

# SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

July/August 2025

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

## SUCCESSION: THE FOUNDATION OF A LIFE PLAN

So believes the retiring Neale Hopley of Buxtons, as he hands over the MD reins to Kelly Burgess

**HANDLING FORMS  
FOCUS OF DEDICATED  
DEPOT**

B&B Machinery explain

**THE GREATEST  
OPPORTUNITY IN EUROPE**

UK robotic mowing market praised

**KIT THAT CUTS IT**

Pro machinery developments demoed

**AN AG AND  
TURF DRAW**

We visit Turney Group as they host an open day focused on farm equipment - as well as a professional turf demonstration event



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Owner at Lawns by KC  
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WELCOME

Letter from the editor  
**Steve Gibbs**

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



Welcome to the July/August 2025 edition of *Service Dealer* magazine.

It's that time of year again when we've asked you, our valued dealer readers, about how you're getting on with both recruiting and retaining staff. You can read the results of our most recent survey starting on page 42 this issue, but, without wishing to spoil anything: it's not much different to the last one!

The struggles that dealers are facing are real. It's clear that our sector is not unique in that regard, but I suppose that's cold comfort when roles are going unfilled and staff members are departing for higher wages or fancier working conditions. There are some choice, if pragmatic, comments from readers who responded to the survey in this issue, summed up by one who basically says it's not great out there now – but they'll just have to soldier on! Which, I suspect, is the opinion of many.

As well as hanging onto staff, keeping customers loyal has also been a recent subject of discussion on our *Weekly Update* (which, if you are, not aware is circulated free every Friday at noon – sign up at [www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk)). A dealer correspondent related a tale about a

stinking online review they had received from a customer who had discovered the dealership charged a lower price for certain products on their own website than they did in store. This prompted the dealer to respond with their reasoning as to why this would be. As you might imagine, factors such as expert, one-to-one, personal customer service given in the showroom were mentioned. Alongside overheads, other benefits that come at premium were cited, such as demoing equipment, PDI-ing, setting up and testing kit - plus ongoing aftersales support. Which all sounds fine and valid to me.

I did hear from another dealer who disagreed with this policy, though. They told me how they keep their prices aligned, saying: "As a small family business, I don't think it is worth the hassle of negative reviews and arguments with customers over differing online and instore prices."

They went on to say that, yes, stores cost money to run, but so, too, they would argue, does a decent online presence. Which is, of course, also perfectly true.

I suppose a discussion such as this just goes to show: there's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to how dealers choose to run - and justify - their businesses.

CONTENTS

- 4 **News**  
Latest industry developments
- 16 **Succession**  
Buxtons tell their story
- 20 **Dealer Focus**  
With B&B Machinery
- 24 **Toro UK Q&A**  
Powering ahead, with Craig Hoare
- 28 **Kit that cuts it**  
At the PSD demo day
- 32 **An ag and turf draw**  
Visiting Turney's open days
- 36 **Mower stats**  
Do the numbers make a difference to dealers?
- 40 **Robotic reflections**  
"The greatest opportunity in Europe"
- 42 **Business monitor**  
Recruitment survey results
- 44 **View from across the pond**  
With Sara Hey
- 45 **Diary of a season**  
With Gammies Groundcare
- 46 **SME digest**  
Information for small businesses
- 50 **New products**  
Coverage of new equipment to hit the market
- 56 **In my view**  
With the Sprocket
- 58 **Events**  
Shows and industry events update

THE TEAM

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INDUSTRY

# Husqvarna signs multi-year deal

With Golf's Global Tour

Husqvarna has signed a partnership with the DP World Tour – Golf's Global Tour – as it becomes an official partner to the Amgen Irish Open and the Betfred British Masters.

The multi-year partnership will see Husqvarna's brand and products, including its CEORA, Automower 580L EPOS, 550 EPOS and 535 AWD EPOS, feature across on-course and digital branding, product showcases in tournament villages, and hospitality platforms at the two events - which make-up part of the Tour's iconic 'Back 9.'

Beyond the two staple tournaments, the manufacturer also becomes a corporate partner to the BMW International Open on the tour's European Swing until the end of the 2027 season, as it strengthens its footprint across the golfing landscape.

Samantha Donnelly, senior marketing manager at Husqvarna, said: "We're committed to supporting the game of golf, so we're incredibly excited to see our connection to the game growing - whether that's through the courses we supply, or those we partner with. We're thrilled to

announce this partnership, as we take our next step in the sport."

The company says the relationship marks their latest commitment to the industry and future in the sport, as it builds on partnerships with such names as Sir Nick Faldo - with the brand supporting the growth of the Faldo Futures initiative via donations and beyond from May 2025.

Sir Nick Faldo said: "As host of the British Masters for nearly 3 years now, it's an event that's close to my heart - so it's brilliant to see Husqvarna partnering with this iconic tournament. What its technology is doing for golf courses is truly changing the game - I've heard firsthand how greenkeepers now have more time to spend on other areas of the course, such as the greens, which is driving a real improvement for players. Husqvarna's support for Faldo Futures is increasingly important, too - it's an initiative that supports young golfing talent, so we're incredibly proud of it. Having brands such as Husqvarna help foster its growth is brilliant for the future of the game."



DEALERS



Paul Walton, Chris Ollerton, Oliver Knowles, Andre Dobson and Will Berry

DEALERS

# Russells acquire Robert D Webster

Expansion in East Yorkshire area

Russells Ltd has acquired the neighbouring New Holland dealership, Robert D Webster Ltd.

Russells, a long-standing New Holland dealer based in Malton, North Yorkshire, has nine New Holland depots across Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire. Russells will retain Webster's depots at Owstwick, near Hull, and Hutton Cranswick, near Driffield, integrating them into their agricultural business. Many of Webster's staff will also join Russells, ensuring continuity for existing customers.

Paul Russell, CEO of Russells Ltd, said: "We are delighted to welcome the teams from Owstwick and Hutton Cranswick, along with the challenges and opportunities that the new territory provides. This expansion aligns with our focus on local staff serving local customers. We look forward to working with all our new staff and customers in the area, and wish them a warm welcome to Russells as we develop our business in the area together with New Holland."

David Rapkins, CNH business director UK & ROI, added: "Congratulations to Russells on their continued growth, demonstrating the strength of our dealer network. We would like to thank Jackie Thompson, Robert Webster and all their team for their longstanding service, and look forward to supporting Russells and all New Holland customers in the area."

# RVW Pugh expands operating area

Following closure of Malpas Tractors

RVW Pugh Ltd, farm machinery dealer for many brands, and Massey Ferguson franchise owner for Cheshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Mid-Wales, has expanded its operating area to the North of the UK.

Due to the closure of Malpas Tractors, RVW Pugh Ltd has expanded into the Lancashire area for Merlo, Sumo, Hi-Spec, Väderstad and AVR customers. The dealership has a dedicated sales manager for this area, as well as a depot for parts sales, warranty enquires and repairs and maintenance work in Lathom.

The company has retained the employment of former Malpas Tractors staff members, who have knowledge of the local area and the local market. RVW Pugh Ltd will also be taking on the warranty commitments for the Merlo, Sumo, Hi-Spec and Väderstad-branded machinery.

The depot is open for AGCO parts, along with a range of tools, wearing parts and other merchandise for day-to-day farming jobs.

Robert Pugh, managing director of RVW Pugh Ltd, said: "We are delighted to be able to take on the Lancashire area for the Merlo, Sumo, Hi-Spec, Väderstad and AVR brands, as well as welcoming our new team members to the company."

Emma Pugh, business manager for the dealership, added: "We have a new depot for the Lancashire area, and would encourage any former customers of Malpas Tractors with outstanding warranties with the Merlo, Sumo, Hi-Spec and Väderstad brands to contact us with any queries they have."



DEALERS

# GGM to offer training from new depot

LANTRA accreditation at Yorkshire Service Centre

The GGM Group have announced that they will be offering LANTRA Training from their new Yorkshire Service Centre in Knottingley.

The LANTRA accredited training academy will be an additional offering to their portfolio of services.

The courses, which the business has been running for the past two years, provide delegates with the skills and knowledge required to safely operate and maintain relevant machinery. All training can be carried out on customers' premises or on-site at the new centre, using the equipment that team members will be operating on a day-to-day basis.

The LANTRA accredited training courses ensure that operators are

trained to a national standard whilst fulfilling the organisation's legal obligations with regards to the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulation (PUWER) 1998.

Upon successful completion of the courses, all delegates will receive a certificate of competence, and, for the LANTRA training, an accredited certificate and skills card will be awarded (LANTRA registration fees apply).

GGM managing director Chris Gibson explained: "Since launching our Training Academy, we've received fantastic feedback from both trainees and their employers. The expansion of our academy to the Knottingley site will make training much more accessible for our



GGM's new Yorkshire Service Centre in Knottingley

Yorkshire-based customers. Providing added value has always been a key part of our ethos, so we're thrilled to bring the LANTRA training offering to our new Yorkshire centre."

DEALERS

# Wildwood Machinery partners with ECHO

To sell robotic solutions across southern England



L-R: Wildwood's James Bastian and Echo Robotics' Sam Daybell

Winchester-based Wildwood Machinery have expanded their product portfolio with a deal to sell Echo Robotics solutions across southern England.

Wildwood managing director James Bastian said: "Robotics and autonomous machinery are very much the buzzwords right now in the groundcare industry. Our partnership with Echo, and previously-announced partnerships with the likes of Raymo and RoviMo, ensure that our clients have access to state-of-the-art equipment, and the opportunity to increase efficiency, sustainability and consistency."

Sam Daybell of Echo Robotics said of Wildwood: "What makes them a standout partner is how closely they mirror our vision at Echo Robotics - ensuring that our technology is introduced to the marketplace in the right way. Their consultative approach, technical understanding, and customer-first mindset help ensure the technology is not only embraced, but also reaches its full potential. Ultimately, this delivers the best possible experience for the end-user."

Sam concluded: "Echo Robotics' growing network of UK partners, including trusted providers such as Wildwood Machinery, ensures that this technology is delivered and supported the right way - empowering clients to fully embrace automation and unlock the full potential of their outdoor spaces."



# COBRA

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## STIHL increased sales during 2024

UK saw “double-digit” growth

**The STIHL Group have announced that they increased their sales to €5.33 billion last year - an increase of 1.1 percent compared to the previous year (2023: €5.27 billion).**

The company said that, despite a year marked by restrained consumer spending, geopolitical uncertainty and regional differences in economic development, 2024 sales remained “well above pre-pandemic levels.” The manufacturer says they generated over 90 percent of their turnover outside their German home market.

Michael Traub, CEO of the STIHL Group, said: “We are driving the transformation of our company from a position of strength. Despite economic headwinds, we remain strategically focused, and continue to invest in future-facing technologies, innovative product solutions, and the development of our global sales and manufacturing footprint.”

As of December 31, 2024, the STIHL Group employed 19,732 people worldwide, a slight decrease from the previous year (2023: 19,805).

In terms of global market development, our region of Western Europe was described as “a mixed picture.” The manufacturer said that low consumer sentiment and a sluggish construction sector impacted the first half of the year. However, favourable weather conditions and targeted sales initiatives drove strong demand in the second half, especially in the UK, where STIHL said they posted double-digit growth. The German market also performed above average.

Battery-powered products accounted for 25 percent of total unit sales in 2024, reflecting their growing importance in the company’s portfolio (2023: 24 percent).

Looking ahead, Michael Traub said he anticipates moderate single-digit revenue growth over the next few years, “tempered by intense competitive and transformational pressures.”

DEALERS

## Harrison Tractors expands into sprayers

Appointed by Knight Farm Machinery

**Knight Farm Machinery has appointed Harrison Tractors Ltd to its UK dealer network, with the March-based business set to sell, service and support the full Knight range of mounted, trailed and self-propelled sprayers across an important part of the UK’s arable area north of Cambridge.**

Founded by James Harrison in 2003, family-run Harrison Tractors Ltd specialises in trading used tractors and equipment. “We prefer to be a used tractor specialist and not become involved with a dominant new tractor franchise, but, to complement our tractor trade, we decided to build a portfolio of new implement franchises in key areas that are in demand by farmers in our region,” explains James.

“We have been able for a number of years to offer an extensive line of crop establishment machinery, so adding a full range of self-propelled, trailed and mounted sprayers was a natural next step. Being less than an hour away the other side of Peterborough, we knew Knight and they knew us, so after initial talks we visited the factory and were very impressed with the product line and quality.

“It’s great to sign with a local British business that is so well-respected for its quality and technology, particularly as it is also, like ours, family-owned and operated.”

Paul Harrison, who oversees sales and marketing at Knight Farm Machinery, says the company is especially pleased to have signed a specialist implement dealer of the calibre of Harrison Tractors.

“The area around this part of northern Cambs and the surrounding counties is an especially important territory for Knight, with some significant arable enterprises.”



Jim Brown and James Harrison, of Harrison Tractors

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## David Kirshner retires

Well-known industry consultant

**Well-known independent industry consultant David Kirshner has retired.**

David told *Service Dealer*: “After 59 years of land-based engineering from apprenticeship to dealership director, technical director and aftersales manager for UK, German and French tractor importers, and 20 years as an independent consultant to the industry, I am retiring to enjoy life in our new home in Norfolk.”

David continued: “Looking back, there is no other industry that could have offered me a more challenging and rewarding role, or the opportunity to become part of such a uniquely special community. I am honoured and extremely proud that the industry has afforded me the privilege of involvement in leaving a lasting legacy in the form of our present apprenticeship standards, to build the foundations of the future technicians.”

David concluded: “The industry sector faces challenging times, but I know that AEA, BAGMA and IAgRE – in the shape of LE-TEC – together with manufacturers, their networks, and publications such as *Service Dealer* will continue to support and promote what is a truly amazing industry. I will miss you all.”

DEALERS

## J&S Montgomery expand trading areas

For both Kverneland and Yamaha

**Following J&S Montgomery’s acquisition of DKR Agricultural Services, the dealership has confirmed that they have expanded their trading area for Kverneland, whilst its footprint for Yamaha has also expanded into the Lanarkshire region.**

The purchase of DKR based at Coulter, near Biggar, say J&S Montgomery, marks a significant step in their growth. DKR built a strong reputation within the Lanarkshire farming community, and J&S Montgomery say they are committed to building upon this foundation. The acquisition will see the Coulter premises become a key location for J&S Montgomery, offering sales, service, and parts for Yamaha products.

Alister Shanks, group sales manager for J&S Montgomery, said, “This is an exciting time for J&S Montgomery. Expanding our trading area into Lanarkshire provides us with an excellent platform to serve the local farming community. We recognise the strong relationships DKR has built, and we are committed to providing the same high level of service and support that J&S Montgomery is known for.”



