

# SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

SEP / OCT 2017



# WHAT PROFESSIONAL BUYERS WANT

*How dealers can keep them coming back*



**DEALER  
Q&A**

RICHARD JONES,  
OAKLEY'S

❖ Dealer Profile

❖ Cereals Report

❖ Glee Preview

❖ Forestry Machinery

❖ SME Digest

❖ Jim Green

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# EDITOR'S MESSAGE

**W**elcome to the September-October 2017 edition of *Service Dealer*.

If there's a theme to be found in this edition, it's all to do with the value of listening. Listening and responding to the needs of customers – which if nurtured correctly should result in long and profitable relationships.

We hear from both sides of the equation this issue, talking to both dealers and to a professional customer. Angus Lindsey is Group Head of Assets and Fleet Management for professional green service provider idverde. He finds himself in the fairly unusual position of buying significant quantities of machinery from various dealers all across the UK. He therefore has an excellent perspective on what makes a dealer great.

We also speak to dealers in the grounds care and agricultural sectors, both of whom have found real success with the building of long-term relationships with key customers. These guys are proving that there is true value to be gained from genuinely listening. When we as customers can tell we are being paid attention to, we believe the company we are dealing with cares, that they may be open to change and that we are important to them. And these are precisely the type of comments we are receiving from customers of our readers who have already entered the 2017 Dealer of the Year competition. It's not too late to make sure that your dealership is in the running for this prestigious title. You know how hard you work, why not be recognised for it?! See page 12 for details of how your dealership can still enter.

## OUR PEOPLE

[www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk)

### EDITOR

STEVE GIBBS

@ [steve@servicedealer.co.uk](mailto:steve@servicedealer.co.uk)

### FEATURES EDITOR

MARTIN RICKATSON

@ [jmr.agriculture@gmail.com](mailto:jmr.agriculture@gmail.com)

### CONSULTANT EDITOR

CHRIS BIDDLE

@ [chris@servicedealer.co.uk](mailto:chris@servicedealer.co.uk)

### SME DIGEST EDITOR

ADAM BERNSTEIN

@ [adam@adambernstein.co.uk](mailto:adam@adambernstein.co.uk)

### CONTRIBUTOR

LAURENCE GALE

@ [Laurence.gale@btinternet.com](mailto:Laurence.gale@btinternet.com)

### PRODUCED BY

THE AD PLAIN LTD

Pipe House, Lupton Road,  
Wallingford, Oxfordshire,  
OX10 9BT, UK

☎ 01491 837 117

🌐 [www.theadplain.com](http://www.theadplain.com)

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### MANAGING DIRECTOR

DUNCAN MURRAY-CLARKE

### DESIGN & LAYOUT

ALEX FAULKNER

### ADVERTISING SALES

SUSAN PALLETT

@ [susan@theadplain.com](mailto:susan@theadplain.com)

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## DEALERS

# KUBOTA EXPANDS ITS AG DEALERSHIP REACH

*New partnerships in Scotland, Cheshire and Devon*

**K**ubota UK has made some expansions to its agricultural machinery dealership network.

First, the company has significantly strengthened its presence across Scotland with the appointment of A M Phillip Agritech Ltd.

The deal means Kubota's full range is now available from three of A M Phillip's depots: Conon Bridge, Perth and Glenrothes.

Rob Edwards, Business Development Manager for Kubota UK's agricultural division, commented, "This is an important announcement that further highlights Kubota's commitment to the UK agricultural industry. Already this year we have strengthened and enhanced our network with appointments like Battlefield Machinery and Lister

Machinery, but that's just the start and there's much more to come.

"Our message to the market is clear: Kubota is prepared to invest in the right products, infrastructure and network to ensure we're a real force in this market for the long term."

Next up a brand new independent agricultural dealer called K Farm Machinery Ltd has launched that will supply Kubota UK's complete agricultural range in Cheshire and North Wales.

K Farm Machinery Ltd is undertaking a significant investment programme to launch its new branch in Higher Whitley, near Warrington, which is due to be officially opened later this year.

The dealership is being launched by Andrew Dutton and Steve Sykes, both of whom have extensive experience and knowledge of the local agricultural market.

Co-owner, Andrew Dutton, said, "This is an extremely exciting partnership. By joining forces with Kubota UK and making a significant investment in our Higher Whitley branch, it highlights the commitment we're making to the farming community in this region. We're extremely passionate about

supporting local farmers and believe this announcement makes a real statement to the industry."

K Farm Machinery's branch will include a showroom, stores and a workshop. Accompanying Andrew and Steve will be Stewart Whitlow, who will be the dedicated Kubota salesperson and Jez Karkos, a qualified Kubota service engineer.

Andrew Connon, Dealer Principal at A M Phillip, said, "By working in partnership with Kubota UK, we're determined to make an impact on the Scottish farming sector. Already there has been huge interest from our customers in the brand and a lot of people requesting demonstrations.

Another recent agricultural range appointment by Kubota is Dorset and Somerset dealer Highwood.

Ben Manning, Group Technical & Marketing Manager at Highwood, said, "This exciting new venture between Highwood and Kubota is in addition to the strong partnership we already enjoy with the Kubota Groundcare range of equipment.

"We're looking forward to a bright future with a company that is committed to investing in the future."



L-R: Stewart Whitlow, Dedicated Kubota Salesperson, Kevin Price, Kubota Dealer Manager, Andrew Dutton, Co-owner of K Farm Machinery



Kubota Business Development Manager, Rob Edwards, shaking hands with Highwood Operations Director, Nick Green



Dave Roberts, Kubota UK MD, shakes hands on the deal with Andrew Connon, Dealer Principal at A M Phillip, flanked by members of Kubota's and A M Phillip's teams

## DEALERS

# BARONESS APPOINTS STEWART PLANT

## *For Central and Southern Scotland*

Stewart Plant Sales, the groundcare equipment division of Scot JCB, has been appointed as the Baroness UK dealer for Central and Southern Scotland.

Based in Glasgow and run by Groundcare Manager Richard Green, the company provides technical support via a team of mobile engineers, providing service and parts back-up from five local depots across the territory.

Commenting on their appointment, Director Iain Bryant said, "We're delighted with our appointment as Baroness dealers

as the equipment is highly regarded within the industry, and we look forward to growing market share within the territory."

Baroness UK Business Development Manager Jim Whitton added, "Scotland is a tough and demanding market and we were looking for a dealer partner that had a proven track record of delivering unrivalled service support across Scotland, and the sales expertise and market experience to offer a truly consultative approach to the golf and sports ground customers."

"We're fortunate to be able to partner with Stewart Plant Sales whose significant aftersales resources will prove to be a key differentiator in the professional grounds care industry in Scotland."



L-R: Director, Iain Bryant, Richard Green, Baroness

## INDUSTRY

# PRICE AWARDED RYAN FRANCHISE

## *Turf maintenance equipment from Schiller*

Price Turfcare, the recently established business founded by Ransomes Jacobsen's former International Sales Director, Rupert Price, has been awarded the UK and Ireland distribution rights for the Ryan range of turf maintenance equipment.

For an initial six-month period that began in June 2017, Price Turfcare is the joint distributor together with current distributor, Ransomes Jacobsen.

Following the successful transition at the beginning of 2018, Price Turfcare will become the exclusive UK distributor of Ryan branded products.

Pat Cappucci, President and COO of Schiller Grounds Care said, "I've known Rupert for many years and he's hugely respected within our industry.

"He has 20 years of experience, mostly in senior sales management positions with Ransomes Jacobsen, so he knows

our product portfolio very well. His decision to form his own company was a considered one; he has recruited a group of former colleagues with similar experience, to provide sales, parts and service support.

"We thank Ransomes Jacobsen for the great job they have done over the years, but having a dedicated and focussed sales operation in the UK is vitally

important for this Schiller brand. Concentrating on our products, and the complementary Ventrac product, gives Price Turfcare a portfolio of equipment to help golf, sports turf professionals and landscapers create and maintain pristine playing surfaces.

"We're delighted to appoint Rupert and his team as custodians of our products and our reputation in the UK and Ireland."



Ryan Lawnaire IV

## DEALERS

# RUSSELLS EXPANDS TERRITORY

## *New depot to be constructed at Rothwell, near Kettering*

New Holland dealer Russells Ltd (Hallmark Tractors) has signed a deal to expand its territory into Northamptonshire, covering the area around Wellingborough.

Just 18 months after Hallmark Tractors joined the Russells group, the dealership will expand its business and territory with the construction of a new depot in Rothwell, near Kettering. The depot will serve customers in Northamptonshire and the surrounding area.

The new depot will be operational in time for the main harvest season, with full sales, parts and service facilities offered. Andy Loxton will manage sales, Mark Harris the service department and Brian Lenham the parts operation. All the staff have a vast amount of

experience of the New Holland brand in the local area.

Paul Russell, Russell Ltd's Dealer Principal, says of the expansion: "We're confident that we have the right people in place to be able to deliver a professional service and are looking forward to promoting the New Holland brand in the new territory. Jim Nash and the team at Hallmark Tractors have done a great job and are relishing the challenge this new opportunity presents."

Andrew Watson, New Holland Business Director UK and Ireland says: "We're extremely excited about the new developments within the Russell's family. We're sure the new depot will be very successful as it covers a key area for New Holland.

"The Hallmark and Russells teams are exceptionally knowledgeable and they will surely offer great opportunities and a new level of service to all customers in the area."



The new depot under construction

## INDUSTRY

# WALKER MOWERS UK LAUNCHES

## *Handling all sales and service business for the UK market*

Together with its Belgian distributor, Walker Mowers has announced the launch of Walker Mowers UK to handle all sales and service business for the UK market.

Walker Mowers has manufacturing roots going back over six decades with its first prototype zero turn mower developed in 1977.

The company said in a statement that in recent comparative tests of major zero turn machines, the Walker Mower demonstrated "huge time savings, representing a significant reduction in operating costs".

At the time of going to press, staffing for this new UK venture was commencing with the search for two area sales managers. In addition the appointment of a country manager was due to be made.

The new organisation will focus on the demonstration, sales and service support for the full range of Walker Mowers and the mower options that include, collection, mulching and flail unit.

The range of mowers and dealer commercial

package will be launched at November's SALTEX.

Dealers looking to register their interest in a Walker Mower dealership can contact [sales@walkermowers.co.uk](mailto:sales@walkermowers.co.uk)



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## WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS SAY

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## OBITUARY

# FRED WHYTE, FORMER PRESIDENT STIHL INC

*45 years of service*

Fred Whyte, former president of STIHL Inc, passed away on 7th July 2017, surrounded by his family at his home in Virginia Beach, Virginia after a battle with an aggressive form of cancer. He was 70 years old.

A Vancouver, British Columbia native, Whyte began his STIHL career in 1971, working as a Regional Manager for STIHL American, the same company where his father had worked. Whyte moved up the ranks at STIHL in the US and at the age of 34, led STIHL's expansion and operations in Canada. In 1992, Whyte returned to the US as President of STIHL Inc.

During Whyte's tenure as president, he led the company from a moderately-known brand to the number-one selling brand of gasoline-powered hand-held outdoor power equipment in America. After serving STIHL for more than 45 years and leading STIHL Inc for 23 years, Whyte retired, and was named sole Director and Chairman of the Board of Directors for STIHL Inc and influenced STIHL strategy worldwide.

"We, and the larger STIHL family, are very saddened by the news of Fred's passing," said Bjoern Fischer, president of STIHL Inc. "He will be remembered for his extraordinary leadership, passion and the personal connections he had with both his customers and his employees."

Robin Lennie, Managing Director, STIHL GB told *Service Dealer*, "Fred was a wonderful man, so highly regarded by everyone and will be so dearly missed".

In addition to Whyte's service to STIHL, he was also a well-respected leader of both the outdoor power equipment industry nationwide and the local Hampton Roads community. He served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) and President of the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association (PPEMA).

He is survived by his wife Karen, their two children, Jean and John (wife Stacy) and their twin granddaughters, Klarise and Isla.



## DEALERS

# CHARTERHOUSE SIGNS CHARLIES

## Responsible for Shropshire region

Six months on from his appointment as Central Area Territory Manager for Charterhouse Turf Machinery, Richard Lucas made his first new dealer appointment in the form of Charlies Groundcare.

Responsible for the Shropshire region, Charlies Groundcare will be distributing the Redexim range of products for both natural and synthetic surfaces.

Based in the Midlands, Richard joined Charterhouse in November from a regional dealership where he gained experience with the Redexim range of products and developed a good insight into the products and marketplace in the area. His new role sees him take over responsibility for the dealers

and sales in Central UK, as well as working together with some key customers.

On his first dealer appointment Richard said, "Now I've found my feet in this new role it's good to be adding valuable dealer support within my area. The Charlies Groundcare team deliver fantastic sales, service and technical support and I look forward to working with them in the coming months to further enhance the offering to new and existing customers in this area."

Commenting on their appointment, Ian Trevor, Charlies Groundcare Sales Manager said, "We're delighted to be working together with Charterhouse and adding their vast selection of machinery to our portfolio. The

Redexim range is continually being updated and refined and is renowned for being versatile and efficient, meeting the demands of today's ground professionals."



Richard Lucas (left) with Ian Trevor from Charlies Groundcare

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# MULTIPLE NEW DEALERS FOR DEUTZ-FAHR

## Major push across UK

A major push by DEUTZ-FAHR to support growing demand for its brand of small, medium and large hp machines has seen the appointments of several well established and highly regarded dealers throughout the UK.

