

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

September/October 2025

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ELECTRIC TRACTOR TARGETS AG & TURF

What dealers can expect from the new
market-ready development

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Event draws decent numbers



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to maintain profit margins

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Letter from the editor **Steve Gibbs**

steve@servicedealer.co.uk



Welcome to the September/October 2025 edition of *Service Dealer* magazine.

As we move into the late summer/autumn period, a dealer's attention does, of course, turn to manufacturers' demo days and trade shows. Traditionally, September is a busy month, with much vying for our readers' attention and – crucially – time away from the dealership.

A relatively new kid on the turfcare show block, GroundsFest hits its third edition this month – with plenty of undeniable momentum behind it. You can read in this magazine's 'News' pages how its organisers have recently arranged to loosely team up with BIGGA who run the BTME show in Harrogate each January for their greenkeeper members.

Another twist in our sector's long-running trade show story, this move does feel like a genuinely progressive move, and one I feel should be applauded for its grown-up, sensible approach. If word can be spread to members of the industry who might not have considered attending the other show, that must be to the benefit of the wider industry? Certainly, exhibitors will be delighted if more punters are brought through either gate.

What does this mean for the SALTEX shaped elephant in the room, though? For years, speculation was rife that the two professional end-user trade associations would pal up for one mega turfcare show – but, clearly, that never happened. With the GMA's show now

seemingly out of the love-in, where does that leave their NEC exhibition?

The GMA were quick to release a statement after the news broke, pointing out that "every penny generated by the SALTEX show is reinvested directly into the grounds management industry, supporting the people that keep sport and community spaces thriving across the nation." A true and admirable fact. Also the show has added new features for November's edition including 'The Workshop' – which promises to deliver hands-on machinery guidance for professionals and volunteers (plus *Service Dealer* are a media partner with the show once again)."

From a dealer's perspective, I suspect they will want to know which events their manufacturer suppliers are choosing to invest in – and, indeed, where their commercial customers are picking to visit. Who organises them probably doesn't mean all that much to dealers?

Decisions are clearly being made in boardrooms across the industry regarding which shows to support. I suspect the days of every company wanting to show support to every exhibition are long gone. Emotion aside, choices will need to be made that result in a bottom-line benefit.

This news does feel like the start of a new chapter in the UK turfcare industry's trade show story. For how much longer that is a story that features the three major characters in their current form, we shall watch with interest.

THE TEAM

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DEALERS

Ernest Doe sell their Case IH business

To local dealer, Haynes Bros

Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd have announced the sale of their Case IH agricultural business, based at Woodchurch, Ashford, to Haynes Bros Ltd.

Doe say this move follows five productive years of trading in the Ashford area for themselves. However, in an official statement, the company said: "With two competing agricultural dealers operating in close proximity, both with the Case IH franchise, it has become clear that a long-term, sustainable presence is not commercially viable.

"Following a strategic review of dealer coverage in the region, and in close collaboration with CNH Industrial, our principal franchise partner, a mutual decision has been made to consolidate agricultural operations in the Ashford area within Haynes Bros Ltd's existing CNH dealer network, which already holds the Case IH franchise in Birchington in East Kent."

As part of this agreement, the agricultural business currently operated by Ernest Doe Power Ashford, including the agricultural staff, will be integrated into Haynes Bros Ltd's network, and the Ashford branch will close.

Doe stressed that this change does not affect their construction or groundcare operations, which will continue to operate as usual from their Dartford, Esher,

Ringmer and Albourne branches.

Graham Parker, sales director at Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd, told Service Dealer: "Ashford has played a valuable part in our journey over the past five years, and we're grateful to the team there for their dedication, and to our customers for their support. As we continue to focus on long-term strength across our 20-branch network, this move allows us to consolidate our efforts and ensure we're best-placed to serve customers across our trading areas."

While day-to-day operations transferred to Haynes Bros on 25 July, 2025, Ernest Doe & Sons will retain responsibility for the sale agreements on units sold to date, including outstanding account balances.

However, as Haynes will now cover both East and West Kent for Case IH farm machinery, including Case IH manufacturer warranty, customers are invited to open an account with Haynes Bros Ltd for in territory parts and service work.

Doe extended their appreciation to the agricultural team at Ernest Doe Power Ashford, and concluded by saying: "We are proud of what has been achieved, and wish both our colleagues and Haynes Bros every success in this new chapter."



INDUSTRY

Baroness announce new UK facility

Designed to support dealers

Baroness UK have announced a significant expansion to their UK facilities.

The company has said that, in direct response to their continued growth, the new 22,000 square foot facility will strengthen operational capabilities, and provide enhanced support and training for partners in their UK, Irish and European dealer network.

The expanded facility, located in Basingstoke, becomes the third facility in the UK and marks a significant milestone for the brand as they seek to support their 18 dealers operating out of 46 sites throughout the UK, Ireland and across the EU. Baroness say the strategic investment allows them to streamline further machine imports, have a larger dedicated space for hands-on training, and stock a wider range of spares and parts.

Adam Butler, Baroness UK director, said: "As demand for our equipment continues to grow, it's vital we are investing in the infrastructure that enables us to meet the needs of our dealers and end-users, not only in the UK, but further afield.

"The new facility will support increased inventory and faster delivery, but will also give us the space we need to run new and more frequent training programmes to ensure our dealers are equipped with the knowledge and resources they need to deliver the exceptional quality and reliability that Baroness is known for."

Adam concluded: "We see this as a necessary step to elevate our operation to the next level. It's not just growing our footprint, it's strengthening all elements of our manufacturer/dealer relationship, which will put us in the best position to provide unmatched support in every aspect of the ownership and service of a Baroness and AgriMetal product."



DEALERS



Turney Group's Dan Coates, operations manager; Phil Bush, managing director; and Peter McFerran, aftersales manager; with Craig Parkes, regional sales manager, Merlo UK

Turney's new depot takes on new brand

Extending dealership's Merlo coverage

Merlo UK has announced that Turney Group is now representing their brand from a new depot in Bredon, near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire.

This follows the planned closure of P&D Engineering (Bredon) Ltd at the end of June, marking the retirement of Mike Pullen after 49 years in business - more than 20 of which were as a Merlo dealer.

The Bredon depot will serve as a dedicated Merlo centre for the area, offering full sales and aftersales support for the range of telehandlers. Turney Group will also offer a range of groundcare and agricultural machinery brands at the site, but with Merlo serving as the sole telehandler franchise at this location.

Several members of the former P&D Engineering team will be joining Turney Group at Bredon, ensuring continuity and familiarity for customers and reinforcing the company's commitment to trusted local service.

"The Merlo brand will be a key part of our machinery offering from Bredon, and we are proud to extend Turney's coverage into Gloucestershire and Worcestershire," said Phil Bush, managing director at Turney Group. "This new depot will allow us to build on our commitment to offering premium machines with exceptional service and support."

Owen Buttle, national sales manager at Merlo UK, added: "We are delighted to expand our partnership with Turney Group through the addition of their new Bredon depot. Their specialist team and long-standing reputation align perfectly with Merlo's values of quality, innovation, and customer care. We'd also like to thank Mike Pullen for his decades of dedication to Merlo, and wish him all the best in retirement."

DEALERS

Chandlers expands Grasshopper's network

Appoints Readman Mowers

Chandlers Farm Equipment Ltd have announced the expansion of its Grasshopper Mower dealer network across the UK – with Readman Mowers, of Wilberfoss, York, their latest appointment.

Chandlers say this strategic growth initiative brings Grasshopper's zero-turn mowers to even more customers nationwide. They say their expanded network "ensures that commercial landscapers, grounds maintenance teams, and estate managers across the UK have better access than ever to the full Grasshopper lineup, including front-mounted and mid-mounted zero-turn mowers."

Justin Thompson, grounds care specialist at Chandlers, added: "We've seen a steady increase in demand from professionals who want reliable equipment that stands the test of time. Grasshopper's commitment to quality, combined with our expanding reach, means we can now support more customers across the UK with expert advice, fast delivery and local service."



Michael Readman, of Readman Mowers, exhibiting the Grasshopper machines at the recent Great Yorkshire Show

INDUSTRY



Sands open new UK factory

With potential for future expansion

Sands Agricultural Machinery (SAM), the Norfolk-based self-propelled sprayer manufacturer, say they have underlined their commitment to British agriculture and farm equipment manufacturing with a move to a completely new factory.

With business continuing to expand in recent years, Neal Sands and his son, Thomas, had been seeking a new site on which to expand production and boost efficiencies. Following its purchase and considerable investment in redevelopment, the new facility at Catfield – just a few minutes away – was officially opened in late-May, following a move during December and January. Of the site's 3.6ha (9ac), a third is under cover, with converted or purpose-built modern buildings, significant investment in construction, and conversion having been made before the move.

"We have created a layout which maximises production efficiency, where we can work on six machines at once and unfold 40m booms inside," says Thomas.

"But we also have potential for future expansion, with sufficient space to extend production by another eight bays if required. The production facilities are complemented by investment in new shotblasting and painting facilities, and by offices, stores and the service department."

The parts department for machine construction and supply to customers is now under one roof, with a six-tier stacking system and full computer organisation. Some £2.6m of stock comprising 26,000 lines was moved from the former premises.

Currently the plant produces approximately three machines per month, but this is expected to rise to four.



COBRA

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INDUSTRY

Irelands to distribute Energreen mowers

Rights taken over

Lincs-based Irelands Farm Machinery has taken over the distribution rights for the Energreen range of self-propelled vegetation mowers (SPV), covering an area that extends from the Scottish Borders down to London.

The agreement includes sales, service and support for new and existing Energreen machinery, with a stock of genuine parts available from all three of the Irelands depots, which are located at Carrington, Sutterton and Market Rasen in Lincolnshire. In addition, Irelands Farm Machinery say they will also be helping Energreen SPA to establish a dealer network for the remainder of the UK.

"We're extremely pleased to have added the Energreen SPV range alongside our existing premium brands," explains Daryl Dunn, Irelands Farm Machinery's sales and product manager for the Energreen range. "As a professional vegetation management tool for environmental, railways and highways sectors, the Energreen range is geared towards the maintenance of any green area."

Built in Poiana Maggiore, near Vicenza, Italy, the hydrostatic, four-wheel drive SPV range comprises four models from 143hp to 220hp, and with telescopic booms from 5.7m to 17m. A range of attachments are also available, including saw bars, shears, cutterbars, rotary brushes, stump grinders, grapples and grabs. In addition, river buckets, ditching buckets and barrier mowers are also available.

"We're already familiar with the Energreen product, having sold the range for several years under a previous brand," explained Daryl. "Our staff have had comprehensive training at the factory, to further prepare our business for the full integration of Energreen products."



PEOPLE

Crawfords' founder retires

Following 45 years of service



Crawfords Group have announced the retirement of its founder and chairman, Bob Crawford.

Originally known as R W Crawford Agricultural Machinery Ltd., the dealership was founded by Bob in October 1980, initially focused on the buying and selling of used farm machinery in Essex. Over the years, the business has grown into Crawfords Group, a multi-branch

business specialising in the sales, servicing, and parts support of machinery and 4x4 vehicles across the South and South East of England.

Wes Crawford, managing director, said: "On behalf of the Crawford family and the entire Crawfords team, we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to my father for his years of dedication, vision, and support. Bob's leadership has shaped the culture of the business from day one - grounded in passion, trust, family and respect, with a strong customer focus, and a genuine passion for the land-based sectors that we serve. His mentorship has left a lasting legacy that will continue to guide the business for years to come."

Bob added: "What started as a small venture from a yard in Essex has grown into something I'm incredibly proud of. Crawfords has always been more than just a business to me - it's been a family, a team, and a way of life. I'm grateful to everyone who's been part of the journey, past and present, from loyal customers and suppliers to the dedicated team who continue to drive the business forward. It's now time for me to step back, knowing the company is in safe hands, with a bright future."



WHEN IT COMES TO TURF CARE

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PEOPLE

Chris Biddle retires (finally!)

Podcast 'put to bed,' writes *Service Dealer's* founder ...

"Last December, I announced a pause in my Inside Agri-Turf podcast, as Trish and I were about to move from our home of 30 years in Salisbury to Southbourne on the Dorset coast. My intention was to restart production after a couple of months.

However, with the move successfully completed, I have decided to put Inside *Agri-Turf* 'to bed' permanently, after an exhilarating and satisfying five years producing more than 130 episodes for the land-based engineering community.

It brings to an end my direct involvement with this wonderful industry. More than 60 years that have been, always challenging, never dull, constantly evolving, endlessly fascinating - with a cast of the most talented and innovative folk you will find in any industry.

It all started for me in 1962, as a demonstrator for Ford Tractors, and progressed through management for an ag and grass machinery dealership. Then a change of gear, founding *Service Dealer* and *TurfPro* magazines in 1988, before passing the baton to Duncan Murray-Clarke who has taken the publication and events to new heights, supported by the ever-present editor Steve Gibbs, who joined me in 2001 fresh out of uni - with a degree in film studies!

I've been extremely fortunate to have enjoyed excellent relationships with the industry bodies. With BAGMA, where I was president-elect 'back in the day' (but couldn't take up the post because my dealership had just acquired another company); with the AEA, to whom I extend heartiest

congratulations on its remarkable 150th anniversary this year; and as a Fellow of IAGrE, for whom I produced its house journal, *Landwards*, for 12 years.

There are so many memories, experiences, highs and lows, all underpinned by enduring friendships. Hardly any of it was planned. Careers in this industry evolve. Doors are constantly opening as technology drives new opportunities. But now is the time to totally switch off.

Today, my 'local' is Sobo Beach, just 100 yards from our new home, a laid-back bar and eatery on Southbourne beach, recently voted one of the best in the UK.

And guess what? One of the first dealer profiles I wrote for *Service Dealer* in the 1980s featured Christchurch Power Tools. I was back in that very same showroom recently, buying a ride-on. Not a grass cutter, but a mobility scooter to help with my pesky spinal issues. The premises is now occupied by a specialist in these aids - whilst Christchurch Garden Machinery, opened by Chad Hayes of Longham Mowers, occupies a smart showroom on the same site.

So, what goes around ... Many thanks to everyone who listened to, guested or collaborated with my Inside *Agri-Turf* podcast - and best wishes to everyone involved in an industry which has dominated my life for so many years.

Judging by the pictures and stories in the media, online, and across social media of smiling, enthusiastic young people who have 'got the message' about the opportunities offered in land-based engineering, the industry is well equipped to meet the challenges of the future."

Ciao Chris.



DEALERS

Phill Hughes, of Lister Wilder, with Jeremy Vincent, from Trilo



Trilo's James Boyle with Tim Mason from George Browns



Ravenhill's Lee Murray and Gavin Kelt with Jeremy Vincent

Trilo trio take territory

Dealer shake-up around country

Trilo, the manufacturer of vacuum collectors and multipurpose turf maintenance equipment, have announced a reshuffle of their UK dealer network with an expansion of territory for Lister Wilder and the appointment of George Browns Ltd and Ravenhill.