DEALERS

## Kuhn choose Clapham

As a full product line dealership

**Kuhn Farm Machinery has strengthened its dealer network in the north of England with the appointment of Clapham Agricultural Engineering Limited as a full product line dealership.**

Clapham Agricultural is run by Ed and Debbie Clapham, and the manufacturer says the move reinforces their presence in a key grassland and livestock region. From the dealership’s base at Ripponden, near Halifax, West Yorkshire, Ed said he’s excited to grow the brand across his area. “Kuhn machinery is well-respected and popular, and I think there’s great potential to get more

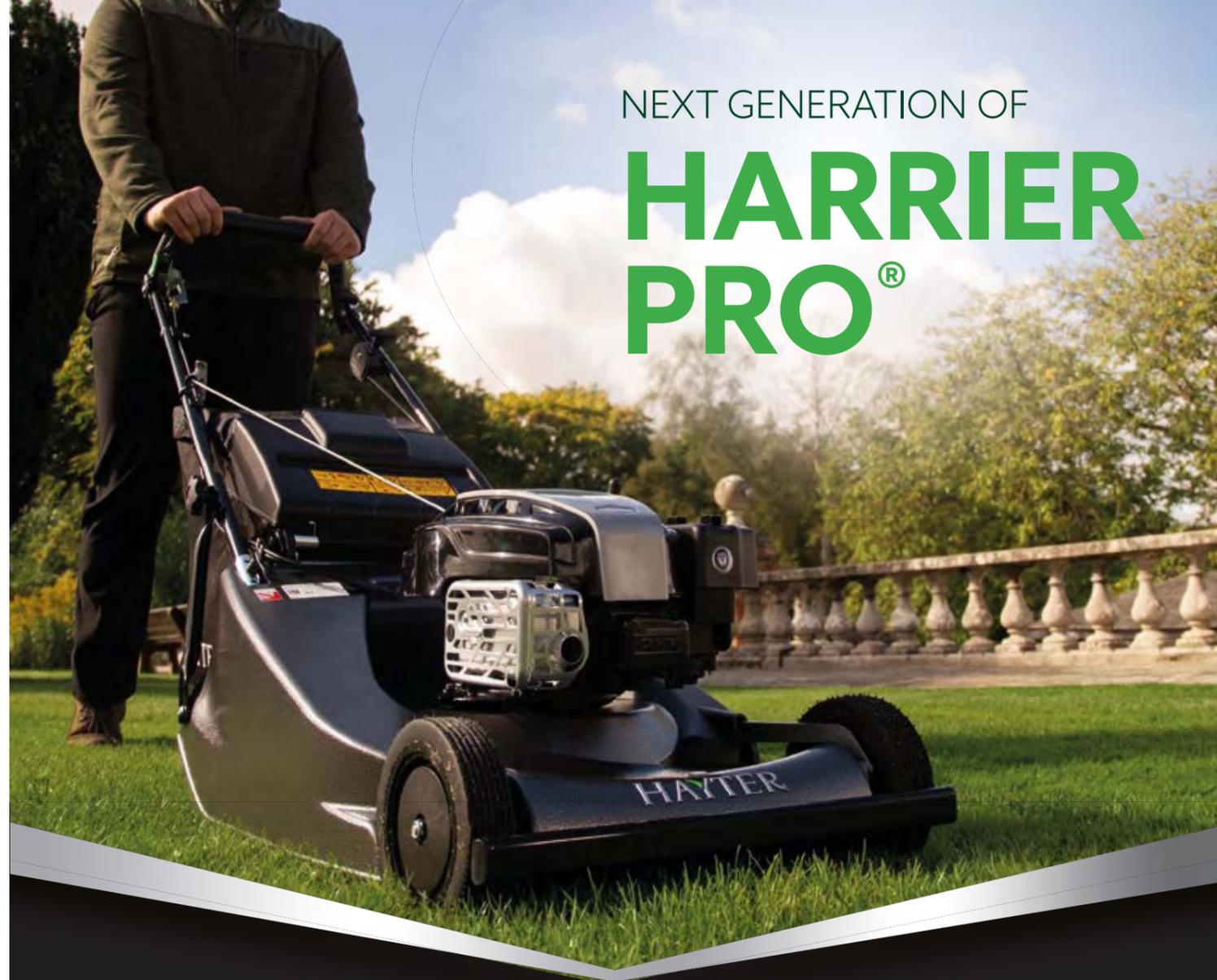


L-R: Ed Clapham, Clapham Agricultural, and Karl Ridsdale, ASM for Northern England at Kuhn

machines onto farms,” he confirmed.

Speaking of the appointment, Karl Ridsdale, Kuhn’s area sales manager for northern England, said: “I’ve known Ed for several years, and his dedication to providing a first-class service, with particular focus on aftersales, fits well with Kuhn’s vision for its dealer network.

The area Clapham Agricultural will cover is predominantly livestock, so our product range will dovetail nicely with what farmers are requiring.”



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DEALERS

# Reesink strengthen dealer support

Two new appointments



L-R: Robert Hogarth, Jon Cole and Darren Anderson

Reesink Turfcare has announced the appointment of two new dealer development and key account managers, which, they say, will strengthen its support to dealer partners and improve key customer relationships across the UK.

Robert Hogarth steps into the role for the North - covering territory from Cheshire and Lincolnshire up to Northumberland, across into Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man - and replacing Mike Turnbull, who now leads the Reesink Scotland branch. Robert's background spans greenkeeping and course management through to sales leadership for turfcare companies, such as Hydroturf International and Fairways GM.

Darren Anderson will take responsibility for the South of England, Wales, the Isle of Wight, Jersey and Guernsey. Darren brings 33 years' experience in the golf sector gained through course and club management roles at Abergele Golf Club, Bromborough Golf Club and the North Wales Golf Club.

Darren joins Reesink as a double national award-winning course/club manager, also gaining Master Greenkeeper status in 2007.

Jon Cole, divisional business manager for Reesink Turfcare, said: "Our dealer partners are essential to Reesink, and we want them to feel integral to our shared success, and to know how much we value their contribution. The added support from these new roles will help us achieve this, and further demonstrate our commitment to helping our dealers grow their businesses."

By dividing Mike Turnbull's former role into North and South, Reesink say they aim not only to reinforce the company's dealer-focused strategy, but also to offer an additional layer of support and attention to customers within dealer territories.

With the country now split into two regions, Robert and Darren will each be responsible for managing the dealer network within their designated areas, and unlocking new local opportunities.

DEALERS

# Merlo announce dealer changes

Carr's Billington extend area and Vincents appointed

Merlo UK have recently announced some changes to their dealer network.

First, it has been confirmed that Carr's Billington, headquartered in Carlisle, has expanding its coverage and support of the brand to additional depots in Stranraer and Penrith.

This growth follows the successful partnership announced in December.

Owen Buttle, national sales manager at Merlo UK, commented: "Carr's Billington is a trusted supplier of leading agricultural brands, and this expansion reflects both their confidence in the Merlo product and our shared commitment to providing customers across the North of England with exceptional machinery solutions and service."

Reflecting on the last six months, Tom Jobling, machinery director at Carr's Billington, added: "Sales have started well, and we believe now is the right time to expand the Merlo brand into our other depots. The team has been impressed by the quality and performance of Merlo telehandlers, and we are excited to introduce these machines to even more customers."

In addition, the manufacturer also recently announced the appointment of Vincents as an authorised dealer within their agricultural network'

Operating from two of their strategically located depots in Fraddon (Cornwall) and Smithaleigh (South Devon) the company will represent the range across South Devon and Cornwall, further strengthening Merlo's presence in the South West.

Owen Buttle said of Vincents: "Their multi-depot footprint, highly capable team, and dedication to customer service make them an ideal partner. This appointment further supports Merlo's aim to ensure customers across the South West have access to industry-leading telehandlers and expert local support."

Nick Vincent, dealer principal at Vincent Tractors, added: "Merlo is a key piece of our business plan. We want to be the 'Dealer of Choice in the South West,' and offering a premium range like Merlo - backed by our own premium service - allows us to meet the needs of a broad and growing customer base."

## News in brief: [www.servicedealer.co.uk](http://www.servicedealer.co.uk)



### INDUSTRY Councils using petrol in clean zones

EGO Power+ has revealed that many UK local authorities are still using petrol-powered tools in Clean Air Zones, despite public commitments to reduce emissions.



### EVENTS Registration now open

Visitor registration for GroundsFest 2025 is now officially open, with organisers saying that this year promises to be "bigger, better, and bolder than ever before."



### DEALERS Another Aodes dealer

Boss Off-Road-Vehicles has appointed Devon tractor and machinery dealer Blakewell Services as their latest Aodes dealer.



At the Carr's Billington Stranraer branch: Andy Collier, Merlo product support manager; John Jamieson, Stranraer branch manager; and Mark Taylor, ASM, Carr's Billington; Euan Thomson, regional sales manager, Merlo UK



Nick Vincent, dealer principal and Craig Parkes, regional sales manager, Merlo UK

DEALERS



Henry Nash and Roger Doherty

## Gordons appointed by Dieci

Presence strengthened in Scotland

**Dieci Telehandlers Ltd has announced a new partnership with Gordons Agricultural Equipment.**

With seven strategically-located depots stretching from Castle Douglas to Ayrshire, Gordons offers an extensive range of agricultural and construction machinery. Dieci say this new partnership ensures Scottish farmers and contractors can now benefit from their material handling equipment, supported by a dealer network renowned for reliability and customer care.

Henry Nash, managing director of Dieci Telehandlers Ltd, said: "We're delighted to welcome Gordons Agricultural Equipment to the Dieci dealer network in Scotland. With their wide customer base and strong reputation for aftersales support, Gordons are a perfect partner. This appointment demonstrates our continued commitment to the Scottish agricultural market."

Roger Doherty, Dieci sales manager at Gordons, said of the move: "This strengthens our machinery portfolio and reflects our ongoing commitment to providing reliable, high-performance solutions to Scottish farmers."

Dieci's reputation for durability, performance, and operator comfort makes their telehandlers an ideal addition to our lineup."

DEALERS



Richard Haines, commercial director, Argo Tractors GB, and Richard Sessions, managing director, Hollies Engineering

## Argo add Hollies to network

Dealership has over 20 years' experience

**Argo Tractors GB has announced the appointment of Hollies Engineering as its newest authorised dealer for both Hampshire and the surrounding areas.**

Based in Manor Farm Buildings at Church Lane, Exton, Argo say Hollies bring over 20 years of experience to the table, in addition to a strong reputation for quality agricultural machinery sales and aftercare. They say the dealership's dedication to customer satisfaction, coupled with an in-depth understanding of the local farming community, makes them an ideal partner.

"We are thrilled to welcome Hollies Engineering to the McCormick dealer network," said Richard Haines, commercial director with Argo Tractors GB.

"Their commitment to providing excellent customer service aligns perfectly with McCormick's values. We are confident that their expertise and local knowledge will ensure that our Hampshire-based customers receive the highest level of support."

Richard Sessions, managing director of Hollies, added: "Everyone at Hollies Engineering is incredibly pleased to be partnering with McCormick Tractors. We recognise the quality and innovation that McCormick brings to the agricultural market."

INDUSTRY



Sentera drone

**John Deere have announced the acquisition of Sentera, a provider of remote imagery solutions for agriculture headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota.**

The manufacturer said the acquisition "... will advance the capabilities of John Deere's existing technology offerings, providing farmers and ag service providers with a more comprehensive set of tools to generate and use data to make decisions that improve farm profitability, efficiency, and sustainability."

Chris Winkler, director of digital software and solutions at John Deere, said, "Combining Sentera's imagery capabilities with the John Deere Operations Center will enable farmers and trusted advisors to seamlessly gather and integrate agronomic data, understand real-time conditions, and turn data into insights that drive decisions in the field throughout the growing season."

Sentera's cameras are compatible with most major drone platforms and enable farmers and crop scouts to quickly

# John Deere acquires

Remote imagery company, Sentera

and efficiently capture high-resolution data at scale.

Drones equipped with the technology fly over fields at high speeds and generate high-resolution images. These images are processed with Sentera's FieldAgent application to identify the exact location of specific weeds and generate a weed map. This map becomes a targeted prescription for how much product a farmer needs to load into their sprayer, helping minimise waste. Once the prescription is generated, it can be wirelessly sent to compatible equipment via the John Deere Operations Center.

Sentera say they will continue to supply cameras directly to drone manufacturers for integration into their products, as well as sell to farmers, agronomists, ag retailers, and other users. The John Deere Operations Center will continue to be open for other drone imagery providers for integration, as well, ensuring customers continue to have choices on the solutions that work best for their operation.

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

INDUSTRY



### Ceo to step down

Husqvarna Group has announced that Pavel Hajman has, by mutual agreement with the board of directors, decided to step down from his role as CEO and board member as soon as a permanent successor is appointed.

INDUSTRY



### Green light for hydrogen ag power

A recent Government decision to change the law has given hydrogen powered tractors and machinery the green light to be driven on UK roads.

DEALERS



### Successful dealer day

Etesia UK recently welcomed dealers from across the UK and Ireland to a dealer day at Primrose Hill Farm in Oxfordshire.

# Succession was the foundation of my life plan

So says the retiring Neale Hopley, of dealership Buxtons, as he hands over the managing director reins to Kelly Burgess. *Service Dealer* editor STEVE GIBBS hears about how succession doesn't happen overnight.



Neale Hopley of Buxtons

**D**ealership Buxtons, based in Teddesley, Staffordshire, confirmed recently that Kelly Burgess has taken over as their new managing director following the retirement of Neale Hopley.

Kelly told *Service Dealer*: "Following Neale's retirement in February, I've now taken on the role of managing director at Buxtons. It's a privilege to step into this position after more than 35 years of Neale's hard work and commitment to the company."

Kelly continued: "I'm excited about the opportunities ahead, and look forward to the challenge, with the hope of continuing the strong legacy Neale leaves behind."

"As I take on this new challenge, I'm excited about the journey ahead. These are rapidly changing times, full of both challenges and opportunities - and I look forward to leading our amazing team as we navigate them together."

Following the announcement, I caught up with Neale to ask him about how the dealerships planned for

succession, what challenges he feels lay ahead for the new team – and to reminisce about his years at the helm.

**Service Dealer:** Why was now the right time for you to retire?

**Neale Hopley:** The answer is simple - there's a lot of other things I want to do, and I want to do them while I still can.

From travel plans that have been on the backburner, to spending more time with family, now feels like the right moment to step back and enjoy life beyond the day-to-day of the dealership. It's not about slowing down - it's about making time for all the things I've been putting off. I'm grateful for everything this journey has given me, and I'm just as excited for what's ahead.

**SD:** How important to you was it knowing you had succession in place?

**NH:** When it comes to retirement, succession wasn't just important to me - it was the foundation of my life plan. Knowing someone capable and



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Buxtons' base in Teddesley, Staffordshire

committed was ready to step in gave me the confidence to take this next step. Having Kelly in place made all the difference. Without her, I'd still be working today.

It's not easy to let go of something you've built over the years, but seeing Kelly step up with passion and vision made it clear that the future of the business is in safe hands.

**SD: What steps had you been taking regarding succession plans as you moved towards retirement?**

**NH:** Succession doesn't happen overnight - it's a process that takes time, trust, and careful planning.

Over the past few years, I gradually began delegating more and more tasks to Kelly and involving her in the decision-making process. It was important to me that she wasn't just observing but actively shaping the direction of the business. After all, the decisions we were making were going to impact her future as much as mine.

**SD: What does Kelly and the new management setup bring to Buxtons?**

**NH:** With Kelly and the new management team stepping in, Buxtons is entering an exciting new era.

They bring a younger, energetic approach - full of fresh ideas, a modern mindset, and a real hunger to succeed. It's that drive and enthusiasm

that will help the business grow and evolve while staying true to the values we've always stood for.

**SD: What challenges can you see them facing this season? And in seasons to come?**

**NH:** No matter the season, the dealership world always has its fair share of challenges. I see Kelly and the team facing the same hurdles we've dealt with year after year - tough online competition, unpredictable weather patterns, and stock availability issues. But, with the right mindset and adaptability, I know they're more than ready to take them on.

**SD: And where are the opportunities for growth, do you believe?**

**NH:** Looking ahead, I believe the biggest opportunities for growth lie online. By tapping into the power of social media, Buxtons can showcase what truly sets us apart: our expert advice and outstanding customer service. It's a great way to connect with a wider audience, build trust, and highlight the value of the personal touch in a digital world.