The regions to benefit from the most recent appointments include Ayr and Stranraer in West Scotland, West Cornwall and East Lincolnshire

DEUTZ-FAHR says its investment of 90 million euros in a new state-

of-the-art factory in Lauingen, Bavaria, Germany coupled with the millions already invested by the company on R&D to expand and develop its range of tractors, has given a major confidence boost to new and established DEUTZ-FAHR dealers.

In Scotland William Kerr Tractors Ltd has been appointed as DEUTZ-FAHR main dealer for Ayr and Stranraer. "Dairy farmers in particular have been suffering from high second-hand machinery

values and from a poor milk price, so the arrival of a tractor manufacturer in the area that offers quality and reliability as well as high residual values and is supported by an established dealership has to be welcome," says Managing Director Willie Kerr.

A key area of growth for the DEUTZ-FAHR brand is Cornwall and the appointment of Penhallow-based Paul Jeffery Agricultural Engineers as its dealer covering West Cornwall has been welcomed by new and previous farmer customers.

All administration and the running of the spare parts department, which is due to be refurbished, will be the responsibility of Mr Jeffery's wife Paula. The family-owned dealership is also looking to expand its team with the appointment of at least one trained engineer to satisfy growing demand for DEUTZ-FAHR tractors in the area.

The final new appointment JPM Agricultural Ltd based at Authorpe near Louth, which is a sub dealer to J T Friskney Ltd covering the East Coast from Skegness to Grimsby, has been a respected dealership in Lincolnshire for over 10 years experience.

"The DEUTZ-FAHR tractor is a perfect addition to our existing range of machinery we sell at JPM Agricultural," said the company's Managing Director, James Hunt. "Unless you have a very strong brand that can compete with some of the other well known tractor brands, it's virtually impossible to get a foot hold in one of the UK's arable heartlands." ●



Paul Jeffery Agricultural Engineers



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# SERVICE DEALER

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CONFERENCE + AWARDS

2017

## THE DEALER OF THE YEAR TITLE COULD BE YOURS!

*Nominations open for 2017's competition until 22nd September*

This year's prestigious Dealer of the Year Awards ceremony takes place at the Oxford Belfry Hotel on the evening of Thursday 16th November. As ever it will make a thrilling and enjoyable end to a day which will have earlier seen the *Service Dealer* Conference enthral our dealer delegates.

Following on from the day's events which this year are entitled *The Challenge of Change: Embracing & Adapting to a changing market*, the Awards ceremony has established itself as an important date in the industry diary. It gives an opportunity to network, share stories, discuss business challenges and most of all share a delightful evening with friends and colleagues.

There is still time to make sure your dealership is in the running for one of these highly regarded accolades which recognise excellence in the independent outdoor machinery dealer sector. We are taking nominations via our website at [www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk) until Friday 22nd September – so don't delay.

### Our core dealer awards this year will be presented to the:

- GARDEN MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR
- PROFESSIONAL TURFCARE DEALER OF THE YEAR
- FARM MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR
- FORESTRY EQUIPMENT DEALER OF THE YEAR
- ATV/QUAD DEALER OF THE YEAR

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2. Dealers – you know how good you are, so nominate your own dealership!

Once your dealership is in the running for the Dealer of the Year awards, assessment will be made via feedback from the most important people to your business – your customers. We will send you a link which you could email to your customers which will take them to a page on our website where they can submit comments in favour of your dealership. We will also provide you with a logo you can add to your own website and a Word document you can print off and hand out at your premises.

Winning one of the Dealer of the Year titles would give you ample opportunity to gain PR in your local press and to promote yourselves to new and current customers. National industry recognition really is something to shout about.

### Other awards

As well as the Dealer of the Year titles, which will include a new prize for Overall Dealer of the Year, this year we shall once again be presenting two honours recognising key members of your dealership's team.

**These are:**

### 2017 STAR OF THE DEALERSHIP AWARD

Dealers are asked to nominate a member of staff from the sales, parts, service or support team who has demonstrated exceptional skills, commitment

to customer service or any other compelling reason during the 2017 season – and who are deserving of industry recognition.

### 2017 APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

Similarly, we wish to recognise an apprentice who, during the 2017 season has demonstrated the desire, willingness and ability to progress within the dealership and the industry.

You can nominate deserving candidates for both these awards on our website now.

### LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The judging panel will once again this year be paying special honour to an individual who has made a

significant contribution to our industry over the course of a distinguished career. The person will be following in the footsteps of Ron Miller and Graham Dale who were presented with this title in recent years.

Please visit [www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk) and head to the 2017 Conference and Awards section where you will find all the information you need to get your dealership in the running for one of these major prizes.

## EARLYBIRD TICKET OFFER ENDING SOON

*Take advantage of the specially-priced tickets for the Conference and Awards*

Service Dealer hopes to see as many of our readers as possible at the Oxford Belfry Hotel on Thursday 16th November for our Annual Conference and Dealer of the Year Awards evening dinner.

To make sure of your place at these not-to-be-missed events you can take advantage of very special Earlybird priced tickets which are currently available from [www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk). However, make sure you act soon as the discounted prices will have to cease on 29th September.

The Conference is intended for dealers supplying and/or servicing the garden machinery, professional turfcare, farm machinery and outdoor power equipment industries – therefore registration for the conference is strictly for dealers only.

The Earlybird price for a dealer attending the Conference only is £175 (full price £195).

If a dealer wants to attend both the Conference and the Awards dinner the Earlybird price is £240 (full price £260).

Entry to just the Awards dinner is open to everyone (dealers, manufacturers and suppliers). Earlybird price for this is £85 (full price £99). Tables for 10 people are also available for £850. All of these mentioned prices exclude VAT.

There is also a special Conference Rate available for Bed & Breakfast at the Oxford Belfry Hotel. To claim this offer please call the central reservations team at the hotel on 0845 074 0060 and quote The Ad Plain – 16/11/2017.



## OUR 2017 SPONSORS

The following organisations have confirmed their sponsorship of the 2017 *Service Dealer* Conference and Awards. We'd like to welcome them on board and thank them for their support and input.

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# CEREALS EVENT QUIET BUT PLENTY OF NEW KIT

*With the sector under pressure, attendance down and a number of big names absent from Cereals, the UK's key arable equipment show, products from smaller makers had the chance to gain greater exposure, reports Martin Rickatson*

While sterling's fall since the Brexit vote has helped firm up commodity prices, and tractor and equipment sales have risen from their recent low point as a result, there is still a significant level of cautiousness in the UK arable sector.

That has been exacerbated by uncertainty over agricultural policy post-Brexit, and what

form Brexit will take, particularly given the general election's hung parliament result. Couple this with rising costs associated with exhibiting, such as stand rent and staff accommodation, which are deterring some makers from committing to the event, and the result was a noticeably quiet Cereals event this year, in terms of both visitor and exhibitor numbers.

However, the absence of big stands full of tractors and combines gave the chance for manufacturers of crop establishment, treatment and handling equipment the opportunity to give their machinery a higher profile. Among this there was plenty new to see among the stands at the Lincolnshire farm venue.

## Opico



Opico, the UK importer for Maschio products, is extending the range of the Italian manufacturer's machinery it offers its dealers with the addition of a plough line, reflecting a resurgence of interest in rotational ploughing as a grass weed control tool, particularly in light of increasingly difficult-to-control blackgrass. The range comes courtesy of fellow Italian firm Moro, whose products Maschio has sold in other parts of Europe for some time, and in which, since May, it has owned a controlling share. There are two ranges, the 3-5f Unico M and the 4-6f Unico L.

Key features include mechanical or hydraulic variable furrow width, double-arm parallelogram linkage adjustment for the front furrow width, and a turnover memory function which closes up the bodies automatically when turning the plough over and then resets them accordingly, using the beam alignment ram to reduce wear on pins, bushes and link rods. A centralised hydro-pneumatic circuit with piston nitrogen accumulator is said to result in faster leg reset

should a body encounter an obstacle.

Meanwhile, Opico has signed former Gregoire Besson UK man Rob Immink as Sales Manager for the Maschio Gaspardo products it imports.

## Claydon



Making its debut on the Claydon stand was the firm's front linkage-mounted Terrablade inter-row hoe, designed for shallow working between wide-row band-sown crops established using one of the company's drills to reduce demands on herbicides and cut crop protection bills. Claydon says the Terrablade can be used at forward speeds of approximately 6.0km/hr, working at up to 20mm deep. Guide wheels are installed at the front of the implement.

The company continues to strengthen its dealer network, with the most recent recruit being Hants-based John Seale Ltd, which will cover the Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex region, bordering Haynes to the East.

## Triton



Farm designed and built, the Triton drill was attracting a lot of attention on the working plots, largely because of its simplicity, which is said to ensure it moves the minimum amount of soil to avoid disturbing weed seed, while still filling the seed slot.

Claimed to be suitable for a wide range of soils, the key feature of the drill is that each tine coulter is followed by a slightly offset closing tine, which shifts soil sideways to close the seed slot, negating the need for a press wheel or packer and eliminating the risk of the weed seed disturbance they can cause. Seed is piped from a front-mounted hopper. A standard 3m drill is priced at £23,950 ex VAT.

## Bristows



Simplicity was also a theme with the Split-Level subsoiler from Bristows, a firm based not far from the Cereals site. Targeted at the oilseed rape establishment market, it can be specified with leading loosening tines or discs, which precede subsoiler legs of various types depending on the level of shattering and surface movement required.

The interesting bits come next, with a Multi-Tooth Tiller Roll comprising staggered points providing a consolidation and levelling effect. Then, arranged in pairs, come 45 degree-angled disc coulters, down the back of which the seed is placed. Each is followed by a flat roller.

## Kuhn



Cultivation and drilling equipment from bigger names included a 3m version of Kuhn's Performer deep-working disc/tine cultivator. Key components include two rows of 510mm independent and hydraulically adjustable discs and four rows of non-stop hydraulic breakback tines capable of working to a maximum depth of 350mm. Tine point choices include standard 80mm shares, 50mm subsoiling shares or wing shares. At the rear is a notched roller providing up to 225kg/m of hydraulically adjustable pressure.

The firm also showed its new Prolander tined seedbed cultivator and articulated Vari-Challenger plough of up to 10 furrows.

## Lynx Engineering



Retro-fit rear track units have found homes with a number of UK cropping businesses seeking increased traction and flotation from high-hp tractors yet wanting a fully wheeled tractor at other times of the year, but the downside for many is the 40% reduction in road speed that they impose. Lynx Engineering is now offering a new 40km/hr (25mph) rated system from Dutch maker Zuidberg.

Suited to tractors of 250-400hp, the new tracks use a revised gearbox that bolts on to the tractor axle to achieve this, and feature full hydraulic suspension plus flexing midrollers to absorb bumps. Belts, which are made in-house, are available in 24, 30 and 36in widths.

## Cross Engineering



Among exhibitors from Ireland was Cross Engineering, whose Managing Director Simon Cross revealed that the firm has now brought one of its giant 46 cu metre chaser bin/drill fillers into the UK. In addition, three are working in Ireland and five have been exported to the USA, where the firm is working with a John Deere dealer, Tri-County Equipment, which has nine outlets across eastern Michigan.

## Agrifac



In the sprayer lines, a number of makers debuted new products. On sale in mainland Europe for a number of years, Dutch manufacturer Agrifac is now offering the trailed Milan range alongside its established Condor self-propelled sprayers, the two sharing similar plumbing. There are 3,500, 4,200, 5,400 and 6,800-litre tank options, with booms from 27-45m, and individual nozzle section control available.

## Househam



A new flagship self-propelled sprayer from Househam is the Predator, available in 4,000 and 5,000-litre capacities, with booms to 36m. Innovations on the machine include a hydraulic load-sensing suspension system which adapts responsiveness according to tank load. The engine is a four-cylinder MTU producing 230hp, and unladen weight is 10 tonnes.

## Mzuri



Away from tillage, drilling and spraying, one of the more interesting launches was from Mzuri, the direct strip-till drill firm whose boss founded and formerly owned Spearhead. The company chose Cereals to launch the Razorback, a new hedgetrimmer design incorporating two distinct features.

A hydraulic levelling system automatically levels the trimmer independently of the tractor, while the head drops the conventional horizontal rotor and flails in favour of three vertical rotors, each featuring with a pair of three blades and mounted one above the other to pulverise the trimmings. ●



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# WHAT PROFESSIONAL BUYERS WANT

*Angus Lindsay is in charge of buying grounds care equipment across the country for professional green service provider idverde. As such he is in constant contact with dealerships nationwide. Editor Steve Gibbs spoke to him to discover what dealers need to be doing to keep him coming back*

In February 2016, The Landscape Group merged with Quadron Services Ltd to create the idverde UK family, the largest green service provider in the UK. More recently idverde increased its portfolio in Scotland by acquiring 40% of Land Engineering's business following its administration.

The company offers services in amenity horticulture, focusing on parks and open space management, grounds maintenance, tree surgery, street cleansing and landscape design and build.

The company cares for parks and gardens, amenity green space, woodlands, riverbanks, beaches and nature reserves. Its fine turf specialists keep bowling

greens, golf courses and cricket squares in top playing condition.

In charge of specifying and buying the machinery to keep these teams across the country in operation is Angus Lindsay. A true advocate of the value of independent, specialist dealers, Angus is in a rarefied position of regularly visiting and purchasing from dealers across the UK. From his perspective as a customer of commercial equipment, he knows a thing or two about what makes a truly great dealer. He also knows where some go wrong!