With multiple depots across the south of England, and in recognition of their performance with the Trilo brand to date, Lister Wilder's dealership area has now been extended to include Kent, Sussex, Berkshire and the South London boroughs.

"It's great to now be working with Trilo across all of our branches," commented Lister Wilder sales and hire director Phill Hughes. "We have held a strong relationship with this leading manufacturer for many years, and are delighted to be asked to support their growth throughout the South of England."

Serving Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire and Essex, with immediate effect, George Browns are now dealers for the full range of Trilo debris loaders and vacuum trailers.

Tim Mason, group groundcare sales manager for George Browns Ltd, said: "Having had previous experience selling Trilo - knowing how well they are built and how well they perform in the field - I am excited to add the Trilo range to our lineup of market leading brands."

Finally, Ravenhill - serving customers in the north and north-east of Scotland - said in a statement: "We are delighted to welcome Trilo on-board, further strengthening our groundcare product line across the region. We are excited to showcase their range of machines over the coming months, and demonstrate their performance and versatility to our customers."

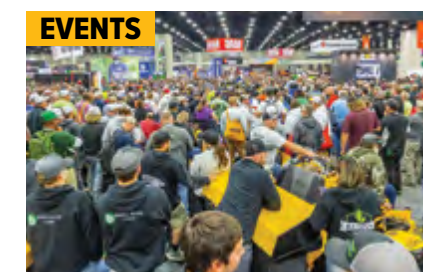
News in brief: Read these stories, and more, in full at: www.servicedealer.co.uk



INDUSTRY

Gadget boom predicted

A recent Aviva report has revealed an uptick in new technology usage across British homes, with the market expected to more than double over the next five years. In the last year alone, for instance, Britons spent more than £300 million on robotic lawnmowers.



EVENTS

Equip Exposition sells out again

For a fourth year in a row, Equip Exposition, the international landscape, outdoor living, and equipment exposition, has sold out its available exhibit space at the Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC) in Louisville, USA.



INDUSTRY

Management change at Reform

Reform has announced a change of management - with CEO Reinhard Riepl handing over his responsibility to Markus Wieshofer who assumes the role of sole member of the executive board and chair of the executive board.

TRADE SHOW

GroundsFest to collaborate with BTME organisers

Announce “strategic industry partnership”



GroundsFest's Christopher Bassett and Christopher Bennett flank BIGGA's Jim Croxton

The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) – organisers of BTME – and GroundsFest have announced a new collaboration, which, they say, is aimed at strengthening both events while bringing together professionals from across the grounds care, landscaping and golf sectors.

In an official statement, they say the partnership will see BIGGA and GroundsFest working closely on joint initiatives throughout the year, including attending and supporting each other's events, hosting tailored educational content, and working together on joint marketing campaigns.

At the heart of the collaboration, they say, is a shared desire to encourage crossover between both event communities - helping professionals discover the value that each show offers.

The statement reads: “It's a fantastic opportunity for community-building and cross sector engagement. From greenkeepers and grounds managers to landscapers and contractors, the partnership aims to unite the wider industry.”

The statement goes on to describe the two trade shows as “complementary” meaning they are “natural partners.”

Jim Croxton, CEO of BIGGA, said: “We at BIGGA are hugely proud of our flagship event, BTME, and the positive impact it has, particularly on the golf greenkeeping industry on an annual basis, and at a perfect time of the year to give turf managers a much-needed boost, be that to their morale, their industry knowledge, or their skillset. However, it is our ambition to engage with our members and the wider industry far more than just once a year.

“GroundsFest provides us with a brilliant opportunity to do so at a different time of year, and in a very different environment. We are looking forward to engaging with many greenkeepers at Stoneleigh Park this September, and to working closely with GroundsFest on a number of initiatives to move our industry forward.”

Speaking on the collaboration, GroundsFest's event director, Christopher Bassett, said: “The two shows complement one-another brilliantly - both in format and timing. BTME is a long-standing and special event, while GroundsFest delivers a dynamic, summer-based event where people can get hands-on with the latest kit. We're proud to be working with BIGGA, a fantastic association, and we believe this collaboration will bring real value to the industry. We very much see this as a long-term partnership - action-driven and focused on delivering real benefits to the sectors we serve.”

Outside of the two events, BIGGA and GroundsFest say they are also exploring further educational opportunities. BIGGA is known for its training and professional development programmes, and, with the recent launch of the GroundsFest Academy, the two parties believe there is clear potential to co-develop training content that supports professionals across the entire industry.

The official statement concludes: “As both events continue to grow, this partnership sets the tone for a more collaborative future for everyone working in grounds care, landscaping and golf.” More updates are promised soon.

SECURE THE FUTURE: Why UK Garden Machinery Dealerships Should Partner with Kress

In a rapidly evolving industry, UK garden machinery dealerships need to think ahead to stay competitive, sustainable, and profitable. Partnering with Kress offers a powerful way to future-proof your business while unlocking strong commercial advantages - from excellent margins to a dealer-first ethos.

Kress is built around dealer success. Unlike manufacturers that sell direct and bypass dealers, Kress stands firmly behind its partners. It does not sell direct, ensuring every sale strengthens its dealer network. This protects territories, builds long-term relationships, and puts control back in the hands of local dealerships.

Kress also offers a no-risk consignment model, allowing dealerships to stock products without tying up capital. It's a stress-free way to expand your offering with premium tools, without the pressure of immediate sell-through.

From a financial perspective, Kress delivers exceptional margins. With competitive pricing and strong perceived value, their battery tools and robotic mowers offer

higher returns at the point of sale. After-sales service and accessory sales provide ongoing revenue, enhancing long-term customer value.

“With our focus on the commercial market, we were one of the pioneers that supported Kress early on. It's not an overnight thing, but we hung in there, believing through hard work, the rewards would come. The graph has gone up rapidly and we are very excited by the potential! The support has been really good from the Kress team and we are delighted with the success we've had so far.”

Steve Halley, Managing Director, Cheshire Turf Machinery

As the market shifts from petrol to battery-powered tools, Kress is leading the way. Its advanced battery systems and robotic mowers are redefining standards in performance, efficiency, and sustainability. By aligning with Kress, dealerships gain early access to next-generation technology

that appeals to today's eco-conscious, tech-savvy customers.

Engineered for professional use, Kress tools offer rugged reliability and long service life. Fewer returns, higher customer satisfaction, and repeat sales mean more value for dealerships.

Support is another key strength. UK dealers benefit from dedicated sales, technical and marketing support, along with in-store training and promotional materials. With Kress, you're never left on your own - their success is tied to yours.

In a changing market, success favours those who adapt. By partnering with Kress, UK dealerships don't just add a premium brand, they embrace a model designed for long-term growth, resilience, and profitability.

Now is the time to join the Kress dealer network and secure your business's future.

If you are interested in becoming an authorised dealer, visit [Kress.com/become-a-dealer](https://kress.com/become-a-dealer).



Kress range of commercial tools



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ZONE**
STAND 36

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ZONE**
STAND OSA130

TRADE SHOW



ScotGrass to return in 2026 at new location

Dumfriesshire to host live demo event

The Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA) has announced that ScotGrass, the grassland demonstration event, will return to a new location at Slacks Farm, Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire, on Wednesday, 13 May, 2026.

The event provides visitors with a large collection of working machinery demonstrations, showcasing grassland technologies across expansive field-scale plots on a commercial dairy

farm. ScotGrass 2026 will feature a central static exhibitors' hub, surrounded by individual company demo areas, and a working clamp demonstration arena.

Kayleigh Holden, event organiser from the AEA, said: "ScotGrass is a key event for our industry, offering both exhibitors and visitors a rare opportunity to see the latest equipment in action, in a real-world setting along with giving visitors the chance to speak

with industry experts on technical subjects affecting the livestock industry and those supplying products and services to the sector.

"We're thrilled to return in 2026 with a new location that allows us to grow and enhance the event for everyone involved."

Exhibitors can now book their stand via www.scotgrass.co.uk/book-a-stand, whilst from November visitors will be able to pre-book tickets online.

PEOPLE



Jim Young assumes interim responsibility

Change of leadership at AriensCo

AriensCo has announced a change of leadership in the EMEAA region (Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia).

Jochen Schneider, executive vice president of the region, has left the company with immediate effect. In a statement, the company thanked him for his commitment, and wished him all the best for his future endeavours.

Jim Young, chief financial officer at AriensCo, will assume interim responsibility for the region, in close coordination with Nick Ariens, president of AriensCo and the Ariens family.

"Looking to the future, we are

convinced that greater family involvement in the EMEAA region is crucial to realising our long-term vision," says Nick Ariens. "In addition to our home market, the EMEAA region is hugely important for our global development. We want to further strengthen our commitment in this region with the AS-Motor and Ariens brands.

"Together with our EMEAA team, we look forward to further developing the product portfolio, further expanding our sales channels, and growing market share throughout Europe."

DEALERS

MLM take over for Kverneland

On Orkney and the Shetland Islands

MLM Engineering at Orphir has taken over sales, service and distribution of Kverneland equipment on Orkney and the Shetland Islands, following a change in the business structure of the previous dealer, Kirkwall-based J&W Tait.

"We've had a good relationship with J&W Tait over many years, and it was a mutual decision that led to us taking over the franchise when the Tait family decided to stop," explained MLM Engineering's dealer principal, Alan Muir.

With an established team of 11 in total - six of which are workshop-based - MLM say they are pleased to have added Kverneland to their portfolio, alongside their main tractor franchise, John Deere.

"There's a lot of beef cattle, dairy herds and sheep on the islands, with crops mainly grown for animal feed, and some barley grown for the distilleries. So we're expecting ploughs and grassland equipment to be our biggest selling implements from the Kverneland range," said Alan.

"We're looking to build on the good work that J&W Tait had achieved with its customers during its 28 years as a Kverneland dealer," he added.



MLM Engineering dealer principal Alan Muir (left) with business partner David Linkletter

News in brief:

Read these stories, and more, in full at: www.servicedealer.co.uk

INDUSTRY



Al-ko tease range expansion

AL-KO Gardentech has announced the launch of what it describes as its most extensive product range to date for the 2026 season.

Featuring a broad spectrum of new additions across the AL-KO and Solo by AL-KO brands, the company says the new offering represents a major milestone in their long-term growth strategy.

DEALERS



Iseki appoint

Wildwood Machinery, who have their main headquarters at East Horton Golf Club in Winchester, and who launched three years ago, have now been appointed as an Iseki dealer. They say: "The new products complement our existing product portfolio perfectly."

PEOPLE

Husqvarna Group appoint new CEO

Glen Instone to take over from Pavel Hajman



The Board of Directors of Husqvarna AB has appointed Glen Instone as the new CEO of Husqvarna Group.

Glen Instone currently holds the position as president of the Husqvarna Forest and Garden Division, and will assume his new role on August 11, 2025. He is succeeding Pavel Hajman, who will leave

the group by the end of the year.

Torbjörn Lööf, Chairman of Husqvarna AB, said: "The board and I are very pleased to announce Glen Instone as the new CEO of Husqvarna Group. His deep knowledge of our business and strong leadership skills will be of great value to further strengthen and grow the group going forward. We are entering the next strategy phase, where Glen is playing a central role in shaping our updated strategy, which will be presented during a Capital Markets Day in December.

"On behalf of the Board, I would also like to extend our sincere thanks to Pavel for his outstanding dedication and many years of great leadership within Husqvarna Group. Over the past decade, he has held several key positions, including the role of group CEO since December 2022, in which he has played a vital role in shaping and positioning Husqvarna Group for the future," added Torbjörn Lööf.

Glen Instone said: "I am proud of our company's achievements, and am excited to continue to lead and develop the great team within the Husqvarna Group in a pivotal time in our history. For over 335 years, we have continuously reinvented ourselves, driving industry transformation, with our customers always at the heart of what we do."

Glen Instone, 48, was born in England, is a chartered management accountant (ACMA), and holds a B.A. (Hons) in Accounting & Finance. Glen joined the company in 2002, and has been a part of Group Management since 2018. Apart from his current position as president of the Husqvarna Forest and Garden Division, he was earlier Group CFO, and has held various positions within the Forest and Garden Division, including vice president of global sales and services and CFO.

DEALERS

Open House event for GGM's new facility

And successful local show

GGM Group say they are continuing to move-forward with their new Service Centre in Yorkshire, marking progress with a vibrant customer open house event held in June.

The dealership says the day brought together an enthusiastic mix of long-standing and new customers, industry partners and team members, all contributing to what they describe as "a fantastic day that exceeded expectations."

Following the open house event, GGM is now finalising the setup of the new facility to ensure it is fully-equipped to support local customers. The team say they are focused on expanding aftersales care, technical support and specialist services to meet the evolving needs of customers, and are currently on a recruitment drive across their aftersales team

The recent event offered customers the opportunity to meet the team, explore the facilities and engage directly with machinery manufacturers, including Kubota, Amazone, Baroness, Echo, Ferris, FSI, Major, Kress, and TP Chippers.

GGM Group also recently enjoyed a successful Great Yorkshire Show, where the team hosted their largest-ever stand and welcomed footfall from both new and existing customers.

Chris Gibson, managing director of GGM Group, said: "We were thrilled with the turnout at our open house event, and equally delighted by the buzz at the Great Yorkshire Show. Seeing so many loyal customers and new faces engaging with our team and partners has been fantastic. Our new Knottingley Service Centre represents a significant step forward in our ability to support customers across Yorkshire. We can't wait to keep developing our service and support offering to help customers succeed."



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WARRANTY

BATTERY
TWO 2 YEAR
WARRANTY

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Tactics to thrive in turbulent times

December's *Service Dealer* Conference has **'Resilience'** as its theme – with speakers lined up to help dealers cope with everything that business throws at them.

Organisers of the *Service Dealer* Conference have confirmed that the theme for this year's edition is **'Resilience'**.

Offering tactics to thrive in turbulent times, resilience for dealerships isn't luck - it's a skill that can be honed, improved and nurtured. The conference promises a specially curated programme for our dealer delegates, which will impart expert knowledge on this most timely of topics.

Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke explains: "We felt that **'Resilience'** sums up what is needed right now in a world of challenge and, above all, uncertainty. Our program of events is designed to help physically, mentally and strategically."

Each year, the *Service Dealer* team takes on-board feedback from past events to shape the day around the needs of its delegates - and this year is no different. It's this careful consideration that has helped position the *Service Dealer* Conference as the leading event in the sector, drawing dealership owners, managers, and key decision makers who are keen to stay ahead of the curve and drive business success.

Comedian to deliver keynote

The keynote address will be delivered by international award-winning comedian and highly-regarded corporate keynote speaker **Stuart Goldsmith**.