**SD: Looking back on your time with the dealership, what are some of your fondest memories and proudest achievements?**



Neale young! In the workshop, back in the day



Kelly Burgess has taken over as managing director of Buxtons

**NH:** When I look back on my time at the dealership, I feel incredibly lucky to have had so many unforgettable experiences - from riding a Honda motorbike around the Isle of Man, to a Valentine's dinner on the Eiffel Tower, all thanks to the amazing support from our suppliers.

But above all, what stands out most are the people. The relationships I've built with customers, competitors, and suppliers over the years have meant the world to me. It's those connections, more than anything else, that I'll always treasure

**SD: And what would you say were some of your most challenging experiences?**

**NH:** Without a doubt, the biggest challenge I faced during my time at the dealership was the COVID-19 pandemic. It was completely unprecedented and came out of the blue, affecting every part of the business and the wider industry.

Navigating those uncertain times

tested all of us - but it also showed the resilience of our team, and the strength of the relationships we'd built. It's an experience I'll never forget.

**SD: Finally, any advice you would give to someone just starting out in the specialist dealer sector for a long and successful career?**

**NH:** If you're just starting out in the specialist dealer sector, I'd say you're entering a great industry. It can be stressful at times, but it's built on a small, close-knit network - mostly family-run businesses where relationships really matter.

My two biggest pieces of advice? Work with other dealers, not against them. And always look after your customers - because, when you do, they'll look after you in return.

**SD: Thank you, Neale - enjoy your retirement, and the very best to Kelly and the team from all at Service Dealer!**



Neale in the Buxtons showroom with a copy of Service Dealer from July /August '23, when the dealership featured in these pages



The 2023 Service Dealer Awards saw Buxtons jointly win the Forestry Machinery Dealer of the Year prize alongside Forest & Arb. Neale is pictured centre, with Jason Nettle - along with comedian Charlie Baker, Steven Davies of sponsors Societe Generale Equipment Finance, and Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke

# Handling forms focus of dedicated depot

Founded in 2024 as a sister business to the Bowring Group's B&B Tractors ag machinery concern, B&B Machinery focuses mainly on farm handling equipment - but sees plenty of potential for expansion. MARTIN RICKATSON visited its spring open day to learn more.

**W**hile the dealer networks of many of the key agricultural machinery sectors are regularly reshaped by their main suppliers, the telehandler segment recently seems to have had more than its fair share of restructuring.

There tends to be one key trigger, and in this case, it has arguably been the decision of the dominant green-and-yellow tractor/full-line manufacturer to require its dealers to sell the products of its preferred turquoise telehandler partner. That has led to a

lot of adjustment in recent years, as other telehandler manufacturers have sought to cover areas left exposed by the enforced switches made. Finding replacement outlets to sell and support their machines has been a challenge for some.

Across southern Lincs and the East Midlands, the solution for handler specialist Manitou was to invite its dealer east of this area, B&B Group's B&B Tractors business, to take on the extra territory that had become available from just such a situation. Primarily an AGCO and Manitou dealer,

B&B Tractors is based in Warsop, Notts, with branches in Tideswell (Derbyshire), Fauld (Staffs), and Dodworth (South Yorks), with subdivisions B&B Groundcare and B&B Plant.

The particular challenge for B&B, though, was that the territory required a depot to service it properly, yet many of its other franchises, including its main one with AGCO, were already covered in the region.

The solution, explains Andrew Walker – dealer principal of B&B Group – was to create a further separate business division, B&B Machinery, focused on a materials handling sector and a Manitou product line that encompasses everything from full-scale and compact telehandlers for arable and livestock farms to large and small articulated models, rough-terrain and warehouse-targeted forklifts, manual pallet handlers, truck-mounted models, skid-steer loaders, and even access platforms.

"Because of the breadth of that Manitou product line, and the business opportunities it presents through all areas of agriculture and into other industries, we calculated we could create a viable business model focused on this franchise, plus a couple of supplementary ones," says Andrew.



Andrew Walker, B&B dealer principal, with Natalie Parsons, the company's marketing manager



While its main ag franchise was already represented in Lincs, B&B Group calculated a new depot focused chiefly on Manitou handlers was a viable business prospect

"We have a long-term relationship with Manitou, having held its franchise since the late-1990s, first at our Warsop and Tideswell depots, and, since 2007, at our Fauld branch, covering Staffs and Derbyshire. We know the machines and the people behind them, so, from that perspective, the idea made sense when this area became available due to a required franchise change by the former dealer. The region has had quite a few changes over the years across all telehandler franchises, and Manitou put their trust in us to provide some stability.

"But the change had left open a large territory, stretching from Louth to Peterborough and Northampton, and our primary challenge was to cover it cost-effectively. Ideally, it would probably be served by a northern depot and a southern one, but cost-wise, this was hard to justify, so we selected a central point around Boston, and started looking for a suitable premises."

A former car garage near Swineshead available for rent was an early possibility, but didn't really work in terms of workshop space, explains Andrew.

"But, while returning from here, we noticed an ideal-looking empty

building nearby, hidden by high conifers that meant we hadn't seen it when travelling down. We tried to identify the owner via the Internet, and found there was a planning application for change of use for it to become a pet shop. After more internet research,

we found the pet shop business currently resided inside a nearby garden centre. We made contact and learned they had bought the building with a plan to move out of the garden centre because of rising rent, but things had since changed, and it became more cost-effective to stay put. They were therefore looking to sell, and our intention had always been to buy rather than lease a site - the company prefers this for business security. We agreed a deal, and, after some site refurbishment, we opened just over a year ago.

"Built in the early-1990s, the facility had been used by a packaging company, and then by a motor trade



While agricultural telehandlers are the B&B Machinery mainstay, the broader range of Manitou handlers offers other potential markets

business. The shell of the building was sound, but it hadn't been finished properly internally, so required some work. But we were very pleased with the site, which had plenty of space to display and store machines, and the building, which had potential to create service facilities, plus parts storage and offices."

## Business viability

To make a viable business model a dealership branch based mainly on a single product type requires a certain set of characteristics, believes Andrew.

"We looked at some other sites that did not have right blend of building and yard space, but the size and



A groundcare business has been developed from the branch, working primarily with existing B&B Groundcare partners Toro and Husqvarna



There is a considerable local potential market for warehouse forklifts, particularly electric models like Manitou's ME series, believes Andrew



Located on the A17, the site offered display and demonstration space, and a building with potential for service facilities, parts storage and offices

site of the building here are ideal. It's prominent but secure, and we have the workshop space to raise and extend telehandler booms, plus which we can securely house four machines under service/repair ... as well as our service vans at the end of a working day. There's also potential to extend and expand. Location-wise, we couldn't be happier - it's right on the A17, with great visibility and passing traffic that's helping us draw some local homeowner's garden business and passing trade.

"A good premises is important but great staff are essential. We've recruited two experienced service technicians with a strong background in materials handlers, along with a service manager, a parts manager, and two sales staff. Both our sales and service teams are already well-established partnerships, having worked closely together in previous roles.

"It's important to train people new to the industry, but obviously takes longer to get them fully up to speed, and right now we need service staff with a good level of technical ability to send straight out to diagnose and fix problems. People buy not just on

product quality, but on the level of aftersales support too, so a strong service team is key to helping us secure and retain sales."

### Groundcare added

A groundcare specialist was also recruited, one of the other factors in the success of the business being an open area for Toro and Husqvarna, Andrew explains: "These are two key brands in the B&B Groundcare business, so we had an existing and successful relationship with so we were keen to extend this in a new area. We also hold the franchise for Brian James Trailers, opening new opportunities with vehicle transportation."

With southern Lincs being a strong area for vegetable production, there is not just the potential for sales to farmers and growers needing materials handlers, for tasks from planting to harvesting, but also for yard truck-type forklifts and small telescopic for use in the packhouses and cold stores that are found across the area, notes Andrew.

"It's something we're just beginning to tap into, and we think this market has huge potential, with other sales

possibilities including machines such as warehouse industrial machines and access platforms for maintenance. At the moment we're purely an agriculturally-focused concern when it comes to Manitou products, but we want to grow our industrial business. In recent years, Manitou has tripled the number of industrial-type machines it sells, and the range includes the likes of electric warehouse forklifts, which are increasingly sought by warehouses and packhouse buyers who need to prove their green credentials, as well as operate efficiently. Although our agricultural business is based on retail sales, we may look to introduce other ways to get machines to these customers, such as at longer-term contract hiring, if that's what will help us get into this market."

### Potential for growth

Looking to the future, Andrew says B&B would be keen to expand into construction materials handlers, if that opportunity became available.

"It would fit well into what we do - the machines are very similar, there are overlaps with service, technical tools and parts, and we already have

technically-trained staff."

While it was anticipated that profitability would be difficult to attain for the first couple of years – and that the depot would take three years to break even – Andrew says that B&B Machinery has produced better initial figures than were anticipated, despite cost increases in many areas and the downturn in agriculture.

"That's been helped by a number of fleet deals to buyers, such as livestock building clearance contractors, with one business in particular that runs around 40 machines - around half of which are Manitou - purchasing six new units."

With the business established, and its first year successfully completed, thoughts are turning to its evolution and development.

"Ideally, one service manager should be running four of five technicians, and we want to get to a level of business that justifies the recruitment that will

enable us to get to this," says Andrew.

"That includes the groundcare side, where there's plenty of potential for growth. There's also scope in the PDI and delivery of the car trailers, as well as servicing items on them, such as brakes - these are often used for car

**“A good premises is important, but great staff are essential”**

transport by the likes of breakdown companies, and can do 20-30,000 miles per year, so have a significant service need. We have the workshop space and the technicians to do it. Financial success depends on ensuring their time is fully-utilised on retail preparation, warranty work, and service demands."

As to expanding the sales side of the business, Andrew says B&B is keeping a careful eye on other franchise

opportunities.

"Obviously we have a strong relationship with AGCO across our B&B Tractors branches, but this area is already covered by a longstanding agreement with another dealer, which we fully respect. But we are on the lookout for any brand that aligns with the business here.

There are some franchises we hold at our other depots that could fit, and, in the current climate, changes may happen and opportunities may open up. But, in terms of agricultural

implement lines, these really need to be offered alongside tractors, so I don't think that's a route we will go down.

"Agriculture remains the cornerstone of our business, but we're excited to be expanding into new industries. By concentrating on a single primary product line from a manufacturer with a comprehensive offering, we've been able to develop deep expertise and connections with the full range of equipment we offer."



# Powering ahead

Craig Hoare, sales and marketing manager for the UK and Ireland at Toro UK speaks to *Service Dealer* editor STEVE GIBBS about growth, change, and why Hayter remains close to the company's heart.



Toro UK's sales and marketing manager, Craig Hoare

**Service Dealer:** How has the business progressed since the change of name to 'Toro UK' in 2021?

**Craig Hoare** The decision to change to Toro UK was taken to align the UK with the rest of the global Toro family, as well as looking to grow the brand recognition of Toro outside of our traditional golf market. We have seen strong success in growing the Toro brand within the UK contractor market, with many dealers embracing the opportunities in this area, as well as growing our market share in the zero-turn category.

**SD:** What changes do you feel your dealer network will have noticed since the development?

**CH:** A lot of the things they knew and loved have remained the same, notably Hayter, which is still the market-leading pioneer in the rear roller category.

Dealers will have noticed they now have greater opportunities with an expanded Toro portfolio. We continue to invest in the Toro brand with our marketing efforts helping Toro grow and gain strong momentum in the UK, which I know dealers who have embraced the Toro range are really pleased with.

**SD:** At the time, I remember you saying the Hayter name would not be disappearing - is that still the case?

**CH:** Hayter is infused into the very buildings at Spellbrook, and holds a special place for us in our hearts. Promoting and championing Toro is not at the expense of Hayter, and we have been working on some special projects which will come out in 2026, which will only emphasise our love and commitment to the Hayter brand. I can't tell you what just yet, you will have to wait and see!

**SD:** What is Toro UK's relationship with Reesink, who distribute the golf and professional Toro products here?

**CH:** 2024 saw the relationship between Toro and Reesink UK hit 40 years. Toro prides itself on its long-standing relationships with its distributors, which helps to foster a culture of excellence, amply demonstrated by Toro awarding Richard Wood of Reesink with 'Toro International Master Salesperson,' which was the first time this has been awarded outside of the US.

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

**CH:** I have been in this industry for over 25 years, and I have seen more new brands entering this market in the last 5-to-7 years than in the 18-to-20 years before it. New technology companies are entering the market and disrupting the established brands. We are seeing this in many industries, not just ours. New entrants to the market take the risks to establish a new technology and deal with the teething problems, which enables established brands to learn from their mistakes and invest at the right time. At Toro, we have a long history of quality and reliability,

which customers look for, and which will stand us in good stead against the new emerging brands. As in sport, competition breeds excellence as everyone strives to be the best.

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

**CH:** The needs of domestic and professional users are different. Professional users require longer run times, enhanced durability and toughness. When we design machines, these needs are at the forefront of the development process, and are reflected in the different testing schedules and test conditions that domestic and professional machines are put through. This will often dictate different componentry and materials, such as higher wattage motors, or professional-grade gearboxes in professional machines, which, in turn, will be reflected in higher retail costs, which would put off the majority of domestic users, anyway.

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

**CH:** The Toro Company was built on a tradition of quality and caring relationships, with a network of

professional distributors, dealers, rental stores and retailers in more than 125 countries. In the UK, we have been working with our dealers, distributors and retailers for over 80 years. We have seen a lot of change in those 80 years, and the network is changing at a rapid rate. *Service Dealer* has reported around the turmoil in the dealer network as dealers retire, go into administration, or have a lack of succession. We are constantly reviewing our network to ensure we have the ability to serve our end customers' needs.

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

**CH:** Partnership is a key word I use with our sales team and customers. It is only by working together to ensure we provide the best products and services that both the manufacturer and dealer can be successful. We expect the highest standards from dealers, and we look to align with the ones which have the customer at the core of their business. Dealers can expect high-quality products and innovative solutions for their customers, coupled with a globally-recognised brand, which will help to strengthen their offering and help make their dealership successful.

**SD:** You regularly take groups of dealers on trips over to the United



New Hayter Harrier models

**States to visit the Toro manufacturing facilities. What do you feel you and your dealers gain from that?**

**CH:** It is important for us to showcase the wider Toro enterprise to our dealers. By showing them our testing and manufacturing facilities, they become advocates to our end customers, and can share the Toro brand qualities of technological innovation and superior quality, because they have witnessed all of this first-hand. By taking UK dealers to our head office, we also use it as an opportunity to champion the needs of the UK market with our colleagues in the US, who are designing and developing new machinery, as they can hear first-hand from dealers who have real-world knowledge of the needs of the UK customer.

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

**CH:** Dating back to the Industrial Revolution, Britain has a strong tradition in innovation and embracing technology and change. We have a duty to decarbonise, and our industry is not exempt from this. The transition to non-fossil fuel technologies – either electric or hydrogen – is inevitable, and we must work hard to understand how our industry and dealers can adapt to this change.

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

**CH:** My background is not an engineering one, so I am at risk of ‘veering out of my lane.’ However, there are already machines such as our Toro Revolution Zero Turns, which offer comparable power and ability to their fossil fuel equivalents. When I talk to our engineers, it is not blind faith, but rigorous testing, analysis and verification of electrical power that is proving to them that it has its place in our industry.

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

**CH:** I understand the dealer’s concerns around this. There is still some service work which must be carried out on electrical machines. The workshop is not about to completely disappear from dealerships, but it will play a smaller part in it in the future. Our industry was built on the repair of the combustion engine, but, as the technology evolves, so must our dealerships.

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

**CH:** This is a challenge for all within our industry. We are supporting our dealers with disposal where needed, as well as talking to other manufacturers to see if there could be a collective solution for dealers for a safe and responsible way of disposing and recycling batteries.

