

SERVICE DEALER

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

PLUS:



THE LATEST NEWS & PRODUCTS FOR THE **PLANT HIRE & CONSTRUCTION SECTOR**

- NEWS
- INDUSTRY
- DEALERS
- TRAINING
- SHOWS
- REVIEWS
- SME DIGEST

January/February 2026

A REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT

That's the view from *Service Dealer's* UK contingent after experiencing the world's largest outdoor power equipment trade show

ELECTRIC FUTURE

Battery-powered plant hire & construction kit edging from novelty to necessity

ROBOTICS ON THE RISE (& THE FAIRWAYS)

Buxtons reaching out to local greenkeepers



RESILIENCE ON DISPLAY

FULL REPORT ON THE SERVICE DEALER CONFERENCE – PLUS ALL OUR INCREDIBLE DEALER OF THE YEAR WINNERS

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STIHL CONTRA CHAINSAW (1959)



STIHL MSA 300 CHAINSAW (2023)

WELCOME

Letter from the editor **Steve Gibbs**

steve@servicedealer.co.uk



Welcome to the January / February 2026 edition of *Service Dealer* magazine. I'm writing this introduction not long after our fabulous Conference & Awards, that took place back at the beginning of December. You can read all about our champion dealers and the content enjoyed by our dealer delegates during the day's events starting on page 12 this issue.

I felt it truly was another incredibly valuable day. It was third edition in the great venue of the Stratford-Upon-Avon Crown Plaze and the event just keeps on delivering!

As someone who turns up and is able to enjoy proceedings alongside our valued readers, I feel perfectly entitled to enthuse about all that we experienced. There was so much fabulous content, alongside fantastic spirit and good-humoured camaraderie amongst the gathered dealers, that I already can't wait for this year's!

It was so rewarding for the *Service Dealer* team to hear throughout the day the raft of positive comments from the dealers in attendance. It was fascinating to hear the breath of what elements of the programme had particularly landed with different individuals. With topics

as diverse as looking out for own and our colleagues' mental health in the workplace to the leaps and bounds being made in A.I and how those can be applied in dealerships - there was plenty for everyone to lock into and take back to try out in their businesses.

And then in the evening, the Dealer of the Year Awards proved once again, what an incredibly talented and dedicated network we enjoy across the UK and Ireland.

I would personally like to once again thank all the speakers for presenting with such clarity and purpose - and to all the amazingly hard-working team at TAP for organising such a packed and seamlessly put together event.

Also, a huge debt of gratitude must always be paid to our sponsors. Without their support this amazing event dedicated to the dealer network, simply wouldn't exist. So thanks to you all!

Finally, I'd like to welcome and thank Kelly Burgess from Buxtons for joining us in 2026 as our Diarist of a Season. You can also read in this issue how her dealership has been expanding their reach and forming relationships with local golf courses to promote robotic mowing solutions. It will be fascinating to follow their journey throughout this year with Kelly's expert insight.

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News

DEALERS

Strathbogie add service centre

For robotics and battery

Strathbogie Scotland have announced a new Robotics & Battery Service Centre in Alness - strengthening their support for professional users across the Highlands and Northern Scotland.

Pete McArthur, director of Strathbogie, told *Service Dealer*: “Our new premises in Alness marks an exciting step forward for Strathbogie Scotland, and strengthens our ability to support customers across the Highlands. The site is primarily dedicated to our growing range of professional and domestic robotics and battery-powered products, giving us the space and capability to expand these services.”



“This investment allows us to improve response times, enhance the support we offer to both new and existing customers, and continue delivering the high-quality service our clients rely on.”

Pete went on to explain that they are also actively exploring suitable premises further south to extend these benefits to an even wider customer base across central and southern Scotland.

“Sales support will follow later in 2026,” confirmed Pete, “but this is an important first step in expanding our regional presence and ensuring customers receive the highest level of service.”

INDUSTRY

Opico takes over UK distribution for Simtech

Range of drills

Opico has announced that they have added the Simtech range of direct drills to its portfolio of products.

A mix of specialist grassland seeders and more mainstream arable machines, the lineup includes straightforward mechanical box-drills and wider, more sophisticated pneumatic units.

The Simtech brand was established by George Simon in 2005, its trademark feature being an opener disc in front of a distinctive, patented T-slot coulter. Opico say the drills are known for their ability to consistently place seed at a uniform depth in its own micro-environment.

Having taken over the reins, the company say they will maintain the established Simtech hybrid distribution



model, selling the drills through specialist dealers and direct to farm.

The Lincs-based distributor has set up a web shop where customers can purchase wearing metal and spare parts, which can be delivered direct to the farm the next day.

Managing director James Woolway said: “Opico has a proven track record with no-till crop establishment equipment, and can see great potential with the Simtech range in helping farmers work towards cost-effective, financially sustainable arable and forage crop production.”

Technical support will be provided through the Opico service team, with over-the-phone advice as well as a team of field-based technicians.

INDUSTRY



Husqvarna introduces Home Service Programme across the UK

Designed to meet growing demand for residential robotic mowers in suburban areas

Husqvarna has announced the launch of its Husqvarna Home Service (HHS) programme in the UK.

Described by the manufacturer as designed to meet the growing demand for residential robotic mowers in suburban areas, the HHS brings a “full-service experience” for customers. The company says that, from garden consultation and product selection to installation, maintenance, and seasonal storage, it is all delivered directly to the customer’s home.

This move is further strengthened, say Husqvarna, by their acquisition of Autocut UK Ltd, a specialist in Automower sales and services. Based in Devon, Autocut has been an exclusive Husqvarna Automower dealer since 2017, and has built a loyal customer base. In a statement, the manufacturer said: “Autocut’s independent operation ensures continuity for existing customers, while enabling Husqvarna to expand coverage in underserved areas, particularly across the South of England.”

Stewart Carter, managing director of Husqvarna UK, said: “The UK represents one of the highest-growth potential

markets for robotic lawnmowers in Europe, and we must continue to adapt to meet changing customer needs.

“With Autocut’s excellent reputation, they will play a pivotal role in accelerating the rollout of our Home Service model - something which is already well-established and running successfully in a number of markets, including Sweden and Germany. The initiative will bring effortless lawncare to more customers, whilst providing valuable insights to help shape future innovations.”

The company went on to say how customers can book services online and have expert support at their doorstep. They also stress how the Husqvarna Home Service programme is designed not only to reach new customer segments, but also to support the growth of Husqvarna’s regional coverage. Existing dealers who also wish to expand their offering and join the programme will benefit from new tools, training, and marketing support.

The initiative will launch with selected partners in early-2026, with plans to roll out across the UK.

“Complements rather than competes with the dealer channel”

Service Dealer asked Husqvarna MD Stewart Carter for some further insights on the new HHS scheme.