Duncan explains: "The conference will be kicked off by Stuart. An acclaimed comedian, he will give us a fascinating insight into how important resilience is to function as a comedian."

Stuart specialises in tackling important, serious and often overwhelming subjects, such as resilience and the climate crisis, via the fresh, engaging and accessible medium of comedy.

His TV credits include performing stand-up on BBC institution *Live at the Apollo*, and also on *Conan*, hosted by comedy icon Conan O'Brien.

Stuart created the hugely popular keynote *'What Comedians Can Teach You About Resilience'*, which he has delivered to organisations all over the UK and Europe (to such clients as LEGO, eBay, Deloitte, HG Capital, Aviva, PwC, UKTV and the Office for National Statistics).

Stuart is also a talented interviewer, and host of the internationally

renowned *Comedian's Comedian* podcast. He has interviewed many of the comedy world's household names, including James Acaster, Jimmy Carr, Sarah Millican and Sindhu Vee. The podcast has had over 25 million downloads to date.

For up-to-date information regarding the *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards, keep an eye on our social channels and the *Service Dealer Weekly Update*, published every Friday at midday. To subscribe for free, visit www.servicedealer.co.uk



Comedian Stuart Goldsmith will deliver the keynote address on the subject of **'Resilience'**

Speakers confirmed to share expert knowledge

We are thrilled to announce a stellar lineup of speakers, all of whom will have the concept of **'Resilience'** tied into their presentations. Joining us on-stage to share their experiences and provide valuable insights will be:



Ian Beecher-Jones *JoJo's Vineyard* CUSTOMER INSIGHT

Co-owner of JoJo's Vineyard – a 2.2ha vineyard in Henley on Thames – Ian was director general of BAGMA from 1994 to 2006, then moved on to set up his own precision farming consultancy business, working with farmers around the world to improve their use of precision farming yield data. Ian says one of the main challenges facing the viticulture industry is sustainability, and what that looks like to a business. Ian will explore what this means for farmers, growers and dealers over the next few years.



Jim McKenzie MBE *Celtic Manor Resort* CUSTOMER INSIGHT

Following an already successful career in greenkeeping, Jim joined Celtic Manor Resort in 1993 to oversee construction of the Roman Road Course. He became golf course manager upon completion of the project and subsequently developed a further four courses on site. Between 1999 and 2004 Jim also held the position of director of golf and is now director of golf courses and estates management. Jim will speak on what a turf professional requires from their local dealer.



Gary Whitney *Smartlawns Limited* ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Gary Whitney, managing director of Smartlawns Ltd who specialise in robotic solutions for large area mowing and line marking, has spent over 40 years across all aspects of OPE sales, use and maintenance. Most recently enjoying 25 years with Stiga, he was first promoted to national sales manager in 2014 and then managing director in 2018 - leaving in June 2024 to set up Smartlawns. Gary will reflect on lessons learned across the industry and consider the network's threats and opportunities.



Nick Elston *How to Forge Ahead* WORKSHOP

Nick is an award-winning speaker and transformational speaking coach, best known for helping people speak with confidence, communicate with impact, and lead conversations that matter. With a background in lived experience storytelling and mental health advocacy, Nick works with businesses, leaders and teams to spark connection, inspire action, and drive positive change - all delivered with humour, honesty and heart.



Neil Wilkins *AI for '26* WORKSHOP

Returning following his popular session from last year, where he introduced our dealer delegates to what AI can offer the business, Neil returns for an all-new session. Marketing consultant and senior tutor at Cambridge Marketing College, Neil's focus in this year's workshop is how much AI has changed in the past 12 months – helping dealers prepare for the coming year.

Join us on December 4, 2025, at the Crown Plaza Hotel, Stratford-upon-Avon, to hear from our expert speakers, to learn from tailored breakout sessions, and to network with your industry peers for invaluable sharing of knowledge and expertise.



2025 ‘Dealer of the Year’ awards

The categories have been announced this year’s awards.

The core dealer categories for the 2025 awards are:



There are also special award categories this year:



In addition, of course: all those considered for entry will be put forward for the prestigious **Overall Dealer of the Year Award**



For details of how to enter your dealership into any of the above awards, keep watching the

Service Dealer Weekly Update
and www.servicedealer.co.uk

Categories correct at time of going to press.

2025 Sponsors

“We are absolutely delighted to welcome **AL-KO/Weibang** as Principal Sponsors for the first time,” confirmed *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke. *Service Dealer* welcome AL-KO/Weibang and all our other vital sponsors, thanking them for their support and input.

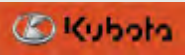
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What do manufacturers really want from dealers?

With his lifetime of experience from the supplier side of the fence, industry expert ROB EDWARDS explains in his personal view, what he believes is required by manufacturers from their dealers.



Rob Edwards has worked in the agricultural and groundcare machinery industry all of his working life. Over the last 38 years, he has worked with New Holland (as a global product specialist), Kverneland and Deutz-Fahr (in UK sales and marketing), and has recently spent ten years with Kubota, leading the M7000 series tractor project, before spending the last five years heading up their UK product and marketing team.

An avid supporter of our industry, but also very keen on rugby (he runs the local walking rugby team), all things sailing-related, and Moto GP.

Firstly, let’s look at the verb ‘dealer,’ often defined as ‘*someone who buys and sells goods.*’ Its root is the word ‘deal,’ whose etymology lists ‘*sharing, portion, division or part of,*’ whereas our industry twists this definition to mean trading and negotiation, as we know, all part of any purchase today. This can be said to be a positive, and also a negative, too. Negotiation is an important part of any capital purchase but ‘dealing’ is a different kettle of fish.

Do you know how the customer behaves? Do you know who the real decision-maker is? Both of these can bring many different needs to the ‘dealing’ table. One extreme example I recall, when working with a South-Western dealer to close the deal on a 135hp tractor, was when the dealer was at the point of shaking hands, the customer asked the dealer for several pairs of overalls to be thrown in with the deal - and he was serious. And I mean really serious. “Add the overalls, or the deal’s off.” It was his last chance to drive the deal in a different way. Instantly, the dealer

looked at me, the manufacturer’s rep, for an answer. He didn’t know what to do, and was a bit surprised. You can guess what happened, but the important lesson learned here, for both the dealer and me, was to never dismiss the customers in-built need to ‘deal’ - and to be prepared for that, whatever it may be.

A dealer is, in my opinion, an essential part of the machinery supply chain. Some manufacturers are managing local depots, in essence becoming local dealers. The key point here, though, is that that entity is behaving like a local dealer, understanding and supporting the local market, its businesses and customers, young and old – and let’s not forget the walk-in consumers, too.

So, I am going to make a bold statement here, so here goes;

“There is a real desire from manufacturers to sell through a recognised, independently-managed distribution channel.”

Why? Simply, because they need localised retail activity.

In the last thirty years or so, many manufacturers have invested in their

own distribution channels, and they have, with a couple of well-known exceptions, all failed to thrive. The sentiment was often right - a viable market potential, a lack of a strong dealer for that brand in that area, and, often, very few alternative dealers to consider at that time, too.

This resulted in some manufacturers opening their own retail departments, often investing in new, state-of-the-art depots, and some others supporting a smaller-scale local dealer or mechanic to grow. Let's quickly recap some of the names that have tried these types of approach: David Brown, Same Deutz-Fahr, Renault, Grimme, Krone, and, of course, Claas. Generally, the first of these two options failed, except for where Claas and Krone have endeavoured to make it work – and there are also a very small number of dealers or mechanics that have, with manufacturers' support, gone on to thrive.

Let's look at some of the key factors influencing the lack of success of this model.

Firstly: a manufacturer doesn't 'do' retail.

Can they manage the retail sales process alongside their ongoing business? Can they manage the trade-ins, having sufficient trade contacts to know where to sell and how to price and manage the used machines?



Dealers need localised retail activity



Aftersales support is probably the one essential that can have a greater impact on the perception of your product

Secondly: do they know the local market well enough?

Not just the market, but the customers, their buying profiles, their business plans, financial structure, and the subtle factors (like natural geographic boundaries) that customers have traded within for many years? How often have we heard, "but we never cross the river," or "go over that hill?"

It all adds up to it being a difficult challenge for a national wholesaler to sell local retail. However, there are, as always, some exceptions, and Claas and Krone, with their specialised approach to harvesting products, has no doubt brought differentiation and success - albeit with years of hard work, adaptation and, of course, some serious investment.

So, in the UK, machinery sales are predominantly made through established dealer networks, often across broad geographical areas – and, with all but a few exceptions, they are not owned or supported by the manufacturer.

So, what do manufacturers want?

They want them to prospect - in my opinion, an essential aspect, often underdone. For example, if we use a cautious 4:1 prospect to sale ratio, then they will probably want you to quote far more than you do already. For higher-market-share brands, then, without a doubt they will be over-quoting the market volume in their area. They must be. To be achieving the market shares that they are achieving, they are just talking to more customers. Are you doing that?

Of course, they want dealers to sell machines, too. To help that, they will be providing regular product sales, updates and training, and will expect dealers to attend.

They want dealers to invest in branding and signage for their premises. This makes it clear to the local marketplace what products the dealer sells and supports, and also promotes the brand in that area. They will also be expected to invest in marketing, often



Manufacturers will support the network by having training staff to set up and run apprenticeships, technical training and certified technical accreditation

with an expectation to have dedicated resources, a marketing plan, and, importantly, a marketing budget.

Investment in the dealer structure and infrastructure will also be planned and expected, with a ratio of sales or service staff being defined to bring the appropriate sales volume and support for the products in that market. There will also be targeted guidelines for dealer premises, workshops and vehicles.

Aftersales support is probably the one essential that can have a greater impact on the perception of your product, and you as a dealer in your local area, than anything else. Manufacturers will focus extremely hard on ensuring that you provide this.

Margins from aftersales will be greater and more consistent over the year than wholegood sales. A manufacturer will be targeting dealers to improve their aftersales margins, improving their 'absorption' percentage, to allow the sales function to continue within its sphere of unknowns and variables (such as trade-in values, used machine repair costs, used machinery finance stocking plans, unrecovered warranty costs and labour charges - all part of the business that eat into the cashflow every day).

Aftersales technical support, especially for warranty, is essential. You may think that is a given, but,

occasionally, it's not. There are still some dealers who focus on sales alone, with aftersales support being definitely in second or third place in the dealer's mind.

This then brings in a need for skilled and competent aftersales staff and technicians. Manufacturers will support the network by having training staff to set up and run apprenticeships, technical training and certified technical accreditation, all of this being essential in supporting customers with their technical needs and providing breakdown support. With increased product complexity, added to high machine purchase costs, customer demands on the dealer are higher than ever.

What else is expected from the dealer?

Many of the manufacturers' needs above are then wrapped up in some form of annual business plan, too. Depending on the brand, this can vary from being a quite simple process through to quite complex online reviews, sometimes being done by specific manufacturer staff, too. And the aim? Increased market share and sales, improved market perception through brand representation and marketing - all whilst providing first class aftersales support.

Finally, manufacturers may ask that

dealers submit key data to some form of 'dealer composite.' These have been around since the late seventies, and are not just a spying exercise, as some dealers may think. Used properly, a dealer can use this to benchmark many aspects of their business.

For example, profitability by department, workshop or sales performance against a set of baseline data. In my opinion, these can be invaluable to a dealer to help them drill down into how their business is performing, and to help them to see what areas they should be focusing on to improve their margins and profitability.

More often than not, the dealer will have a specific strength – let's say, sales. Use of some form of benchmarking tool will allow them to identify what to do with the less favourable part of the business. You may find that, with some focus, this area could become your new profitable best friend. I will add one comment, though: keep it simple and relevant to your business, but do it.

To summarise, manufacturers will always need this local 'on-the-ground' contact with the customer base, and so, in some form, localised dealers are, in my opinion, an essential part of the machinery supply chain. But the model is going to change and evolve with technology and market shifts and influences.

Make sure that you are ready.

Robotics, batteries and the road ahead

Jonathan Snowball, head of business unit professional UK at Husqvarna UK, speaks to *Service Dealer* editor STEVE GIBBS about changes in the company, their relationship with their dealer network, and the growth of robotics.



Husqvarna UK's head of business unit professional, Jonathan Snowball

Service Dealer: How is general business for Husqvarna UK in 2025?

Jonathan Snowball: That's a very well-timed question, as not only is 2025 the 30th year since we began producing robotic mowers here in the UK, but we're also celebrating a record first half of the year. The dry spell around May slowed things down, but interest picked up again in June and July, and our dealers are reporting excellent numbers.

SD: How are your different product areas faring?

JS: Robotics continue to grow, with levels in the professional sector achieving triple-figure percentage increases. The shift towards battery-powered machinery, such as blowers, hedge trimmers, chainsaws and brush cutters, is also constantly growing as our portfolio increases. However, we still continue to develop our petrol-powered range, and are also seeing growth in this area.

SD: What changes do you feel your dealer network will have noticed recently?

JS: We have invested in the UK setup with the goal of improving our dealer customer service and aftersales support. Our headcount in aftersales and customer service has tripled, and

we have upskilled our employees, with a new structure in place to manage these departments. New telephone and customer relationship management systems have increased efficiency in case handling for dealers.

Our supply chain was the area most impacted by the rapid growth through the pandemic, and so significant investment has been allocated there. We essentially have a new operation running from the same site, resulting in better stock levels of the right products, faster delivery times, better communication, and a 50 percent reduction on waiting time on backorders.

We have restructured our dealer sales team to include North and South regional area business managers, ensuring dealers receive more support through revised territories.

SD: Both the domestic and professional Husqvarna products are increasingly utilising battery-power. How do you feel about that market becoming more competitive?

JS: There's certainly more brands on the market now offering battery solutions. Although it can be seen as competition for us, it supports the greater good. More sustainable solutions in people's hands is what we want. With more options, and all the major manufacturers pushing battery solutions, it has helped the category awareness grow, and convinced the end customer battery-power is the right route for them to take.

SD: Is there still space for petrol-powered machines in Husqvarna's portfolio, and, indeed, the marketplace?

JS: Absolutely, and we are continuing to develop our petrol-powered machines to make them more powerful, more efficient, reduce emissions, and make them easier to use. In recent years, we have launched petrol-powered machines in all product categories.

Despite the rapid switch to battery, I believe petrol-power will still remain for many years to come. Whilst the petrol handheld market is shrinking, we are

growing our sales, suggesting we are taking more market share.

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?

JS: I agree with that statement, to some extent. As an example, leaf blowers are recognised as the most inefficient power tool, due to so much energy being wasted on air resistance. A 25cc petrol handheld blower can be matched in power and performance by a battery handheld blower, but you will need a couple of batteries to match an extended runtime.

However, as you move up through the power segments, there is currently no battery solution with a sensible runtime to match the 80cc petrol backpack leaf blower needed for working all day in parks, clearing autumn leaves. So that's an area for future development.