**SD: You have recently held a series of roadshow events around the country. In this age of electronic communication, why are these still important to Toro UK?**

**CH:** We utilise many ways of communicating with our dealers, and, in recent years, electronic communication has proven to be an efficient mechanism, which can allow things such as training to have minimal impact on dealership staff being out of the business. These roadshows were specifically to launch the upgraded Hayter Harrier Pro Series. We felt that physical events were the best way to give dealers and end users the opportunity to test these upgrades for themselves.

**SD: What did you introduce to your network at these events?**

**CH:** Following on from dealer and end-user feedback around some performance issues in extreme



The company’s presence at 2024’s SALTEX, alongside Reesink

conditions of the Hayter Harrier Pro models, we conducted thorough analysis, and identified some upgrades to our machines. We launched these upgrades for the 2025 models, and utilised the events to communicate why and what has been upgraded, and also gave attendees the opportunity to try the upgraded machines for themselves.

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

**CH:** This is a question I know that myself and many of my peers are grappling with. For any business, you will always try to understand what return on investment you get for any activity, and, with shows, it can quite often be hard to quantify. Other industries are innovating in an ever-increasing digital world to find new ways to communicate with their customers – such as the car and tech industries, which will livestream launch events. We will continue to ensure that we embrace the most effective ways to communicate with our customers, both physically and digitally.

**SD: Toro UK are sponsoring the Service Dealer Conference & Awards**

**again this year. Can you say why that’s something you choose to do?**

**CH:** Service Dealer has and continues to provide a vital link between the dealer network and the manufacturers and suppliers, which we like to support. The conference provides interesting speakers, who can help to inform and challenge dealers, whilst the awards are a great opportunity for the industry to come together to network and celebrate what is great about independent dealers.

**SD: I recently heard you on the Radio 4 show ‘Dough,’ speaking on how you believed ‘autonomy’ would be the future for outdoor powered machinery. Can you expand on that?**

**CH:** I think that autonomy will play a large part in the future of our lives in general. With the growth of technology and AI, we are already seeing ‘autonomy’ entering our lives, from adaptive cruise control and lane assist in cars to smart speakers in our homes. Our industry will inevitably embrace these new technologies, and we are seeing that in the growth of wireless robot technology. The professional side of the turf industry, like many industries, is struggling with labour, and, as such, will turn to autonomy to help fill this void.

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

**CH:** Since 2020 and COVID-19, we have had many challenges thrown at this industry, as well as the eternal worry of the weather. With all dealers, I would encourage them to evaluate what their customer journey looks like. Consumers have very different expectations now than they used to have, and our dealers will need to adapt. Consumers have embraced different ways to access goods and services, and dealers need to ensure they meet these expectations. I am still surprised by dealers who fail to invest in their websites to ensure they are visible to their local customers.

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

**CH:** Toro will continue to be a leader globally in the maintenance of the outdoor environment, investing in new technologies and continuing to build quality and caring relationships with our customers. In the UK, we will be looking to deploy this strategy within our region, investing in people and products to ensure that we grow Toro to remain a trusted leader in the UK turf and ground care industry.

**SD: Thank you.**



Toro UK’s stand at last year’s GroundsFest

# Kit that cuts it

LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR, recently attended a PSD Groundscare dealer day, and found out how the company selects their new machinery options – and why strong dealer connections are key to success.



The recent PSD demonstration day took place at the Forest of Arden Golf Club



An Eiel scarifier being put through its paces



The Grin mowers showcased their pulverising action

So far this year, I've had the chance to attend several dealer days organised by manufacturers and distributors – events where new machines are unveiled, and the dealer network get hands-on experience.

One such event was an invite from PSD Groundscare to attend a two-day product update held at the impressive Forest of Arden Golf Club in Warwickshire. With over 100 dealers in attendance, it was a strong

demonstration of just how important face-to-face engagement still is in our industry.

PSD Groundscare, for those unfamiliar, is a specialist supplier of groundscare machinery, operating under the GGM Group umbrella. Their approach is simple yet effective: provide innovative solutions backed by a national network of independent dealers and hire companies. It's this combination of forward-thinking products and solid partnerships that continues to resonate with dealers.

## New machinery on demo

April's event offered a full morning of presentations from six overseas manufacturers, followed by an afternoon of live demos. On show were the latest innovations from SABO, GRIN, EcoTech Italia, Eiel, Koppl and Canycom – all companies whose equipment I was keen to get to know better.

As a professional gardener, I've previously used Eiel's scarifiers, so I was especially interested to hear from the company's MD, Fredric Lietaer. His passion for the craft was evident as he

introduced the newest generation of Eiel E-ZR dethatching machines—what he called “a real game-changer.” These self-propelled units use ultra-thin DoubleCut blades that rotate against the direction of travel, lifting moss and thatch efficiently while minimising lawn damage. With their built-in full-width rear roller, these machines leave behind a clean, striped finish. It's clear they've been designed with professional end-users in mind.

Another interesting development from Eiel was the new Ecocure

Top Dresser. Robust and even in its material distribution, I could easily see its applications across cricket squares, bowling greens and golf course tees.

From there, Stefano Corti of GRIN introduced us to their unique “pulverising mowers.” This concept was new to me. The deeper cowl and absence of an outlet means the grass is pulverised into fine clippings, and left to settle into the lawn. Not only does this save time and waste handling, but it also improves the health of the grass by feeding it naturally. I was so

impressed that I've since asked to trial one of their mowers at several of my customers' sites.

The SABO stand caught my attention, with its legacy of German engineering and strong product design. Lars Daniel the company's MD, gave an insight into the values of the business and its extensive range of products, which includes both battery and traditional fuel-powered tools. Offered to the end-user are a plethora of pedestrian rotary mowers, as well as a range of ride-on flail mowers that had



Canycom brush cutter



A brush attachment seen on a Koppl machine



The Eliet range on show also included a top dresser

previously been marketed under the Stella brand.

Koppl showcased a range of brush-cutters and sweepers, while Canycom brought their well-built ride-on brushcutters - machines known for their durability. Meanwhile, EcoTech's remote-controlled flail mowers made an impact. Designed for managing heavy scrub and steep slopes, these machines offer real safety benefits especially when there's a need to cut steep slopes. I've personally noticed a rising interest from hire shops and contractors in these machines.

### Understanding challenges faced by dealers

While events like this are invaluable, I also wanted to understand more about how PSD identifies and selects new machinery. I spoke with Chris Gibson, managing director of PSD, who gave me an insight into the thinking behind their product strategy.

"We're always looking to expand our product offering in a way that makes it more appealing to both dealers and the end-user," Chris explained. "But it's not just about adding something new - it has to offer real innovation, exceptional performance, and significant benefits over the competition."

Their product selection isn't random, either. Chris said: "We're approached

by manufacturers from all over the world, but we don't jump at every opportunity. We've learned over time that it's far more successful working with family-owned companies, where we can build a long-term relationship with the owner or manager. That trust is key."

Even with strong leads, onboarding a new brand takes time. Chris states: "It can often take over 12 months, especially when you're starting from scratch. But, in the case of Canycom, we signed a distribution agreement in under four months. That was unprecedented for a normally cautious Japanese company. In fact, they told us they'd never signed an agreement that quickly before - it was hugely gratifying to earn that level of trust."

Of course, regulatory compliance plays a role. "We do all the necessary due diligence to make sure each product has the proper CE and UKCA certification," Chris added. "That's a non-negotiable part of our process."

When it comes to working with dealers, PSD takes an inclusive approach. Chris said: "We'll work with any dealer who wants to work with us, provided there's a viable area and they're focused on offering good customer service and support. Our most successful dealers are those who understand the benefits of developing business with alternative

brands - especially when it helps protect them from sudden changes by big multinationals."

I asked Chris what he believes makes PSD's offering stand out in such a competitive market. "Quality, performance and value for money are at the core of what we do," he said. "But, from a dealer's perspective, I think the fact that all our sales team have previous experience working in dealerships really helps - we genuinely understand the challenges dealers face, and go the extra mile to support them."

Chris also had some advice for dealers navigating today's tougher trading environment. "Demonstrations are absolutely essential," he said. "There's no point waiting for the phone to ring. Dealers need to be proactive - get in front of customers, show them the machines, and offer solutions."

On the topic of hire, Chris believes it presents a good opportunity - though not without challenges. "Hire can provide valuable additional income. It's worked well for us at GGM, but it does require extra capital and resources, so it's not for everyone."

As for broader trends, Chris noted a shift in buyer behaviour: "Professionals are scrutinising whole-life costs more carefully now. There's less interest in 'cheap and

cheerful' - customers are prioritising performance, quality, and longevity. Autonomous machines are drawing attention, too, although there's still some scepticism about how well they'll perform over the long term."

When I asked if any recent launches had exceeded expectations, Chris smiled. "Honestly, all our new products have been received with real enthusiasm," he said. "It just shows the importance of patience and choosing carefully."

If you are planning to see any of these innovations for yourself, PSD recently exhibited at the Arb Show in Wiltshire and the Balmoral Show in Northern Ireland during May. Their flagship showcase, however, will be at GroundsFest in September, where the full portfolio will be on display. They will also be supporting dealers at a range of county shows and local events throughout the year.

All in all, the dealer day was a valuable reminder of just how much the UK grounds care industry has evolved. We're spoiled for choice when it comes to machinery - but behind that choice is a network of dedicated people like Chris and the team at PSD, who work hard to bring the right solutions to the market. Without that bond between dealer and supplier, our jobs would be a lot harder - and our customers less well-served.



EcoTech's Pantha H27



Service Dealer's Laurence Gale spoke to PSD's MD, Chris Gibson



# Turney days prove an ag and turf draw

This spring, Turney Group, 2024 *Service Dealer* Farm Machinery Dealer of the Year, hosted an Oxon HQ open day focused on its farm equipment, and a professional turf demonstration in Oxford. MARTIN RICKATSON visited to talk with MD Phil Bush and marketing manager Sammy Denne about the events and happenings within the business.



The Turney business has been fortunate with recruitment and retention, particularly of engineers, said Phil Bush

**W**hile the past couple of years have been tough for the farm machinery trade, Oxfordshire's Turney Group has had at least a couple of reasons to celebrate.

In 2024, its Turney Agriculture business took the Farm Machinery Dealer of the Year prize at the *Service Dealer Awards*, and won key ag machinery supplier New Holland's Q1 Customer Service Champion Award, scoring highest across the board. Meanwhile, its Turney Groundcare division saw its Ransomes Jacobsen territory extended significantly to the

south and west of its established area. Twelve months earlier, the firm marked 75 years in business, celebrating with an event for customers, staff and suppliers at its Middleton Stoney HQ.

However, 2023 also saw the sudden passing of Paul Turney, chairman and formerly managing director of the business his father Peter had founded. Paul's son, Jeremy, had succeeded him as chairman. Phil Bush, formerly of Ernest Doe and Agwood/Crawfords, had only then recently joined as group sales manager. When the existing managing director left the business for personal reasons, Phil was asked to become dealer principal, but Paul

passed away just four days later, resulting in an especially challenging time for the company and its team. Once reorganisation had taken place, in January 2025, Phil was appointed managing director. With all this having happened over the past couple of years, there has been plenty going on in the company, to add to the ag and turf trade's general challenges.

## A bit of history

Formerly known as PA Turney, the business was created in 1948 by Peter Turney, Paul's father. The son of a farmer and agricultural contractor, he founded the company in a rented barn in Middleton Stoney, offering engineering services to farmers. Three years later, he had been sufficiently successful to purchase nearby premises, and the company still has its HQ on that site today.

In 1953, PA Turney was appointed a sub-dealer for Nuffield tractors, establishing a new machinery retail business alongside other franchises, including Ransomes, Lister and Bentall. Five years later it was incorporated as a limited company.

By 1961, the business' agreement

with Nuffield elevated it to full dealership status, covering the whole of Oxfordshire, but it was another deal signed the same year that was to have more lasting consequences, with the appointment as dealer for Sperry New Holland and its lines of combines, balers and forage equipment, a connection which endures today. Nine years later the company switched from Nuffield tractors to sell and support Ford across north Oxon, again creating a link that has endured.

During 1968, PA Turney made another significant business move by entering the market for professional grass machinery, acquiring freehold premises at nearby Weston-on-the-Green. Here it established dedicated sales, service and parts facilities for its new division, and created another lasting connection, ultimately signing a franchise agreement with Ransomes.

The two branches remain at the core of the company today, having been upgraded over the decades that followed. By 1980, the business was on the acquisition trail, purchasing certain business assets of Ford dealer AV Fitt, taking its coverage from north into west Oxon, from a depot at Little Tew.

The following year, an eight-acre site at Chipping Norton was purchased to replace this with a new premises, and PA Turney commenced trading from here in 1983. The 1985 acquisition of certain assets of another Ford dealer, Curtis and Horn, enabled growth into mid-Oxon via a site at Britannia Works, Botley, near Oxford, later replaced by a new depot at nearby Eynsham.

In 1989, the company moved into Northants, having been awarded the Ford New Holland franchise for the county that September. A premises was acquired the following year at Wellingborough to serve the area.

By the mid-1990s, despite the setback of a major fire in the Middleton Stoney parts warehouse, the Turney business not only began a site refurbishment, but also acquired certain trading assets of AG Jones, neighbouring Ford New Holland dealers with branches at Stoke Mandeville, Bucks, and Maulden, Beds. By the turn of the century, the groundcare business also expanded, with the acquisition of the Textron franchise for Oxon, Bucks, and Northants.

The next two decades saw significant reorganisation of the company. With farms becoming fewer



The event attracted a strong turnout of customers keen to talk with Turney Agriculture's key suppliers

but larger, it was decided to focus on the outlets at Weston-on-the-Green (for grass machinery), Middleton Stoney and Princes Risborough (to where the Stoke Mandeville depot had been relocated), supporting the existing trading area for key franchises from these main sites. In 2021, new Turney Agriculture, Turney Groundcare and Turney Garden Machinery branding was created to identify the three arms of the renamed Turney Group. There is also a Turney Construction arm, primarily concerned with sales of New Holland light construction equipment.

**Turney Group today**

Since reorganisation, Turney Group strategy is led by Phil and Jeremy, with day-to-day operations overseen by the senior management team of Phil, Jeremy, operations manager Dan Coates, aftersales manager Peter McFerran, and finance manager Neil Houghton – plus Jeremy’s cousin Emlyn Thomas, who is a non-executive director. Turney Agriculture’s key franchises include New Holland, Manitou, Kuhn, Väderstad, Opico, Claydon, McConnel and Can-Am. The

main agencies for the Groundcare business are Ransomes Jacobsen and Iseki, while the Garden Machinery division primarily deals with Stihl, Husqvarna, Hayter and Honda, with some overlap on the Groundcare side.

“We’ve recently made a significant investment in expanding the Turney Groundcare arm, with the lease of the former P&D Engineering premises, based in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire,” explained Phil at the Turney Agriculture open day, held in April at its Middleton Stoney HQ.

“We had been looking for a groundcare premises to take our core franchises into this area, and while it was an agricultural engineering concern under the former owners, we will be operating a groundcare business from the site, tying in with our significantly increased Ransomes Jacobsen territory, plus Can-Am, Husqvarna Pro and other premium franchises.

“We plan to retain some existing staff, and we’ve also recruited a new team member to oversee the depot. Both he and Jeremy live close by, and it’s also right on the M5, so is well linked. All being well we’ll have

commenced trading here on July 1.”

In a slight departure for the overall Turney company, there are also plans to take on the retail business established on the site by P&D, which includes animal feeds and farm sundries.