Service Dealer: Can you tell us some more about how this move impacts your current dealer network? How can they get involved in this?

Stewart Carter: The consumer landscape is transforming rapidly. Today’s homeowners increasingly prioritise convenience, digital research and at-home experiences when making purchasing decisions. This shift is evident in the growing number of robotic lawnmower brands entering the market with direct-to-consumer strategies. However, our research confirms that customers still deeply value expert advice, reliable aftersales support and trusted local service, elements that remain essential when investing in premium technology like Automower®.

Our launch of Husqvarna Home Service (HHS), together with the acquisition of Autocut UK Ltd, represents a proactive response to these market developments. This initiative is designed to complement our existing dealer model by expanding our reach into focused areas, where traditional in-store purchasing isn’t the customer’s first choice.

HHS meets evolving customer expectations by bringing the complete Husqvarna experience directly to the doorstep, while simultaneously creating new

growth opportunities for our existing partners. Dealers who wish to participate in the programme will have full opportunity to do so. The model is built around genuine partnership, a joint investment supplemented by Husqvarna’s digital tools, marketing support and service systems. This is a proven business model, already delivering excellent results in Sweden and Germany, with thousands of garden consultations completed and a 75% conversion rate achieved in 2025.

SD: Can you allay any concerns that traditional dealers may have that they are being circumnavigated by this development?

SC: Over the past 30 years, Husqvarna and our partners have collaboratively developed the robotic lawnmower market to where it stands today. We fully recognise the vital role our dealer network plays, and will continue to play, in Husqvarna’s success. The introduction of Home Service is not about bypassing our dealers – it’s about enhancing our presence in a changing marketplace. While consumers increasingly want convenience, they also value trust, expertise and confidence in aftersales support – the strengths our dealer network provides.

The acquisition of Autocut supports this strategic approach. Autocut will continue to operate as a standalone business, supporting customers in previously underserved regions across southern England while piloting innovative ways of engaging consumers. The insights and operational excellence gained will be shared across our entire network, ultimately helping us raise the bar on customer experience for everyone.

We want to reassure all partners that this initiative complements rather than competes with the dealer channel. Home Service opens new opportunities for dealers who wish to expand their offering with Husqvarna’s full support, enabling them to benefit from bespoke tools, training, marketing and promotional resources.

Our collective ambition is clear: continue building awareness, grow Automower® sales, and strengthen Husqvarna’s leadership position in the robotic lawncare market.

Our dealers remain the cornerstone of our business. By combining their local expertise with Husqvarna’s innovation and support infrastructure, we can offer customers the best of both worlds: the convenience of modern home service, backed by the confidence and care of a trusted local dealer.

DEALERS

Significant sum achieved by RVT auction

Sales of ag machinery following winding up

Auctioneers BPI announced that they have successfully completed a series of agricultural machinery auctions following the closure of Rea Valley Tractors, the long-established Midlands-based dealership with multiple depots across Shropshire, the Midlands, the North West and Wales.

Delivered on behalf of a finance company, the first phase of sales achieved more than £2 million from the disposal of assets previously operated by the dealer. Rea Valley Tractors represented such manufacturers as John Deere, New Holland and JCB, with the initial auctions featuring a range of tractors, telehandlers, combines, attachments and support equipment.

All assets were relocated to BPI's operating centre in York. Each item was valeted, inspected, appraised, catalogued, videoed, marketed and sold before being delivered to buyers across the UK and beyond.

BPI said in a statement: "Competition across the auctions was exceptional, with sustained bidding on key lots from both UK-based and international buyers."

Nathan Burnham, associate director at BPI, commented: "The scale of this project reflects both the importance and the resilience of the agricultural industry. Despite challenging trading conditions, there remains huge demand for quality machinery - and sales of this size offer buyers rare

access to premium equipment at realistic prices. It's been a significant undertaking for our team, but one that has demonstrated the strength of our process and our buyer network."



COBRA

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Ride-Ons



Cylinder Mowers



Chippers



TAG acquires RVT'S RTK

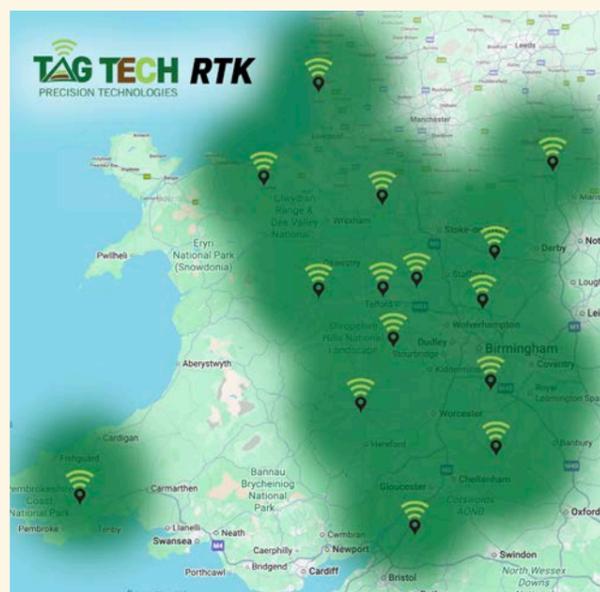
Base station network purchased

Tallis Amos Group has announced the acquisition of the Rea Valley Tractors RTK base station network, which, they say, strengthens its precision agriculture offering across the Midlands and beyond.

RTK correction signals enhance the accuracy of GPS-equipped agricultural machinery, enabling repeatable pass-to-pass precision for farmers and contractors.

Matthew Thompson, tech ops and aftermarket director of Tallis Amos Group, said: "This acquisition allows Tallis Amos to expand its RTK network, ensuring Rea Valley customers who have invested in RTK hardware continue to receive reliable, high-precision correction signals. It underscores our commitment to supporting modern, technology-driven agriculture."

Users of the Rea Valley RTK network have been advised to contact the Tallis Amos Precision Technology helpline on 07893 933 804 to register their details and maintain access. Over the coming months, the TAG Tech team say they will also update SIM cards in customers' machines as required.



PEOPLE

David Withers retires

From Iseki UK & Ireland and four decades in the industry



David Withers

At SALTEX in November, David Withers, managing director of Iseki UK & Ireland, announced he would be retiring at the end of 2025 following a distinguished career spanning more than four decades in the turf care and grounds maintenance industry.

Reflecting on his time at Iseki, David described the process of building the brand as “one of the most fun and satisfying things I have done in my career.” Under his leadership, the company has doubled its sales over the last eight years, and continues to grow.

Expressing confidence in the future of Iseki UK & Ireland, David announced his successor, saying: “I have worked with Alan Prickett for around 30 years,

and am very comfortable leaving the business in his hands to keep it growing and prospering for many years to come.”