*Service Dealer* spoke to Angus about his role and how he interacts with dealers and manufacturers.



## **Service Dealer: What do you do for idverde?**

**Angus Lindsay:** My official title is Group Head of Assets and Fleet Management, so I basically look after everything from the procurement and specification of the machinery, through to its utilisation on the contracts, which involves supporting the contract managers as well as assisting our business development side to see if we can come up with any alternative ways of working.

I also work very closely with manufacturers on machinery development, and with others in similar positions, to help the manufacturer to better understand what we need as an industry. I do consider myself to be in quite a privileged position in that respect because you get a chance to influence what comes to market.

Part of my job therefore is understanding what the client wants and trying to influence the manufacturer to supply that.

## **SD: In your position do you favour one particular manufacturer's machinery?**

**AL:** No, I pick and choose and it can change each year. If a different product comes to market I'll go and try it. It would be very easy for me to put all my eggs in one basket and say for example 'I'm only going to buy from Ransomes Jacobsen'. And some of our competitors do that. But I think that limits your focus on what the marketplace has to offer. Also it keeps the manufacturers, and the suppliers, on their toes.

## **SD: Do manufacturers try to influence you to commit to just buying their products?**

**AL:** They do, but there is always a good case to resist that, because invariably a single manufacturer won't produce every machine that I need.

At the end of the day we know what our clients want – what their issues are. We also know what our operators get fed up with and what will make their lives a little bit easier.

## **SD: You use dealers across the country to source your machines, not just a single source. Why is that?**

**AL:** You've got to use your local dealer. If I was to only use one supplier, it just wouldn't work with my national contracts. If I was to only use Farols for example, the manager in Aberdeen probably wouldn't have heard of them and would feel somewhat detached from the procurement process. Imagine the scenario where a contractor takes their John Deere machine bought from a supplier several hundred miles away into the local dealer and finds themselves at the back of the

queue for repairs. I'm not saying this happens but I'd rather not have to pick up the phone and re-focus the supplier. With a national coverage and many sites it's important to use the local dealer and build a relationship with them.

We have national accounts with John Deere, Ransomes, Kubota and the like, but I try to make sure that there's enough in the deal that the dealer gets his cut out of it – making sure they get the service and off-shoot work. And this is nationwide for 90% of the products I purchase. The only exception is with power tools from companies like Husqvarna and Stihl; because I would have to deal with so many different suppliers it's more efficient to buy from one and work with the importer to ensure national support in the event of a warranty issue or product failure.

## **SD: Do you stick with the same dealers in the same parts of the country, or do you switch around?**

**AL:** I tend to use the same ones but it's always interesting when we secure work in new parts of the country and you have to work with a new supplier.

There's a bit of a move, however, in recent times to have these 'super dealers' who are mixing agriculture and grounds care. My concern with this type of enterprise is that agriculture could become the dominant force and I can see a scenario where, when the chips are down in the height of harvest and these super dealers have a dozen combines needing work, an out-front rotary with a dodgy transmission simply gets sent to the back of the queue – and that worries me. The dedicated dealers that specialise in the grounds care and golf equipment are more focussed from my perspective.

To be fair, some dealerships manage the agriculture and grounds care combination very well. T H Whites, Ernest Doe, Lister Wilder for example are very good at separating the divisions. I just feel it's an issue I need to keep an eye on.



### **SD:** What makes a good dealer for you?

**AL:** Let's say for example I'm buying a Kubota tractor from Lister Wilder. I'll speak to Kubota to discuss the specification, delivery times, agree the pricing and nominate the supplier. I'll then contact the dealer, in this case Lister Wilder, and explain the order they'll be getting and where I want it delivered, plus when and how it's going to be paid for. A relatively painless process for the supplier as long as all parties play their part. They haven't had to sort a demo out, fill in a laborious tender or constantly chase to see if there's an order coming.

Keeping it simple gets me the tractor I want delivered where I need it and hopefully when I need it. The installation process with the operators and the manager builds the relationship by explaining who they need to contact at the dealership for service or spare parts. This then hopefully makes for an easy life for all parties.

If there does happen to be a problem and they are responsive and get things turned around quickly and back into work with little or no drama, then great, the system works.

### **SD:** Any examples of when a relationship with a dealer has really worked well?

**AL:** We had a major failure on a tractor which was our own fault – a casting failed because the operator was driving too fast and hit a speed bump. This occurred at half eight on a Friday night! With the tractor recovered back to the depot, I texted both the manufacturer and the supplier to explain the problem, stressing that this tractor was crucial and was required back up and running as a matter of urgency.

With little or no drama the wheels then kicked into motion. I had a loan tractor on site by Monday

morning, a casting had been sourced, and it was shipped to the dealer's workshop and the tractor was back in operation four days later. I couldn't want for any better service than that. That's how the system should work.

### **SD:** And when it doesn't work?

**AL:** When the system doesn't work, that's when you get a bad taste in your mouth. When the excuses start and delays increase it's not good for the relationship between customer-supplier-manufacturer. I appreciate I'm not the most important person in the world, far from it – but I am a customer.

Some dealers are very good at delivering a top-quality level of service. There are, however, a lot of average ones out there who find it easy to blame the operator or the environment in which the equipment is being used. Sometimes this is the case or the machine has not been serviced on time, or at all. I accept that. But now I need it repaired so I can get it out working again. Suppliers who understand the pressures which our contracts are under from clients, and can react to it, will go a long way in my world.

### **SD:** Once you've established a relationship with a supplier do they appreciate what you as a company expect?

**AL:** Absolutely. People may think we're demanding, but we're really not. We buy the machines, if we wreck them through misuse or abuse, that's our fault and our problem which we will address internally. However, we need it back in the field and operational as all the time we have machines not cutting grass it's costing us money. We run things tight, very tight – we can't afford not to. Last year the cost of machines went up by around 5-10%. We're not going to get 5-10% more



for cutting the grass, so basically, our machines need to be working harder, and we need to rely on suppliers' support to get them back up and running again if they go down.

I know and appreciate how tough it is being a machinery supplier working with small margins and demanding customers, so I take my hat off to all suppliers working in this industry. I believe that we as end users have a duty to support the main dealers and independent workshops, because if we lose them, it would be a sad day for the industry and we'd be in a much worse position.

**SD: How many teams have you got working across the country?**

**AL:** idverde operates 60 depots around the country, from Inverness in the North to the Isle of Wight in the South, employing a core staff of around 2,500 people. The vehicle fleet numbers around 1,100 and around 8,500 pieces of machinery.

**SD: How often are you replacing machinery?**

**AL:** It's a rolling programme. Small pedestrian kit such as power tools, strimmers and mowers, we replace every couple of years, but I tend to look at each item of machinery individually before we replace it, just to make sure we're not just replacing for the sake of it.

On bigger equipment such as ride-on mowers I try to get five or six years out of them. But I have some machines that are closer to 10 years old and are still working hard. I may take them off front-line operations and put them onto reduced hours, but they still do a job.

Tractors I would expect to last over eight years, as I would implements such as aerators and verti-drains, but I don't want to get rid of anything that still might have some life left in it. Machinery is becoming more and more expensive, £25–30,000 for a triple-mower dictates that you need to get more than five years or 4,000–5,000 hours out of it before considering it for a change – but this is becoming increasingly difficult.

**SD: Where do you see the future for the grounds care industry?**

**AL:** I look at all the new electric kit out there now and it's getting better and better and I accept this is where the future lies, as long as it's commercially appropriate. It is after all what our clients are demanding as they appreciate that there are electric alternatives for every task we undertake. As an industry we have to move forward to embrace new power sources and working practices but manage the perception that electric equipment is not as powerful as the two-



A Trimax Pegasus in use in Wiltshire

stroke alternative. So it's important to get all relevant stakeholders to industry events where they can see this new equipment in action and witness what it can do. Then most importantly we need to get that equipment out onto the sites for the operators to try it and hopefully accept it as a viable alternative.

**SD: What about the use of robotics in commercial applications?**

**AL:** I like to think that in the next five years we'll be using more robots. They'd be perfect for the mundane task of grass cutting in situations such as pocket parks, sports grounds, and grass areas within business parks or university campuses, even cutting on a busy roundabout. They would get the job done quietly, efficiently and even during the hours of darkness, allowing people to use the public spaces with relatively little disruption. This then would allow staff to get on with other tasks that are currently difficult to achieve due to time and budget constraints.

I believe we've got to embrace the new technology and make it work as labour costs are increasing. It is becoming more difficult to attract people into our industry. Client budgets are constantly being squeezed and the cost of machinery and the fuel to power them is ever-increasing.

**SD: How would you sum up the dealer-buyer association?**

**AL:** Our industry is built on relationships in which people deal with people. I firmly believe that a strong relationship with the dealer is the key to making everything work. ●

# GLEE PROMISES A 'LIFE ALIVE'

*Organisers aim for a bolder, brighter and more interactive show*

The organisers of this year's Glee exhibition which takes place at Birmingham's NEC 11th-13th September, say they are proud to welcome exhibitors and visitors for a bolder, brighter and more interactive show – which this year is using the tagline 'For A Life Alive'.

Offering over 550 UK and international wholesale garden suppliers, the organisers say that independent retailers who choose to visit will be able to gain valuable advice and guidance to help grow their business through challenging trading conditions. The event will offer the opportunity to find out about the latest trends in the gardening market and to discover new and innovative products.

Spread across eight show sectors Glee says it offers three days of valuable networking, selling and purchasing. While discovering new products, visitors also have the opportunity to meet hundreds of new and current suppliers all under one roof.

With a strong emphasis on home-grown suppliers, Matthew Mein, Event Director at Glee, says that British gardening ideas, designs and products are in high demand, from Europe and the US to Japan.

"No other country leads the way in gardening and garden retailing quite like the British do," Matthew says. "Our heritage and role in the development of gardening's history is something that we are incredibly proud of, and something that other countries respect



and envy in equal measure. Glee is a great place to see UK suppliers in action on home soil."

Despite facing the same economic, demographic and weather challenges that have affected most of northern Europe in recent years, the market is growing, with 8.2% growth forecast year-on-year. Product innovation, industry-wide marketing initiatives and a renewed media profile are all playing a part in this.

Glee will be reflecting this buoyancy with eight show sectors this year. For garden machinery dealers, the sector of most interest will be Garden Care.

## HANDY SHOWS RANGE

*Large display of machinery once again*

Handy Distribution will once again be showcasing its various brands of garden machinery including the Webb and The Handy products.

One of the many Webb mowers on show will be a 17" self-propelled, rear-roller petrol rotary mower. The company describe this lawnmower as both manoeuvrable and lightweight with versatile 3-in-1 functionality. With its mulching ability users can either cut and collect, cut and discharge or cut and mulch.

The chassis of the mower has been

constructed with ABS polymer. This 43cm (17") self-propelled machine has been designed to be used in a small to medium-sized garden and folds easily with its quick release handles into a compact size for easy storage. The collection capability means users can also utilise the machine for collecting the autumn leaves from the lawn.

From The Handy range visitors will be able to see products such as the Electric Long Reach Hedgetrimmer, Electric Chainsaw and Garden Roller.

*Stand: 19C30-F31*



# STIHL RETURNS TO THE SHOW

*After many years away, company will show Compact Cordless System*

After many years away from the Glee exhibition, STIHL GB will return this year to promote its Compact Cordless System family of products.

The company's Head of Marketing, Simon Hewitt, told *Service Dealer*, "Glee is a great opportunity for us to talk to independent garden centres interested in stocking STIHL's growing range of cordless tools.

"As we announced earlier in the year, STIHL's primary route to market is and will continue to be through STIHL dealers. However, we are now looking to expand the availability of our new lithium-ion powered garden tools through carefully selected garden centres that are prepared to offer a quality retail experience for our customers."

The products which make up the Compact Cordless range are the HSA 56 18" Compact cordless hedge trimmer; FSA 56 Compact cordless grass trimmer; BGA 56 Compact cordless blower; and the MSA 120 C-BQ compact cordless chainsaw.

Working on the concept that lithium-ion battery power is just as powerful as petrol, STIHL says the four

very compact machines still retain their full capabilities.

Designed with the everyday gardener in mind these products are suitable for all kinds of users, irrespective of strength or expertise. The batteries are interchangeable throughout the range, with the machines being lighter, smaller, quieter and with reduced vibrations.

**Stand: 19A59**



## BARRUS TO SHOWCASE ELITE CUTTING COLLECTION

*Wilkinson Sword cutting tools to be unveiled*

EP Barrus with its Wilkinson Sword brand will be unveiling a premium range of cutting tools at the show.

The Elite Cutting Collection, launching at the show this year, is a selection of premium garden tools. Described by Barrus as being individually crafted with superior Japanese SK3 steel blades, strong dual cast housing with integrated shock absorption system and lightweight extruded aluminium handles with plush contoured handles, the collection comprises eight tools.

The Elite Bypass Loppers feature plush soft grips, and are also available in a telescopic option (with the handles extending from 67cm to 100cm), as do the Elite Hedge Shears, with the telescopic version featuring a 220mm cutting blade length and handles extending from 80cm to 113cm.

Completing the collection are four pruners. Each of these pruners have a cutting capacity of 22mm, with the same non-stick Japanese SK3 Steel Blades as found on the loppers and shears, with precision-ground leading edges. The strong and light dual forged aluminium bodies make working with them easy and sustainable for longer, with the shock absorption rubber bump stops complementing this.