“This is an established part of the business with a reasonable turnover, so, although it’s a new sector for us, it seemed sensible to buy the stock and carry it on, supported by the staff who know how it operates,” Phil explains.

“But our core focus remains on agricultural and groundcare machinery. Ag-wise, last year was tough – the telehandler market in this area was down 50%, for example. The year as a whole was mixed, though. We had an OK first half, but the back end was difficult, particularly October and November. December, though, was extremely good, and we ended up further ahead than we actually budgeted for.

“Moving into 2025, this year was one of the hardest to call for wholesales sales predictions when we sat down to plan our budgets. We knew, as others would, that we would likely be relatively busy in March because of the tax year

end, but, beyond that, things were difficult to predict.

“So far, though, things have been relatively good. Handler sales, for example, bounced back, with eight units retailed in the first quarter alone.”

While many ag dealers tend to have a tractor segment in which they are particularly strong, Phil says there is a real mix in the New Holland tractor types sold across Turney territory.

“There’s a lot of groundcare demand for New Holland Boomer compact models and the T4 and T5 tractors of 50-100hp. Then we have livestock farms buying 75-150hp T5 and T6 tractors, plus a lot of large arable farms running long wheelbase 250-350hp T7 models. Our main competition comes from local John Deere, AGCO and JCB dealers. We have a loyal local following for tractors, and are strong in combines too, across Oxon and Bucks, and well into neighbouring counties, including Northants and Beds.”

The line of implement offerings that support the main New Holland and Manitou franchises has stayed stable for many years now, with relatively recent additions, including direct drill specialist Claydon.

“We’re lucky in having some good strong franchises and relationships with our suppliers. The only recent change has been the addition of AW Trailers, a high-quality manufacturer based in Herefordshire. We’ve done some good trailer business in the past, so, although it takes a while to get up and running with another brand, we are keen to show potential customers what AW can offer.”

While both ag and groundcare dealers across the industry face severe challenges sourcing and retaining good staff, Phil says the Turney business has been fortunate with recruitment and retention, particularly of engineers.

“We have fifteen technicians and four apprentices, plus seven technicians in our groundcare business, and a good parts team at all three depots, including Princes Risborough, which is a parts-only operation.

“I live a couple of hours away, but this is a nice place with a good culture, and it’s a pleasure to work here, making the travel well worthwhile. I think the strong turnout we’ve had today shows this translates into great support from our customers.”

**Turf demo day**

**While the Middleton Stoney open day focused primarily on ag equipment, Turney Groundcare held its first commercial open day at Oxford University Parks the following month, supported by many of its turf equipment suppliers.**

“We had a strong attendance from horticultural teams from the Oxford University colleges, landscaping contractors, and professionals, schools and council customers,” says Sammy Denne, Turney Group marketing manager.

“It gave us a great opportunity to demonstrate equipment, such as the Ransomes Aurora, the first commercial battery-powered out-front rotary mower, plus zero-turn mowers from Ariens and Hustler, which drew a lot of interest from visitors keen to try them out.

Stihl’s commercial team was also present, with professional hedge cutters, strimmers, blowers, chainsaws and mowers.

“We also demonstrated Iseki products including TG tractors, the SXG 327 ride-on cut-and-collect mower, and the Addax utility vehicle, which drew attention particularly from council customers. And robotic technology was also one of the highlights – Husqvarna in particular had its Ceora and 580L EPOS professional robots demonstrating their ability to handle the precision mowing requirements of golf courses.

“Feedback from suppliers and customers was overwhelmingly positive, and the day presented a fantastic opportunity for visitors to see and try multiple machines in one space. It’s certainly something we will look to do again.”



*While 2025 was hard to plan for, first-quarter ag numbers were relatively good for Turney Agriculture*



*While agriculture was the day’s focus, products from the likes of Can-Am and Hustler were also on show*

# Do the numbers make a difference to dealers?

A strange question, no doubt – but does it have any significance in today's global market, asks KEITH CHRISTIAN?

**S**ervice Dealer's editor Steve Gibbs raised the above question in one of his blogs on the Service Dealer Weekly Update back in April this year, and I thought a follow-up with some detail may be of interest to some.

Just to be clear, we are talking about outdoor power equipment, and whether knowledge of the number of units sold into the UK market and the types of mowers, handheld products, commercial groundcare equipment, etcetera sold would be of any help to a grass machinery dealer? Also, fundamentally, is this information available, and can it be discovered or acquired for a fee?

Many in the UK will be familiar with the statistics provided by the AEA on a monthly and annual basis regarding tractor sales by horsepower, plus annually in arrears by brand. This information is available because tractors must be registered in the UK, and the statistics placed in the public domain. The brands of tractors are small in number, and specific model information is not available within this scheme – only the horsepower categories.

The variations within outdoor power equipment are endless. Categories need to include the type of equipment, from a simple lawnmower to hand-held product and into the commercial end of the market. Nowadays, this will include the derivatives of petrol, diesel

and battery, with light mains electrics (LMEs) for many of the same products. There is also the many derivatives of lawnmowers by size, push or driven, four-wheeled or rear-roller (for instance). To collate all of this information into something that could be of use is a mammoth task, yet, to an extent, it can be done.

Many industries collate statistics through commercial organisations or their own trade organisations, but this usually will involve input from a member base, and some rather tedious work to establish import numbers through various import or commodity codes. Member companies of a trade organisation will not normally cover the whole market, and a certain amount

of educated guesswork will come into play to fill the gaps. It should also be noted that, if a trade organisation is collating statistics, it will probably be for the benefit of members only, and used as a hook to bring in new members. If this is not the case, there will probably be a fee to pay for the information, as it will not be provided free of charge.

The Outdoor Power Equipment Industry (OPEI) trade organisation in the USA provides exclusive shipment data and market forecasts for the complete spectrum of outdoor power equipment and power sources. The availability of industry statistics is on its website, but this information is only available to paid-up members of the OPEI. This is completely understandable, as the time and cost involved in maintaining such a complicated and comprehensible set of data is huge. The OPEI claim to be able to represent around 30-plus categories of outdoor power equipment – 90% of all shipments in the US market – from members' information. They have been gathering data for more than 20 years, and have the historical data covering this period.

## How useful?

There are some commercial organisations that claim to be able to provide data for the outdoor power equipment market in the UK, but I have no idea how accurate or useful this data would be, and one is only going to find out by buying into it.

Is the minute detail of this available data really useful to a dealer, as they

are national statistics and not regional? I doubt this would help, other than to identify national trends. More important, perhaps, would be knowing the percentage changes from LMEs to battery-powered units, and the changes from petrol to battery, or the increase in robotic mower sales. I think the generalisations that highlight the bigger trend changes would be more useful than to know how many 18-inch push mowers were sold in the UK.

I suspect that, locally, a dealer will pick up quickly on these trends and adapt to them. The dealers' own suppliers or manufacturers will also be a solid source of certain statistics for their own sales in the UK, and should be able to share this information with their dealer network one way or the other. The statistics or data do exist in the UK, but how complete it remains is a debatable point - as does its benefit to a dealer. This area of data collection will rely on trade association members inputting data to their various organisations, who will then add in data that is available through government import statistics, but, as is the case in the USA, the data release will be confined to a member base, and will not be wholly accurate in terms of the overall market.

If a dealer is really interested in finding out how a certain type and brand of product is selling in the UK, they could get hold of a commodity code and go onto the HMRC's website to check on imports of certain products. It does not include data on

products produced and sold in the UK, meaning you can only get part of the story.

Commodity codes are essential for importing goods, as they are used to identify products and determine duties, taxes, and other regulations. They are also used on import declarations. You will need a 10-digit commodity code for imports into the UK, and an 8-digit code for exports, according to Wise.

The matrix required to track all types of product and variations across the OPE industry is immense, and requires much research and input from manufacturers and dealers, and a third party to collate the information. No doubt there are some IT whiz kids out there that could do this, but the level of cooperation needed to make it usable is probably way out of reach. The attempts I have seen over the years have fallen short by some margin, and only one in the UK is close to being useful, but it is sadly not in the public domain (it is not for me to identify it).

I would suggest that those dealers who want more information ask for it from their various suppliers, and collate what they learn for their own benefit. After all, when a dealer is being asked to place a large stock order, the supplier needs to dangle a few carrots to encourage the dealer to come onboard – or, indeed, to stay onboard. There is also the option of using a trade expert or customs broker, but this is going to cost someone.



**Market trends**

It is interesting introducing a new product into the UK market - and I have had my fair share of these 'market breakthroughs.' Going back over 45 years, I remember the old Dixon zero-turns, and, whilst I sold a few, it seemed they would never catch on. However, after many years - with influence from the USA and the proliferation of zero-turns - they are a popular alternative in the UK from domestic users to top-end commercial users. Watching the statistics for the sales of these units over many years, it was a slow growth market, but it seemed to have potential for the more patient dealer or importer. The problem is always the same, though - once a certain product gains

momentum, everyone jumps on the bandwagon. The secret is to be in and out before too much competition starts to affect margin retention. Been there and got several T-shirts!

Current trends would be battery-powered equipment and robotic mowers. When one looks at the proliferation of these products in such a short time, you can just hear the margin retention crashing through the floor, as more and more 'clones' hit the market. In my experience of introducing new products that catch on, there is probably a three-year window from launch to market saturation. This is all made worse now by the multiple routes to market being exercised by some manufacturers to maximise their market penetration.

So, back to the question at hand. Do the numbers make a difference to dealers? Yes, of course they do, but is it worth a dealer going to the time, expense and trouble of collating data themselves that are national statistics? Unlikely. However, try to get more information from your suppliers when they have you pinned to your desk trying to get a preseason order out of you. Alternatively, make some time to visit relevant shows or exhibitions in different countries, and see if you can spot a trend in the making and get ahead of the game.

**Just remember: the data is out there. It's what you can do with it in your business that matters.**



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That's how Husqvarna's Automower specialist, NIKLAS BROBERG, views the UK robotic mower market as he prepares to return to his native Sweden after seven years working with the team at Newton Aycliffe.

**N**iklas Broberg is a key account manager, and Automower specialist, at Husqvarna.

A native Swede, he has been working with the UK team at Newton Aycliffe for the past seven years, having been sent over initially to launch Automowers in the UK. When he arrived in the UK, Niklas came with a wealth of knowledge in robotic lawnmowing, and, according to the company, was the longest-serving, most experienced Automower specialist in the world at the time.



Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke speaking to Husqvarna's Niklas Broberg

Joining the company in 1989, Niklas became fully dedicated to all things Automower back in 2009. Upon his arrival in the UK, Niklas told *Service Dealer*: "I'm looking forward to a new chapter in a new country with Husqvarna. My knowledge of robotic lawnmowing will help the team in the UK to work together with our dealers to grow the market further. It's a challenge I'm excited about, and I look forward to aligning with our authorised dealer network to support them on all things Automower."

As he now prepares to return to Sweden, Niklas reflected with *Service Dealer's* owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke, on his time in the UK – and how he views the future of the robotic mowing market.

### Mission to launch Automowers

"When I came to the UK, it was almost a challenge to just speak to people about robotic mowers. Also, I came from a country where the showrooms were just filled with solely Husqvarna, because it's such a big brand in Scandinavia. Everyone in Sweden, whether they were 70 years old or 5 years old, knew what a robotic mower was.

"At the time I came to the UK, we were selling around 40,000 robotic units a year in Sweden, compared to just 3,000 units in the UK.

"A lot of sales of robotic mowers come from the customers themselves having plenty of their own knowledge about the machines. Dealers, when I first came, needed

that knowledge from their customers to commit to the technology. At that time in the UK, no one really knew about the concept of robotic mowing.

"Now the public know about robotic mowing, so they are asking their dealers about it. Therefore, there is much more commitment from the dealer network regarding robotics. So, the dealers have no option really. They need to know how it works – especially now with its popularity in the commercial sector. When golf courses are asking about it, dealers need to be up on the subject, as it's a big talking point."

### Education and explanation

"In my first year in the UK, we trained maybe 100 dealers. We had a list of who was interested in robotics and who wasn't. We started with the more interested ones and did big dealer training sessions. We would try to get the big, multi-branch dealers together and do a whole robotics day just to get them more interested in the concept.

"Then, I remember, we did a big commercial push on TV one year, and, after that, things almost kicked off a little bit. It was such a big moment to get the knowledge out there to the domestic users, because, whilst the units are not cheap, they could now see the benefits of their use. You don't put petrol into them, and you don't waste time with them. And, of course, a huge benefit is the quality of cut. From a domestic point of view, your lawn is going to look fantastic all year round."

### Swedish levels of servicing

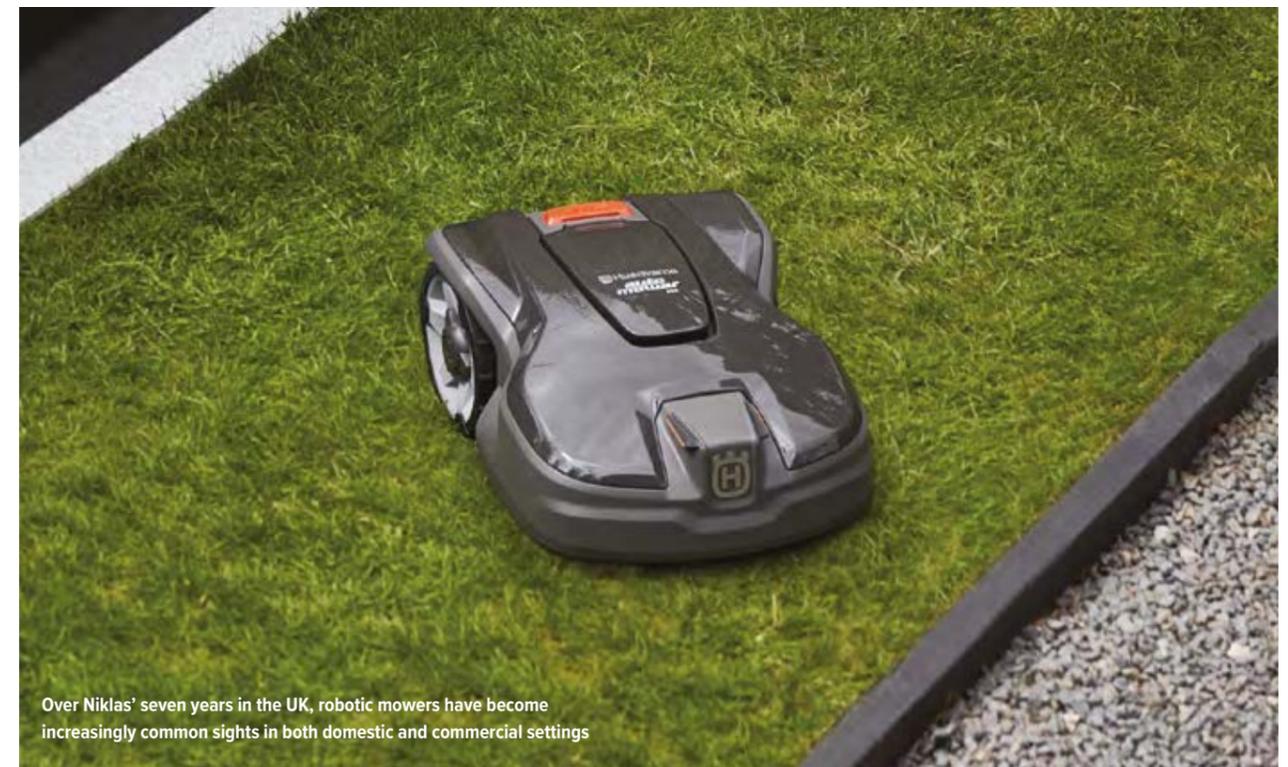
"When I first came from Sweden to the UK, no dealers thought there was any money in doing service work on robotic mowers. I would tell them about dealers in Sweden doing hundreds of services every year. They thought: 'That is impossible.'