He also extended his gratitude to dealers, customers and fellow manufacturers for their support and partnership throughout his career, wishing them continued success.

David began his career demonstrating verti-drains for Charterhouse Turf (now Redexim), followed by 25 years at Jacobsen, including six years as President. His eight-year tenure at Iseki UK & Ireland as a standalone entity marks the culmination of his full-time professional journey. He added: “I feel it is time to finish fulltime work - I may still do a bit of consulting and advise for a couple of companies, but plan to end serious work and focus on developing a golf swing and a tan!”

In addition to his roles at major manufacturers, David has been an influential figure within the industry, serving as a director of the Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA) for many years and as its president in 2022. During the recent AEA 150th celebrations, he spoke at an event in the Houses of Parliament. David has also recently taken up a directorship at the Grounds Management Association, and intends to continue contributing to the organisation in his retirement.

In a statement, Iseki UK & Ireland, its staff and partners said they would like to thank David for his years of dedication and leadership, and that they “wish him all the best in his future endeavours both on and off the golf course.”

David was presented with *Service Dealer’s Outstanding Contribution Award* at our recent Conference & Awards – which you can read more about this issue.

INDUSTRY

Timberwolf acquires GreenMech

Brand and IP

Timberwolf, an Alamo Group Company, have announced the asset purchase of GreenMech’s brand and IP - the manufacturer of woodchippers based at Alcester, UK.

Since its founding in 1993, GreenMech Ltd has sold its chipper range across the world, with Timberwolf saying in a statement that their machines are “recognised for their vertical integrated manufacturing

and key engineering innovations.” A notable machine of GreenMech’s is the Safe Trak woodchipper used in the highways and rail sector.

In addition to purchasing the rights to GreenMech’s brands and IP, Timberwolf has acquired GreenMech GmbH and GreenMech SAS. Timberwolf say these new European sales and technical support hubs will support their “strategic intent to

become a leader in the European forestry and tree care sector.”

Chris Perry, Timberwolf’s managing director, said: “Although competitors for many years, Timberwolf and GreenMech have been built on similar values. This purchase will strengthen Timberwolf not only from a product perspective, but also our sales channels, as we welcome colleagues into the business.”

GreenMech say their products will continue to be manufactured at the facility in Alcester for ongoing supply to existing dealers and distributors. Jonathan Turner, GreenMech’s managing director, added: “This consolidation allows our manufacturing team to focus on further investment and development in our facility, ensuring a continued supply of GreenMech heritage woodchippers to the market.”



DEALERS

Garden Machines Northampton goes live

Modernising operations

Garden Machines Northampton (GMN) have gone live with True Track Software’s Pyramid Dealer Management System, which the software supplier says marks a significant step in modernising operations across the Northampton business.

After going to market for a replacement DMS, GMN selected True Track as the partner best positioned to support its next stage of growth. Although the system is new to the groundcare and agricultural dealer space, they say Pyramid brings a decade of success in the motorcycle

industry, where it has scaled rapidly with dealers.

True Track has migrated the GMN team onto Pyramid and fully integrated their systems across retail, parts online, and warehouse operations. GMN’s Steve Gammon reports that the transition has been smooth, praising the company for both the system and the aftercare package.

Steve said, “After using the same software system for more than 25 years, the prospect of changing to something new was daunting. However, choosing True Track proved to be an excellent decision.



Jez Shave, md True Track Software & Steve Gammon, md Garden Machines Northampton

“Jez Shave and his team went above and beyond to ensure a seamless transition, making the entire process silky smooth from start to finish. The new system is a joy to operate, and we’ve already seen significant savings in our running costs. We couldn’t be happier with the outcome.”

DEALERS

Guy Machinery confirm management change

After 20 years



After more than 20 years at the helm of Guy Machinery Ltd (GML), Graham Guy has stepped back from day-to-day operations, handing over responsibility to a new management team as the company looks to the future.

Reflecting on the company's journey in a LinkedIn post, Graham Guy recalled taking over from Gibson's at Skipton Auction Mart with limited experience and resources. "I had no idea what I was doing and very little money to do it," he said. With the support of a few key people and an

understanding bank manager, Guy Machinery grew from three main franchises into a business representing over ten premium manufacturers and employing more than 20 people.

"It has been far from easy, with plenty of sleepless nights and very long days," Guy continued in his post. However, he says: "Now feels like the right time to hand over the reins to the next generation of leadership."

The new management team, taking full responsibility for daily operations from January 2026, was confirmed in a letter published on the Guy

Machinery website. The team will be led by Mark Maybury, operations director, alongside Emma O'Callaghan, finance manager; Andy Miller, commercial manager; and Charlotte Fawcett, sales manager. Mark Maybury has been with Guy Machinery for almost 30 years, starting as a tractor driver for Guy Contractors, and Graham has expressed his confidence in the team's ability to take the company to the next level.

Graham says he will remain involved in an advisory capacity, primarily supporting strategic planning and the company's continued development. He has paid tribute to everyone who has contributed to the company's success, including staff, manufacturers, and, most importantly, customers. "Without you, we are nothing," he said.

Guy Machinery say this management transition is designed to strengthen their position in the marketplace and capitalise on future opportunities to grow the business in the years ahead.

News in brief:

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



PEOPLE

Vicon appoints new dealer

Vicon has appointed Menai Tractors, of Dinas, Caernarfon, to its dealer network, extending availability of their product portfolio throughout North Wales and Anglesey. Robert Jones, MD, said he was proud to have taken on the range, which gives the business access to a range of grassland machinery that compliments its New Holland tractor franchise.



PEOPLE

RFU's new groundskeeping partner

STIGA has been appointed Official Groundskeeping Partner of England's Rugby Football Union (RFU). As part of the agreement, the brand will support the maintenance of pitches and green spaces across the country, from elite England Rugby training facilities to grassroots clubs, by providing access to its autonomous robot mowers and battery-powered equipment.



PEOPLE

Apprentices graduate

More than fifty apprentices have graduated from John Deere's Ag Tech, Turf Tech, and Parts Tech programmes, joining dealerships across the UK and Ireland as qualified technicians and parts specialists. The graduates, trained in partnership with ProVQ at the John Deere Apprentice Training Centre, were recognised at a special ceremony celebrating their achievement.

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Wheelbarrow



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SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE





Resilience demonstrated across the network

The winners of 2025's *Service Dealer* Awards were announced and presented at a celebratory gala dinner, held following this year's Conference.

On Thursday 4th December 2025, immediately following the *Service Dealer* Conference, the winners of the 2025 *Service Dealer* Awards were unveiled during a lively celebration at the Crowne Plaza, Stratford-upon-Avon, marking another successful year at the venue.