We frequently see tenders issued for battery-only fleets, and sometimes have to advise that some petrol-power is still required. We're comfortable doing this, as it is about providing the right machine for the job.

SD: How do you differentiate your battery-powered tools in the minds of domestic and professional end-users?



Robots in action at Carus Green Golf Club



Despite the rapid switch to battery, Jonathan believes petrol-power will remain for many years to come

JS: Husqvarna have a very broad battery offering, and have everything to suit the back garden convenience-seeker, right up to demanding professionals. Our Aspire range is entry price point with a premium feel. The model numbering system moves from 100 series for domestic garden occasional use right up to 500 series designed for professionals. Therefore, all the battery products are designed specifically with the customer in mind. A 300 series aimed at landowners will take some features from the 500 professional range to enhance performance, but still maintain a lower RRP. So a hobby gardener, landowner, semi-professional and professional all have options right for them.

SD: How do you view your company's relationship in general with your dealers – and are you looking to expand on your network?

JS: The dealer network are our partners, and our primary route to market as the invaluable service proposition from dealers is what makes our products stand out to the end customer. The skill and expertise of the sales and technical staff of our dealers is second to none. We have some large commercial customers that are serviced by the dealer network, and it's their hard work that supports the renewal of these contracts.

Our aim is to expand the Husqvarna dealer network and open new dealer accounts each year. However, we're strategic in doing this, and have criteria in place to ensure a good quality of

dealer is in place to serve our customers.

Last year, we invited a selection of our dealers to Anfield, the home of Liverpool FC, for our dealer conference, and, in 2025, we are planning our biggest dealer conference ever at The Belfry, the five-time Ryder Cup venue. We'll invite over 200 dealers – firstly, to thank them for being our partners, and secondly, to show them the innovations planned for 2026, and how we continue to work in partnership.

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

JS: We should always take the view of the end customer, whether they be professional or domestic. What are they looking for, and what can a dealer offer that's better than the basic retail option? It's about offering a premium experience with good shop displays, a welcoming atmosphere, and expertise to help them select the right products. Then, if the product breaks or they have any issues, service and support will give them the support they need to maintain that positive relationship.

Increasingly, there is an expectation for field sales and service, such as robotics survey and installation, or it could be a professional customer expecting a visit to their place of work. I believe dealers need to be prepared to invest in mobilising staff to capitalise on the opportunity.

With this in mind, Husqvarna is looking closely into the training we offer, and how we can improve it to upskill our dealers even more.

We are also looking at how our brand is represented in-store, and this year launched a new shop concept with a modern feel, to support dealers wishing to create premium experiential shopping.

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

JS: I could understand those concerns five years ago, but it's now a minimum requirement to sell battery-powered machinery in order to stay relevant. We're encouraging dealers to consider how battery-power fits into their business, and how they can maximise the potential of this new technology. With Husqvarna, you can still mix your range with petrol and battery-power, it doesn't need to be 100% battery.

SD: The lack of service work with battery tools is also something that some of our dealer readers have expressed concerns about. What are your thoughts?

JS: One of the main challenges in our industry is recruiting and retaining skilled technical staff. When speaking with dealers, I hear about lead times up to four weeks for a petrol lawnmower service, meaning the network can't keep up with the current demand. Battery-power can help ease that.

There is still service work required for battery-powered machinery, and I strongly believe that new battery and robotic technology will attract school leavers who have an interest in working with diagnostics, software and autonomous solutions.

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

JS: Husqvarna are partnered with ERP (European Recycling Platform), and, through this partnership, we arrange collection and disposal of batteries from our dealer network. Being partnered with ERP means we are fully compliant, and utilising the best recycling networks.

SD: Obviously, robotic mowing solutions play an increasingly

significant role in Husqvarna's business – tell me about how you see that area developing for domestic-users?

JS: For domestic use, we have seen a rapid shift towards boundary-free technology. We launched our first boundary wire-free Automower 550 EPOS in 2020, and, since then, we have spent a lot of time training our dealers in the installation, and marketed the technology heavily. There are many benefits to boundary wire-free over a cable in the ground, but we still see the dealer installation as a crucial step to ensure machines run smoothly and the customer receives the best experience.

The UK market is starting to embrace robotic mowing, which is wonderful, but, when you consider that less than 1% of UK homes use the technology – compared to approximately 25% in Scandinavian countries – it's clear that there's a huge amount of untapped potential.

SD: And how will robotics develop for commercial-users?

JS: We're now 100% boundary wire-free for professional use in 2025. The pro applications in sports turf and landscaping have increased considerably, and this is a big opportunity for our dealers. We're now focused on the intricate details required for each application. The requirements for a green space in a business complex are very different to a football pitch, and we're confident that we have developed the right features, whereby we can handle all these applications. Cutting patterns, managing large fleets, multi-area and scheduling are all areas where we have the best technology on the market, and this is the reason why so many professionals are now using Husqvarna robotics in commercial turfcare.

SD: Husqvarna traditionally have a prominent presence at many the major professional turfcare machinery shows. Are these still important to you?

JS: The trade shows are incredibly important, and you will see me

standing proudly on our stand at all of the major events. For me, they are the highlights of the year, as they are where we get to interact with our end customers and dealers. I enjoy the camaraderie between the manufacturers, and I see these events as the heart of our industry.

Each event requires significant budgetary and time investment, and, with so many trade shows in the calendar, I hope the various organisers recognise this, and make efforts to support their exhibitors and engage with them on ways to create a stronger and more vibrant industry.

Sorry, I forgot to mention the *Service Dealer* Conference, which is obviously my favourite!

SD: Speaking of which, then: Husqvarna are a Platinum sponsor of the *Service Dealer* Conference & Awards this year. Can you say why that's something you choose to do?

JS: We see *Service Dealer* as the true voice and forum of the dealer network. We're incredibly proud to support the conference and awards, especially considering the support dealers get from the event, such as the workshops. We always leave feeling inspired, and, hopefully, the dealers do, too.

SD: What advice do you have for dealers during a tough season?

JS: Extreme weather conditions are now becoming the norm, and, unfortunately, in recent years, dry spells or poor weather have really affected us all, not to mention the turbulence in the economy. Consistency, resilience and making the

right business decisions are key.

I read your column, Steve, and you've often questioned how many brands a dealer should stock? That's a difficult question to answer, but we do see that those dealers with a focused range seem to have fewer fluctuations and more consistent performance.

I have learned a lot from working with our dealer network over my 16 years at Husqvarna. Many have had a great influence in my career, and I've learned a lot from many dealer business owners and managers. Although I know there will be challenging times ahead, we have a great network of dealers, and I'm certain we'll thrive and succeed together.

SD: And finally, what do you see as the future for Husqvarna in the UK?

JS: We will continue to launch new products every year, to give our dealers the best range to drive business. We're confident we will continue to be the world leaders in robotic mowing, and that will be driven by engaging with our customers and dealers, ensuring our products suit their changing needs and requirements.

We will continue to invest in our after-sales, customer service and supply chain to ensure we are the best partner for our dealers. Our HQ office in County Durham has recently had a full refurbishment, and we're going to follow that up by creating an amazing on-site visitor experience for our customers and dealers.

We've come a long way together in the last few years. It's now time to cement our place as the best at what we do.

SD: Thank you.



Professional products being introduced at an open day



Are you towing legally?

There are rules that dealers must comply with when using a trailer for their business. KEITH CHRISTIAN explains.

I have been involved with towing trailers in the LBE industry for over 45 years. I have also been involved in advising dealers, when in trouble, about what they can do and shouldn't do when it comes to using trailers in their businesses.

This also meant working closely with the DVSA (Driver Vehicle Standards Agency) in my BAGMA days to understand the rights and wrongs of trailer towing. In my experience, many dealers and users would say that the whole topic is a 'grey area' - yet the rules and regulations are black and white.

Just to get something out of the way, I apologise to other road users. I have started towing a caravan in my retirement. Thankfully I like to think I know what I am doing but it horrifies me that anyone with a driving license can hook up to a caravan or trailer and tow it away never having had any training, or knowing anything about the vagaries of what a trailer or caravan can do behind a car or pickup - and how potentially dangerous they are.

I thought a little update on trailer use, recommendations, and some of the rules for dealers maybe of some help to some of you reading this magazine. It is all available online but I enlisted the help of Tony Collinson, from Beyond Driving Limited, to make sure I have the most up-to-date information and to cover the 'grey areas' for *non-believers*!

Tachographs

One of the biggest and most common issues I have come across over the years is the endless argument about when,

why and who should use a tachograph. This is supposedly a grey area to some, but not to the DVSA.

A tachograph is required when towing a trailer if the combined maximum authorised mass (MAM) of the vehicle and trailer exceeds 3,500kg and the vehicle is used for commercial purposes. If the vehicle is used for hire or reward, or for the commercial carriage of goods, and the total weight exceeds this limit, a tachograph is necessary, according to fleet management websites.

The MAM is the total permissible weight of the towing vehicle and trailer, or Gross Train Weight. The vehicle weight is clearly listed on the VIN plate of any vehicle, and the maximum capacity of the trailer should be shown on the trailer's plate, which also shows the weight of the trailer. You add these together to get the MAM. If this is below 3,500kg, all is OK. If it is over, and you are using the combination outfit for hire or reward, you need a tachograph. Plain and simple, and really easy to understand – isn't it?

Don't forget you have to add the permissible weights of the towing vehicle and trailer together. For example, a two-tonne pickup hooked up to a 3.5-tonne capacity trailer is a total of 5.5 tonnes. If used commercial, for hire or reward, you need a tacho.

You do not need a tachograph if the driver is going about his normal business, it is not his full-time job to drive, and he or she is within a 100km of their normal operating base (and there is no hire or reward involved). For a supplier or dealer, this means that demonstration equipment can be taken out without the use of tachograph. If there was a smaller machine or even spare parts being delivered with the demonstrator,

“Dealers and suppliers need to be aware of the licence requirements for towing a trailer”



and the MAM was over 3,500kg, then it would be a case of hire or reward, and a tacho would need to be used. I have seen a case like this prosecuted by the DVSA despite the protestations of the dealer involved.

Requirements and training

Dealers/suppliers also need to be aware of the licence requirements for towing a trailer.

A BE (or B+E) driving license in the UK allows you to drive a car with a trailer, where the combined maximum authorised mass (MAM) of the vehicle and trailer does not exceed 7,000kg. If you passed your driving test on or before January 19, 2013, you can tow any trailer within the vehicle's towing limits. If you passed after this date, the trailer's MAM cannot exceed 3,500kg, as long as it is within the vehicle's towing limits.

Clearly, you need to be aware of the January 2013 restriction on the MAM limits, and the 'grandfather rights' prior to this. Also note the reference to the vehicle's towing limits, which is another area of vehicle law that applies.

Breaking these basic rules or guidelines may invalidate your insurance, and give the DVSA or police reason to impound the vehicle, trailer and load until such time as the matter is sorted out. I have also been involved in a case where this happened, and it took a month to get the vehicle combination and load back to the dealership.

Employers need to ensure their employees are trained and competent to tow trailers, particularly when it is for work purposes – regardless of a tacho being required

or not. This includes verifying their driving licences and providing appropriate training on trailer handling, pre-use checks, and safe loading/unloading practices. Adherence to such regulations as the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) is also crucial to ensure safety and compliance.

This all comes under the Health and Safety at Work Act, which dealers and employers should be more than aware of as they have a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of their employees. This is not something to be trifled with, as any breach that involves a serious injury or



death will land an employer in a huge amount of trouble.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 is the primary piece of legislation in Great Britain that covers occupational health and safety. It sets out the general duties employers have towards their employees and the public, ensuring a safe working environment and protecting against risks to health.

Any employee who will have to tow a trailer should be provided with training for trailer towing that includes road craft, legislation, hitching and unhitching, loading and unloading, trailer safety and general awareness. There are companies listed online that can provide this training that will satisfy the Health and Safety at Work Act. Don't send an employee out with a trailer unless they have had training. It will be a recipe for disaster. One such company are Beyond Driving Ltd, who are a registered Lantra training provider for trailer training (www.beyonddriving.co.uk - contact Tony Collinson). They can provide training at a dealer's premises to minimise any disruption to a business.

There is now no legal requirement in the UK for a person to have training or be licenced to tow a trailer. This is covered by the general car licence BE for private use, but it is essential that employees have training, even though their licences may cover them. This is covered under the

PUWER regulations mentioned previously. Any breach of regulations while towing a trailer may invalidate a user's insurance cover apart from attracting the might of the law.

Trailer towing tips

Now for some simple and obvious tips for trailer towers. A vehicle towing a trailer can only do up to 60 miles an hour on a motorway and dual carriageways, and up to 50mph, where permissible, on other roads. Trailer towers are not allowed in the outside lane of a motorway (or 'fast lane,' as it is wrongly referred to). Caravans come under the same rules, and there are restrictions for cars and caravans under the MAM rules. Obviously, a caravan, being box-like and like a sail in a strong wind, can be more unruly than a twin-axled equipment trailer, and, as we all know, they need a bit more space and caution when being overtaken.

In my past experience, trailers can be neglected, because there is no MOT to ensure their roadworthiness and, where several people may use the same trailer, they can be overlooked when it comes to regular maintenance. If it is on the road, it must be fit for purpose (Road Traffic Act and PUWER regulations apply). Inertia brakes should be working correctly, and attention must be paid to wheel brakes, safety



Employers need to ensure their employees are trained and competent to tow trailers, particularly when it is for work purposes



Breaking these basic rules and guidelines may invalidate your insurance, and give the DVSA or police reason to impound the vehicle, trailer and load

Don't fall into the trap of believing these rules do not apply to you, or that the 'grey areas' give you something to hide behind. Ignorance of the law is no defence! Above all, do everything you can to be safe and keep others safe.



Be aware of additional weight on handling. Avoid sudden acceleration, braking or steering manoeuvres.



Consider additional stopping time and maintain a larger gap when following other vehicles.



When turning or over-taking, consider the additional length and slower rate of acceleration.



The number plate on the towing vehicle must be clearly duplicated on the back of the trailer

or snatch cables for overrun brakes, and the handbrake which is also operated by the snatch cables. Trailer electrics need to be operating correctly in the same way they must be on a car. Attention should be paid to the A frame, towing hitch and jockey wheel. The number plate on the towing vehicle must be clearly duplicated on the back of the trailer.

There is a legal limit for trailer tyres in the UK, just like there is for car tyres. The legal minimum tread depth for trailer tyres is 1.6mm across the central three-quarters of the tyre's breadth and around the entire circumference. The tyre should not have any cuts or splits in it.

Maybe not so obvious, but a tyre offence on a trailer comes under the same law as on a car, and a user could pick up three points on their licence and a fine for each tyre that does not comply with the law. It should also be noted, although obvious, that trailer tyres are not constructed in the same way as car tyres, as they must be more rigid. They can also perish and crack more quickly than a car tyre. Tyre pressures should also reflect the capacity and speed of the trailer.