But it is, of course, such a good opportunity to do aftersales business with robotics. Dealers can make sure customers have effectively a new, shiny product to go out to work each season. Now in the UK, I know one dealer for example, who does around 1000 services every year."

### Leaving the UK turfcare market

"Now that I'm leaving the UK turfcare market, it feels like I'm leaving behind the greatest opportunity in Europe for robots. This UK market, certainly when it comes to golf, with almost 3,000 courses - compared to going back home with only 400 - is a big difference. It's genuinely a great, great opportunity in the UK.

Now, when more or less every golf course is looking into the technology, it is a bit sad for me to be leaving. But, at the same time, it's quite exciting to be going back to Sweden with all that I've learned in the UK from this challenging market. It really has been a great experience."



Over Niklas' seven years in the UK, robotic mowers have become increasingly common sights in both domestic and commercial settings



Watch Duncan Murray-Clarke speak with Niklas Broberg on *Service Dealer's* YouTube channel – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9RtdqccRZo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9RtdqccRZo)



# BUSINESS MONITOR

Taking the temperature of the dealer network, sponsored by STIHL

## Dealership recruitment still 'extremely difficult'

Readers tell of struggles to both fill roles and keep hold of staff

**T**he feedback from dealers who took part in our recent survey about recruitment challenges this year was clear: not much has changed. This remains the case despite campaigns aimed at boosting the sector's visibility and appeal.

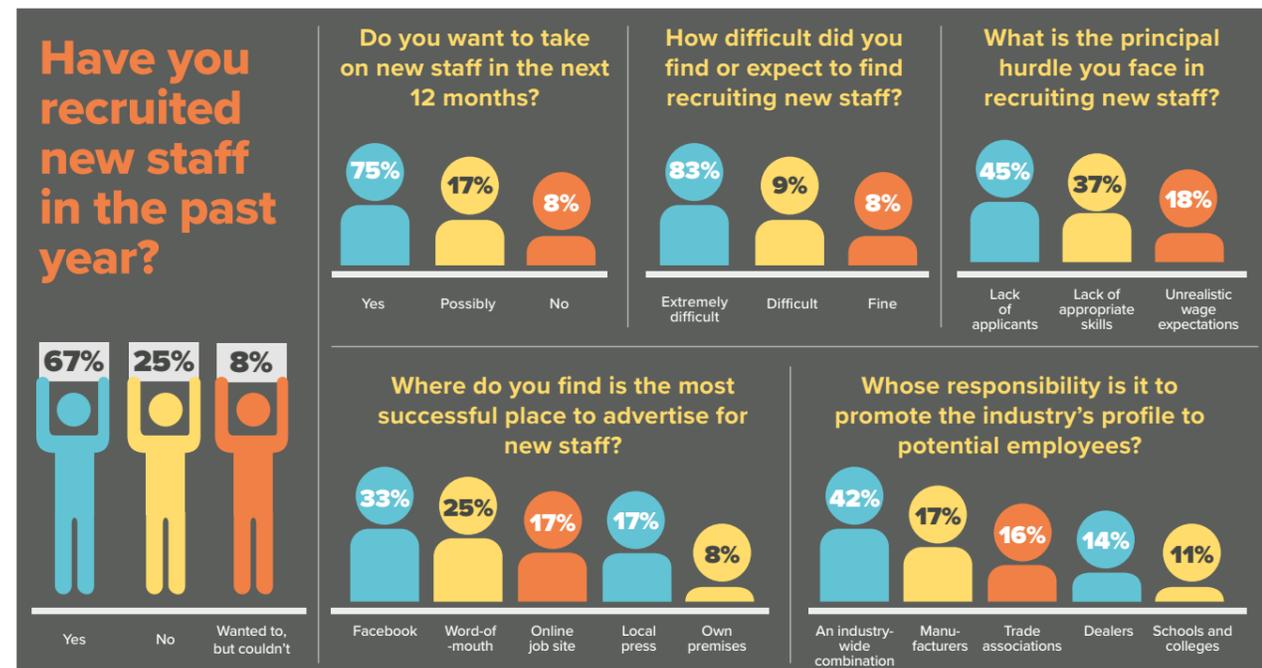
As with last year, a good number of respondents said they had hired new staff within the past 12 months. However, a significant majority (77%) are still hoping to recruit more

over the coming year. When asked about the difficulty of recruitment, a whopping 83% described it as 'extremely difficult.'

When it comes to the reasons behind these struggles, the most common issue was a simple dearth of candidates. Last year's largest bugbear – a lack of suitable skills amongst candidates – was pushed into second place. Unrealistic wage expectations were also cited quite frequently – which appears to be a

challenge we're seeing across a wide range of industries, not just our own.

As for how dealers are trying to reach potential hires, Facebook remained the most effective platform according to those who responded, followed by old-fashioned word-of-mouth. And, just like last year, there was broad agreement that the responsibility for promoting the benefits of working in this industry should be shared - among manufacturers, trade associations and dealers themselves.



## Your say...



We asked for your thoughts on the current recruitment situation in the industry – and what could be done to help dealers find the right staff?

- The LETEC and WeAreLandbased sites/campaigns are great, but they both lack an outcome for any prospective recruit. Both sites talk about what career opportunities 'could' be. Are we missing the opportunity for each of the industry associations to post their real-life opportunities in one central area to provide anyone visiting these sites with tangible examples of the type of jobs that are out there right now?
- Advertised for four months, employed two part-time staff, one 65 and one 61. Not a long-term plan, but best we can do. Schools should be promoting practical, hands-on work, instead of pushing all academic, maths and English.
- Schools and colleges do not promote into sectors where the candidate does not have a chance of a degree at the end. Now, after years of this, we have a shortage of candidates, and the attitude is 'I am worth more than that' - whether that is pay or conditions. Until this changes, things will not alter.
- It's difficult, as it's a particularly unglamorous profession. We advertised for nearly a year and had just five applicants, three of which had no experience at all, but thought it would be easy as its 'just lawnmowers.' One had unrealistic wage expectations, and the one we actually recruited has now announced he's leaving, as he's been offered a huge wage rise by another company elsewhere (not doing machinery). So it's been a frustrating waste of time. I think we will just soldier on with the staff we have and turn additional work away.
- We need to act now. If the powers that be of our industry can come together and collectively promote our diverse industry to find a way to deliver a new pathway scheme for youngsters to gain a foothold in the industry, then the issue of recruitment may start being resolved. We also need to look at pay and conditions, and finally get our hands on this huge government pile of money sitting there, waiting to be spent on apprenticeships.
- Lengthy and painful!

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# How to speed up turnaround without sacrificing quality



**Sara Hey**, vice president of operations and development at Bob Clements International, the dealership development company based in Missouri – shares the insights she offers U.S. dealers with *Service Dealer's* UK readership every issue. This issue, Sara considers: How to ward off complaints about long wait times.

**L**et's face it. Nobody likes waiting. Whether it's in a drive-thru line, or for a repair job at your shop, long wait times can drive people nuts. The good news is that you do not have to choose between speed and quality. You can have both, like a perfectly-cooked steak served in record time. Here's how.

## Quote the right time (and then add a buffer)

If you're giving customers an estimate based on pure optimism, you're setting yourself up for complaints. Instead, use what we call the average completion time.

Figuring out your technicians' average completion time doesn't require a maths degree or a crystal ball. It's simple, and once you nail it, you'll wonder how you ever scheduled jobs without it. Here's how to crunch the numbers without breaking a sweat:

- **Gather the Goods** - Start by pulling 90 days' worth of work orders for each technician. Add up all the hours they spent wrenching, fixing, and problem-solving during that time.
- **Count those jobs** - Next, figure out how many work orders that tech completed over the same 90 days. Is it 50? 80? Whatever it is, write it down (or type it up).
- **Do the magic maths** - Take the total hours worked and divide it by the number of work orders completed.
- **Formula:** Total hours ÷ Number of work orders = Average completion time

### Real-Life Example:

Let's say your tech, Bob, worked 540 hours over 90 days and completed 80 work orders.  
 $540 \div 80 = 6.75$  hours per job.

### Boom! Bob's average completion time is 6.75 hours.

Now you know that, if he has five open work orders ahead of a new customer, you can estimate he's got about 34 hours of work left. No more guessing games when scheduling jobs – you'll look like a pro and impress customers with spot-on timelines.

**It's not just maths – it's magic.**



## Build triage into the job

Your shop is not an ER, but it can learn a thing or two from how hospitals prioritise patients. Triage is your secret weapon to speed things up without sacrificing quality. Here is how it works. When a unit arrives, the tech who will eventually work on it does a quick evaluation. This triage time is built into the job itself, not tacked on as an afterthought, so it is part of your workflow from the start.

The goal is to assess the equipment, identify any issues, and determine which parts might be needed. This process allows you to get back to the customer within 24 hours (or less) with an update, and start moving parts toward the service department immediately. By doing this upfront, you avoid delays caused by last-minute discoveries, and customers appreciate the fast communication.

Triage also helps you prioritise your jobs. Quick fixes can be tackled right away, while more complex repairs are scheduled with everything in place. It's a win-win. Customers feel cared for, and your team has a clear game plan.

## Cut the word "soon" out of your vocabulary

"Soon" is the ultimate four-letter word in customer service. It is vague and frustrating, and it guarantees you will hear: "But you said it would be done soon!" Instead, give clear, specific timelines. Even if the answer is not what the customer wants to hear, they will appreciate knowing exactly what to expect.

Replace "soon" with statements like: "We will have an update for you by Thursday." Or: "You can expect your equipment to be ready by next Wednesday." Specific timelines reduce misunderstandings, and give your team a clear target to hit. This results in fewer complaints from customers and less stress for your staff.

## Wrapping it up

Speeding up turnaround times without cutting corners is not magic. It is about managing expectations, working smarter, and communicating clearly. By quoting realistic timelines using your average completion time formula, building triage into your workflow, and ditching the word "soon," you will keep customers happy and your shop humming. **You've got this!**

# A dry start with growing challenges



**Les Gammie**, of Gammies Groundcare, discusses how the dry weather is a concern for business – and how new processes from manufacturers are adding to administrative work.

**M**ay was the driest start to a season I can remember in my 40-plus years in the industry.

After an exceptional start to the season (as detailed in my previous *Diary of a Season* entry), sales and service are still performing well for us, but the current, unseasonably pleasant weather (however nice it is to enjoy) is a concern for businesses in the groundcare industry. A quick glance out of the window as you're driving shows grass edges already starting to turn brown. This has led to business starting to slow down, and I am really cautious now regarding topping up stock mid-season. The worry is that, if this dry spell continues, we won't have any grass left to cut, and this will inevitably affect sales.

Speaking of the sun, coming very soon for us is the installation of our 120KW solar system. With a proposed payback of just over two years, it's a bit of a 'no-brainer.' After the two years, this will help with our profitability – and of course, every little helps! We are also planning for the summer shows and events ahead of us. We have recently purchased a used show unit, and are getting it wrapped with new vinyls, servicing, and kitting it out so that it looks great at shows when finished.

On top of the weather concerns, some of our main suppliers have been struggling to cope with dispatching goods from the early-season sales. Delays are frustrating for all parties involved. We are bound by lead times,

but, as the dealership is the one dealing directly with the customers, we unfortunately bear the brunt of their dissatisfaction for longer than normal delivery times for goods and parts.

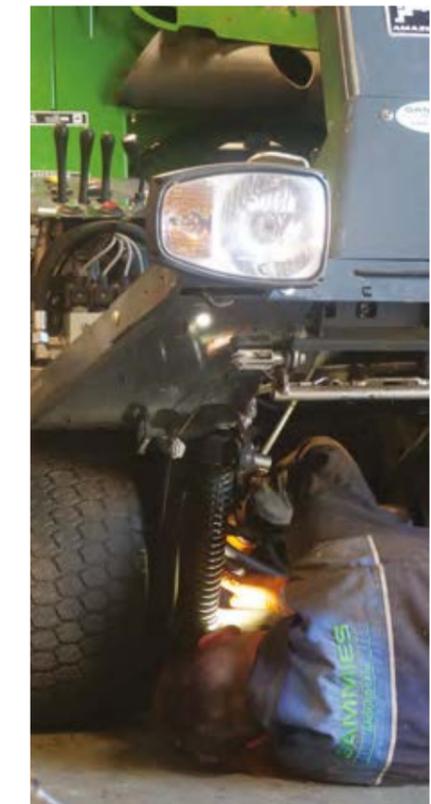
Another challenge we are facing is a trend for manufacturers/suppliers putting dealer standards in place, where they link their additional discounts, bonuses or promotions after product registration, processed in payments to us. This has led to frustration, as there is additional administrative work to ensure we keep records of what bonuses or additional discounts are due, and to check that we actually receive them. As well as this, most manufacturers/suppliers don't seem to be able to track this properly – likely due to them grappling with the new way of working themselves. This leads to us having to chase for payment of missing bonuses or discounts.

For a multi-franchise dealership like ours, who work with numerous manufacturers/suppliers, this makes the whole process even more complex, and ends up costing the company a lot of time and money to keep records and chase payments – an additional cost that we didn't have a few years ago. Sometimes, I find myself asking: why not just give a straight discount like it used to be, saving us and the supplier time and money?

Forgive the rant, but it is frustrating, as in this climate – where our costs are rising and our margin seems to be constantly eroding – every penny

counts. We need all the support we can get to remain profitable and competitive, especially when price increases aren't an option. This is why we explore a variety of cost-saving methods in the long run, including the solar panels to plan for future profitability as well as current.

Finally, as we head into the summer season, we are making sure that we have cover in all areas of the business as employees request their holidays. This can be a bit of a challenge to organise, but everyone deserves their holidays after such a frantic start to the season - even me!





# SME DIGEST

Advice for small and medium-sized enterprises

*Edited by Adam Bernstein*



## THEFTS

# You couldn't make it up!

Sometimes we come across stories that are so outlandish as to be unbelievable – where the brass neck of the criminals is beyond belief. Yet these stories are, remarkably, true, writes ADAM BERNSTIEN, *SME Digest* editor

**Consider the theft in May 2015 of £30,000 of equipment stolen from Kent-based garden machinery specialist, Godfreys, where five John Deere X590 petrol lawn tractors and a 42-inch cutter deck were taken**

More recently, B&B Tractors was ram-raided in February 2025. Although the 13 thieves fled after their van got stuck in the building, it appears that they were after quadbikes as they were seen on CCTV carrying cans of fuel.

### Risks of loss

Zachariah Islam, managing director of Region Security Guarding, says that loss in commercial and industrial environments is more prevalent than many business owners might assume. He said: "While retail settings often focus on shoplifting, industrial and commercial sectors face diverse risks that can lead to significant financial losses."

Typically, his firm sees crimes relating to external theft, which will most commonly involve trespassing and break-ins targeting valuable stock, machinery and even fuel. Islam says: "It's not uncommon for organised crime groups to begin targeting businesses if

they notice there's a lack of effective security on-site."

And then there's employee-related theft, which will often target the removal of easy-to-conceal company property (most often items like tools and electronics).

Dave Kearns, managing director of the Expert Investigations Group, sees three different vectors for attack.

The first comes through external players who commit fraud or who perpetrate cyberattacks by, for example, either obtaining monies via false invoicing or supplier frauds.

Next comes external physical theft through burglary, walk-in theft, and criminal damage.

Thirdly, Kearns highlights the risk of internal theft and fraud committed by employees.

### Losing items

Theft goes beyond the obvious 'removal' of the physical as employees can also 'lose' items such as phones or laptops.