The evening got underway with a lively performance from stand-up Nick Page, with comedian and actor Charlie Baker returning to host the ceremony. Now in its 21st year, the awards -

organised by the team behind *Service Dealer* magazine - shone a spotlight on outstanding achievements in sales, service, advice, and support across the garden machinery, professional turf care machinery and farm machinery dealer sectors.

A panel of industry experts carefully reviewed nominations submitted by dealer principals, dealership staff, manufacturers, and loyal customers. Open to businesses of all sizes - from single-location dealerships to multi-branch operations - each entry was assessed with rigour and fairness, reflecting the awards' long-standing

commitment to recognising excellence.

Steve Gibbs, editor of *Service Dealer* magazine, said: "Year after year, we are proud to celebrate the very best in specialist dealer expertise. Our Dealer of the Year winners set the standard for exceptional service, consistently going above and beyond to exceed customer expectations.

"In an era when service can often feel impersonal, these awards remind us of the value of personalised, knowledgeable, and friendly service - the kind of dedication that truly deserves recognition."

The winners were:



Louise Danbury-Peters is presented with her award by Simon Chadbone, division manager, parts at sponsors Kubota, with *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and comedian Charlie Baker

STAR OF THE DEALERSHIP

Winner: Louise Danbury-Peters, Horticultural sales manager at Arthur Ibbetts Ltd, St Neots, Cambridgeshire

Finalists: Maddie Stevens - Major R Owen Ltd
Graeme Rogers - Sam Turner & Sons

Sponsored by: Kubota

Presenting award: Simon Chadbone division manager, parts

The judges said: "Louise Danbury-Peters stands out as a dynamic and influential member of Arthur Ibbett Ltd, breaking stereotypes in a male-dominated industry with knowledge, initiative, and a customer-focused approach. "In just four years, she has driven significant growth, including elevating AS-Motor sales to the UK top three from a single location, while also enhancing the dealership's presence through a redesigned website and new signage. Her energy, professionalism, and ability to make a tangible impact make her a truly deserving recipient of the Star of the Dealership award."



Matty Smart is presented with his award by Jason Nettle, director of Winchester Garden Machinery, with *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and comedian Charlie Baker

NEW TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR

Winner: Matty Smart, Sam Turner & Sons, Northallerton, North Yorkshire

Finalists: Sion Ap Pedr - Major R Owen Ltd
Celt Thomas - Major R Owen Ltd
Olly Harper - Andover Garden Machinery

Presenting award: Jason Nettle, director Winchester Garden Machinery

The judges said: "Matty Smart has made an exceptional impact in under a year, rapidly mastering new skills in robotics and garden machinery despite joining from a different industry.

"His technical competence, proactive attitude, and genuine care for customers have allowed him to take full ownership of installations and service work while building strong, trusting relationships. Matty's enthusiasm, teamwork, and natural aptitude mark him out as a rising star and a truly deserving recipient of the Best New Technician award."

LEADERSHIP AWARD 2025



Tom Taylor is presented with his award by Craig Hoare, sales & marketing manager at sponsors Toro UK, with *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and comedian Charlie Baker

Winner: Tom Taylor, managing director, Stuart Taylor International Ltd, Blackburn

Finalists: Keith Norman - Sam Turner & Sons
Jason Nettle - Winchester Garden Machinery

Sponsored by: Toro UK

Presenting award: Craig Hoare, sales and marketing manager

The judges said: "Tom Taylor embodies authentic, hands-on leadership, combining humility, vision, and a deep commitment to his team and customers.

"Stepping up during a period of immense change, he has not only preserved his family's legacy at Stuart Taylor International but also modernised operations and strengthened relationships across the business. Through his dedication, care, and ability to inspire those around him, Tom sets a benchmark for leadership that is both personal and transformative."



Jeremy Turney and Anthony Shepherd are presented with the award by Andy Wardrop, key account manager at sponsors STIHL, with Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and comedian Charlie Baker

BEST NEW INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR

Winner: Turney Group

for their diversified new Bredon depot

Finalists: Major R Owen Ltd

Sponsored by: STIHL GB

Presenting award: Andy Wardrop, key account manager

The judges said: "Turney Group's Bredon depot exemplifies bold, forward-thinking diversification - blending strategic expansion with deep community and customer focus."

"By revitalising the former P&D Engineering site and introducing their first Country Store alongside established agricultural and groundcare brands, the team demonstrated innovation, commitment, and hands-on leadership at every stage. The result is a thriving new branch that broadens Turney's reach, strengthens supplier and customer relationships, and sets a benchmark for sustainable, people-driven growth."



Mark Smith is presented with the award by Stewart Carter, managing director at sponsors Husqvarna, with Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and comedian Charlie Baker

GARDEN MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR

Winner: Ron Smith & Co, Worcester

Finalists: Winchester Garden Machinery

Revill Mowers

Blakewell Service

Sponsored by: Husqvarna

Presenting award: Stewart Carter, managing director

The judges said: "Ron Smith & Co exemplifies excellence in garden machinery retail through a holistic commitment to customers, community, staff, and sustainability."

"Their combination of expert service, family-driven culture, strong supplier partnerships, and proactive promotion of greener, cordless technologies demonstrates innovation and leadership in the sector. By consistently delivering outstanding customer experiences and fostering long-term relationships, they set the standard for what a modern, independent garden machinery dealer can achieve."



Celt Thomas, Huw Williams, Maddie Stevens, Joshua Owen-Jones, Sion Ap Pedr and Luke Owen-Jones are presented with the award by Vince Jenkins, national accounts manager at sponsors Kress, with Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and comedian Charlie Baker

PROFESSIONAL TURFCARE DEALER OF THE YEAR

Winner: Major R Owen Ltd,

Penrhyndeudraeth, Gwynedd

Finalists: Strathbogie Forest & Garden

GGM Group

Turney Group

Sponsored by: Kress

Presenting award: Vince Jenkins, national accounts manager

The judges said: "Major R Owen Ltd demonstrates how a smaller, family-run dealership can deliver exceptional impact through expertise, integrity, and a customer-first approach."

"Their tailored, consultative solutions for professional turf machinery, combined with outstanding aftersales support and highly trained staff, have earned remarkable customer trust and satisfaction. By investing in technology, community engagement, and long-term partnerships, they continue to set the standard for professionalism and service in the turf machinery sector."



Scott Knottenbelt of T Hammond Farms is presented with the award by David Mortimer, regional sales manager UK & Ireland at sponsors EGO, plus Andrew Walker of B&B Tractors, with Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and comedian Charlie Baker

CUSTOMER OF THE YEAR 2025

Winner: T Hammond Farms, Nottinghamshire nominated by B&B Tractors.