Each pruner is created with its own benefits, to suit a range of tasks. The Elite Adjustable Bypass Pruner has an adjustable handle opening to suit all hand sizes. The Elite Straight Head Bypass Pruner benefits from a traditional straight head design.

The Elite Angled Head Bypass Pruner is designed in such a way as to provide better accessibility and increased comfort when tackling hard to reach areas. Finally, the Elite Anvil Pruner is suitable for attacking dense, hard and dead wood, with its sap groove reducing the build-up of residue on the cutting blade, keeping it cutting for longer.

**Stand: 19C50-D51**



# GOOD RELATIONS SUSTAIN BRAND LOYALTY

*While Lancs dealership Clarke and Pulman was set up only in 2003, relations between its MD and one of its key customers go back much further, as does the link between that customer and the dealer's core brand. MARTIN RICKATSON discovered more*

**P**rice, specification and residual value may be among the key factors that influence major equipment purchase decisions, but customers often tend to value well-forged relationships between them and their local dealership staff as traits that are just as important.

It's this combination that has resulted in a 75-year association between North-West England-based vegetable producer and distributor Huntapac and Massey Ferguson, believes Ged Clarke, Managing Director at Burscough, Lancs-based agricultural, construction and groundcare machinery supplier Clarke and Pulman. While his business is only 14 years old, the relationships he

has developed with customers over that time, and beforehand as an MF salesman, have helped to grow some fruitful business.

A prime example is Lancs-based fresh produce grower Huntapac, to which Clarke and Pulman recently supplied a fleet of 32 Massey Ferguson tractors comprising six different models from 105-235hp. A long-standing relationship with the firm, to which Ged first supplied tractors some 30 years ago as a salesman for Sharrocks, before establishing Clarke and Pulman in 2003 and securing the Massey Ferguson franchise, shows the value of working to build good customer relationships, he believes.

"We understand the time constraints that Huntapac's

own customers place on getting produce from field to shelves, and that means we commit to servicing and maintaining the whole fleet, no matter where the tractor is in the country, with our technicians regularly attending sites wherever crops are being grown, from Lancashire and Shropshire to Yorkshire and even Scotland."

Initially supplying the local fruit and vegetable markets in Lancashire and Yorkshire, Huntapac has evolved to be one of the largest root producers in the UK. Specialising in growing, packing and distributing a variety of root vegetables, brassicas and salads, the business now grows around 1,800ha of root crops across the UK, from Suffolk up



Clarke and Pulman's Burscough base is now focused on Massey Ferguson, while the Valtra and Fendt brands are supported from its Garstang premises

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# “THE KEY TO GAINING A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE LAY IN PROVIDING OUTSTANDING AFTER-SALES SERVICE”

to the Black Isle in the Scottish Highlands. Headquartered in Preston, Lancashire, Huntapac's 240ha brassica and salad growing operation is still predominantly operated from Lancashire, with root crops grown across the country, harvested and then transported back to Huntapac's main premises to be washed, graded, packed and distributed. Supplying major UK supermarkets, as well as independent retailers, wholesalers and caterers, Huntapac operates its own distribution fleet, consisting

of 60 trucks, 66 refrigerated trailers and 40 bulk trailers.

Today the company uses 32 new Massey Ferguson tractors every year for its farming operation, mainly from the MF 6700 and MF 7700 ranges. The tractors are spread around farms across the UK, with 10 in Shropshire, 11 in Lancashire and a further 11 in Yorkshire. Celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary both of Huntapac and of its relationship with Ferguson/Massey Ferguson were marked with the inclusion in the

delivery of the firm's most recent fleet of tractors of a specially-liveried MF 7726, the largest model ordered. The tractor was delivered to Clarke and Pulman before being sent to Clitheroe-based Grafx to apply the British branding and 75-year graphics on the bonnet and rear mud flaps.

“When we first opened our doors in 2003 at our site in Burscough, we were a small company with some big wheels and even bigger ambitions,” says Ged Clarke.

“We knew customers could go



Huntapac's Jason, Will and Warren Hunter (first, third and fourth from left) with Massey Ferguson's William Judge (second left) and Clarke and Pulman's James Bond and Ged Clarke (first and second right)

and buy tractors and machinery from other dealerships, but believed the key to gaining a competitive advantage and differentiating ourselves from the competition lay in providing an outstanding level of after-sales service. That meant – and still does – that exceeding customers’ expectations drives how we operate. We’re committed to providing fully-trained technicians able to give same-day service with genuine spare parts, and this has gained us over 5,000 regular customers, a figure still growing.

“We also place a lot of emphasis on the experience of our sales and aftersales teams, and continued investment in product training. Most of our staff have been here from the beginning, and were in the industry even before that, while others have been brought through from apprentice level and have learnt on the job from senior technicians. We’re proud of our

ability to retain our staff and we work our utmost to make everyone a valued part of our team.”

Since it was established in 2003 by Ged and his wife Sarah, the

company has expanded rapidly. Within two years, for example, it had launched the UK’s first on-line tractor parts website, quickly attracting customers worldwide.



Huntapac uses 32 new MF 6700 and MF 7700 tractors annually, across farms from Lancashire and Yorkshire to Shropshire

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The Power Behind The Brands



Beyond its core Massey Ferguson franchise, the business is also a dealer for fellow AGCO brands Fendt and Valtra. Additional franchises include JCB, Kverneland and Honda. At both sites are retail and trade stores stocked with brands including Milwaukee power tools and Draper and Sparex products, plus electric fencing, lawnmowers, strimmers, leaf blowers and protective equipment, in addition to boots and clothing from makes such as Hunter and Argyle, and a range of toys.

As well as gaining new contracts with additional manufacturers, part of the company's expansion plans include expanding its territory, and it was with this in mind that the firm acquired a two-acre site some 30 miles to the North, near Garstang, which previously traded as Whittingham Farm Supplies. This coincided with the award of the Valtra franchise, ultimately for both branches, reaching from the West coast to as far as Tebay to the North, Harrogate to the East and the M56 to the South. At the same time, the business's Fendt territory was also increased to now stretch as far as the Yorkshire borders and Morecambe.

Investment in the site in Garstang

has included new structures, frontage and signage, and Ged says the firm also intends to create more jobs in the future as business grows and the demand for more technicians and sales staff increases. The branch is now the Clarke and Pulman dedicated Centre of Excellence for the Valtra and Fendt brands, with its Massey Ferguson business – both sales and service – continuing to operate from its Burscough base, and the sales territory unchanged.

“We regard AGCO's UK

distribution strategy as being very important to our business, as this will help to generate further market share,” says Ged Clarke.

“We've always asked ourselves: ‘Why would a potential customer choose us?’ I think the answer is simple, in that we aim to always go above and beyond to ensure complete customer satisfaction, both with their purchase and with the service provided. That's the best way to ensure customers will use us again and recommend us to others. ●



Huntapac has been a Massey Ferguson user for 75 years, a fact commemorated in delivery of one of its latest tractors



Ged's son Tom Clarke hands over the keys for a new Massey Ferguson 7724 Dyna-VT to a customer

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# LISTENING TO OUR CUSTOMERS' NEEDS

*Richard Jones, Sales Director of Oakley's Groundscare in Shropshire, talks to Laurence Gale*

**O**akley's is a Shropshire-based, family-owned business, established in 1921 initially to distribute farm machinery. Today, Oakley's is increasingly focused on providing the highest level of aftersales service and support to its customers. Whether it's garden machinery, professional grounds care products or specialist golf equipment, Oakley's customers rightly expect the best from their machines with minimum downtime.

The company's premises at The Leasowes Business Park, Cound, near Shrewsbury, include comprehensive servicing and parts facilities as well as a grassed area where staff are able to demonstrate to customers how a new or used machine performs.

The company is owned by the Bland family with the current Chairman, Robert Bland, having joined the family firm in 1972, taking over the MD's role from his father, Jack, when he was 26 at the end of the decade.

Today, Robert still gets involved with the business, but tends to leave the day-to-day running to Ray George, the current Managing Director, who joined the business 12 years ago, along with Sales Director

Richard Jones, who has been with Oakley's since 2001.

A recent visit to Oakley's enabled *Service Dealer* to meet up with Richard Jones to see how the company continues to meet the ever-demanding challenges from both the manufacturers and customers they serve.

**Service Dealer:** Which machinery ranges and customer sectors do you specialise in?

**Richard Jones:** Since 2000 the company has focused its business interests on providing top-class grounds care equipment for the professional end users based across the Midlands. As well as this, we sell and hire lawnmowers and specialist garden machinery to the homeowner and semi-professional user.

Over the years the company has developed excellent relationships with several local authorities and we now supply councils in Shropshire, Staffordshire, the West Midlands, Cheshire and Powys.

We also spend a lot of time supporting local schools and sports clubs with their complex machinery needs.



Oakley's Sales Director, Richard Jones, at the company's premises in Cound, near Shrewsbury

We have a specialist golf machinery section fronted by Kenny Macnab, who joined Oakley's to concentrate specifically on selling Toro to the golf market using his contacts and the experience he gained in his previous role as a head greenkeeper.

**SD: Which brands do you deal with?**

**RJ:** It's amazing how technology has advanced since I've been in the business. Keeping abreast of it and indeed trying to stay ahead of the curve, has been hugely important for us as a business.

I would say that alongside this, an important element to our success are the relationships we have with key franchises. We enjoy a close association with excellent brands such as Toro, Kubota, Stihl, Trimax, Scag, Club Car, Stiga, Mountfield and Hayter. For us, they are all tried, tested and trusted brands with which our customers are both comfortable and identify positively with.

They are also brands upon which we can count when we need that extra support.

**SD: What do you see as your company's strengths?**

**RJ:** Being a family business has helped us recognise the benefit of building good relationships – we understand the value of listening to our customers' needs. Above all though, employing a dedicated experienced workforce is so important to us.

There are 24 workers at our Cound premises, most of whom are involved in the aftersales service side of the company. If you look around our site you will see there's a lot more to the Oakley's set-up than just retail sales. Our workshop sees machinery large and small serviced by our factory-trained technicians, under the direction of our recently appointed Service Manager Paul Rawlings.

Like most dealerships, we also have to ensure that we can offer a well-stocked spares department, which provides a 24–48-hour delivery service to our customers.

As a company, we also run a machinery hire service which is popular with many of our customers. One of the company's catchphrases is "try before you buy".

And while we use our experience and expertise to tailor machinery to clients' needs, no equipment is completely indestructible, hence we pride ourselves on our ability to provide an aftersales service that is second to none.

**SD: Do you offer any other services?**

**RJ:** We also have a golf buggy division, selling and hiring Club Car vehicles throughout the North-West and the Midlands. We have a fleet of around 150



buggies which are hired out to golf courses, county shows, leisure facilities and the like across Shropshire and the wider regions. In the past 12 months we've also diversified into selling refuse sweepers.

We really are a constantly evolving business, which is, of course, how it has to be in order to remain competitive.

**SD: What technological changes to the machinery you sell have you seen make an impact on Oakley's business?**

**RJ:** Without doubt the continuing improvement to the cutting quality and performance of both cylinder and rotary mowers. However, we have also seen a remarkable swing to the use of rotary and flail cutting mowers, especially in the local authority markets.

Grass-cutting regimes have changed dramatically in recent years, switching from say 30-plus cuts a season, down to a 6–10-cut mowing regime. This is mainly due to the austerity measures being placed on councils. Our customers are finding that rotary and flail mowers are better suited to coping with these longer grass cutting needs. Also, the running and maintenance costs of rotaries are considerably lower than cylinder mowers.

As well as this we have seen tremendous changes in the build quality of machinery, with legislation driving many health and safety features to be added to protect and safeguard the operator. These have come in many guises, such as anti-rollover bars, comfort cabs, anti-vibration and noise protection systems, and dead man's handles all being fitted as standard.

However, I'd say the biggest change we have seen has come with the new breed of hybrid mowers. These offer our customers a more efficient cutting performance, lower noise levels, improved fuel economy and the removal of many potential sources of hydraulic leaks.

**SD: Are you seeing the advancement of battery powered products affect your trading?**



A total of 24 staff work at the Count premises

**RJ:** It has given us a new range of products to promote and sell. We have always embraced new technologies and we are keen to educate our customers in buying the appropriate machinery to serve their needs and budgets. We've seen plenty of interest in hand-held battery-powered equipment, particularly on products such as leaf blowers, strimmers and hedge cutters.

I believe this new-found popularity has been driven by better battery life performance, which now tends to exceed 40-60 minutes, as well as the reduced noise and vibrations – plus customers like to feel they're doing their bit to reduce pollution levels.

**SD: What trends are you seeing in your sales currently?**

**RJ:** Small domestic and semi-pro products are popular at the moment. The recent upsurge in gardening programmes and the wealth of horticultural shows on offer has stimulated an interest in gardening again. In recent years, we've seen many manufacturers tailoring

and enhancing their product lines to meet these demands, hence we now offer a larger range of these products than ever before. Lightweight, well designed hand tools such as strimmers, blowers, vacs, hedge trimmers and small domestic mowers are regular sellers.

Customers are ever more demanding, so we need to listen to our customers. To this end we now have a dedicated sales team on the road, who are able to spend time with our customers and give them the correct advice on which product is best suited for their needs and budgets – and if appropriate will arrange a demonstration of the machinery.