As Kearns outlines: "It is simple for an employee to 'lose' something – steal it and report it as a loss, and sell it – especially as there are many routes for sale for stolen products."

Islam thinks the same. He, too, says it is surprisingly easy for employees to 'lose' company property, and it may not always be accidental: "In workplaces with weaker security measures, items like laptops, phones, tools, or even sensitive documents are at risk of disappearing without a trace."

However, they're certainly not the only things that will get stolen.

Islam points here to Personal Protective Equipment as another potential target that non-retail commercial environments should be wary of. It's not uncommon for workers or thieves to take them for their own personal use, or for resale purposes.

Then there's fuel, which he considers probably one of the larger 'non-conventional' targets of theft. As he outlines: "If company vehicles are left unattended, it's a perfect window for thieves – or even employees – to siphon fuel."

### Inventory loss

And what about losses of inventory in general? In relation to this, Kearns is bothered that so few businesses put internal theft and fraud on the board's agenda. He says: "It's only after a theft

or fraud that they are willing to accept the risk as real and put measures in place to prevent it happening again."

Indeed, Islam sees losses of inventory, particularly consumables that are easy to resell, as being more widespread than many business owners realise or are willing to admit. He states: "Unlike high-value items that require tracking, small consumables – such as stock-in-trade materials, office supplies, or raw goods – can disappear unnoticed over time."

But why don't directors see theft as a risk to their business? It's very odd for, as Kearns says: "There are simple, cost-effective measures they can introduce to prevent, disrupt or detect such crimes."

### A typical criminal?

With a hint of caution, Kearns says: "There are no generic telltale signs, people being dishonest generally do not attract attention to themselves."

While there have been documented and proven 'red flag' indicators, such as excessive control, a person not taking holidays, aggressive and socially disruptive behaviour, the problem is that the world has changed with virtual and hybrid working – especially as work can be subcontracted out – which makes it harder to see those indicators.

Islam reckons that the risk of an insider working with someone outside the company is "one of the biggest and most difficult to detect security threats

in commercial and industrial environments. Employees with access to sensitive information, valuable inventory, or restricted areas can significantly increase the impact of external theft or fraud."

He's seen cases where warehouse employees have coordinated with external thieves to leave access points unsecured – staff with knowledge of security systems have disabled alarms or CCTV at key moments; logistics workers have tipped off criminals about high-value shipments or weak security protocols; and office staff with financial access have leaked company banking details or conducted invoice fraud.

### The key to protection

Crime prevention measures, such as technology, zero-tolerance attitudes, written policies and inventory tracking are, in Kearns' opinion, "the most neglected area by businesses, managers and directors."

He reckons that situational crime prevention should include IT and software systems, CCTV, access control, inventory and stock monitoring, perimeter security, lighting, housekeeping, as well as a written managed protocol that is disseminated to all employees." Such measures form layers of protection.

This is a tack that Islam would take. He, too, advocates a multi-layered approach that combines physical security measures, technology, strict

policies and a strong security culture. As he says: "Businesses that rely solely on one aspect – say, just CCTV – often find that gaps still exist. The most effective strategies involve a mix of security measures and employee accountability."

If advising, he would deploy measures such as CCTV and remote monitoring for sensitive and key areas, and for recording evidence; access control and key cards to restrict movement; sign-in/sign-out systems to log items' movement and reduce unauthorised removals; regular stock audits – both scheduled and surprise; and close monitoring of high-risk items.

But even with such measures, Kearns reminds us: "Dishonest employees can override measures put in place, or the measures themselves may not be sufficient. Therefore, the question is: 'How effective are these measures?'"

"Firms believe that, once they have these measures in place, they are secure. They are not. Every time I conduct a security review, I find that CCTV is ineffective - cameras are faulty or lighting is insufficient, or access control doors have been jammed open."

### Summary

Crime happens - it's regrettable. This means that every firm needs to consider itself under potential attack, and must take proactive steps to protect its position.

## BUYING FROM ADMINISTRATION

# Caveat emptor!

The Burdens Group Limited, Balgownie Ltd and Suffolk Agri Centre – just three firms in the sector that have gone into administration in the last twelve months, writes ADAM BERNSTEIN, *SME Digest* editor.

**An administration is a procedure where a company may be rescued or reorganised, or its assets realised under the protection of a statutory moratorium.**

Notably, Paul Taylor, a partner in Fox Williams, says: "The moratorium

means that creditors cannot take or continue actions against the business in trouble. When introduced, it was hoped that it would be the equivalent of Chapter 11 rescues in the US with the original corporate entity being able to be rescued."

As to the practicalities, Freya Summers, a partner in the corporate department of Wright Hassall, says that administration sees an external administrator - usually an insolvency practitioner - appointed to manage a struggling company. She says:

“Unfortunately, for creditors, administration often means that payments may be delayed, debts may be written down, and their ability to recover funds will depend on the value of the company’s assets and any secured claims.”

Importantly, Taylor comments: “An administrator can only pursue the sale of the firm if it’s not reasonably practicable to keep it as a going concern.”

### Control changes

If the business cannot be saved in its current form, administration changes control. As Taylor explains, while directors may stay employed, “their powers to operate the company are effectively frozen ... the administrator is given wide powers to carry on the company’s business and realise its assets.”

In essence, they must secure control of the company’s assets, prepare proposals for approval of the creditors, and carry out those proposals.

But, as Summers notes, it’s important to understand: “If a business cannot be saved, its assets are typically sold off to generate funds for creditors. This may involve selling the entire business as a going concern, selling individual assets, or winding down operations entirely.”

### Buying a business out of administration

Most will be aware of the phrase ‘pre-pack.’ This is where a company is put into administration and its business or assets - or both - are immediately sold by the administrator under a sale that was negotiated before the administrator was appointed.

As Taylor has witnessed: “Often, a pre-pack involves the sale of a company’s business on a going concern basis. However, sometimes, a pre-pack will just involve the sale of selected assets of the company.”

Summers has seen the same, and says that buying a business out of administration typically involves purchasing selected assets rather than assuming all liabilities. She says: “Buyers can choose to acquire key assets such as stock, intellectual property, customer lists, or premises, while leaving behind liabilities like debts or problematic contracts.” However, she warns that some obligations, such as employee rights under TUPE, may still transfer

depending on the structure of the deal.

The key point, and one that leaves some feeling miffed, is that certain liabilities, such as a lost litigation case or an uneconomic lease, will be left behind by the purchaser.

### Avoiding mantraps

A pre-pack has many positives. Taylor says they include “a quick and relatively smooth transfer of a business to a new owner, which can reduce the costs of the administration process - which ultimately results in a better return for creditors, protection from creditors, and the opportunity to save more jobs, compared to an administration that attempts to continue to trade the business pending a later sale or other type of restructuring.”

But pre-packs have come in for much criticism.

Taylor first addresses the lack of transparency. He says: “Unsecured creditors often do not realise that a pre-pack sale is going to happen, and so have no opportunity to protect their interests by considering and voting on the pre-pack proposal. In contrast, secured creditors are usually involved, because they need to consent to the release of their security where secured assets are to be included in the sale.”

But there are other issues, such as a lack of accountability, as the administrator can sell assets of the company before proposals have been agreed by creditors and without court sanction.

And then some see pre-packs as similar to the outlawed practice of creating ‘phoenix’ companies. Taylor says: “This practice involves a company being put into liquidation by its management before the same business is transferred to a new ‘phoenix’ company, but without the debts of the former.”

There’s also the writing off of liabilities using a pre-pack, which can be seen as a short-term fix as necessary restructuring is not carried out.

### Protecting the genuine buyer

So, how can a buyer protect itself against purchases it makes in good faith? How do they know what they’re buying, and if good title is passed?

In answer, Taylor says that buyers must be careful. “An administrator has broad authority to sell a company’s assets when

a company enters administration, acting as the company’s agent with the power to make decisions regarding the management of its affairs, business, and property, which includes disposing of assets as needed to achieve the best outcome for creditors.” He adds a warning: “They will not give warranties, and, therefore, due diligence is key for the purchaser, who will not get any better title to the assets that are enjoyed by the selling company in administration.” On top of that, a buyer would need to make sure any existing security is released.

And this is the line that Summers takes. She reiterates: “Administrators act as officers of the court, and are protected from personal liability as long as they act in good faith.” That said, she says: “If they have breached their duties or acted negligently, a legal challenge could be pursued – but this is rare and difficult to prove.”

### Dealing with an administrator

But just because an administrator appears to be in an unassailable position, that does not mean that a creditor, buyer, or other third party who has concerns about conduct is impotent.

Seeking redress is far from easy. But if issues arise, Taylor first advises raising the matter with the administrator – “speak directly to the administrator or through a creditors’ committee.” Then, if necessary, file a claim for professional negligence “if the administrator breached their duty of care and caused loss.” He cautions: “This is not an easy action, and a high burden of proof would apply.”

Lastly, he would recommend applying for a court order “if the administrator’s conduct was unfair, they failed to perform their duties, or they wrongfully exercised legal authority.” Something else to consider is the filing of a complaint with the administrator’s professional body, or the formation of a creditors’ committee to represent the interests of creditors.

### Summary

Buying assets from or the failed firm itself out of administration is a perfectly reasonable course of action. However, buyers need to act with caution, not haste. Not unsurprisingly, good advice is essential.

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# Products

DOMESTIC



5 SECOND INFO

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- 3.5-inch colour touchscreen display
- Rain, lift and tilt sensors
- Special user features with the EGO connect app

## EGO launches its first robotic mowers

Boundary-wire machines can automate mowing for up to 4000m<sup>2</sup> and 2000m<sup>2</sup>

**EGO Power+ is adding two robotic lawnmowers to its portfolio of battery-powered outdoor power equipment.**

The manufacturer's first robotic tools, the RM4000E and the RM2000E, can automate mowing for lawns up to 4000m<sup>2</sup> and 2000m<sup>2</sup>, respectively.

The GPS-supported boundary-wire robotic mowers use three pivoting blades to deliver a 24cm cutting width. Described as boundary-wire machines that provide systematic mowing, this feature enables the mower to cut grass systematically in parallel tracks. Likewise, the GPS navigation promotes even coverage and reduces wear on

the lawn around the charging station. RM2000E and RM4000E are capable of navigating gradients of up to 50%.

Users have a choice of control settings, with the schedule and mowing settings of both mowers adjusted by an intuitive 3.5-inch colour touchscreen display. Also fully connected, the mowers can also be optimised for remote control using the EGO Connect App. Adding the mower to the app offers full live status visibility of the mower via a cellular data connection.

Andrew Frohock, IoT product manager for EGO says: "By using the EGO Connect app, users can see a map of their lawn, the mower's live

location, and details of what areas have been covered so far. And for enhanced usability, the remote-control function in the app enables users to tell the robot mower to drive, park, pause or schedule its work time. Other features, such as changing the LED colour, weather features and software updates, enable users to customise their mower and keep it up-to-date."

The robot mowers also incorporate sensing and monitoring capabilities, rain, lift and tilt sensors (to protect the user, lawn and machine during operation), and GPS tracking to provide advanced warning and traceability in the event of theft.

COMMERCIAL / AGRICULTURAL



## Next-gen compact tractors

Two new models from Massey Ferguson

**Massey Ferguson has introduced two new models in its compact tractor lineup, the MF 1M.20 and MF 1M.25, replacing the MF 1520 and MF 1525, respectively.**

The manufacturer boasts that the series delivers improved performance, updated styling, and additional features for professional use in municipal, equine, and grounds care applications.

The MF 1M.20 is powered by a 20hp, three-cylinder 1.123-litre engine, and features a nine-speed mechanical transmission. The 25hp MF 1M.25

comes with a larger 1.498-litre engine and hydrostatic transmission, offering smoother speed control. Both models are equipped with rear three-point linkage, with lift capacities of up to 900kg on the MF 1M.25.

A key addition is the option of a factory-fitted cab on the MF 1M.25, featuring air conditioning, LED work lights, and improved visibility. Both models include updated controls, a hydraulic joystick, and mid-PTO options. The MF 1M.25 has a standard mid-PTO and a rear PTO, with selectable 540/750rpm speeds, plus

optional 540E for improved fuel efficiency.

Hydraulic flow is rated at 20.9 litres/min, and a dedicated pump for steering ensures consistent performance. The tractors can be configured with up to two spool valves and mid-mounted hydraulic couplers for attachments, such as loaders.

New drive-over cutter decks are also available, with options for 54-inch or 60-inch widths and side or rear grass discharge. Both tractors come with ROPS as standard, and offer a choice of agricultural, turf or industrial tyres.

DOMESTIC

## Cobra powers on

With new 40VX battery range for UK dealers

**Cobra has launched what it describes as its most comprehensive cordless range yet – the Cobra 40V Max Plus battery (40VX) system, now available for dealers to stock.**

The range combines lawnmowers with a full suite of handheld garden tools.

The manufacturer says each mower in the series is designed to provide the same quality, durability, and user-friendly features as their petrol models, but with the convenience of cordless power. They say the range's lithium-ion batteries ensure extended runtimes and faster charging times.

At the heart of the system is the new MX series of battery-powered lawn mowers, designed to cover a broad range of garden sizes and user needs. The mowers feature robust steel decks, high-lift blades for improved grass collection, and mulching capabilities for a cleaner, more sustainable finish.

In addition to mowers, Cobra is also introducing a range of



handheld tools, including a grass trimmer, leaf blower, hedge trimmer and a chainsaw.

The system features an interchangeable battery across the entire range, and promises more tools to launch soon, including a multi-tool system with multiple attachments, a long-reach hedge trimmer, and a pole saw.

Peter Chaloner, managing director of Cobra Garden, said: "With the 40VX range, we're offering our dealers a complete cordless system with huge appeal. Whether it's a customer looking for their first battery mower, or an existing Cobra user wanting to expand their toolkit, this platform delivers versatility, performance, and a great customer experience."



## A hedge trimming first for STIHL

Single-sided battery-powered units

**The first single-sided battery-powered hedge trimmers in the STIHL range have been launched.**

Designed for professional landscapers, the HSA 150 R and HSA 150 T are a first for the AP System, with the manufacturer saying they are comparable in performance to the petrol HS 87.

Available in lengths of 75cm or 100cm, the HSA 150 comes equipped with a catcher plate as standard, increasing the speed at which the top of hedges can be cut.

The new HSA 150 R weighs 4.3 - 4.7 kg (without battery), and features ergonomic handle grips. STIHL says the wide grip stance, combined with the central centre of gravity, allows it to be pivoted with ease, resulting in minimal strain to the operators' wrists or arms.

Featuring 38mm tooth spacing, the HSA 150 R is suited to annual pruning or hedge reduction work. Its lower maximum RPM of 3,200 also allows thicker branch material to enter the cutters efficiently. Alternatively, the HSA 150 T has a higher maximum RPM and smaller 30mm tooth spacing, making it better suited to ornamental or fine leaf hedges, such as taxus, buxus or privet, where a fine finish is required.

The HSA 150 benefits from a new gearbox design, consisting of a two-step planetary gear. The manufacturer says this results in high cutting performance and fast cold startup, as well as improved protection of the internal components thanks to the integrated slip clutch.

To help prevent the blades from jamming, the HSA 150 features an anti-blocking system that reverses the motors rotational direction to unblock the blades. It also utilises the same friction optimised double-edged blades, that feature on the HS 87 professional petrol models.

When used with the recommended AP 200 S battery, the HSA 150 R has a maximum working time of 150 minutes, while the HSA 150 T's maximum working time is up to 140 minutes.