Sponsored by: EGO

Presenting award: David Mortimer, regional sales manager UK & Ireland

The judges said: "T Hammond Farms embodies the spirit of long-term partnership, innovation, and community commitment that defines this award."

"Over 25 years, their collaboration with B&B Tractors has grown from a single purchase to a fully optimised Fendt fleet, underpinned by trust, efficiency, and shared values. Celebrating 125 years of family farming, the Hammonds continue to blend tradition with cutting-edge technology, setting a benchmark for progressive, sustainable agriculture."

FARM MACHINERY DEALER OF THE YEAR



Jeremy Turney and Anthony Shepherd are presented with the award by Greg Cadman, account manager at sponsor Ibcos, with Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and comedian Charlie Baker

Winner: Turney Group - Bicester,

Middleton Stoney, Bicester

Finalists: Major R Owen Ltd

Lloyd Ltd

Sponsored by: Ibcos

Presenting award: Greg Cadman, account manager

The judges said: "Turney Group has set the benchmark for excellence in farm machinery retail through strategic growth, dual-brand representation, and a relentless focus on customer service."

"Their ability to successfully reinstate both New Holland and Case IH franchises and strengthen supplier and community relationships demonstrates vision, agility, and leadership. By combining innovation, hands-on service, and a deep commitment to the farming community, Turney Group exemplifies what it means to be a trusted, forward-thinking agricultural partner."





David Withers is presented with his award by Steve Gibbs, editor at sponsors *Service Dealer*, with owner Duncan Murray-Clarke.



Jeremy Turney and Anthony Shepherd are presented with the award by Stewart Anderson, managing director at Principal Sponsors AL-KO and WEIBANG, with *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke, and comedian/comper Charlie Baker



Tactics to thrive in turbulent times

‘Toughness; the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties’. That, says the Oxford English Dictionary, defines ‘resilience’, the one-word theme of the 2025 Service Dealer Conference. MARTIN RICKATSON details how the December day’s speakers made the topic central to their various presentations.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION

Winner: David Withers, Iseki UK & Ireland

Sponsored by: *Service Dealer*

Presenting award: **Steve Gibbs**, editor

The judges said: “This year’s winner is very much an industry character and has spent pretty much all of his working life in groundcare machinery. He has the ability to balance fun with professionalism but you can’t help feeling there is always a plan behind that smile.

“David Withers has worked his way up in the industry, starting a car repair business with his friend David Watson (latterly of Ernest Doe) which they ended up selling to their customer Charterhouse.

“David then joined Jacobsen as a regional sales manager and quickly worked his way up to National Accounts Manager. In 1998 Ransomes Jacobsen came to be and David worked his way up from UK Sales Manager to Managing Director.

“Then around 2011 he was appointed Jacobsen President & CEO, moving to live in Charlotte, North Carolina. He served six years in this post, where he was running the global business, setting up branches, buying companies, such as Dixie Chopper, and growing the group to a turnover of around \$400 million.

“David then moved back to the UK to focus on Iseki -leading to the successful evolution and sale of Iseki UK last year. An incredible career by anyone’s standards.”

OVERALL DEALER OF THE YEAR 2025

Winner: Turney Group - Bicester, Middleton Stoney, Bicester

Sponsored by: **AL-KO and WEIBANG**

Sponsored by: **AL-KO and WEIBANG**

Presenting award: **Stewart Anderson**, managing director

The judges said: “Turney Group displays excellence across every facet of their dealership, combining strategic growth, innovation, and outstanding customer service with a strong community and employee focus.

“From successfully reinstating dual-brand representation and launching the pioneering Bredon Depot, to delivering award-winning initiatives and fostering trusted supplier and customer relationships, their achievements reflect vision, resilience, and leadership. Consistently setting the standard for professionalism, adaptability, and long-term value, Turney Group is a truly deserving recipient of the Overall Dealer of the Year.”

AND FINALLY ...



Service Dealer editor, Steve Gibbs, was presented with a special cover by Duncan Murray-Clarke to mark his 25 years with the magazine.

Factors from impacting customers and their investment plans – weather, commodity prices, government policy – to those directly affecting farm, turf and garden equipment dealers – such as bigger national insurance bills and the minimum wage increase – the trade has faced more than a little turbulence of late. The ability of a business to stand up to such headwinds, though, can be defined by its ability to handle such challenges – its resilience.

That was the thinking behind the theme, speakers and topics of December’s Service Dealer Conference, a resilient event in itself in that it has become an established fixture, despite the past decade’s trials and tribulations, from coronavirus to shifting retail and service trends. In his opening speech, Duncan Murray-Clarke, *Service Dealer* owner, acknowledged the role of support from sponsors in the event’s continued success. This year’s list was headed by Principal Sponsor AL-KO/WEIBANG, with Husqvarna as Platinum Sponsor, and EGO, Ibcos, Kress, Kubota, Stihl and Toro as Gold Sponsors, with AriensCo and Cramer providing Silver Sponsors, and Garden Trader and TAP sponsoring the day’s networking.

“Since our last conference, political and economic challenges have considerably impacted our trade, particularly in areas such as increased National Insurance contributions and the minimum wage rise,” he noted.

“These costs have stretched already thin margins and in some cases have had to be absorbed by passing on rises to customers. Ag dealers have been hit particularly



hard by market downturns, as well as rising machine costs, especially with big kit.

“Then, of course, we’ve seen arguably our industry’s biggest influence, the weather, continue to impact all sectors, with high autumn rainfall affecting arable farmers, and then prolonged drought cutting harvest yields and slowing groundcare machinery sales.

“But since our first conference a decade ago, the dealer network has continued adapting to meet such evolving challenges. That’s why ‘Resilience’, and the subtitle ‘tactics to thrive in turbulent times’, seemed an apt theme for this year’s event.”



Service Dealer owner, Duncan Murray-Clarke



Keynote speaker, Stuart Goldsmith

Lessons in resilience

The Service Dealer Conference day usually ends with a comedian introducing the evening dinner and awards, but this time it also began with one. While keynote speakers generally hail from the wider business arena, this year's guest was stand-up Stuart Goldsmith, who – in addition to being a regular on shows including Live at the Apollo – specialises in speaking on issues including the climate and resilience at employee events for companies ranging from Santander and Lloyd's to Sainsbury's and the BBC. In 13 years of his podcast The Comedian's Comedian, he has interviewed over 500 comics about how they cope with the challenges of a creative life.

"The defining characteristic of a good comic is resilience," suggested Stuart.

"We've all endured those moments of stage fright, of being heckled, of trying out something new that crashes and burns, and those moments of silence.