Recommendations for caravans are that tyres should be changed every five years regardless of wear, so be aware when checking your trailer tyres. Tyres will have a date of manufacture on the side wall, size and a speed rating, which needs to be matched to the type of usage they will get. Sorry to be boring, but tyre pressures should be checked regularly and adjusted to suit the activity of the trailer and its load. It is amazing how few people bother to check their car tyres regularly, and I am sure there are some out there that just expect the god of tyres to make sure their pressures are always correct!

So, make sure you know the law as it stands regarding the use of trailers for both private and commercial use. Check with the DVSA if you are not sure. They want you to be safe, and will help you. Be aware of the tachograph rules for commercial use. If you are buying a new 4x4 pickup, you may want to make sure it already has the provision for a tachometer to be fitted. Make sure your employees are properly trained to tow trailers where required.

Electric tractor targets ag and turf markets

While the likes of hydrogen and methane are making the headlines in alternative power development on larger tractors, Fendt believes batteries are the best bet for smaller machines – and has a market-ready model. MARTIN RICKATSON went to the UK launch of the E107 S Vario to learn more about what dealers and customers can expect.



Fendt now offers a battery-electric E107 S Vario tractor, which, it believes, has potential agricultural as well as municipal applications

Back at Agritechnica 2023, Fendt took the wraps off a production-ready battery-powered vineyard tractor, and promised an agricultural version was to come. Now both machines are in production, dealer training is underway – and, from this autumn, it will be possible to place orders.

Based on standard and vineyard versions of the 200 series, Fendt's smallest tractors of 94-114hp, the V for vineyard models are just 1.05m wide, while there is now also a standard version with a more 'normal' stature. Aimed primarily at the groundcare and municipal sectors, Fendt also sees possible homes on livestock farms, horticultural units, glasshouse

enterprises and specialist arable businesses. Farms with wind turbines and/or solar panels to generate their own electricity are another key target.

Similar in size to the equivalent 211 diesel tractor, the e107 S Vario is 2.16m wide, and is capable of light draught work as well as operating with 'position'-mounted and trailed equipment, suggests the maker.



While AC charging is generally an overnight exercise, DC fast charging with up to 80kW charging power makes charging from 20% capacity to 80% possible in around 45 minutes

The power source

When fully charged, the 100kWh battery pack can power the tractor four-to-five hours of continuous light-to-mid duty work. Fendt suggests that in a typical working day, beginning at 7:30am after a full overnight charge via an AC socket, it should be midday before a further charge is required via a DC socket for a fast charge during an hour's lunchbreak, with a rapid 'refill' from 20% to 80% possible in 45 minutes. This should provide enough juice to run from 1pm until a 4pm tea break, when a further DC fast-charge can take place. Alternatively, depending on the work in hand, a 5pm stop for dinner could allow recharge via an AC socket connection for steadier charging if the workload is easier and time is less pressured.

"A lighter workload – surface work with a tined weeder or a hay rake – will obviously impose a lower demand on the battery pack, but more energy-intensive operations, such as haulage, will reduce the operating time – much as with a conventional diesel-engined tractor," points out Ed Dennett, Stoneleigh-based north-west Europe marketing manager for Fendt.

"Creating enough cooling capacity to dissipate the heat generated by a battery-powered tractor was one of the key challenges in designing this machine. To take care of this, the e107 S features a transmission oil cooler and water cooler, with air drawn through the condenser to maximise cooling, and reversible fans governed by a control system which allows each

cooling circuit to regulate the fan speed individually to minimise energy consumption."

Compatible with standard wall outlets or public charging points, an automotive-standard CCS2 socket is all that is required to recharge the tractor. Fendt has accounted for the fact that many rural areas do not yet have DC fast-charging infrastructure, with a Type 2 plug enabling charging via alternating current up to 22 kW.

"Charging is also possible via commonplace industrial 32A sockets in combination with a 22kW mobile charger," explains Ed.

"Full charging with this infrastructure takes around five hours. And we are ready for future developments in DC fast charging, with up to 80kW charging power possible via a CCS socket. We are also offering a mobile 22kW quick-charging cable set, with adapters for 16A and 32A. The integrated software enables charging with 11 or 22kW."

Various auxiliary power consumers on the tractor are supplied directly from the battery via the e107's Power Distribution Unit (PDU), which transfers energy to the air conditioning compressor, the AC/DC converter (which replaces the alternator), and the water heater. Fendt believes this is a particularly efficient solution to the power demands of these components, as no reactive power is generated and only the energy actually required by the auxiliary consumers is consumed, while no belt drives are required for power transmission.



The Fendt e107 S Vario

Specification:

Battery:

100 kWh battery capacity

Electric motor:

55kW continuous power
66kW peak power

Charging rate:

22 kW AC/80 kW
DC fast charging

Speed range

fwd/rev (km/h):
0.02-40/0.02-25

Rear PTO:

540/540E/1,000rpm (ground speed option)

Hydraulics:

Load-sensing 110/min pump; up to four DA rear valves, one front; lift capacity 4,204kg

Overall width:

(Standard tyres): 2,163mm

Overall length:

4,119mm

Max. permissible overall weight:

4,119mm

Putting power to the ground

Despite the fact there is a battery pack rather than an engine up front, the e107 S retains the wasp-waist design of its conventional counterpart, allowing the front wheels to tuck in when turning, for a 4.2m turning radius. Fendt's 'intelligent' all-wheel drive management provides auto disengagement and 100% permanent 4wd features, while intelligent differential lock management is also button-controlled, and includes automatic and 100% engagement functions.

The suspended front axle, with 80mm of travel, incorporates roll support and anti-roll bar features to minimise rolling movements, while a levelling control system keeps ride comfort constant regardless of load on the tractor. Fendt uses its established HA 75 axle at the rear, with recirculating pressure lubrication and a 5.3t permissible load. It is also equipped with a 100% multi-disc differential lock, with a reinforced brake

system designed for a high permissible overall weight. A large-dimension wet ring-piston brake with brake booster acts on the rear axle, but there is also full front axle braking, with brake pressure monitoring to ensure even application.

A joint development by Fendt and Trelleborg, the latter manufactures a new TM1 Eco Power tyre design for the e107 S. A hybrid road/field tread design with low rolling resistance, the tyre has been created specifically for electric tractors to minimise power consumption, and is manufactured from 65% renewable and recycled materials. Rear size is 480/70 R30, with 340/70 R24 units up front.

Full-size tractor

At 2.16m wide and 2.64m high on standard tyres, the e107 S is similar in stature to its diesel-powered Fendt 200 Vario equivalents. While the power source is different, from this point the componentry of the electric tractor is similar to that of other Fendts, with a Vario stepless transmission. In this case, though, it is driven by an electric motor powered by the battery pack, and synchronised by Fendt's established TMS Tractor Management System software. Using either the Vario joystick or the accelerator pedal, the tractor can be operated in one of two driving modes. Once the operator has selected a target speed, TMS then regulates the transmission setting and motor speed to optimise energy consumption. When the motor comes under load, the load limit control takes over control of the motor speed and transmission setting, and motor speed increases automatically. As the operating

conditions become easier, motor speed falls back to the minimum required level. Three driving styles are selectable, allowing the operator to choose between maximum range, performance or additional power over a limited period of time. In Eco mode, up to 68hp (ECE R85) is available, a figure that rises to

75hp in Dynamic and 90hp for short periods in Dynamic+ mode. Maximum torque is 347Nm. When decelerating or travelling downhill, pressing a recovery switch maximises deceleration energy recovery, utilising this to extract greater tractor performance and maximise operating time. If stopped during operation, the motor is automatically switched off when start-stop mode is selected, to further save battery energy and range/time potential.

Implement handling

The E107 S hydraulic system centres around a load-sensing variable displacement pump with Power Beyond capability, and a maximum 113 l/min flow rate. Adding to the tractor's environmental credentials, bio-based oil can be used in its hydraulic system, while separate transmission and hydraulic oil reservoirs mean no mixing of oil and no potential dirt ingress into the transmission.

Both front and rear PTO shafts are also powered electrically, which, Fendt points out, eliminates driveline power losses. To complement the 4,204kg rear linkage, there is a choice of front linkage variants, with a base version featuring single-acting rams for the link arms, and a double-acting unit with position control as an upgrade option, equipped with a changeover tap for single/double-acting operation. Top spec is a double-acting option with full two-way pressure at all times. Like the rear hitches, all are controlled via the armrest and the 12-inch terminal. "Design and manufacturing takes place at our Marktoberdorf plant in Germany, alongside other Fendt tractors," says Ed Dennett.

"We will be providing full technician training to dealers on these models, as there are, of course, some specific areas of engineering and design that require specialist knowledge and the ability to train customers with additional support to help them get the best from the particular characteristics and advantages of the tractors.

"The first e107 S Vario came into the UK earlier this summer for training and customer demonstrations, and orders can be taken from this autumn."



Operators familiar with Fendt tractors will find many of the controls identical to those on the brand's diesel-engined machines



Fendt sees applications for the tractor in such specialist agricultural operations as vegetable production, where planting and hoeing could suit its traits

Still evolving at 71

LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR, revisits Ludlow dealership Morris Bufton & Co to find out what changes they have implemented over the past couple of years to maintain profit margins.

A recent visit to Ludlow gave me the chance to catch up with Steve Bufton of Morris Bufton & Co, a family-run business that has now been trading for an impressive 71 years.

I last visited Steve a couple of years ago for *Service Dealer*, and, with the ever-accelerating pace of change in our sector, I wanted to find out how his dealership has evolved in the interim. Bufton's remains a great example of a business adapting smartly to the circumstances it faces.

One clear area of evolution has been staffing. The company has recently welcomed two new recruits: Adam, who's been taken on to manage robotic mower sales and installations full-time, and Tyler, who supports the shop floor team - bringing their total staff to twelve.

Being centrally located in town, the business benefits from a steady

stream of walk-in customers. But after seven decades, it's no surprise they also have a loyal local base. Steve explained that the business typically operates within a 50-mile radius, and is happy to deliver and demonstrate equipment within that range. As for customer mix, it's roughly a 50/50 split between domestic and professional end-users.

I sat down with Steve for a Q&A on how things are shaping up.

Service Dealer: How has business been for you these past couple of years?

Steve Bufton: Like most dealers, we're governed by customer demand, new trends - and the weather. The last two years have been tough for mower sales. Last year, we had a wet spring and summer, and this year it's been the opposite - very dry, with hardly any rain.

Both extremes have hit mower

sales. If it's too wet, grass can't be cut. If it's too dry, it doesn't grow. That's a huge problem when, like most dealers, we're forecasting sales with suppliers as early as November, and planning to start selling stock by spring.

Typically, we begin paying for that stock in March - so those sales are crucial to cashflow. After two disappointing mowing seasons, many of us are now left with too much stock. Climate change is making it harder to predict and manage.

I honestly think more dealerships will struggle to survive if sales continue to fall, and rising running costs keep eating into our margins.

SD: What are the key areas where running costs have increased?

SB: It's across the board, really. Rent and utility costs are up year-on-year, with annual increases between 3% and 10% depending on the location.



Steve Bufton of Morris Bufton & Co



Recently the dealership has taken on new staff, including a robotic mower specialist and a new sales person



Inside the showroom



In the workshop

Bills including electricity, water, gas and internet have all risen, either due to market rates or inefficiencies. Staff wages have gone up, partly due to minimum wage changes, and there are also the hidden costs of recruitment, training, and staff turnover to consider.

We've also seen price increases from suppliers that haven't always been possible to renegotiate. At the same time, overstocking or wastage becomes a risk when sales don't meet forecasts. Insurance premiums rise each year. Banking and transaction fees are another burden, along with maintenance costs, marketing expenses, compliance and licensing requirements, and increased taxes and fuel prices.

All these elements impact the bottom line, and, with online selling tightening profit margins further, it becomes a real challenge to maintain a healthy business.

SD: Have you introduced any new products recently?

SB: Yes - we've added Weibang mowers and Toro zero-turns to our line-up, both of which are proving popular. Our offering in robotic and battery-powered equipment continues to grow, too. In-store, we stock a full range of Draper and Wolf tools, along with a large selection of sundries.

SD: Have you seen growth in robotic mower sales these past couple of years?

SB: Definitely. We've seen about a 30% rise, largely due to the wider range we now offer. We sell STIGA, STIHL, Honda, and Segway models, and offer both cabled and GPS-controlled systems. For many of our rural customers, GPS signals can be unreliable, so cabled options are often more appropriate.

Sales have grown significantly since Covid. In response, we brought in Adam Jones as a dedicated robotic sales and aftercare manager. He handles everything - from the initial sale and installation, to walking customers through the app setup, and making sure they fully understand the machine's functionality.

We're not planning to add more brands at the moment. We're focused on offering the best models, supporting them well, and educating customers on the difference between the quality machines we supply and the cheaper alternatives sold through big retail chains. The key is staying selective, and offering top-tier customer service and technical support.

We also make sure customers understand that regular servicing is just as important for robots as for any other machinery. They often need software

“There's growing pressure from manufacturers to hit sales targets, while our costs keep climbing. That's a dangerous combination.”

updates, blade replacements, and checks on moving parts to stay in good working order.

SD: What about battery-powered equipment?

SB: Sales have definitely risen over the last two years. More brands are now offering battery-powered tools, and battery technology itself has improved dramatically, charging faster and lasting longer.

We've established a battery recycling and waste facility, which is collected regularly by a contractor. But, when it comes to handling and storage of batteries, there's still a lack of proper guidance from manufacturers. We're left with several unanswered questions: how many batteries are safe to store at one time? What should we store them in?

As we expect battery sales to only rise, this issue is becoming more pressing. We need clearer, more specific direction from both manufacturers, and from governing bodies like the Health and Safety Executive. The current guidance just isn't detailed enough for the scale of battery handling we're now dealing with.

SD: Has your approach evolved to online sales?

SB: We're getting more involved all the time. We now sell products through eBay and our own website. Over the past few years, our sales team has become proficient at promoting and selling online, and I believe every machinery dealer will need to do this to help shift stock.

That said, it's vital to maintain sensible profit margins. With some manufacturers now selling direct to end-users, we need clear guidance on what dealers can expect in terms of compensation for any aftersales support or servicing we're still responsible for.

SD: Have seasonal patterns changed?

SB: Yes, completely. The old pattern of servicing and repairing machines in winter and selling in spring is long gone. It's a year-round business now, with work coming in constantly.

SD: What about customer expectations?

SB: Absolutely. Today's customers expect instant service. They're no

longer willing to wait weeks - or even days - for delivery. We now use Royal Mail's 48-hour tracked service for parcels under 30kg, and larger items go out via pallet. Because of our volume, we get good rates on both.

SD: Like others, are you still struggling to recruit mechanics?