These demonstrations, although expensive to undertake, are an important part of our sales strategy, especially when selling the larger, professional machines to our clients. To help push our professional grounds care sales, we recently appointed Kenny McNab, an experienced greenkeeper, who now looks after many of our professional customers and local authority clients.

**SD: Is it a struggle to remain competitive in the current retail landscape?**

**RJ:** Customers definitely seem to drive a harder bargain these days. We therefore feel under pressure to offer keener prices which is, of course, not easy with so much competition, especially from online sales outlets, many of whom do not offer an effective aftersales service and spare parts department.

We have also noticed a slight reduction in domestic customers' willingness to use our service and repairs department in recent years. There appears to be a reluctance among some in that sector to pay for regular servicing. The problem is that they tend to turn a blind eye to its importance and simply expect the machinery to cope.

However, they soon find out this policy is short-



Kubota equipment

# CUSTOMERS ARE EVER MORE DEMANDING, SO WE NEED TO LISTEN TO OUR CUSTOMERS

sighted when they begin to get major repair bills after the machinery breaks down as a consequence of this lack of servicing. We tend to hear from them then, once the horse has bolted!

**SD:** Looking ahead, how do you see the role of the dealership evolving in the future?

**RJ:** With the ongoing complexity, innovation, evolving trends and needs of the industry, dealerships have to rise to the challenges of an ever-demanding customer. With profit margins continually decreasing, we have to work smarter, making better use of IT solutions and marketing strategies. We also need to take time in educating customers to make the right choice when

buying new products.

Alongside this we need to offer viable financial packages and deals that give the customer the ability to secure the machinery they require – backed up with a reliable aftersales and parts service. Reviewing the way we carry out demonstrations and communicate with our customers is also important.

Having an informative and up-to-date website is a key tool in helping to serve our customers. This allows us to draw in new customers and retain current ones through good communication and information sharing. It's also a vital means of keeping in touch with our longstanding, loyal customers.

**SD:** Thank you.

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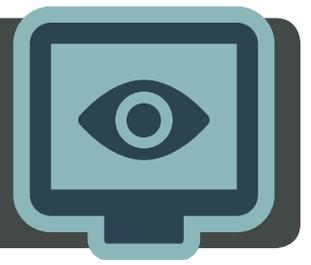
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# BUSINESS MONITOR



## BUSINESS CONFIDENCE STRONG AMONG DEALERS

*A year on from Brexit decision and following election result, not much has changed*

We ran our latest *Dealer Survey* just over a month after the general election left the country with a hung parliament and as the UK began its Brexit negotiations in earnest.

According to national surveys around this time confidence among small business owners had taken something of a hit. Uncertainty in the country's future was proving troublesome for SMEs, it was reported.

So it was interesting and very encouraging to discover from dealer respondents to our survey that a massive 88% described themselves as either Confident or Very Confident for their business's future. This is up on this time last year when 57% answered in a similarly positive fashion.

While the majority of dealers who responded had once again this year stayed with the same number of franchises held during the past 12 months (76%), a healthy number said they had actually expanded their offering (24%) – with no one saying they had reduced.

There were no firm indications that further expansions

or decreasing of brands were on the cards this coming year.

Once again, by far the most popular reason for choosing which brand to stock was cited as 'reliability of product' – with this year the level of respondents placing this as their number-one factor, increasing from 36% in 2016 to 71% in 2017.

Similar to last year, while most were not in a position to consider expanding their current premises (53%), there were a few out there (12%) who have plans in place to develop their retail space. What didn't crop up last year, but unfortunately did this time around, is that a very small minority (6%) are considering actually downsizing their premises.

In terms of gaining new customers, 'word of mouth' once again trumps all other methods (65%), but interestingly, alongside own websites and social media channels, it was significant to notice a return to some dealers who responded favouring traditional print media advertising (12%).

**Have you changed the number of franchises you hold during the past 12 months?**

**Increased** 24%

**Stayed the same** 76%

**Do you plan to change the number of franchises you hold over the coming 12 months?**

**Stay the same** 65%

**Not Sure** 35%

**Are you considering changing your business premises over the next 12 months**

**Yes, developing current premises** 12%

**Yes, moving to larger** 6%

**Yes, downsizing** 6%

**Not sure yet** 23%

**No** 53%

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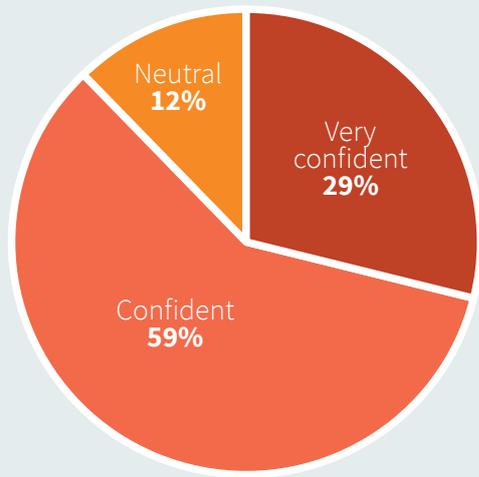
*No more messing about. Fitted in about 3 minutes to my trimmer, it now only takes me about 15 seconds to fit a new reel of line to the head. And the line is thicker, makes cutting easier and lasts much longer than the old line I used before.*

*Customer Review*

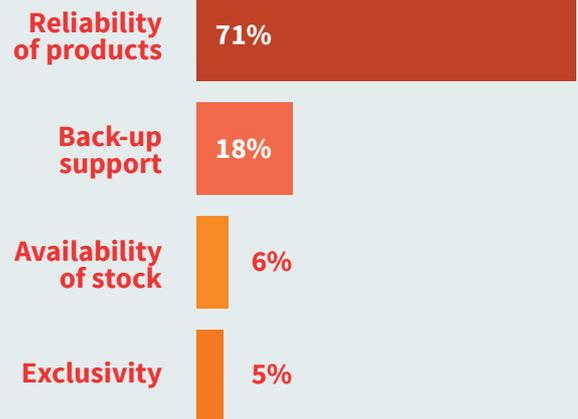
**GET GATOR® SPEEDLOAD™.  
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[OregonProducts.co.uk/GSL](http://OregonProducts.co.uk/GSL)

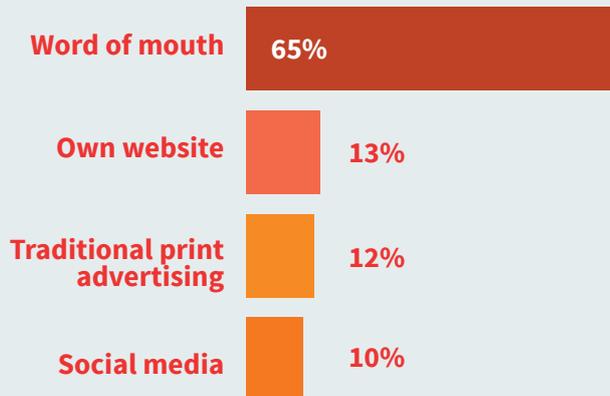
It's been over a year now since the Brexit decision was taken, how confident are you for your business's prospects as we enter this period of negotiation with the EU?



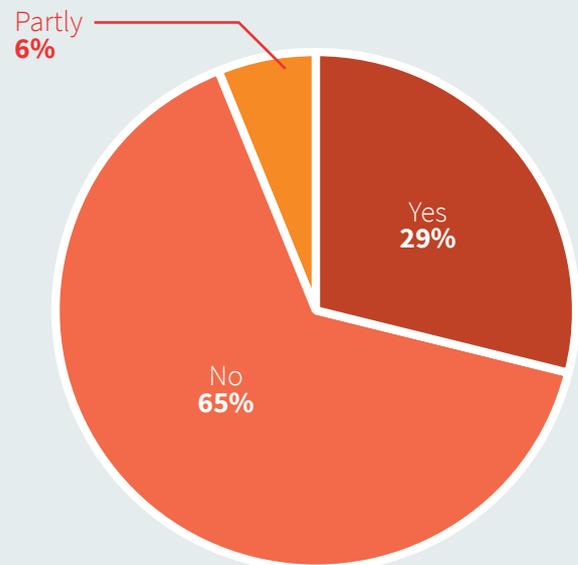
Which factor most influences your choice of franchise to stock?



What method do you consider the most effective for gaining new customers?



Has your level of business confidence changed during the past 12 months?



## YOUR SAY

**WE ASKED YOU OVER 12 MONTHS ON SINCE THE DECISION TO LEAVE THE EU WAS TAKEN, AND POST 2017'S GENERAL ELECTION, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS'S PROSPECTS?**

- We are small enough and rural enough for politics not to have much effect on our customer base. But I do wish they would actually get Brexit sorted so we all know where we stand – for better or worse, at least the uncertainty will be gone.
- Very good. Best year this past 12 months by far in 11 years of trading.

- We are preparing for a huge downturn in profit as Brexit may affect our economy in the next couple of years – so hatches are being prepared just in case they need to be battened down.
- There seems to be more money about combined with us having had some fantastic weather, with plenty of rain when needed.
- We feel our prospects are okay for the next year – but we aren't getting over excited!
- We do not expect to see any change for our business during this next year.

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# ARB SHOW 2017 SMASHES RECORDS

*The move inside the gates of Westonbirt Arboretum makes it the most successful event in the trade show's 19-year history*

A new and improved showground for this year's Arb Show, inside the gates of Westonbirt Arboretum, enabled more space for exhibitors with more large kit stands on display than ever before.

In total a diverse range of 109 organisations presented their wares, from wood chippers and climbing kit to tree surveying equipment.

Over 5,000 people attended during the two days. Dedicated arborists arrived in scores with organisers The Arboricultural Association reporting the tills of many kit suppliers in attendance were constantly busy, with some having to travel back to their headquarters on Friday evening to replenish stock for the second day.

As main sponsor of the show, the STIHL stand was buzzing with the sound of professionals demonstrating top-handled chainsaws, with hands-on testing and displays. The winner of the

prize draw for a brand new £800 STIHL arborist saw, Michael Brown from Romsey, was thrilled to be picked from over 1,000 entries.

BBC cameras were on site capturing the STIHL demonstration of speed chainsaw carving skills with Simon O' Rourke, as well as some of the incredible times set during the Knot Tying Competition – won by Matthew Graham for the second-year running who tied five arborist knots in a time of 17.09 seconds.

Taking centre stage at the heart of the showground, and showcasing just some of the many technical skills involved in being a professional arborist, was the 3ATC Tree Climbing Competition, sponsored by arbjobs.com. Nearly 50 climbers took part across three skill categories in a hard-fought competition, which drew in the crowds and had many in awe of their daring efforts high in the canopy of Westonbirt's magnificent



cedars.

The sun came out on Saturday and with it, families, arboretum members and members of the public showing a keen interest in trees and professional tree work. ARB Show regulars and industry professionals were spoilt for choice between an array of workshops, tree climbers' forums and the stunning landscape and remarkable trees within the arboretum itself.

The organisers say they are already looking at ways to build on the success of the new showground inside the arboretum and look forward to seeing visitors in 2018.

## GRIZZY'S LION ROARS

*Battery powered lightweight chainsaw*

Grizzly's brand new multi-tool battery system includes the AKS 4035 Lion chainsaw.

The company says that doing away with electric cables and ditching petrol to keep carbon emissions low, the one battery fits all the 40v range, extended to include an ultra-lightweight chainsaw, without compromising on quality or performance.

Grizzly



believes that a chainsaw option in its cordless range, to tackle serious outdoor maintenance without the worry of fumes, is an important choice.

Shnayde Murphy, Marketing and Communications Executive, said, "Reliability concerns are quashed by the interchangeable nature of the batteries, giving gardeners the option to simultaneously use one and charge one, and never run out of power."

The unit is powered by a 40v lithium-ion battery that charges to full power in around 60 minutes and allows for one hour of constant use.

Grizzly Tools are TUV tested and come with a three-year warranty as standard, including batteries and chargers.

# VERSATILE CHOICE FOR PROFESSIONALS

## STIHL's MS 261 C-M

STIHL say their MS 261 C-M is suitable for felling small to medium sized trees, as well as snedding. The professional chainsaw is light and well balanced and can be used with a range of bar lengths depending on the application, making it a versatile choice.

The chainsaw boasts a number of innovative features including STIHL's M-Tronic engine management system that offers users fast acceleration, easy starting and optimum power when needed most. The fuel supply is electronically controlled and the machine automatically adapts to operating in ambient conditions, ensuring optimal engine performance. All this information is stored in the system and allows operators to restart quickly after extended breaks.

### Other features include:

#### 2-MIX technology

This system increases performance whilst significantly reducing fuel consumption.

#### Controlled delivery oil pump

Allows for precise delivery of chain oil based on the demand of the application. The volume of oil can be easily increased if the saw is being used with longer bar or on very dry wood.

#### HD2 filter

This is made from polyethylene filter material that offers up to 70% finer pores than fleece and polyamide filters, helping to trap very fine dust. Maintenance of the filter is kept simple due to its oil and water-repellent qualities.

#### Anti-vibration

STIHL has developed an effective anti-vibration system that dampens the oscillations of the machines engine, significantly reducing the vibrations at the handles.

#### Captive nuts

The MS 261 C-M is the first STIHL chainsaw to be equipped with the captive nuts, ensuring the operator will not risk losing the nuts on the sprocket when changing the cutting attachment.