"American comedian Jerry Seinfeld suggested people's fear of public speaking is often bigger than their fear of death, and that, therefore, at a funeral more people would rather be in the casket than giving a eulogy. But don't forget that we all feel this fear, and that comedians and others who speak

publicly were not born with a talent to stand up in front of a crowd. They've learned the resilience necessary to do so, and the same applies to taking business decisions."

Resilience is not about not making mistakes, but about how they are handled and managed and not dwell on, suggested Stuart.

"There are two golden rules when you stumble – don't try to repair your way out of a mistake, but keep calm, smile and rebuild.

"There are sharp and blunt ends to the need for resilience. The sharp end is about the there-and-then, when it's all going wrong. The blunt end is more insidious and lasts longer – ruminating about a mistake or bad result or decision.

"With comedy gigs you learn the need to be connected to your audience at all times – right from the very basic level of keeping in range of the microphone. If you lose connection with people, it can be hard to reconnect. I imagine the same is true with your customers. And if you lose half of a big potential audience, that can be a big number. Some take a quiet approach to a challenging audience, others meet them equal

intensity. Work out what's best for you and individual customers.

"As a comedian, my job is to build something with my audience, a bit like a house of cards. It's incredibly vulnerable, but as with any business, if your performance is stuttering, you need to find your flow state and identify the triggers – the things you do when achieving your best work, and when not – while also noting any negative thoughts and addressing them. I also know I'm at my funniest when I can make myself laugh. If you're enjoying what you do, you will do your best work. Comedians often record their gigs to see afterwards what worked and what didn't, and I'm sure something similar works in your businesses."

Stuart suggested parallels between the comedian's nemesis, the heckler, and the challenging people dealers can encounter among peers, staff, suppliers and customers.

"The first rule for dealing with heckling is not to assume it's an attack. Not everyone directly shows their support. Stay playful and don't break your contract with your audience. Have an internal system to identify the real problem with a criticism, then deal with the issue. Sometimes you're heckled and it's justified. Accept it, step back and recover. Move on from an emotional negative experience and don't get dragged into a whirlpool of rumination. In comedy you learn the most from the worst gigs. When something goes wrong, roll up your sleeves and see an opportunity to learn.

"And when things get tough, remember why you do what you do and the connection you have to your industry. Like you, I'm not doing this to make money – it's because I love doing it. And in your industry, of course, you cannot necessarily fix the big issues such as weather and politics, so focus on addressing the ones you can.

"Work out what's important to your individual audience or customer – factors in your sector such as succession, costs, weather, even sport. We all put up barriers, but are all human underneath. Learn how to connect to a customer's authentic personality and you will gain their trust. These are human soft skills AI cannot replace."

Opportunities in viticulture

Ian Beecher-Jones, former director-general of BAGMA and now an independent precision farming adviser and trainer, spoke on the dealer opportunities available in another of his industry interests – Ian also owns JoJo's Vineyard, a 4ha Oxon enterprise established with his wife in 2019.

"The UK now has 1,500 vineyards covering 5,500ha, averaging 5ha, and they produced 22m bottles in 2023, with 15% of the industry volume exported," said Ian.

"There's significant scope for dealers in parts of England and Wales to supply the equipment needed by a growing sector.

"While smaller and start-up vineyards tend to buy secondhand and retain equipment long-term, larger vineyards have extensive requirements for purchase or hire of mowers, estate management machinery, specialist tractors, sprayers and vine-trimming equipment. And there's significant potential in areas like robotic mowing."

Developing knowledge and understanding of vineyard owners' requirements and researching the right machine offerings for them should be first steps for dealers considering entering the sector, suggested Ian.

"The quality of grape production and wine-making is improving continuously, with English and Welsh

wines now viewed firmly as premium. With vineyards expanding and the UK industry's 15,000 workforce predicted to double in the coming years, but the larger vineyards, like larger farms, finding labour-sourcing ever-more challenging, and manufacturers looking to expand sales, there are significant dealer opportunities."



Ian Beecher-Jones of JoJo's Vineyard

Greenkeepers' dealer needs

Jim McKenzie MBE, director of golf courses and estates management at Gwent's Celtic Manor Resort, was this year's customer insight speaker from the sportsturf world. With Celtic Manor having grown into a nine-venue business with £160m turnover and 1,300 staff, and having hosted events ranging from the 2010 Ryder Cup to the 2014 NATO summit, he emphasised the value he places on a dealer partnership.

"We have an excellent relationship with our preferred local dealer, Hopkins Machinery, which supplies us with machines from the likes of Toro, Club Car and Kubota. The size of our operation means we can justify two extensive workshop facilities of our own, staffed by five mechanics, and we do most servicing and even our own grinding in-house.

"There are many other ways in which we work together, though, and our dealer is fundamental to what we do –

we want the businesses who work with us to benefit from our relationship. It's a two-way arrangement – Hopkins has been a massive help with big events like the Ryder Cup, as well as our everyday needs, while often we also help them – if we have something in our own parts stocks they need, for example.

"They understand our replacement cycle, and that we're unlikely to regularly replace everything. It's a flexible give-and-take relationship.

"We also work together to trial new machines, such as battery-powered equipment, and I can see this and robotic machinery becoming increasingly important.

"I hear from many courses who say they rarely see anyone from their dealer. Relationships are built on trust and understanding, and I'd urge dealers to build this by getting service as well as sales staff onto courses to understand their issues."



Celtic Manor Resort's Jim McKenzie MBE

The domestic grasscare view

Gary Whitney, formerly MD of Stiga UK and now running Smartlawns, his own robotic lawncare business, spoke from the domestic grass machinery perspective, and of the lessons he had learned in the trade.

“Early on, when working for firms including Carden Horticultural and Victor UK, the importance of keeping promises, returning calls, honesty and empathy quickly became clear to me,” he recalled.

“Later, it was equally applicable through my time with Hayter Beaver and with Brophy’s the grounds maintenance contractor, when the market was changing with the evolution of competitive tendering. I learned the necessity of deep product knowledge through using the machinery, walking in the customer’s shoes.”

From the late ‘90s until 2018, Gary saw things from the other side of the

supplier-customer fence, running his own hard landscaping business, an experience he said taught him the value of reciprocating fairness and trust from suppliers in earning his commitment.

“When I then accepted the role of MD at Stiga UK, those principles guided my management, to grow the business through trust rather than pressure,” he said.

“And since departing to develop the Smartlawns business, I’ve retained those principles, taking every chance to listen to problems to build or strengthen a relationship.

“Be easy to do business with, and build growth through trust, whether converting a potential buyer into a customer, or helping an existing one with an issue. Always consider how a potential or existing customer with a challenge or problem feels – listen,

understand and communicate a solution. And remember that customers appreciate support and will pay for it if presented the right way. Find out what extra services they may need. This way you can build relationships that outlast single transactions.”