AGRICULTURAL

## Amazone expands mounted range

FW 580 flex ring roller for varied soils

**Amazone has introduced the FW 580 flex ring roller, a new packer roller for the Cenio and Cenius mounted cultivators, and Catros mounted compact disc harrows.**

Due to its open design, with a ring spacing of 200mm and its narrow roller core, the roller, with a total diameter of 580mm, is suitable for a broad range of applications on both sandy and loamy soils.

The continuous spring action of the rings means the FW 580 produces a lot of fine soil, whilst ensuring deep reconsolidation and a loose soil surface. These properties make it suitable for targeted seedbed preparation. In addition, the closed rings reduce the carry-over of soil and weed seeds. This helps to improve field hygiene, especially when working in different fields.

The manufacturer says the spring action of the rings means reliable operation, even in damp and sticky soil conditions. Thanks to the small tube diameter of 140mm, the roller ensures through-passage on light, sandy soils.

An optional sprung cleaning system offers additional functionality and prevents the roller from sticking. A harrow system ensures finer crumbling of the seedbed and supports precise placement of the seed. Both systems also contribute to additional levelling on light soils.

Thanks to its low own weight, the flex ring roller can be lifted by smaller tractors both at the headland and when travelling on the road.



COMMERCIAL



## Ree-turn of two grounds mowers

Toro models from Reesink Turfcare

**Reesink Turfcare has announced the return of two Toro grounds mowers – the Groundsmaster 7210 and the Groundsmaster 1200.**

Jon Cole, business development manager at Reesink Turfcare, said: "Customers of the 7210 will be pleased to hear it is now available with an engine upgrade, and the 1200 returns after a post-pandemic production pause."

The Groundsmaster 7210 has returned with an upgrade to a Yanmar 36.8hp (27.4kW) three-cylinder engine, which brings a 48.38% increase in

power. Features such as a tight wheelbase, power steering and individual steering brakes remain.

The seven-gauge welded steel cutting deck construction with tough spindle assembly ensure a long life, say Reesink, and the small area zero-turn rotary mower is now available with the option of either a 62 or 72-inch deck.

The Groundsmaster 1200 pull-behind rotary mower, meanwhile, has not had any upgrades. It can cut up to 8.73 acres/h at 6mph. And the cut is

described by the manufacturer as consistent and even across the entire width of the mower, while distributing clippings evenly. When combined with the dual roller design, it can deliver a high-quality cut and rich turf striping in most conditions.

Together, its three independent contour-following cutting decks offer a 12-foot (3.66m) width of cut, and transport between sites is convenient, with the wing decks folding up to reduce machine width to 88 inches (223.5cm).



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# Pellenc make an Essential launch

Range of battery tools

**Pellenc has announced the launch of the Essential Line of battery tools.**

The new range includes the Helion Essential hedge trimmer, two Excelion Essential brush cutters, the Airion Essential blower, and the ULiB 200E and 400E batteries.

The hedge trimmer features a 64cm blade with double-edged teeth, a balanced design, and an ergonomic swivel handle and protective guard. The manufacturer says the tool benefits from an advanced HMI (Human-Machine Interface) that displays the remaining battery charge and allows the user to select from three cutting speeds. Compatible with the ULiB 200E integrated battery with

up to three hours runtime and Pellenc's ULiB backpack battery range, the company says the Helion Essential provides extended operating time.

The Excelion Essential brush cutter is powered by a brushless motor. It boasts a cutting diameter of up to 460mm with the Tap Cut 3 cutting head, and is available with a choice of double (cow horn) or loop handle models.

Its LED screen displays battery levels and allows users to select from three speed settings, adjusting performance based on the task. As with other Essential tools, it is compatible with the ULiB 200E and 400E (recommended) batteries – with

runtimes of up to two hours – and the Pellenc ULiB backpack battery range.

The Airion Essential leaf blower, meanwhile, is described as offering ambidextrous design that reduces wrist fatigue. With its angled air intake, the blower limits strain on the user, enabling comfortable operation over long periods.

Finally, the ULiB 200E and 400E batteries offer a power source for all Essential tools. Compact and ergonomic, these batteries feature an easy-to-use clipping system and a clear battery level display.

Pellenc battery-powered equipment is exclusively distributed in the UK and Ireland by Etesia UK.



# Bobcat complete ag telehandler range

With three new models

acceleration from 0km/h to 40km/h without gear changes, which, the manufacturer says, improves ease of operation and reduces jolts.

Dual hydraulic motors maintain the performance of the previous transmission, and a redesigned hydraulic tank increases capacity from 59 to 70 litres. The two-speed drive modes - Turtle (0–20 km/h) and Rabbit (0–40 km/h) - are joystick selectable, and tuned for specific tasks.

Noise and vibration have been reduced through acoustic refinements

and motor suspension, and traction performance has been enhanced across varied terrain. Standard features on the V-Drive models include tractor homologation, 40km/h max speed, 7" touchscreen display, fan inverter, and Alliance tyres.

Smart functions, such as cruise control, ECO-Ride, engine stop/start, and a speed limiter, are included as standard. All machines are covered by a three-year warranty, and supported by Bobcat's dealer network and Machine IQ telematics platform.

**Bobcat has added three new models to its agricultural telehandler lineup: the TL34.65HF, TL38.70HF, and TL43.80HF, all equipped with the company's new V-Drive continuous transmission system.**

These large high-flow machines offer an alternative to the existing gearbox transmission, which remains available. The V-Drive system allows

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A huge thumbs up from us!  
Ed Offer - General Manager Hampshire Garden Machinery

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# Uncertainty in the UK lawn and garden industry



Mystery columnist THE SPROCKET gets all Donald Rumsfeld on us, considering the impact on the network of knowns, unknowns and known unknowns (and unknown ones).

**S**ervice Dealer's editor recently commented on the uncertainty expressed by dealers when himself and Duncan did a road trip to see a number of dealers.

Steve said: "Uncertainty amongst customers and in the marketplace was frequently cited as an inhibitor to the running of businesses to their maximum potential."

Nothing controversial or incisive about the uncertainty that always exists with any business. I guess the simple fact that this will always be with us, whatever we do, means all we can do is try and anticipate what we can and deal with the unexpected or the unknowns.

United States Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, famously spoke of "known knowns," "known unknowns" and "unknown unknowns."

But what, you may well rightly ask, has this got to do with outdoor power equipment, tractors or the industry's dealer network? Well, it's all about the uncertainty of the trade we are in and business uncertainties, generally, and how we deal with the unknowns and uncertainties.

I will be stating the obvious at times - and no doubt readers will be able to shout at the page: 'We already know that, idiot!' But knowing it and applying it to your business maybe two very different things. Cast your mind back to the impact of Covid, and then a container ship getting stuck in the Suez Canal, and the impact it had on businesses around the world. None of us would have foreseen those two events, or the effect they would have on a garden machinery business in rural England and elsewhere. Uncertainty in the extreme, maybe, but could you have planned for the fallout from these two events alone?

To provide some useful general information, I have enlisted the help of ChatGPT by asking the questions about uncertainty in relation to the outdoor power equipment market. ChatGPT provides some titbits that could be helpful in a dealership. I cannot claim to be the author, as the technical wording used would quickly show up my failings as a writer, so best to fess up and let the AI do its stuff - carefully edited to suit our industry, of course. So, switch into academic mode and take in what could be useful to you ...

To navigate sales uncertainty—whether in the lawnmower market or another industry—tools like **Assumptions Mapping** and **Scenario Planning** are especially useful.

For example:

- **Assumptions Mapping** helps surface and rank what you think you know about UK lawnmower sales—like "we assume seasonal demand peaks in spring" or "we assume petrol mowers are declining in favour of battery." These assumptions can then be tested via research or experimentation before scaling decisions.
- **Scenario Planning** is valuable for exploring divergent futures, such as high adoption of robotic mowers due to labour shortages, or market contraction driven by environmental policies limiting petrol-powered machines. As is the case in some countries.

To get started, you might consider:

1. Mapping key assumptions about consumer behaviour, economic factors (e.g. cost of living impacts), and weather patterns.
2. Building a few plausible scenarios using both pessimistic (e.g. housing slowdown) and optimistic (e.g. subsidies for low-emissions lawncare) frames.
3. Applying "even over" statements like: "Understanding buyer context even over historic sales patterns" to guide decisions in ambiguous situations.

If you're analysing this from a business perspective, it might be helpful to run a **lightweight Belief Challenging** or **Portfolio Review** session to evaluate current product bets in light of uncertain demand.

**Business uncertainties refer to the potential for unpredictable events or factors that can impact a company's performance or operations. These uncertainties can arise from various sources and can significantly affect a business's ability to achieve its goals.**

**Here's a more detailed breakdown of common business uncertainties, many of which will be obvious – but they need to be acted on.**

**ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES:**

- Recessions
- Inflation
- Interest Rate Changes
- Exchange Rate Fluctuations
- Changes in Government Policy
- Political Instability

**TECHNOLOGICAL UNCERTAINTIES:**

- Rapid Technological Advances
- Cybersecurity Threats

**SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC UNCERTAINTIES:**

- Changes in Consumer Preferences
- Demographic Changes

**OPERATIONAL UNCERTAINTIES:**

- Supply Chain Disruptions
- Changes in Demand
- Competitor Actions

**LEVELS OF UNCERTAINTY:**

- **Near-Certainty** – events are highly predictable with little variation.
- **Risk** – events are predictable, with some level of variation, and the potential outcomes can be quantified using probabilities.
- **Uncertainty** – events are less predictable, and the potential outcomes are not easily quantifiable.
- **Deep Uncertainty** – events are highly unpredictable, and impossible to predict with any degree of accuracy.

**NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY:**

Businesses can take several steps to prepare for and mitigate the impact of uncertainties:

- Scenario Planning
- Risk Management
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Continuous Learning

It all seems so obvious, but read through the list again and tick what you anticipate may happen, and note what came as a surprise. The change in employers' National Insurance contributions was a kick in the teeth to all employers - and that was not really anticipated or expected when the new government took over. I spoke to one large dealer whose annual salary bill went up by half-a-million pounds overnight. How on Earth does the business manage that in any positive way?

I could pretty much put a tab against many of these scenarios in relation to what has happened in the last few years. Just one glaring example was Covid, which was amongst us before we knew about it. Some would say that it was a known unknown. In many ways, this huge negative turned into a positive for the dealer network at the time, but, with the problems starting much later, probably the unknown unknowns.

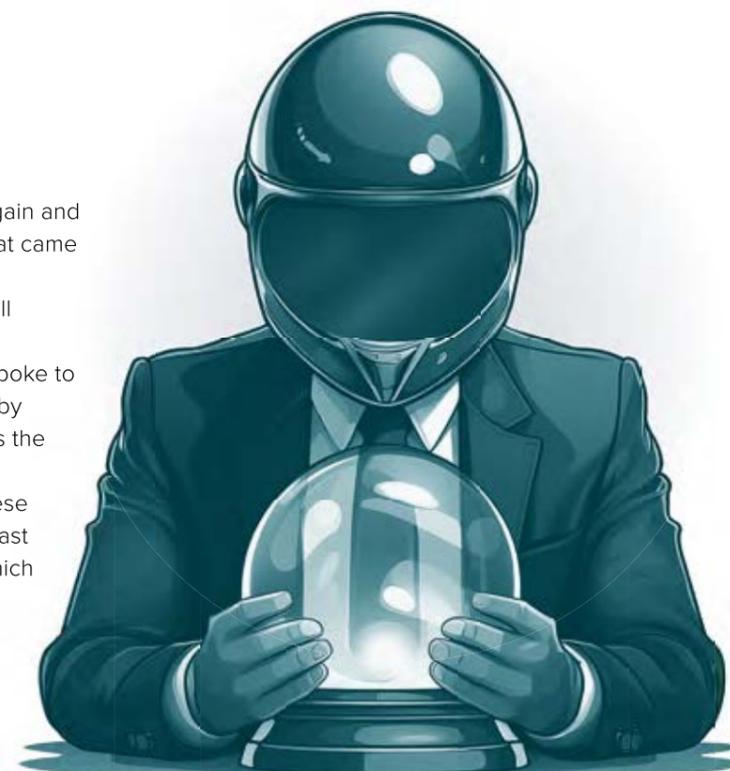
Those of you that have been in the industry a long time would have no doubt experienced most of what Donald Rumsfeld described, and would have a wealth of experience in dealing with uncertainty. Have past experiences prepared you for future uncertainties, or is it a case of shrugging your shoulders and getting on with it?

Figuring out what the uncertainties may be could require a crystal ball, but, if you can work out future trends, political issues, the housing market, interest rates and maybe exchange rates – to name a few – you could get ahead of the game. Wouldn't it be lovely to be ready with the next innovative piece of garden equipment before the market gets swamped and margins are ripped apart by everyone jumping on the bandwagon? I have been there and done it, but, oh boy, you have to be in quick and out of it just as quickly and onto the next thing.



**Now, something for the bikers amongst you.** In 2018, I was lucky to be able to ride the Wild Atlantic Way coastal roads in Ireland. Completion was interrupted by Covid. I've just been back and finished off

the Ireland route and the Northern Ireland coastal route. Absolutely fantastic – incredible scenery, little traffic, and great people who were very interested in our little adventure. I can highly recommend it. Jump on the ferry with your bike and a few mates and just ride the coastal roads. It's easy and very enjoyable. Ride safe.



# What's on?

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

## JULY 2025

**Hampton Court Palace Flower Show** 1-6  
www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/  
rhs-hampton-court-palace-garden-festival

**Groundswell 2025, Lannock Manor Farm, Hertfordshire** 2-3  
www.groundswellag.com

**Kent County Show** 4-6  
www.kentshowground.co.uk

**Great Yorkshire Show** 8-11  
www.greatyorkshireshow.co.uk

**Norfolk Garden Show, Norfolk Showground** 11-13  
www.norfolkgardenshow.co.uk

**Royal Isle of Wight County Show** 12-13  
www.iwcountyshow.co.uk

**Driffield Show** 16  
www.driffieldshowground.co.uk

**Royal Welsh Show** 21-24  
www.rwas.wales/royal-welsh

**Border Union Show** 25-26  
www.borderunion.co.uk/border-union-show

**The Game Fair, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire** 25-27  
www.thegamefair.org

**Mid Devon Show** 26  
www.middevonshow.co.uk

**New Forest & Hampshire County Show** 29-31  
www.newforestshow.co.uk

**Launceston Agricultural Show** 31  
www.launcestonshow.co.uk

## AUGUST 2025

**Garstang Show** 2  
www.garstangshow.org

**Anglesea Agricultural County Show** 12-13  
www.angleseyshow.org.uk

**Vale of Glamorgan Agricultural Show** 13  
www.valeofglamorganshow.co.uk

**Mid-Somerset Show** 17  
www.midsomersetshow.org.uk

**Edenbridge & Oxted Show** 24-25  
www.edenbridge-show.co.uk

## SEPTEMBER 2025

**Moreton-In-Marsh Show** 6  
www.moretonshow.co.uk

**Autumn Fair, Birmingham NEC** 7-10  
www.autumnfair.com

**GroundsFest, Stoneleigh Park** 9-10  
www.groundsfest.com

**UK Dairy Day, The International Centre, Telford** 10  
www.ukdairyday.co.uk

**Penistone Agricultural Show** 13  
www.penistoneshow.com

**Kington Show** 13  
www.kingtonshow.co.uk

**Stanhope Show** 13-14  
www.stanhopeshow.com

**Glee 2025** 16-18  
www.gleebirmingham.com

## OCTOBER 2025

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

## NOVEMBER 2025

**AgriTechnica 2025, Hanover** 9-15  
www.agritechnica.com/en

**GMA Saltex 2025, Birmingham NEC** 12-13  
www.gmasaltex.co.uk



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