#### STIHL ElastoStart

This reduces the shock caused by the compression of the engine during starting. The compression shock is taken away from the user's joints and muscles through a spring or rubber element in the starter handle.



## GREENMECH OFFERS PETROL ALTERNATIVE

*Shown for the first time at the Arb Show, the Arborist 150p*

In response to impending changes to emissions legislation, GreenMech has launched the Arborist 150p, a new addition to its Arborist range of woodchippers.

Shown for the first time at the Arb Show this year, the company says the Arborist 150p offers a cost-effective alternative to diesel-powered chippers.

From 2019, Stage V Standards of the European Emission legislation come into effect, which will require all new diesel engines over 19kW (26hp) to include Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF) technology. Because of this, GreenMech believes it is likely that the cost of diesel-powered units will increase.

However, says the company, the new Arborist 150p is fitted with a 37hp Briggs & Stratton petrol engine which can offer almost the same performance as the higher horse-powered diesel engine of the Arborist 150, but at a much reduced cost.

Sales Director Martin Lucas said, "It's important for us to be continually looking ahead at issues which will affect the industry, and as a consequence our products. The launch of the Arborist 150p has come after many years of research, development and testing. It was vital that we could offer a petrol alternative that did not sacrifice on output or performance.

"For customers for whom diesel remains their preferred choice, we will continue to produce the Arborist 150 fitted with a 26hp diesel engine which, as it stands, meets the new legislation requirements."

The Arborist 150 has a 970 x 790mm in-feed chute to accommodate a 150mm chipping capacity. The 150mm x 230mm letterbox-style in-feed throat opening can deal with heavily forked branches and as standard comes fitted with GreenMech's patented Disc-Blade system, giving up to 150 hours of chipping before requiring re-sharpening.

Designed particularly for the disposal of waste brush, GreenMech boasts that the Arborist 150 is the top-selling chipper in its class in Europe.



## NEW ECHO WELL RECEIVED

*Finding success with professional arborists*



Echo says its top handle chainsaw, the CS-2511TES, has been very well received and is finding success among professional arborists, since its launch earlier this year.

Weighing 2.3kg (dry weight without bar and chain) it is ECHO's lightest and most compact saw to date, which the company claims makes it highly manoeuvrable and easy to use for long periods with little fatigue.

## OREGON GUIDES THE WAY

*Full line of light-weight professional guide bars now available*



Oregon has been producing outdoor and forestry products for over 70 years.

Continuing with this tradition, the company has announced that the full line of Light-Weight Professional Guide Bars, featuring their exclusive aluminium core technology, are now available. The Light-Weight Professional Guide Bars include the following three product families

- SpeedCut
- ControlCut
- VersaCut

All three families of guide bars feature a number of newly designed features – including more durable rails, longer nose life, stiffer bar body, and 20% lighter weight compared to Oregon's Pro-Lite Guide Bars. And less weight means less fatigue for professional woodcutters.

# NEW PROFESSIONAL SAWS FROM HUSQVARNA

## *The 562 XP and XP G models*

Husqvarna says its latest models – the 562 XP and 562 XP G are designed with the professional users in mind.

The 562 XP petrol chainsaw is developed for professional use in arboriculture and forestry. This 60cc chainsaw has a high power to weight ratio and shares the same design and performance figures as the 560 XP.

Husqvarna says the proven design includes a lightened flywheel and angled cylinder, reducing gyroscopic forces, improving manoeuvrability and increasing productivity.

The company claims the X-Torq engine is more environmentally friendly and provides more power when users need it, utilising up to 20% less fuel, while producing 75% less exhaust emission than other professional chainsaws without this technology.

RevBoost provides an instant high chain speed for extra efficient de-limbing in tough conditions.

The 562 XP and 562 XP G professional chainsaws are supplied as standard with 3/8" H42 chain and an 18" bar. The main differences between the 560 XP and the new 562 XP is the addition of a 3/8" large bar mount, a larger capacity air filter and high top engine cover.

The large bar mount allows the use of bars that are found on larger Husqvarna models (365 to 395 XP) standardising the bar

and chain type for most operators where 60cc is their smallest ground saw. The 562 XP also gives arborists the ability to use a compact high power to weight ratio chainsaw with the capabilities to fit larger bars, ideal when working up in the tree.

Also available is the 562 XP G, a model which features the same technology with the added benefit of heated handles to increase comfort in cold and damp conditions.

The new models will be available from 1st September 2017.



562 XP 18" – £870.00 RRP inc VAT  
562 XP G 18" – £920.00 RRP inc VAT

# JOHN DEERE AWARDS APPRENTICES OF THE YEAR

*Three singled out for honours out of 33 graduates*

A total of 33 young service technicians have graduated from the latest John Deere Ag Tech, Parts Tech and Turf Tech advanced apprenticeship programmes, run in partnership with national training provider ProVQ.

Three of the company's apprentices won overall awards for the 2016 graduation year. Jack Robbins of dealer Ben Burgess, Norwich, was named Ag Tech Apprentice of the Year, for which he received a crystal plaque, a certificate and vouchers for workshop tools worth £250.

Lewis Parker of Mona Tractors, Llangefni, was awarded Turf Tech Apprentice of the Year and Grant Roberts of Cornwall Farm Machinery, Penzance, won Parts Tech Apprentice of the Year. Both also received a crystal plaque and certificate, and the same value workshop tools and shopping vouchers respectively.

The presentations were made by Deere and Company's Region 2 Training Delivery Manager Dr Lutz Schueppenhauer and John Deere Limited Training Centre Manager Richard Halsall at the John Deere Forum visitor centre in Mannheim, Germany. They took place during the apprentices' annual graduation visit to the company's tractor and cab factories and European Parts Distribution Centre (EPDC).

John Deere's three-year Ag Tech and Turf Tech and two-year Parts Tech apprenticeships lead to IMI Level 2 & 3 Diplomas in Landbased Engineering, and registration at LTA2 level in the industry's Landbased Technician Accreditation scheme. In subsequent years qualified technicians undergo further education and adult training within the John Deere University programme, on a career path that can ultimately lead to the highest possible LTA4 Master Technician accreditation.

Now in its 25th year, Ag Tech was the first such scheme to be introduced in the UK and won a National Training Award at the end of 1997, the only one ever made to an agricultural machinery apprenticeship programme. Since the first programme started in 1992, nearly 700 apprentices have graduated through the three main John Deere schemes (Ag Tech, Parts Tech and Turf Tech) and are now working in the company's nationwide dealer network.



John Deere Parts Tech Apprentice of the Year Grant Roberts of Cornwall Farm Machinery (centre) with Division Sales Manager Joedy Ibbotson and Area Aftermarket Manager Monika Stypa



John Deere Ag Tech Apprentice of the Year 2016 Jack Robbins of Ben Burgess with John Deere Training Centre Manager Richard Halsall



John Deere Turf Tech Apprentice of the Year Lewis Parker of Mona Tractors with Richard Halsall

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**KOHLER**  
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**YANMAR**

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**PEERLESS**  
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**Simplicity**

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# GIE-EXPO TO OFFER CUSTOMISABLE TRAINING FOR DEALERS

*Free Boot Camp by national dealership expert Bob Clements at Louisville show*

Organisers say that dealers looking for ways to improve efficiency and profitability will find new, customisable learning opportunities at the 2017 GIE+EXPO (Green Industry & Equipment Expo), which takes place from 18th-20th October at the Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville, USA.

Many of the sessions are free to dealers with the \$15 tradeshow admission.



Bob Clements speaking at GIE-EXPO

## Wednesday is Dealer Day

The 2017 Dealer Day education will include:

- **The first-ever People, Process, Profit: Dealer Boot Camp led by Bob Clements and his team;**
- **UTV University with proven powersports dealer training specialists;**
- **Technician training on advanced and basic tracks;**
- **A kick-off keynote featuring noted economist Alan Beaulieu;**
- **Two sessions in a new series of 30-minute dealer workshops led by industry experts. These sessions will continue Thursday and Friday;**
- **LatinoLink Dealer Day Breakfast.**

The programmes will run concurrently throughout the day and dealers will be able to customise their learning by choosing sessions from each track. Or, dealers who bring their team can split up and take in all sessions. The Dealer Resource Center will be open from 9:00am to 7:00pm on Wednesday and 9:00am to 5:00pm on Thursday and Friday.

Following the Dealer Day educational programming, dealer, retailers, distributors and media will have an exclusive preview of the indoor exhibits from 3:00pm to 7:00pm. During a welcome reception on the show floor, from 5:00pm to 7:00pm, many of the exhibitors will host games, food, festivities and prizes in their booths.

## Thursday and Friday's dealer education schedule

- **Eight additional 30-minute dealer workshops;**
- **A Power-Up Morning session with Bob Clements each day before the show floor opens;**
- **On Thursday and Friday, the tradeshow and the adjacent 20+ acre Outdoor Demonstration Area will be open to all in the industry.**

## People, Process, Profit: Dealer Boot Camp

Bob Clements has developed a reputation as the dealership guru. He has given countless dealers the tools they needed to achieve personal and financial freedom.

For a full breakdown of all the sessions available visit [tinyurl.com/yb76o59y](http://tinyurl.com/yb76o59y)

GIE+EXPO's 2017 dates are Wednesday, 18th October, Dealer Day and 19th-20th October for all industry participants.

For information and online registration for the tradeshow visit [www.gie-expo.com](http://www.gie-expo.com).

# HUSQVARNA COMPLETES BATTERY TRAINING TOUR

## *Series of events held around the country*

Husqvarna concluded its Battery Tour initiative earlier this year.

The company organised and hosted a series of training events to “enlighten, energise and enthuse” dealers on the key features and benefits of its Battery Series.

As part of the tour, Husqvarna purpose built and customised a battery trailer in order to demonstrate products and host training sessions. A number of key dealers and their staff received training in each territory and a total of 83 dealerships were visited.

Following the dealer ‘roadshow’, the Husqvarna Professional team also conducted their own two-week tour which culminated in their presence at the Turf Maintenance Live event for two days, accompanied by the Battery Series trailer.

Each dealership on the tour received a presentation by an Area Business Manager on the Battery Series and the training ended with enough time for practical hands-on usage, encompassing guidance and best practice. The company says this offered dealers the opportunity to become accustomed with key product features and benefits, and allowed them to gain insight

into the quality and performance of the Battery Series in comparison to petrol equipment.

UK Field Sales Manager, Mike Hind said, “The tour was a huge success, providing the dealers with invaluable training and knowledge which can be passed on to the end user at the point of sale. We are committed to continued investment in providing training and support to our dealer network, to improve the overall service and customer journey of Husqvarna.

“Training programmes like this one are a great way to interact with dealers and to get them excited about new products.”



The purpose-built trailer hosted demos and training

## TRAINING ON THE WILD SIDE FOR POLARIS DEALERS

### *Ride and Drive Days events held*

Derbyshire Quad’s Wild Park Leisure near Ashbourne was the venue for this year’s Polaris Ride and Drive Days.

Forty Polaris dealers gathered over two days in May for dealer training, product focus and the opportunity to get familiar with new Polaris Rangers and Sportsman ATVs. Unusually, Polaris had also arranged for competitive machines to be available for comparison testing.

The trekking centre offered the ideal venue for putting all the machines through their paces, with over 200 acres of land to play with, including mature woodlands, swamps, brooks, open fields and challenging

terrain. This was perfect for testing all units and the Polaris line-up comprised the new Ranger Diesel 1000 HD, Ranger XP900 and Ranger 570, with the Sportsman range represented by a Sportsman 570 and 570 EPS.

There was strong focus on the new Ranger Diesel 1000 HD 2017 model, with the facility to try

the Active Descent Control for controlled hill descents.

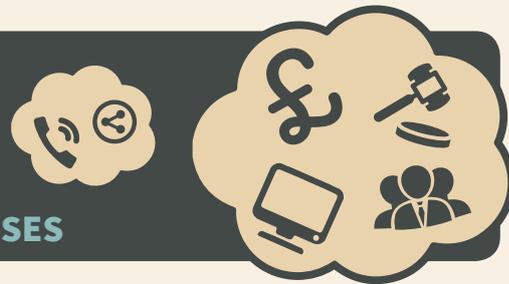
The Ride and Drive Days also provided good opportunities for the dealers to familiarise themselves with the latest Lock & Ride Pro-fit cab options and the many accessories available for both the Rangers and Sportsman models. ●



# SME DIGEST

ADVICE FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES

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## CONTRACTS

# NO SUPPLY

**W**hen you make a contract to supply a product, say a lawn mower, you expect smooth and plain sailing, writes *SME Digest* editor Adam Bernstein. However, serious problems can occur when the suppliers go bust.

Eve England, Principal Associate in the commercial department of Eversheds Sutherland, says that where a contract has been formed with a customer, the retailer will be obligated to deliver the goods ordered, unless there is a specific provision within the relevant contract that allows them to terminate the arrangement if that item becomes unavailable. “The fact that the ‘supply chain’ has resulted in the retailer being unable to source the relevant item will not usually provide a right for the retailer to end the contract.”

Where an alternative source cannot be found, a retailer may look to rely on termination provisions included in their terms and conditions to ‘get out’ of the contract, however, in standard terms and conditions of sale, this is rare. England points out that any such termination rights will be subject to an assessment of fairness under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA).

In any event, she says that where a retailer is unable to meet its obligations under the contract, “the consumer will be entitled to terminate the contract. They will also be entitled to statutory remedies as well as being entitled to bring a claim for damages against the retailer.”