Industry stalwart, Gary Whitney

AI rebooted

While he had spoken just a year ago at the 2024 conference on the subject of AI, the technology is developing so fast that Neil Wilkins, marketing consultant and senior tutor at Cambridge Marketing College, presented again on the topic at the 2025 event – and gave some practical demonstrations on the time savings it can offer.

“AI isn’t about replacing people, but about providing more power to your business to quickly handle repetitive human tasks where humans add no value,” he suggested.

“Think of AI as a team of experts that can tap into the world’s knowledge and solve the small challenges you don’t have the time to address – from monitoring what your competitors are doing to managing minor business tasks. It frees time to devote to human areas such as improving customer experience and building strategy.

“Development is rapid – a new version of ChatGPT was launched every three days in 2025. For 2026, developments in AI focus on promoting, agents and automation, helping keep ahead of trends, social listening and

new market opportunities.”

The most significant recent development in AI’s evolution is smarter prompting, he believes.

“It’s now possible to not just prompt AI tools to do things, but converse with them, and train AI assistants such as Fern to challenge assumptions, creating hybrid human-AI decision-making. While a 2025 prompt might have been ‘write me a blog about customer loyalty’, a 2026 prompt might say ‘challenge me on my assumptions about how I retain customers.’ Used correctly, such agents can become useful workforce members, and be

set up to manage specific business functions, such as marketing, scheduling and stock control. And through hybrid browsing you can, for example, instruct your assistant to perform an activity online, such as placing orders.

“Identify a step in the sales process that’s slowing you down – enquiry, quotation, follow-up, sale – then see how AI can help. Starting with simple small processes where humans don’t add value is great for beginning AI adoption. New Toolkit coming early 2026. Explore the *Service Dealer Toolkit* to learn more.”



Neil Wilkins returned to update dealers on AI

Managing mental health

Nick Elston, who specialises in speaking on motivational and mental health issues, titled his breakout session presentation ‘Every storm runs out of rain’, reminding his audience that work and personal challenges can be used as catalysts for change to forge something better from a situation.

“Rationality often goes out the window when these challenges come into play, but people often don’t reach out for help when they need it,” he suggested.

“It’s reckoned 28% of people experience anxiety issues. Discovering how this manifests itself can help address it. High-performing people can suffer equally, but you can only run so fast for so long before coming to a sudden halt. It’s not about how you perform or deliver but about how you

recharge, and reminding yourself why you do what you do.

“To get here, communication is essential. Tell people what you need rather than get aggressive about things not getting done.”

What goes into your eyes and ears – such as too much news or internet/ social media scrolling – affects you mentally, Nick suggested.

“Waiting for something to happen often causes more anxiety than the thing happening. When trying to talk through issues with staff, lead with compassion and emotion, and see the other person’s side. Encourage the idea that if you don’t understand something, ask, helping people make decisions with confidence.

“Following a process of acceptance, survival and evolution can help manage

overwhelming situations. Evolution means change is inevitable – find your way through and help others to do so.

“Assure employees of anonymity if they wish to discuss issues, and remember that independent counselling is available, potentially for free if a trainee counsellor is permitted to sit in.

“Mental health and wellbeing is not a clinical, dry topic, and different factors will contribute differently to it for different people. Analyse what nourishes and depletes you, and break down things into daily incremental changes. Everything we do is based on emotional reaction – remember that you are the average of the five people you spend most of your time with, and don’t be afraid to inspire others through your lived experiences, both good and bad.”

Speaking on the importance of good mental health, Nick Elston



Do dealers get a fair deal with warranty?

Warranty reimbursement has become one of the industry's most emotive issues, with many dealers feeling rising labour costs, uncompensated admin and low reimbursement rates are creating an unsustainable burden. KEITH CHRISTIAN examines where responsibility lies, what the law actually says, and why many believe the system is overdue for reform.

One of the land-based industry's most discussed and fought-over policies concerns warranty reimbursement from suppliers and manufacturers to dealers – a subject covered at length in this magazine over the years, and the cause of a certain amount of hardship within the dealer network. The big question is: do dealers get a fair deal from their suppliers and manufacturers with warranty reimbursement?

You can hear the cry of 'NO' from the UK dealer network, but what is the answer to this unending issue? *Service Dealer's* surveys into warranty conditions (see latest this issue) indicate that, generally, dealers do not feel that they are treated fairly when it comes to warranty reimbursement.

Let me make some points clear before I go on a rant about this issue. For the sake of clarity, I will use the term suppliers to describe manufacturers, third-party suppliers and importers. I would also like to stress that there are

companies out there that are fair about their warranty dealings with dealers. Agricultural machinery dealers and groundcare and garden machinery dealers will experience different types of warranty policies concerning reimbursement, due to the nature of the products they sell and the way they charge for labour.

Suppliers will have individual policies that are applied to their franchised dealers, and many dealers may have certain legal contracts with some of their suppliers that require them to carry out warranty work on product not sold by them. More on that later.

I think the dealer network knows its suppliers and their policies well enough for me to avoid naming and shaming any company. For the purposes of this article, I do not intend using any names, although information mentioned will be from bona fide sources. I am also including some, perhaps obvious, statements about the legal aspects of how warranties are covered.

Legal obligations

I would hope that dealers, as retailers, are aware of their obligations under UK consumer law. But, just in case, here we go.

In the UK, a consumer has a legal right to a remedy for faulty goods, known as statutory rights, which exist separately from any manufacturer's or extended warranty. The consumer's statutory rights allow them to reject faulty goods for a full refund within 30 days, or request a free repair or replacement within six months. After six months, they can still claim, but they will likely need to prove the fault existed at the time of purchase. For claims in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, these rights generally last for six years. For Scotland, they last for five years.

Legally, a retailer is not required to offer a warranty on products they did not sell, as the warranty is a contract

between the consumer and the original seller, which may be the manufacturer or third-party provider, or another retailer. This may be changed by the contract between the dealer and their supplier, though. A retailer's legal obligation is to provide products that are of satisfactory quality, as described, and fit for purpose under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, which gives a consumer the right to a repair, replacement, or refund from the retailer if the goods are faulty. A consumer can contact the retailer for help with a manufacturer's warranty, but the retailer who did not sell the product is not obligated to do so.

I have no doubt that dealers are more than capable of determining if a 'faulty' product is because of a design or manufacturing issue or a customer issue, and then making a judgment call on a warranty fix or a good will or a chargeable fix. Often, dealers make a judgement, which is still disputed by the supplier. This can devalue the concept that a dealer works in partnership with their suppliers.

In the UK, there is no such thing as a limited warranty or a restricted term warranty. Some years ago, prior to Brexit, European law was changed to provide a two-year warranty on goods purchased by consumers in the EU. This could not apply in the UK, because the existing UK consumer protection laws generally apply to the life of a product, or a minimum of six years (five in Scotland). The UK could not reduce the consumer rights in this case, providing lesser protection.