SB: Yes, it's becoming harder and harder. Skilled mechanics are increasingly rare. We've tried bringing in young people with a view to training them up, but many move on quite quickly. Speaking to fellow dealers, this seems to be a national issue.

SD: Finally, what other concerns do you have for the industry?

SB: A big one is the continued erosion of dealer profit margins. There's growing pressure from manufacturers to hit sales targets, while our costs keep climbing. That's a dangerous combination.

But perhaps the most significant long-term concern is inheritance tax. The government's current policy on this could seriously impact the future of family-run dealerships and farms. We're already seeing farmers pause spending on machinery, buildings and infrastructure, right after the Budget announcement. That immediately impacted enquiries and orders.

Machinery dealers like us, and many other rural trades, depend on farmers' investment cycles. If that dries up, we're looking at reduced sales, tighter cashflow, and potentially job losses.

Lower farm investment could force smaller traders out of business, which, in turn, weakens the whole rural support network. It's a serious threat we can't afford to ignore.

SD: Thank you.



Buftons have seen an increase in robotic mower sales and currently offer four different brands, including STIHL and STIGA



Steve says his most significant long-term concern is inheritance tax

Successful Cereals draws decent numbers

Mid-June's Cereals, the annual arable farming showcase, took place at former *Service Dealer* conference speaker Andrew Ward's Lincs farm – and, despite the sector's continued challenges, it attracted some strong crowds. MARTIN RICKATSON attended the event to seek out new developments of interest to dealers.

While there were some notable absences from among last year's exhibitors – primarily some big implement manufacturers – the remainder of the regular attendee list at the annual Cereals event looks to have settled now into a regular pattern of committed names.

Among the 426 exhibitors, there were sizeable stands again from such international suppliers as John Deere, Fendt and Maschio, while domestic manufacturers of machinery (such as sprayers, drills and tillage equipment) continue to make up a large portion of the stand numbers. And, according to the organisers, around 20,000 people visited the two-day show.

But the sector's hurdles continue to pop up unabated, with 2025's spring drought morphing into a summer one, and recent government-imposed challenges to

inheritance tax and national insurance compounded by farm support programme uncertainty.

There are chinks of light, though, and, while most manufacturers, importers and dealers present reported a difficult but not disastrous first half of the year, there was a general feeling that the depths of the downturn may have been reached. On the first day of the show, many visitors and exhibitors were waiting with bated breath to hear what the Chancellor was going to say in her spending review speech. With relatively little in it to negatively impact agriculture, though, a collective sigh of relief was almost perceptible, as phones were checked and put back into pockets. And, with the Farming Equipment Technology Fund reopening, plus better news shortly after the show on new applications for the Sustainable Farming Incentive, farmers – and, therefore, the dealers who supply them – have cause for cautious optimism.



While harvest prospects were looking uncertain after the spring drought, there was a strong attendance of arable farmer visitors to Cereals, with a cautiously optimistic mood



John Deere 9RX 830

The biggest attraction on the **John Deere** stand was arguably the first new flagship 9RX 830 tractor to be brought into the UK, with its 913hp maximum output from an 18-litre John Deere engine putting its power to the ground via a new e21 powershift transmission through significantly beefed-up and redesigned track units compared to those on the established 'small' 9RX models. There is also a new CommandView 4 Plus suspended cab, with features including a new G5Plus CommandCenter touchscreen. With around 200-250hp more than anything else currently on the market, finding implements to match may be the challenge for UK farmers, but the first dealer to sell a unit in the UK will unarguably have some serious bragging rights.



Amazone 12m TopCut knife roller

Innovations from **Amazone** included this TopCut knife roller cultivator, shown in 12m format to suit the largest tractors on the market. Designed to offer a fuel-efficient alternative to topping for mulching of cover crops, the TopCut 12000-2T consists of up to three consecutive tool segments, plus a rear segment that can be equipped with various different tools. The TopCut is also reckoned suitable for shallow cultivation of 0-2 cm for those looking to create a stale seedbed.



Sky Progress a rear coulter bar

Designed for use in combination with a rear coulter bar, **Sky** Progress TF, available in 2,200 or 2,400-litre versions, is the first front hopper on the market capable of managing up to four separate hoppers, says the French firm, with the ability to control all units via a single ISOBUS interface. This enables simultaneous management of four different products distributed over two independent air circuits, making it possible to adjust four different application rates and sow at two different depths.



AerWorx Viper direct drill

First shown earlier this year at LAMMA, the **AerWorx** Viper direct drill comes from the same company that manufactures a range of drum-type grassland aerators. It features 21 double-disc openers spaced at 12.5cm across its 3m working width, and can work in both crop stubbles and grassland. With spring protection, the coulters also feature hydraulic downforce that provides a maximum 90kg of pressure per coulter. Each unit is followed by a rubber press wheel that provides depth control and consolidation.



Horsch Partner FT front tank

The **Horsch Partner** FT front tank series has been expanded with new double-tank 1,600, 1,700 and 2,100-litre models, plus a triple-tank version with a capacity of 2,500 litres. Rear drill options include the firm's 6m Avatar 6.25 SL and Sprinter 6 SL for direct and min-till seeding, or the Taro 6 SL and Express KR where more intensive seedbed preparation is required. It is also possible to combine the units with the Maestro RV/RX for eight-row precision seeding, or a Finer SL shallow cultivator for wet weather drilling.



Kongskilde comes back to the UK

Following the sale of the Kongskilde product lines - bar the ploughs, which were subject to a separate agreement - by CNH to Italian firm **Seko**, best known in agriculture for its horizontal diet feeders, there is a new UK importer for the brand's equipment, which is now all made in Italy. Best known for its precision technology and AgXeed autonomous tractors, ASC Communications now handles all the Kongskilde equipment in the UK, and is appointing a dealer network. Key product lines include tillage equipment, such as the Germinator cultivator, mixer wagons and trailed forage harvesters.



Sumo Close Coupled Low Disturbance Subsoiler

New from **Sumo** is the Close Coupled Low Disturbance Subsoiler, available in models from 3-6m, with up to 12 legs on the largest model, at 500mm spacings. Designed for deep restructuring with minimal surface disturbance, it features a rear hitch and PTO connection, and can be paired with mounted drills. Maximum working depth is 350mm.



Maschio Gaspardo mounted sprayers

The Tempo Ultra Isotronic mounted sprayers from **Maschio Gaspardo** are available in 1,450, 1,820 and 2,180-litre capacities with booms from 15-30m featuring aluminium outer sections to reduce weight. All feature the firm's Re.D semi-automatic recirculation system and are ISOBUS-compatible via a tractor terminal, or the firm's own touchscreen. A section control app can be used for automatic operation of the boom sections.



Stocks Turbo Jet 10 Hydraulic applicator

The new Turbo Jet 10 Hydraulic (HD) from **Stocks** provides users with maximum airflow for higher-application rates, at working widths from 10m to 15m. It can also be run at faster forward speeds, and can be set up to apply full-width, in bands or in rows as required, with outlets either blanked-off or doubled-up as necessary. The firm says the new unit responds to demands for more airflow to apply small-to-medium-sized seeds, such as oilseed rape, clover, grass, and mustard at high rates from 10m, plus micro and granular products at low-to-medium rates, all at up to 15m. The Turbo Jet 10 HD's hydraulic fan can be remotely mounted, making it simple to integrate with different host machines.



Maschio Gaspardo Alitalia Isotronic drill

Also new from **Maschio Gaspardo** was the latest version of its Alitalia Isotronic mounted drill, with a new distribution system and larger 2,000-litre hopper with twin external distribution heads, each fed by their own newly-developed electrically-driven volumetric distributors. The drill has full variable rate and section control capability, plus automatic exclusion of the right or left half of the seeding bar, depending on the position within the field detected by the GPS sensor. Suffolk, single-disc, double-disc and smooth double-disc coulters are available.



Mzuri and Razorback changes

UK direct tine drill specialist **Mzuri** and its sister vegetation management machinery maker Razorback both announced significant business news at Cereals. Production of Mzuri drills is to move fully to Poland, where European market drills have been made for some time, following a 2017 deal to sell the intellectual property rights to a manufacturer there. Mzuri UK will be renamed under its sister brand Razorback, which has increased its portfolio with the GreenTec range of machines. Mzuri World, the Polish business, plans to appoint a UK importer, and will work with Razorback to provide additional maintenance and spare parts support to new customers in the short term. Meanwhile, the Razorback side of the business is now the exclusive UK importer of GreenTec hedge-cutting and vegetation management machinery from Denmark, to expand the Razorback portfolio. Greenback manufactures a range of hedge cutters, verge mowers and limb saws. The GreenTec range includes Scorpion series hedge cutters and Puma multi-carriers.



BUSINESS MONITOR

Taking the temperature of the dealer network, sponsored by STIHL

What makes a dealer drop – or add – a brand?

In our latest survey, we're told **margin**, **dealer loyalty** and **back-up** are all important.

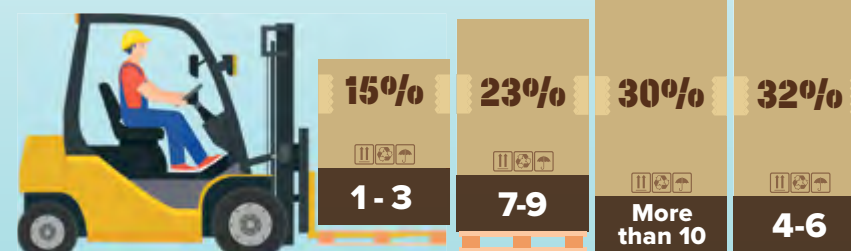
We recently asked our independent dealer readers to share their thoughts on how many brands they choose to represent - and why they might decide to bring in a new marque or drop an existing one.

The results suggest that dealers prefer to keep their options open when it comes to the manufacturers they work with. Most respondents (32%) told us they typically represent between four and six different brands in their showrooms. And the majority (68%) said they don't foresee that number changing over the coming year.

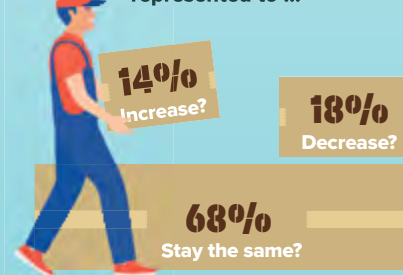
As for what drives the decision to stick with or swap out a brand, three key factors stood out. Dealers told us that product reliability (32%), margin (21%) and back-up support (21%) were the top considerations when choosing who to partner with.

And while many manufacturers might like to steer their dealers' stocking decisions, most independents who chose to respond told us they make it clear they value their autonomy. **A confident 79% said that, although suppliers often try to influence their choices, they ultimately make their own decisions.**

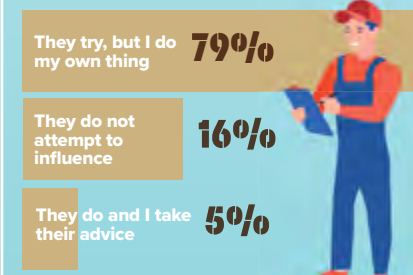
How many different manufacturers do you represent in your dealership?



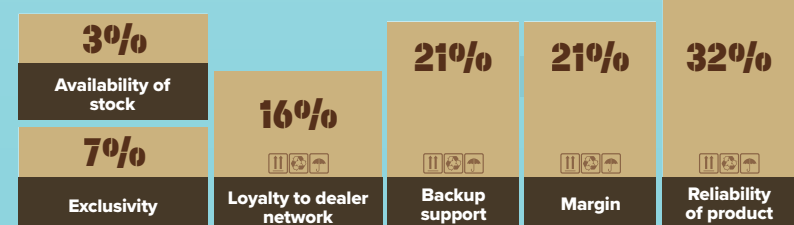
In the next 12 months, do you expect this number of manufacturers represented to ...



Do your suppliers attempt to influence your choices of brands to represent?



Which factor most influences your choice of which manufacturers to represent?



Your say...

We asked you to describe the circumstances that would prompt you to either drop a held franchise or decide to take on a new brand in 2025.

- There is a double-edged sword to consider here - or perhaps, more appropriately, the "sword of Damocles." There is a modernisation of diminished professionalism and respect as manufacturers abuse trust in the relationships with dealers and selfishly use the trust and openness of working events and customer demonstrations and shows with dealer staff to court clients, market direct and, more disturbingly, court dealership staff, too.
- My biggest influence is, and always has been, supplier back-up. We've dropped over six brands in the last 18 months, and these were all quality machines, some with well-known brands. However, if there are frequent stock shortages, difficulty with parts and technical support, etc., it makes it impossible to work with our customers on. Conversely, if a new brand can demonstrate the support they offer, it's something we would be interested in taking up, providing it fits a gap in our current range.
- Being forced to take product that is years behind the market leaders and just doesn't sell.
- Mainly margin. High margin, easy decision to take them on. Sometimes regardless of quality - even though most will say quality over margin, this won't be true.
- Lack of margin or support/parts.
- If a product supplier/manufacture appeared to have lost their way (by which I mean, be trying to promote or demand stocking of what I would now consider less popular products, such as cheap petrol mowers which battery has taken over in our dealership). I would still stock some petrol machinery, but only higher-end products.
- Lack of loyalty, together with a push for a lot of dealers within an area, and then pushing influence or being told how/what they expect to happen within your own business. Non-payments or limited payments of warranties. Non-existent or poor back up support. All or any of the above would prompt us to drop a held franchise and take another brand/other brands to replace.
- The death of BAGMA hasn't helped the dealer's lot.
- The back-up of a brand is important. Also, customers' brand awareness and loyalty to a dealer is very important, which seems to be disappearing. And, of course, profit margin is a key factor.
- Poor availability of machines or parts; denying or reducing payment on warranty; changes to prices/products/terms. Any new franchise would need to better, or at least match the ones we already have in terms of margin, service, etc., plus offer something different that we could promote.

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Marketing isn't magic - it's a system

Sara Hey, vice president of operations and 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 suggests three things a dealership's marketing should be doing.



Let's be real. Most dealership owners didn't get into business because they dreamed of writing Instagram captions. You just want more customers, better results, and a little less of that “*what the heck do I even post today?*” feeling.

But here's where things go sideways. We start expecting marketing to do things it was never built to do.

Before you toss your hands in the air and declare that marketing doesn't work, let's get clear on what good dealership marketing is actually supposed to do.

Let's start with the three jobs marketing should absolutely be doing for your dealership.

Generating leads, not closing sales

If there's one thing to write in bold on your marketing whiteboard, it's this: marketing opens the door. Sales walks through it.

Marketing's job is to spark interest, start conversations and get the right people to raise their hands. If your marketing is bringing in leads, it's working – even if it hasn't closed the deal yet.

But this is where many dealerships get stuck. Someone sends out an email, the phone doesn't ring immediately, and the whole thing gets labelled a flop. Not true.

