



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