Could a *force majeure* (unforeseeable circumstance) term apply which allows a retailer to terminate? England thinks it unlikely and even if it did, it would have to be fair.

England points out one serious risk to retailers: “If the undelivered goods form what is known as a ‘commercial unit’ – say matching branded mower and grass box – the customer cannot reject or cancel some of the items without rejecting or cancelling all of them.”

If the replacements are inferior to what was ordered, unless agreed, the customer will have a claim against the retailer for the item either not meeting the relevant description, or the item failing to comply with the statutory guarantee of being of suitable quality. (Where the retailer substitutes the product knowingly, it may face criminal sanctions under the Consumer Protection Regulations 2008.)

The natural question to ask is: can a retailer increase prices to cover any extra costs? Here, England says, a term which has the object or effect of permitting a trader to increase the price of goods without giving the consumer the right to cancel the contract is very likely to be considered unfair (and therefore unenforceable) – “it could even be a criminal act”.

For further info see <https://tinyurl.com/p68duvw> and <https://tinyurl.com/5rwnzjk>



Edited by Adam Bernstein



# WHAT YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ILLEGAL WORKERS

As we approach Brexit, employers now more than ever before need to ensure their employees have the right to work in their business, says Chloe Themistocleous, an associate at law firm Eversheds Sutherland.

In 2016, both the offences and penalties relating to the employment of illegal workers broadened significantly, meaning mistakes can be extremely costly.

It is unlawful to employ someone who does not have the right to live and work in the UK or to employ a person who is working in breach of any conditions imposed upon them by the Home Office. Employers have an obligation to prevent illegal working. To comply, employers must carry out right to work checks on all prospective employees before their employment begins; conduct follow-up checks on employees who have a time-limited permission to live and work in the UK; keep records of all the checks carried out; and not employ anyone they know or have reasonable cause to believe is an illegal worker.

Employers need to follow a three-stage check.

The first step involves obtaining the employee's original documents proving their right to live and work

in the UK. Next, those documents that relate to the individual in question should be checked to see if they are original, unaltered and are valid. Finally, they should be copied and kept securely with a record of the date of the check and a date for any follow-up check that may be required.

Different documents must be used for employees that have a permanent right to work in comparison to those who have a time-limited right to work. A full list can be found in the Home Office's Employer's guide to acceptable right to work documents at <http://bit.ly/1lbaGUx>.

If employers breach their obligations they may now be liable for a civil penalty and they could also be found to have committed a criminal offence.

The Chief Immigration Officer also now has the power to issue an illegal working closure notice, to effectively close a business premises for up to 48 hours while they apply for an Illegal Compliance Order if the employer has either been convicted of employing an illegal worker, has been required to pay a civil penalty within the last three years, or at any time if a civil

penalty remains unpaid.

An illegal compliance order may be issued for up to 12 months and can include conditions prohibiting or restricting access of people to the premises, requiring a specified person to carry out right to work checks, and to produce documents following such checks in order to prevent illegal working.

With high fines, potential for criminal convictions, and negative publicity, employing illegal workers or not undertaking proper checks is unlikely to be a risk many businesses want to take.



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# A NEW DEBT COLLECTION PROCESS

Any business collecting debts from an individual will, from 1st October, need to follow a new set of rules called the Pre-Action Protocol for Debt Claims, say *Paul Taylor and Sarah Carlton*, a Partner and Associate at Fox Williams LLP

The changes have been brought in because of the large numbers of debt claims in the courts. The protocol only applies to businesses (including sole traders and public bodies) claiming payment of a debt from an individual including sole traders. It does not apply to debts owed by a business to another business (except that of sole traders) and nor will it apply to claims issued by HMRC.

Currently, the position for debt claims is that a business creditor will issue a Letter Before Claim to a debtor in order to give them a chance for the matter to be settled before court proceedings. The new protocol

seeks to formalise the process even before a letter is issued.

The new process requires that

a standardised Letter Before Claim be sent to a debtor with the inclusion of particular information.

From the Letter Before Claim being sent (by post) to the debtor, the debtor will have 30 days to respond. If the debtor fails to pay the claimed debt, another letter must be issued from the creditor giving a further 14 days for the debtor to respond before starting court proceedings.

Their response may request more information or state that they're seeking legal advice. Either way, the creditor will need to allow more time before proceeding – up to 30 days.

If the parties cannot agree or resolve the debt repayment, both parties should take appropriate steps to resolve the dispute without starting court proceedings, and should consider other forms of Alternative Dispute Resolution, for example a without prejudice meeting or mediation.

Clearly the protocol allows what may seem generous time allowances at each stage. Time will tell, whether individuals will use the new rules to frustrate collection actions and if the front-loading of costs onto the creditor pre-hearing may prevent creditors from pursuing all of their debt actions. Failure to comply with the new protocol will result in case management directions and possibly cost sanctions.



## SME NEWS

### Product recalls

Product safety recall information noted by 'watchdogs' and manufacturers is publically available together with guidance on how to check latest recalls, register a device or appliance, and who consumers should contact for more information on product safety.

In essence, if there is a problem with the safety of a product, its manufacturer is responsible for making arrangements for its repair and replacement or refund. This includes contacting the people who have purchased it where possible and publishing a notice drawing attention to the risk the product poses and what the manufacturer is doing to remedy the issue.

[tinyurl.com/yb7pq8rn](https://tinyurl.com/yb7pq8rn)

### Warning to SMEs as firm hit by cyber attack fined £60,000

Small and medium sized businesses are being warned to take note as a company which suffered a cyber attack has been fined £60,000 by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

An investigation by the ICO found Berkshire-based Boomerang Video Ltd failed to take basic steps to stop its website being attacked.

The video game rental firm's website was subject to a cyber attack in 2014 in which 26,331 customer details could be accessed.

The attacker used a common technique known as SQL injection to access the data.

The ICO's investigation found:

- Boomerang Video failed to carry out regular penetration testing on its website that should have detected errors.
- The firm failed to ensure the password for the account on the Wordpress section of its website was sufficiently complex.
- Boomerang Video had some information stored unencrypted and that which was encrypted could be accessed because it failed to keep the decryption key secure.
- Encrypted cardholder details and CVV numbers were held on the web server for longer than necessary.

<https://ico.org.uk>

*Please take proper advice before acting on anything written here.*

# Get Prepared for Autumn

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## COMMERCIAL/DOMESTIC

# TORO'S NEW TIMECUTTERS OFFER INCREASED COMFORT

## *Commercial-grade zero-turn mowers*

Toro has announced the launch of a new line of fast, comfortable and efficient commercial-grade zero-turn mowers: the TimeCutter HD.

The new range of mowers offer a number of features focused on utility and comfort, integrating several ergonomic features.

Within the range is a choice of models featuring Toro's new MyRIDE suspension system, which helps to isolate the operator from the frame, ensuring a smoother drive. The user-adjustable suspension system allows drivers to select the comfort setting that suits their specific needs, cushioning them from bumps and vibrations, to help reduce fatigue when mowing large areas or tough terrain.

The mowers are equipped with the Smart Speed control system, allowing the operator to choose from three ground speed ranges for optimal performance in an array of cutting conditions. Users can select the Trim setting for controlled manoeuvring, Tow for collection or towing attachments, or Mow for mowing open areas at speed.

The company says performance and durability is assured as the TimeCutter HD incorporates many elements from Toro's proven commercial mower legacy. It boasts a heavy-duty cutting deck made out of high-strength steel which Toro says can power through tough grass with confidence.

The TimeCutter HD line also offers a number of features focused on versatility and utility including a built-in bucket holder for easy transport of tools and materials, and a standard tow hitch for safe and efficient towing of attachments. A 12v accessory port and cup and accessory holders are also included for added convenience.

The units also benefit from a heavy-duty front end, featuring a 6.3cm x 6.3cm full tubular front axle for superior strength and heavy-duty front caster forks, all attached to a thick 10-gauge frame.

The deck is made from special Grade 50 high-strength 10-gauge steel that Toro boasts is nearly 50% stronger than competitive decks.



# EFFICIENT SPEC NOW AVAILABLE FOR MCCORMICK X7

*Simpler-spec versions of the two most powerful models in the series*

Simpler-spec versions of the two most powerful models in the McCormick X7 series have been introduced, joining the Efficient versions of other models in the line-up that were added to the range last year.

The Efficient specification was introduced last year on 143-166hp four-cylinder models in the McCormick X7 Series and on a pair of six-cylinder tractors – the 160hp X7.650, which itself was a new addition to the range, and the 165/175hp X7.660.

Now, it is also available on the X7.670, which has 177hp for draft work boosting to 192hp for pto implements and towing trailers, tankers and spreaders, and on the X7.680 with 188hp rising to 212hp.

Standard specification for the new models includes three mechanical spool valves plus one electric valve; 123-litre/min load-sensing hydraulics plus a 44-litre/min pump dedicated to steering and ancillaries; the 24x24-speed Pro Drive transmission; four-speed pto



with 'economy' as well as 'power' gearing; and 9300kg rear lift capacity.

Although the X7.670 and X7.680 use the same 6.7-litre BetaPower engine and cast chassis as other six-cylinder models in the range, these are bigger, beefier tractors.

They have a longer wheelbase (2820mm versus 2750mm), more weight (3055kg versus 2920kg before ballast) and the ability to run on taller tyres (42in versus 38in).

# Grillo

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## DOMESTIC

# EGO'S NEW HEDGE TRIMMER 'MATCHES PETROL POWER'

## HT6500E hedge trimmer with dual action 65cm blade

Powered by "petrol power matching" batteries, EGO Power+'s new HT6500E hedge trimmer has a dual action 65cm blade that offers a precise finish courtesy of its laser-cut, diamond-ground blades.

It has 33mm blade gaps that give exact, clean cuts to

promote new growth in even the thickest of branches. The dual action reduces the vibrations to offer increased user comfort too, particularly over extended periods of use.

The hedge cutter is described by Ego as well balanced and manoeuvrable to deliver the superior performance usually associated with a petrol hedge trimmer. The rotating rear handle allows users to adjust the trimmer for comfort, while the two-speed selector lets them adjust to match each task. The quiet brushless motor and accompanying gearbox gives the user all the power they will need.

For safer working, the safety blade guard helps prevent injuries while the electric brake stops the blades when the trigger is released.

All EGO batteries are interchangeable across the entire range and feature the brand's patented Arc-Lithium design and Keep Cool cell technology.

Hedge trimmers from EGO Power+ are also available in 51cm and 61cm lengths.



## ATV/UTILITY VEHICLES

# SEEK OUT CAMOUFLAGED KING QUADS

## Suzuki offers limited number of special editions

Suzuki GB PLC is giving customers the chance to be one of very few owners of a limited-edition camouflaged KingQuad 750 or KingQuad 500.

This style has already proved to be very popular in America, and Suzuki GB has decided to give its UK customer base a chance to own one of these special edition ATVs for a limited time only by importing only a small number into the country.

These ATVs feature camouflaged panelling, a black grill and black wheels.

George Cheeseman, Head of ATV at Suzuki GB PLC says: "We wanted to give our UK customers the chance to grab one of these camouflaged ATVs that are popular in other markets. We don't usually have the chance to offer these, so we're excited to see how popular they will be."



Customers will also receive free EASI Rider training, a free Suzuki-branded workwear kit including a body warmer and overalls, and free CESAR Security protection to help deter theft.

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DOMESTIC

# SWARDMAN CHOOSES KAWASAKI

## *For international mower launch*

Czech manufacturer Swardman has launched its Edwin cylinder mower, powered by Kawasaki's FJ100D four-stroke petrol engine, to the international market for the first time.

The move follows two years of strong sales in Central Europe for Swardman and investment in a new production facility, following Edwin's introduction to the Czech Republic in October 2014.

Founded by Tomáš Šena in 2013, Swardman says its mission is to build "the best lawnmower in the world for home use". The Edwin is the result of Tomáš's life-long passion for perfectly cut lawns and follows two decades of experience in the turfcare industry.

"My early experience as a greenkeeper and then as a dealer for two British lawnmower companies taught me how to grow and maintain the perfect English garden lawn", comments Tomáš.

"We started developing mower prototypes in 2011, putting this experience into practice and with the sole aim of helping everyone who wants to achieve a perfect lawn."

The result is the Edwin mower which the company says offers a precision cut, easy operation, minimal maintenance costs and a high level of personalisation – including a choice of over 200 powder-coated paint finishes, leather handlebars and carbon fibre cowling.

"We strive to develop and produce precisely manufactured and personalised mowers," continues Tomáš.

"We're probably the only lawnmower maker which allows customers to configure the mower according to their wishes".

Part of Swardman's precision development was its choice of Kawasaki's FJ100D four-stroke single-cylinder petrol engine. Introduced to the company by Kawasaki Engines' Czech distributor Asko KC, the professional quality engine was chosen for its perfect size to power ratio for Edwin's requirements.

"Kawasaki's renowned reliability, easy starting and low noise levels also convinced us that the FJ100D was right for us," adds Tomáš.

"We can now proudly say that Swardman produces the quietest lawnmower on the market, something that is widely noted and preferred by our customers."

The Edwin mower can be configured and purchased from Swardman's website.

All mowers are shipped for free within Europe and customers can book a free demonstration in their garden by a local representative as well as find their closest Swardman partner for after-season servicing.