If your sales team isn't following up, or if you don't know how many leads you need to hit your goals, the issue might not be your marketing. It might be the follow-up process.

Getting your brand in front of the right people

Being loud is not the same as being strategic.

Just because you're posting on Facebook or mailing flyers, doesn't mean you're reaching the people who are most likely to buy from you.

Great marketing isn't about reaching everyone. It's about reaching the right people. The homeowner who's finally ready to ditch the push mower. The commercial crew looking for a reliable service partner. The loyal customer who's ready for an upgrade.

Your job is to show up where those people are already paying attention. Online, in their inbox, at community events. Your marketing should help them connect the dots between what they need and what you do best.

Warming people up so sales isn't starting cold

You know what's worse than a cold call? A cold call to someone who doesn't know who you are and doesn't want to hear from you.

Great marketing helps you avoid that. Marketing is how we take someone from “I've never heard of this place” to “I like them and I'm ready to talk.” It warms people up so your sales team can build trust instead of starting from scratch.

Think of it like dating. You don't propose on the first date. Marketing is what gets you to dinner. Sales is where the relationship gets serious.

What should you even post on social media?

Here are some ideas that consistently perform well:

- **Customer Stories:** Share testimonials or photos of happy customers using your products. **Nothing builds trust like seeing someone else's success.**
- **Behind-the-Scenes Content:** Show the human side of your business. Photos of employees hard at work, funny bloopers, or sneak peeks at new products give your business personality.
- **Tips and Tricks:** Help your customers get more out of what they've already purchased. For example, share maintenance tips or seasonal checklists for equipment.
- **Celebrations and Community Events:** Is your dealership sponsoring a local event or celebrating an anniversary? Post about it! Community involvement is a big deal, and shows you care about more than just sales.
- **Giveaways and Contests:** Want to boost engagement? Run a giveaway. It's a tried-and-true way to get people talking about your business.

When your marketing is doing its job, your sales team isn't chasing people down. They're continuing conversations that your marketing has already started.

Showtime!

Les Gammie, of Gammies Groundcare, explains what goes into the season of shows and events – and the costs that places on a dealership.



August arrived, and it was definitely a busy month for us with a lot of upcoming shows as well as our own demonstration events leading to a lot of preparation, planning and organising behind the scenes.

Getting ready for each show requires a lot of time and effort to ensure that each event is tailored to ensure our presence delivers maximum impact with minimal waste. This means taking into consideration the type of event and the demographic of attendees, to determine everything from the layout, displays and pre-show marketing to the type of machinery we bring along.

As a multi-franchise dealer, we have the benefit of flexibility, as we can adapt the machinery based on our offerings to ensure our displays suit each event. Amongst this scheduling is conflicts with juggling staff holidays. A busy time of year for folk going away and taking a well-earned break – it is our job to assemble the right team for the right shows while taking into account vacations.

On top of the shows, we have started to get an influx of manufacturer and supplier invites for conferences and such events as GroundFest, *et cetera*.

These conferences and events are golden opportunities to hear more about upcoming projects, catch up with suppliers and fellow dealers, and, overall, keep up-to-date with what's going on in the industry. It's also a reminder that many of us are sharing similar challenges - and that, sometimes, is a comfort in itself.

Unfortunately, like everything in business, it has a cost. And this cost is not just financial (from travelling, accommodation and meals), but also in terms of time. Time away from the depot is always costly to any employee, and this includes depot managers, sales and marketing teams. Trying to juggle staff holidays to suit these events is also a task, as we want the right people attending these events to get the most benefit out of them. As suppliers grow and their depot pool grows with them, these events are being hosted more centrally to the UK, meaning they are further away from us. Gone are the days when we could travel there and back in a day. Now, we are typically looking at around a day for travel, a day for the event, and a day return - substantially increasing the amount of time spent away from the depot.

But, overall, the benefits of these events, provided the right people are in attendance, outweigh the financial and time cost of attending them, so it is something we just have to navigate.

As discussed previously, this season has been challenging weather-wise, and continues to throw curveballs, with more dryer spells than we are used to, particularly in Scotland! For some areas of the business, this is beneficial. With our robotics side continuing to grow, this has led us to continue to perform installations while the weather is nice, but it's not so great for actually cutting grass. Less mowing means less maintenance, which means a drop in demand for some of our core equipment.

Also, with one of our annual goals to destock and return to pre-Covid inventory levels, the current weather conditions haven't been on our side. The dealers aren't the only ones affected – we have also seen suppliers pushing stock with in-season offers that we haven't seen since pre-Covid, indicating that they are also experiencing the same squeeze that we are.

It continues to be a season of both challenges and opportunity, and we are continuing to adapt and push forward!





SME DIGEST

Advice for small and medium-sized enterprises

Edited by Adam Bernstein



MANAGEMENT



Have you become a bad manager?

Leadership is tough, and, when stress levels rise, it's easy to miss that the team isn't as engaged as it should be, *writes* ADAM BERNSTEIN, *SME Digest* editor

An American consultant, Bob Phipps, bills himself as a 'retail doctor.' He reckons that it's easy to spot a bad manager through nine telltale signs, chief of which are that they're "invisible on the sales floor," "allow a dirty store," and "criticise staff in front of others."

He's right in many respects – and it shows on workplace website, Glassdoor, with comments such as "ALDI - Worst Managers EVER!!", "B&M Retail 'poor management'", and "Harrods 'poor management.'"

Of course, it's unthinkable that an individual would ever take on a management role just to become a poor manager. Yet, with time and pressure, it's easy for a well-intentioned individual to slip precisely into that position.

Leadership is tough, and, when stress levels rise, it's easy to miss that the team isn't as engaged as it should be.

But, as everyone's patience starts to wear thin, you, as a manager, may find yourself frustrated with your role as a leader. And the more you try to fix things, the worse it feels. Then, suddenly, it dawns on you that you've become the manager that you've always hated.

So, what are the warning signs to be aware of? What are the managerial behaviours that need to be avoided if you want to be the manager that everyone admires?

You assume employees should already know something important

As a leader, you have access to all the information. This makes it key to remember that your team might not have the same information or the context for it to be used properly. In other words, it makes sense to never assume they 'should already know' about something. The only solution is to take responsibility for ensuring that the team has the information they need to succeed. Good leaders make communication a priority.

You put up objections and say 'no' more than trying to find a solution

In uncertain times, it's easy to become risk-averse and shut down new ideas. But good leaders understand that creativity should be encouraged, not stifled. Saying 'no' too often or too quickly kills innovation and morale. So reflect on whether you're shutting down ideas too often and becoming closed off to possibilities.

You think that no one can do what you do

Believing that you're the only one who can undertake certain tasks is a trap that leads to micromanagement and lack of delegation. It's important to recognise that others can probably do parts of your job better than you can. By letting go of control and trusting your team, you will create a stronger, more capable group.

You fear questions that might cause trouble

You might think that asking employees about their concerns or for feedback on your performance will distract from the work at hand. But the truth is that avoiding these questions only lets problems fester. Good leaders ask difficult questions, even when they don't want to hear the answers. And so, it's better to know the truth than to remain in the dark. Similarly, being surrounded by 'yes-men' will get you nowhere - and quickly, too.

You are reluctant to delegate

Hesitation to delegate is a sign of poor leadership. In contrast, trusting your team, and giving them the chance to succeed, will build a collaborative environment. Further, delegation will not only remove stress from your life, but will add to the confidence in others that they can complete the tasks they've been handed.

You consider that emotions are irrelevant in the workplace

Emotions are part of the human experience, and they affect how people perform. Dismissing your team's feelings is a mistake. Accepting and acknowledging emotions is crucial in maintaining a healthy workplace and fostering strong relationships with your team. Ultimately, it's key to remember that the team is made up of people.

You ask others to do things you're not prepared to do yourself

Leadership is about leading by example. If you're asking your team to, for example, put in extra hours, but aren't willing to do the same, then you're sending the wrong message. Success means that you will need to reevaluate whether you're projecting the work ethic you expect from your team. The point is to not lead from the rear.

You favour some individuals over others

Playing favourites is a sure way to undermine trust and create division. Even if you don't think of it as favouritism, treating some team members better than others can lead to resentment. Fairness and consistency are essential traits of a good leader.

You believe that everyone needs to be onsite to work well

Clearly certain roles need an individual to be onsite for the job to get done. But other tasks can, from time to time, be performed at home. But just because an employee isn't physically present, doesn't mean that they're not being productive. Focusing on where and when people work, rather than on results, is a sign of micromanagement. Equally, shifting your focus from monitoring work hours to tracking outcomes and fostering autonomy may help matters. The bottom line should be results and results only.

You expect employees to come to you with issues

There's no point having an open-door only to find that employees are reluctant to walk through it with their concerns because they're afraid. It's important to recognise power dynamics in the workplace, and that they can make it difficult for employees to speak up. This means that managers must be proactive in asking employees about their concerns.

You check on employees

Some managers test staff to see how they're progressing by asking questions, looking to see if they've understood the matter. However, staff aren't stupid, and will soon see through the charade and will feel that trust has been undermined. So, instead of testing staff, ask yourself why you feel the need to do so? The best environment is one where employees feel empowered to perform at their best without constant oversight, and are scored on their results.

You focus more on distractions than anything else

It's easy to get caught up in trying to curb distractions, but the best managers focus on what will inspire and engage their team. Rather than micromanaging coffee breaks or social media use, ask yourself whether your team feels connected to a larger purpose and is excited about their work.

Summary

At some point, every leader will slip into one of these bad-manager behaviours. The key is to recognise it and make a conscious effort to change. If you think this is you, don't excuse yourself, but don't flagellate yourself, either. Acknowledge the problem, decide how to deal with it, and move on – you are human, after all.

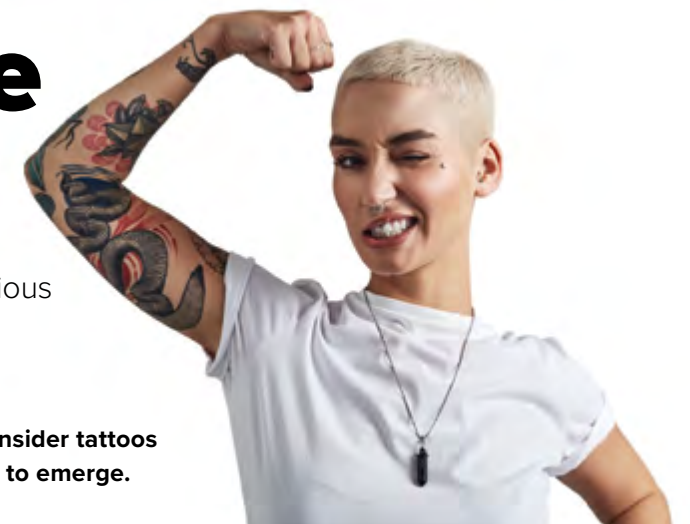
STAFFING

Tattoos in the workplace

Tattoos in the workplace have long been a contentious issue, *writes* KYLE WILLIAMS, *employment law consultant with WorkNest*.

Despite becoming more mainstream, many employers still consider tattoos unacceptable, and stories of 'tattoo discrimination' continue to emerge.

The statistics reflect the lingering taboo.



According to a 2022 YouGov poll, 63% of the public say they consider face and neck tattoos to be unprofessional. The poll also noted that the British public tends not to see visible tattoos as unprofessional – unless they are on someone's face or neck.

Interestingly, 75% said that visible tattoos would be acceptable on people working in low-end customer-facing services, such as flight attendants at budget airlines or mass-market retail staff.

However, those over 55 were more selective about which professions they would accept visible tattoos in, while those under 55 were more tolerant across the board.

But, from an employer's perspective, the matter is more serious. A 2018 LinkedIn survey found that 88% of recruiting and HR managers thought that having a tattoo could potentially limit someone's career prospects, and 41% admitted rejecting a suitable candidate because they had a visible tattoo.

A legal problem

It's clear that some employers disapprove of body art and tattoos in the workplace, but what are the laws surrounding tattoos at work, and what legal protections exist for both employees and employers?

In the UK, there is no specific legal protection against discrimination based solely on having a tattoo. Apart from religious markings, body art is not considered a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, employers are free to make hiring and employment decisions on this basis alone.

What's more, employers may, in certain circumstances, consider visible tattoos – especially those deemed offensive or inappropriate – as a valid reason for dismissing an employee. This is particularly true if the employee regularly engages with clients or customers, though factors such as the employee's length of service may also influence the decision.

Finally, when creating or revising a dress code or tattoo policy, it's important to make sure it doesn't discriminate against employees based on factors like sex, age, disability or sexual orientation.

Policies on tattoos

So, can employers set their own policies regarding tattoos at work?

Acas has said that "businesses are perfectly within their rights to have rules around appearance at work, but these rules should base themselves on the law where appropriate, and the needs of the business, not managers' personal preferences about visible tattoos in the workplace."

While it's reasonable for companies to implement a tattoo

policy and promote a professional image, employers who enforce overly strict rules on body modifications risk alienating skilled workers – particularly from younger generations – due to potentially outdated views on tattoos.

Feelings about offensive tattoos

Offense is subjective – what one person may deem an offensive tattoo in the workplace may be perfectly acceptable to someone else. Nonetheless, maintaining a positive working environment and keeping multiple employees happy is essential.

One obvious example of an offensive tattoo would be a swastika, which evokes strong feelings due to its association with the Nazi Party even though the swastika has a much older history, originating from Sanskrit and symbolising 'good fortune' or 'wellbeing.' It's also a sacred symbol in Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. This illustrates how the same tattoo can hold vastly different meanings for different individuals.

Indeed, in April 2021, a Lidl supermarket worker, Istvan Horvarth, who showed off his 'swastika' tattoo at work, won his unfair dismissal case after a judge ruled he should have been given a 'stern warning' instead.

Therefore, before taking action against an employee for a potentially offensive tattoo, it's important to review workplace laws and policies regarding the subject matter of any disputed body art to avoid accusations of discrimination.

Times are changing

Over the years, many employers have gradually become more relaxed in their attitudes towards visible tattoos in the workplace. However, turning up to work or a job interview with a prominent face tattoo is still likely to raise eyebrows, even in 2025. Many highly skilled professionals have chosen to get religious or personal body art, only to face discrimination at work as a result.

Adopting a more lenient policy regarding tattoos in the workplace could benefit both businesses and young professionals who want to express themselves. After all, a person's tattoos, piercings, or hair colour doesn't affect their character or ability to do the job, and allowing employees to bring their authentic selves to work can foster a more inclusive and engaging workplace, resulting in better business outcomes.

While the law doesn't provide comprehensive protection for either side, employers should familiarise themselves with regulations surrounding tattoos in the workplace so that they can make fair and informed decisions and avoid potential legal pitfalls. In most cases, issues can be resolved through open communication and mutual understanding.



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5 SECOND INFO

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- Digital control

Battery backpack blowers boast big benefits

STIHL launches the new BRA 500 and BRA 600

STIHL has launched the new BRA 500 and BRA 600 battery-operated backpack blowers, designed for professional use, which, they say, offer maximum blowing force for clearing large areas.

The company says the two new machines provide a maximum blowing force of up to 32 (BRA 500) and 35 newtons (BRA 600), available throughout the entire tools' operating time, making them suitable for removing heavy, wet leaves.

Users can also regulate the required blowing force by selecting one of the tools' three levels, using their digital control, with an additional boost mode available to achieve the machine's maximum power.

Built to reduce strain over prolonged use, both tools have a carrying system which distributes the weight of the machine across users' shoulders and hips, allowing for

maximum comfort.

With the manufacturer's Noise Reduction System built in, the machine offers reduced noise, as well as a tuned sound to make them less intrusive when used in public areas.

As STIHL's first 72V professional machines, the BRA 500 and BRA 600 draw energy simultaneously from two AP System batteries. For maximum working time, the AP 500 S battery packs are recommended.

Complete with an LED display, which details the mode the device is working in and battery charge levels, the tools can also be incorporated into the Connected digital fleet management system. This provides a detailed overview of all relevant machine data, and provides the option to reduce the tool's power remotely via the STIHL Connected app. To facilitate use in the rain, both the BRA 500 and BRA 600 are IPX4-certified.



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DOMESTIC

Ride-on range strengthened by Cobra

Two new models

Cobra Garden has strengthened its petrol ride-on mower range with the launch of two new models: the LTX92HR2L and LTX102HR2L

Now available through UK showrooms, the company says these latest additions give dealers an opportunity to meet the growing demand for powerful, high-performance lawn care solutions for larger gardens and estates.

Both models feature twin-cylinder engines, hydrostatic drive, and an upgraded cutting system, with cutting widths of 92cm and 102cm to cover larger areas quickly and efficiently. High-capacity grass collectors and mulching capabilities offer flexibility across a range of lawn conditions, which, Cobra says, ensures broad customer appeal.



Operator comfort is a key selling point. Both models feature ergonomic seating, smooth hydrostatic transmissions, intuitive dashboards, and premium touches, such as LED displays, precision steering and enhanced lighting.

While battery-powered mowers are gaining traction, demand for powerful petrol ride-ons remains strong, say Cobra. They say the new LTX models combine performance with improved fuel efficiency and lower emissions, alongside reduced noise output.

Cobra say they believe these models present dealers with an opportunity to drive new sales and upsell to customers looking for greater performance and value. In-store materials and technical training to help dealers are on offer.

DOMESTIC



Backpack sprayer first for EGO

15L capacity battery-powered BSP3500E launched

EGO Power+ has launched its first backpack sprayer, which, they say, is designed for precise, comfortable, and efficient spraying within the garden.

With a 15L capacity, the battery-powered BSP3500E Backpack Sprayer features onboard variable flow control of up to 24 bar to deliver the pressure required for a variety of

jobs around the garden. Designed for spraying pesticides during the spring to late summer seasons, the sprayer is also described as powerful enough for light cleaning jobs in the garden.

Featuring four nozzles, a stainless-steel wand and a double filtration system, the unit can tackle a wide range of jobs. Clog-free performance within the nozzles and heavy-duty rubber hose ensures long-lasting performance, say EGO, while a translucent tank maximises ease of use.

As well as this, the harness is designed for comfortable operation, while the lance handle allows users to intuitively control the spray, ensuring efficient coverage and reduced fatigue during extended work sessions.

Andrew Frohock, Product Manager for EGO, said: "We are always thinking of how we can use our battery technology to further aid customers with their work, and with this product, they can expect to find the same level of power, comfort and durability that they experience with our landscaping tools."

Powered by EGO's 56V ARC Lithium™ battery technology and a brushless motor, the BSP3500E works with any portable battery from the EGO range. The 5.0Ah battery is recommended, as it delivers up to 120 minutes of use. To protect the battery when in use, the tool has an integrated cover ensuring moisture cannot reach it.

Featuring a three-plunger pump and supplied with an adjustable cone, fan, shower and foaming nozzles, the BSP3500E retails at £349, batteries are available separately.



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COMMERCIAL



Lightweight tool with sustainability in mind

Campey release their new RecyclingDresser

Designed with sustainability at the forefront, the new lightweight Imants RecyclingDresser (RCD) 1.3 from Campey Turf Care is suitable for use with smaller tractors, and engineered to reduce labour and material costs by recycling and redistributing substrate material across the playing surface.

This would consist of either the existing soil or sand in the case of sand-based golf courses, or where the natural composition of the soil substrate is sand-based.

This new model, weighing (approx.) 470 kg, incorporates a specially-designed rear flap for improved soil management and enhanced operational efficiency, ensuring minimal disturbance to the surface. It is also suitable for all areas where the native sand or soil is good.

Campey says the flap drags in material more efficiently, and breaks it up faster, speeding up drying as it goes along. This sustainable maintenance practice aerates the underlying soil both vertically and horizontally, removing soil and sand from the root zone and redistributing it. This process eliminates layering and compaction, increasing biological activity, and extending the efficacy of existing fertilisers in the soil structure.

Another new feature are the new smart folding legs, which double as protective side bars, ensuring transport and storage are simple and secure.

Working width is 1,300mm, with a working depth of 175mm. Other specifications include the distance between digging blades of 260mm.

The new RCD 1.3 requires a tractor with 30hp and 540 PTO, and has an operating speed of 3km/h.

COMMERCIAL

Dennis' gang expands

New range of mowers launched

Howardson Group has introduced the latest addition to its Dennis brand: the Dennis Gang Mowers, a new range of precision-engineered gang mowers designed to provide a superior cut across large areas.

Built with simplicity, durability, and efficiency in mind, Dennis say each individual cylinder boasts a 30" (760mm) cutting width, ensuring a fast and uniform cut.

The standard model, featuring a 190mm diameter cutting cylinder, is ideal for sports turf applications, such as golf fairways, cricket outfields, football and rugby pitches, as well as ornamental landscapes. For semi-rough and amenity spaces, the Giant model comes equipped with a larger 250mm diameter cutting cylinder.

The mowers can be towed as a single unit, or configured in sets of three or five cylinders.

They can be attached to a compact tractor, ride-on mower or ATV, with a minimum towing requirement of 20hp for sets of three and five cylinders.


Engineered for stability and balance, the manufacturer says their framework enables each cutting unit to follow ground undulations, ensuring an even and professional finish across the entire surface.

Features include cast iron or rubber wheels for adaptability; cylinders available with four, six, or nine-bladed options; and a design to allow each unit to follow undulations.



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Is unity the answer?

Mystery columnist THE SPROCKET asks if it really is time for collective collaboration in our sector – or whether that could ever truly work?



L Laurence Gale, editor of *Service Dealer's* sister title, *TurfPro*, wrote an article in its Weekly Briefing on July 14, 2025, entitled: **'Time for collective collaborations.'**

Laurence said: *"I think it is about time many of our key industry organisations stopped working in isolation and began collaborating to promote the industry nationally."*

This came on the back of the announcement that the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA), organisers of BTME, and GroundsFest have announced a new collaboration that, they say is aimed at strengthening both events while bringing together professionals from across the grounds care, landscaping, and golf sectors (see this issue's News pages). An interesting development after all the years of debate about SALTEX and BIGGA getting together for one show for the industry.

Laurence's piece was directed at the turf professional industries, but it is a theme that has come up with land-based engineering over many years. Both themes centre on recruitment of new people into the industries and the general promotion of the sectors to the wider public and education system - to increase the awareness of what they have to offer and the many career opportunities that exist for all age groups.

In the May/June 2024 edition of *Service Dealer*, I wrote an article titled **'Where have all the people gone?'**, which focused on recruitment and the need for a joined-up approach to recruitment and to ensure that the LBE

message of careers for all in an exciting and technologically-advanced industry is there despite its general overall image. The following is an extract from my 2024 article, to provide some background:

"I use the words 'land-based engineering' as a generic term to describe our industry as a whole – to cover agricultural dealerships, garden machinery and groundcare dealers and manufacturers. We seem to lack the unity of being able to describe what we do in simple terms, which causes us to be missed in the modern world of internet searches. Years of trying to find an all-encompassing title for us to compete in recruitment has come down to 'land-based engineering,' to compete with the likes of aerospace, BT, automotive, engineering and so on. Tractors, lawnmowers, outdoor power don't cut it - sorry, no pun intended. Find out what young people or newcomers to the industry look up to find a job with us, and you will be 50% there with any recruitment campaign."



I have spent many an hour debating this subject with Laurence, usually over a beer or two, and fully support his views on 'collective collaborations.' But – and there is a big but – those who could be a part of collaborations are usually competitors, and the nature of their commercial operations can mean that any public collaboration is a no-no. That said, there is a lot of collaboration within the LBE sector between trade organisations, suppliers/manufacturers, and those in education. This is usually behind the scenes, and has involved a huge amount of work and expense in achieving an up-to-date, fit-for-purpose LBE apprenticeship scheme that is delivered by several large manufacturers, and by colleges or university colleges around the country.

BAGMA, IAgRE and the AEA make up the group called LETEC – the Landbased Training and Education Committee – which have mostly funded and organised the work done to provide a modern-day apprenticeship along with the help of a dealer, education and manufacturer group to ensure full industry input. LETEC also funded and developed through the AEA a web-based information site called 'We are Landbased Engineering.' This is a go-to site for general information on careers and opportunities within the LBE sector. (<https://wearelandbased.engineering>). It is the industry's own creation, born out of hard work and a lot of collaboration, and is a great bit of signposting for both dealers and those seeking a career in the LBE sector. It's also a clear indication that there is unity and collaboration in the sector.

There is also a huge amount of

information on the internet about apprenticeships and technical qualifications that is worth a look-through to better understand how the system works. We are at the mercy of the Government and the Department for Education when it comes to funding through the national training levy. There is a massive amount of money sitting in the levy which remains unused for various reasons. This money or fund is ringfenced for apprenticeships, but there is talk about changing the rules to release some of the funding to help with other types of training. Some reports indicate that this would happen from April 2025.

What is the Labour plan for apprenticeship levy?

The Labour Government is planning to reform the Apprenticeship Levy by replacing it with a new and more flexible 'Growth and Skills Levy.' Under this new model, businesses will be able to spend up to 50% of their levy contributions on non-apprenticeship training.

- 18 Sept 2024

One hopes that dealers will tap into this levy and widen their own skills training for staff, and not be frightened off by the rules that used to surround

apprenticeships – and that they will be able to be more selective with the newly-available funding rules. The levy rules mean that only companies with a 'Pay Bill' of over £3 million per annum pay into the levy, but these companies can release funding for non-levy payers for appropriate training schemes. It does mean dealers need to talk to some of their larger suppliers, or tap into the support of one of the trade associations.

Going back to Laurence's comments about 'time for collective collaborations,' they do exist within the LBE sector, but may not be so obvious at the smaller dealer level, or where dealers do not have direct access to manufacturers' schemes. I have no doubt that more could be done in terms of collaboration to achieve a more visible industry profile. However, it can be very difficult and time-consuming to gather representatives around the table to discuss and action schemes for the greater good of all that require time and funding to put in place.

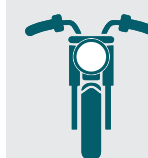
These group or collaborative proposals inevitably raise all sorts of issues and questions. The thinking from many years ago was to raise the profile of the industry generally to encourage more interest in careers within the industry. 'We Are Landbased Engineering' goes some way to doing

this, and is the culmination of a lot of collaboration within the industry itself. One of the important factors is making sure that there is follow-through for those who are interested.

Whilst the industry's apprenticeship programme is state-of-the-art, and funding does exist for it, the delivery of the apprenticeships is spread across manufacturers and further education establishments, and the availability of experienced trainers is limited. Perhaps the next stage is for the industry itself to create an LBE Academy that can bring together all the elements required to train people at all levels, and make use of the changes to the levy funding. That would require a lot of unity from the sector, but would hopefully futureproof our need for technicians at all levels. This has been done in other countries with a great deal of success, and the models for it exist. I have no doubt that these countries and their trade organisations would be more than willing to help the UK LBE sector move toward its own academy.

I wish Laurence all the best in his quest to unite the turf industries in their similar task to recruit, train and retain staff. Any relevant companies reading this should contact Laurence and do what they can to help. It may make a huge difference in the future.

A biker's tale



If the editor has room, I have a cautionary tale for you bikers out there. Back in April, I was riding up North with a group. Parking up in our hotel car park with ANPR cameras and security cameras active, my bike was chained to a fairly new Africa Twin. The owner got a call at 3am from the tracker company his bike was hooked up to. The bad guys had cut the lock and taken his bike. They left mine, as it was probably too old to nick. Interestingly the hotel could not give their CCTV footage to the police because of data protection, unless the police issued a warrant for it. Weird or what? There was also a suggestion that a member of staff may have tipped off the bad guys that the bikes were there – not proven.

The bike was recovered by the police 10 miles away,

and, although damaged, it was ridden back South. Then the saga started. The original Honda dealer it was bought from had gone bust. It had to go to another dealer who could not even start the work for six weeks. When they were due to start, they were missing a part that was unavailable from Honda for at least another month. The insurance company got involved, the part arrived, and the dealer turned around and said they could now not start the work until the middle of August.

So the Africa Twin owner has been without his bike from early April this year, and may not get it back until late August. The dealer who has it clearly has a priority policy for their own customers, despite being a main Honda franchise. A story we have all heard in our sector! Great that the bike had a tracker on it, but the bike dealer does not seem to have provided any help to move things along. Ride safe.

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.

SEPTEMBER 2025

Moreton in Marsh Show www.moretonshow.co.uk	6
Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC www.autumnfair.com	7-10
GroundsFest, Stoneleigh Park www.groundsfest.com	9-10
UK Dairy Day, The International Centre, Telford www.ukdairyday.co.uk	10
Penistone Agricultural Show www.penistoneshow.com	13
Kington Show www.kingtonshow.co.uk	13
Stanhope Show www.stanhopeshow.com	13-14
Glee 2025 www.gleebirmingham.com	16-18

OCTOBER 2025

Equip Exhibition, Louisville, USA www.equipexposition.com	21-24
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NOVEMBER 2025

Agritechnica 2025, Hanover www.agritechnica.com/en	9-15
GMA Saltex 2025, Birmingham NEC www.gmasaltex.co.uk	12-13
Future Farming Scotland Expo, Aberdeen www.futurefarmingexpo.com	18-19
Midlands Machinery Show www.midlandsmachineryshow.com	19
AgriScot 2025, The Royal Highland Centre www.agriscot.co.uk	19

DECEMBER 2025

Service Dealer Conference & Awards, Stratford-Upon-Avon www.servicedealer.co.uk	4
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EVENT DETAILS AND UPDATES:

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