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## AGRICULTURAL

# 3M V-PROFILE FRONT PRESS COMES INTO THE FOLD

## *HE-VA launches new split-folding version to ease transport*

HE-VA has launched a new 3m split-folding V-Profile Front Press to add to its range.

Designed to be more manoeuvrable on narrow rural roads, the machine hydraulically splits into two vertical sections which, at a 2.13m transport width, makes turning into tight gateways a much easier task.

Like the rigid 3m model and larger folding models, the press is available with either a 600mm or 700mm castellated pressed steel V-profile ring to offer optimum consolidation, while having a sharp rib to maximise clod crushing.

Available with spacing of 125 mm (600mm rings) and 156mm (700mm rings), with a scraper between each

ring, the press offers full width consolidation on light or heavy land.

The rings can turn individually but are linked by a series of lugs that ensure they all drive together, ensuring the machine will not be fazed even by wet, sticky conditions.

The machine can be fitted with an optional shattaboard, which is hydraulically adjustable from the tractor seat, increasing the cultivation action and allowing the machine to level, crush and consolidate in one pass ahead of the drill.

The Front Press has a long headstock and effectively becomes an extension of the front of the



tractor when attached, ensuring that it follows the nose of the tractor, steering smoothly even at speed. The headstocks are designed to take the forces produced even when using a shattaboard.

## COMMERCIAL

# REDESIGN FOR DR FIELD & BRUSH MOWER

## *First in over a decade*

Distributor Rochford Garden Machinery says there have been subtle changes to the design and appearance of the DR Field & Brush Mower.

Requested features have been added, including a more compact body for manoeuvrability; a new Peerless transaxle is fitted for enhanced reliability and performance; protected linkages and controls allow easy access for service and maintenance purposes; and finally, to offer larger cutting width and deck size, engines to match performance.

The company says the unit can mow up to 8ft high weeds, 3" thick saplings and other invasive brush. It is built to cut it down and mulch it up without bogging down.

Features include an electric clutch, power steering on selected models, three forward speeds and reverse, sealant-filled tyres, up to 20hp Briggs & Stratton engines, and seasonal attachments.

On the larger Field & Brush Mowers each wheel is equipped with a hand-operated disc brake. With a squeeze of the brake on one side, the machine will

pivot around that wheel, making moving the Field & Brush Mower around obstacles easy.

The DR deck pivots from side to side, enabling it to minimise scalping by following the contours of rough ground, while keeping the drive wheels planted firmly on the ground.

Mark Rochford, Marketing Director, says, "The DR Field & Brush Mower has quickly become the most successful range in the company's history, maintaining its position as the best selling brush mower in America for over 25 years." ●



# EVENTS 2017-18

## SEPTEMBER 2017

- 2 Alresford Show, Tichborne Park, Alresford, Hampshire  
[www.alresfordshow.co.uk](http://www.alresfordshow.co.uk)
- 2-3 Dorset County Show, Dorchester Showground, Dorset  
[www.dorsetcountyshow.co.uk](http://www.dorsetcountyshow.co.uk)
- 3-6 Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC  
[www.autumnfair.com](http://www.autumnfair.com)
- 3-5 spoga-gafa 2017, Cologne, Germany  
[www.spogagafa.com](http://www.spogagafa.com)
- 9 Usk Show  
[www.uskshow.co.uk](http://www.uskshow.co.uk)
- 9 Romsey Show  
[www.romseyshow.co.uk](http://www.romseyshow.co.uk)
- 11-13 Glee 2017  
[www.gleebirmingham.com](http://www.gleebirmingham.com)
- 14 Tillage Live, Wickenby Aerodrome  
[www.tillage-live.uk.com](http://www.tillage-live.uk.com)
- 14 Westmoreland County Show  
[www.westmorlandshow.co.uk](http://www.westmorlandshow.co.uk)

## OCTOBER 2017

- 4 The Dairy Show, Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet, Somerset  
[www.bathandwest.com/the-dairy-show](http://www.bathandwest.com/the-dairy-show)
- 18-20 Green Industry & Equipment Expo, Kentucky Expo Center, Louisville, USA  
<http://gie-expo.com>
- 21-22 Countryside Live, Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, Yorkshire  
[www.countryside-live.co.uk](http://www.countryside-live.co.uk)

## NOVEMBER 2017

- 1-2 IOG Saltex 2017, Birmingham NEC  
[www.iogsaltex.com](http://www.iogsaltex.com)
- 12-18 Agritechnica, Hanover, Germany  
[www.agritechnica.com/en/](http://www.agritechnica.com/en/)
- 15 AgriScot, Royal Highland Centre, Inverleith, Edinburgh  
[www.agriscot.co.uk](http://www.agriscot.co.uk)
- 16 Service Dealer Conference & Awards Oxford Belfry Hotel, Thame, Oxfordshire  
[www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk)
- 27-28 Royal Welsh Winter Fair, Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, Powys, Wales  
[www.rwas.wales/winter-fair](http://www.rwas.wales/winter-fair)
- 29-30 CropTec 2017, East of England Showground, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire  
[www.croptecshow.com/](http://www.croptecshow.com/)

## JANUARY 2018

- 3-5 Oxford Farming Conference  
[www.ofc.org.uk](http://www.ofc.org.uk)
- 17-18 LAMMA 2018, East of England Showground  
[www.lammashow.co.uk](http://www.lammashow.co.uk)
- 23-25 BTME 2018, Harrogate Convention Centre  
[www.btme.org.uk](http://www.btme.org.uk)

## FEBRUARY 2018

- 3-8 Golf Industry Show, San Antonio, Texas  
[www.golfindustryshow.com](http://www.golfindustryshow.com)
- 4-8 Spring Fair 2018, Birmingham NEC  
[www.springfair.com](http://www.springfair.com)
- 6-8 Doe Show 2018, Ulting  
[www.ernestdoe.com](http://www.ernestdoe.com)
- 7-8 Executive Hire Show, Ricoh Arena, Coventry  
[www.executivehireshow.co.uk](http://www.executivehireshow.co.uk)
- 13-15 World Ag Expo, Tulare, California  
[www.worldagexpo.com](http://www.worldagexpo.com)

## MARCH 2018

- 17-2/4 Ideal Home Exhibition, Earls Court, London  
[www.idealhomeshow.co.uk](http://www.idealhomeshow.co.uk)
- 17-18 West of England Game Fair, Bath & West Showground  
[www.westofenglandgamefair.co.uk](http://www.westofenglandgamefair.co.uk)

## APRIL 2018

- 5 CountryTastic, Three Counties Showground, Malvern  
[www.countrytastic.co.uk/](http://www.countrytastic.co.uk/)
- 24-26 The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC  
[www.cvshow.com](http://www.cvshow.com)
- 26-29 Harrogate Spring Flower Show  
[www.flowershow.org.uk/spring-show-2018](http://www.flowershow.org.uk/spring-show-2018)

## MAY 2018

- 7 North Somerset Show  
[www.nsas.org.uk](http://www.nsas.org.uk)
- 16-19 Balmoral Show, Belfast  
[www.balmoralshow.co.uk](http://www.balmoralshow.co.uk)
- 17-19 Devon County Show  
[www.devoncountyshow.co.uk](http://www.devoncountyshow.co.uk)
- 22-26 Chelsea Flower Show  
[www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events)
- 28 Surrey County Show  
[www.surreycountyshow.co.uk/surrey-county-show](http://www.surreycountyshow.co.uk/surrey-county-show)
- 30-31 Staffordshire County Show  
[www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show](http://www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show)
- 30-2/6 Royal Bath & West Show  
[www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/](http://www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-west/97/)



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# STIHL®

# DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS!

*Dealers thoughts turn to winter stocking*

It's that time of year again when manufacturers' dealer days are upon us – each one vying for the dealers' business. Dealers themselves are looking for the brands and suppliers which offer the best products for their customers, at the most competitive prices, allowing them to remain profitable.

It's a minefield, so decisions can't be taken lightly as tens of thousands of pounds are involved in placing the dreaded 'winter stock order'. But why should it be dreaded? Without stock there's nothing to sell.

Manufacturers and distributors have full-time stock controllers continually working on procurement, forecasting and forward ordering. It can't be true that some dealers today still don't have a stock control system or have any idea what they've sold in the 12 months up until the next stock order?

Therefore, does the responsibility lie with both parties to make sure there's product in the showroom for the next season?

UK specialist dealers have very high expectations of manufacturers, their products, back-up and people, much more so than their European counterparts.

Product quality is a major issue. Most UK specialist dealers are technically minded, hence demanding a high standard of technical know-how and back-up. Spare parts availability and pricing is also vitally important.

General attitude and enthusiasm of the people within the manufacturer's sales and service departments play a big part in the dealers' perception of the company.

It's true that most dealers like to stock brands with an exclusive, profitable product line. These should benefit from a family look, a strong dealership policy, plus a degree of trading area security backed up by local and national advertising and promotional activities.

Much of the aforementioned goes a long way to convince the prospective dealer to decide upon whom they will work with and to which product lines they are prepared to commit their time, people and finances to – plus in building a long-term partnership.

Is it not true that dealers like leadership and respect companies with management who are hands-on and prepared to lead from the front? People they can trust, people they know will stand by their commitment to the specialist trade?

Should all dealers look for a proven, consistent policy as an essential before committing? After all, this could be a long-term investment for their company.

On the flip side, what does a manufacturer look for in a dealer? Each will have their own criteria, but if any budding dealership is looking to attract the best brands they should consider and fully understand a prospective supplier's expectations.

Does the dealer have safe, insured storage space? Good, clean, functional workshops with trained mechanics? A spare parts service? Offer pre delivery inspection (PDI) on all new machines? Is the dealer prepared to demonstrate products and possess good product knowledge? Able to give educated advice? Have an inviting showroom with attractive shop frontage? Prepared to advertise and promote? Are they customer oriented, with a good attitude, enthusiasm, and passion for the industry? And are they financially stable with long-term future continuity plans – with motivated staff who are able to sell themselves, their company and the products, in that order, with profit for their company in mind?

Not much to ask for, is it?!

With Brexit upon us, things may start to get tougher; perhaps a can do, 'easy to do business with' attitude will go a long way on both sides?

So, before the arguments about the size of the orders drag out, it may be worth both dealer and supplier remembering that without each other and the end user they have no business – unless, of course, everything starts being sold through vending machines!

Look hard. Decide well. Think profit – isn't that why people go into business?



# JIM GREEN



## ROBBER-BOTS

### ROBOPOCALYPSE NOW?

#### *Dealers have an educational job on their hands*

I was interested to read on our *Service Dealer Weekly Update* recently that Husqvarna is launching pilot schemes in Edinburgh and London to monitor how robots get on mowing our public parks.

The company clearly believes this style of maintenance will play a significant role in the upkeep of public green spaces of the future.

However, specialist dealers may well have a job on their hands, educating professional buyers that they want to purchase these tools.

The task ahead may not be in trying to convince that these machines can perform an effective job. Nor that an evil machine is trying to steal their job!

More so the hurdle which needs to be addressed is persuading turf professionals that these robots will not be a target for thieves.

When our editor ran the robotic pilot scheme story in our sister publication *TurfPro*, most of the

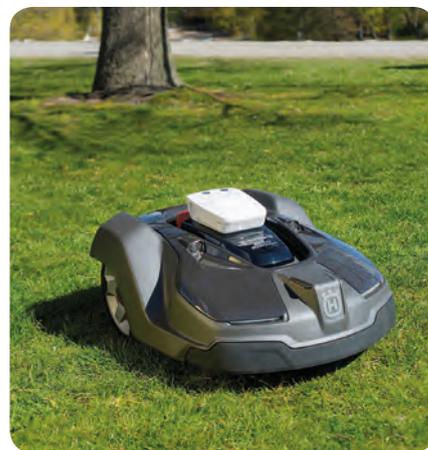
comments received from guys who cut the grass for a living were of a sceptical nature about security of these robots.

For example:

- “Great. It’s the way to go. How do you stop someone stealing it?”
- “Health and safety implications, unmanned cutting equipment, vandalism, theft, problems!”
- “And when they have stolen the mower, how long before they destroy the perimeter, digging the cable out for the copper?”

Educating these users why theft hopefully shouldn’t be too much of an issue due to all the advanced security features of modern robotic mowers, will now fall on the shoulders of dealers.

At the company’s Silent City conference last year where the future of urban parks maintenance



was discussed, robotic mowing was talked of as a significant element of future grounds care.

The good people at Husqvarna have another Silent City event coming up in October. Perhaps by then they might have some initial data from these trials which could hopefully allay some fears.

It would be great if dealers had some hard evidence they could show potential professional customers, proving why these units won’t be off in the hands of some little tea-leaf as soon as they are out working!

## KICKING UP A STORM

### WHIRLWIND OF PUBLICITY

#### *Lawnmower Man becomes local hero*

It was a couple of months back now when this picture of Alberta, Canada resident Theunis Wessels, getting on with mowing his lawn while a tornado raged behind him, went viral.

The incredible picture, taken by Mr Wessels’ wife, was picked up by news outlets across the world – which led to the committed mower becoming somewhat of a legend in his home town.

So much so in fact that Three Hills, Alberta honoured Mr Wessels with his very own float in

the town’s parade a month after the picture was taken. The Lawnmower Man was dressed in his now trademark shorts and T-shirt aboard a float with his mower and a replica tornado behind him. The side of the float was emblazoned with the words “Home of the Lawnmower Man”, while the back of it read: “I’m keeping an eye on it”.





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