Dealers, be aware that, as the retailer of a product, you are liable to the consumer if anything goes wrong, so don't let your suppliers tell you they have limited warranty policies, or only two years, because of the EU consumer rights. These do not apply in the UK.

Modern-day warranty policies should be built on a set of principles designed to protect consumers, while offering fair and transparent terms for manufacturers, service providers and retailers. These principles ensure that

products and services meet quality expectations, and are fit for their intended use.

The issues for dealers seem to be clear when it comes to warranty reimbursement. They rarely get enough back to cover the cost of the work they have done. This is exacerbated when they are expected to do warranty work on product they have not sold, and therefore not made any profit on, to cover any losses incurred from low reimbursement rates.

Dealer labour charge-out rates in the UK vary enormously from region to region, and by dealer size. Average rates may be between £50 and £100 per hour. With ever-rising costs of employment, premises costs and so on, these rates will go up and up. So why does a supplier expect their dealer network to work for a fraction of their hourly charge-out rate when the dealer can probably sell all their labour hours at their retail rate?

Warranty reimbursement rates have not risen in alignment with retail labour rates, which are worked out meticulously to cover costs and make a margin. The idea of making a profit on warranty is not the case. But a dealer

should be able to cover costs. Bear in mind that the balance between retail work and warranty work in service departments has changed a lot in recent years.

One dealer claimed that the split between retail and warranty work can be as much as 60%/40%. That is 40% of a qualified technician's time not making money.

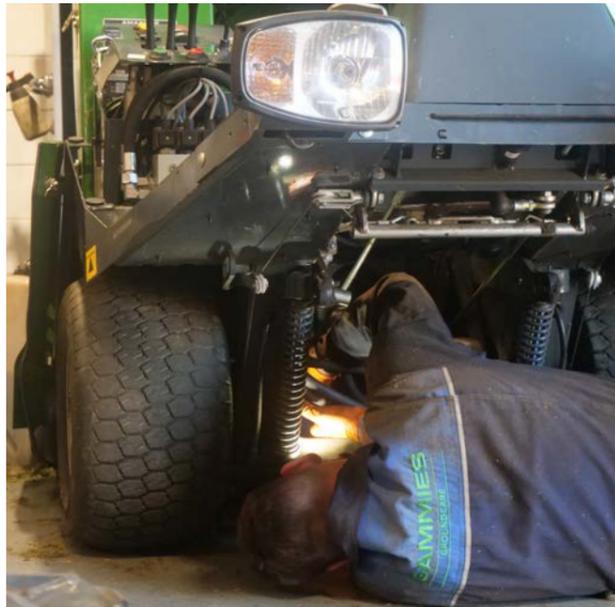
Costs incurred

A dealer commented to *Service Dealer* last year:

"We should be paid a fair hourly rate, we should be credited quickly, and they should take into account all the time taken for doing claims, paperwork, and putting up with all the hassle and abuse from some customers. An absolute minimum of £50 per hour should apply now."

Other things that impact on the cost of doing a warranty are, in some cases, delivery and collection. Rarely is this cost covered by a supplier's warranty policy. Repair times can be set by a supplier that are unrealistic in a normal workshop environment, adding to the





dealer's losses on a warranty repair. The administrative process required to submit a claim can be both time-consuming and costly, often necessitating dedicated personnel within dealerships and incurring related expenses. There is no consideration for the additional information requested by manufacturers (e.g. photos, diagnostic reports, return of failed parts, etcetera).

When you start adding up the hourly cost of staff, and the additional costs in providing this service, it is ludicrous to expect a dealer to cover the cost of what ultimately should be a supplier's cost, as it is their product that is faulty. Failed or faulty products are to be expected. No one blames a manufacturer for that. Dealers just want to achieve a quick and cost-free repair.



Waiting for a warranty payment

All too often manufacturers hinder the process by not being upfront about known issues.

A fair deal?

So, is warranty reimbursement for dealers fair? It does seem unlikely with many brands. However, the more popular brands are important to dealers, and one has to assume that they agree to the terms for these brands, as the brand attracts customers to their business. So does this outweigh the downside of warranty costs? Only a sharp accountant is going to put a number on this question. I spoke to dealers about this, and they generally want the prestige of a well-known brand, but I was shocked to learn that warranty repairs, with some brands, can cost them as much as ten percent of the sales turnover of that brand. That does not leave a lot of margin for the dealer.

Is the solution simply to ditch the brands that cost a dealer too much to look after, and retain more independence when it comes to what products are sold and how customers are advised? With several specialist importers now offering dealers on-demand products and a fair level of support, the alternatives may well be out there with more attractive margins and less stocking commitment.

There are always two sides to any

story, and I must emphasise there are good suppliers out there that are fair and supportive of dealers. I spoke to a few suppliers at SALTEX, and, whilst they felt they could do more, payments of £50 per hour and profit on parts – as well as collection and return, in some cases – seemed to be reasonable. These are the ones dealers should look at. However, if it does make sense for your business to take a hit on warranty costs to benefit from brand prestige, that is the dealer's choice. Just remember if you sell it, you are liable to the consumer regardless of what arrangements you have with a supplier.

Retailer rights

It is important to understand what the rights of a retailer are when dealing with a supplier, even when there is a contract in place.

Manufacturers and suppliers offer legal protections to retailers, primarily through contractual obligations and statutory duties under product safety legislation, which allows the retailer to seek compensation and pass liability up the supply chain.

The primary relationship between a manufacturer/supplier and a retailer is governed by the terms of their supply contract. This contract typically includes implied or expressed terms that the goods must be of satisfactory

quality, be fit for purpose, match their description, and be free from material defects.

If these terms are breached, the retailer can recover damages from the supplier for their losses, including the cost of removing faulty products and installing replacements. Ultimately, the law operates on a "chain" system, allowing the retailer to pass the liability back to the party responsible for the defect or safety issue.

Sorry about all the legal stuff, but it does make it clear that there is a high level of responsibility from the supplier to ensure that the consumer is protected via a retailer or dealership, in our case. So why is it that some suppliers simply do not provide a reasonable level of warranty reimbursement when it is their product that is defective? Why should the dealer subsidise the cost of a warranty repair and not be correctly reimbursed by their supplier? Why can some suppliers provide a fair level of reimbursement and others cannot, and who in the industry should be prepared – or is prepared – to challenge this everlasting status quo, and ensure that dealers get a fair deal on warranty reimbursement?

There is the issue of parts cost

reimbursement, and I hear stories of suppliers discounting parts claimed on a warranty from the dealers' stock, and in some cases charging postage for parts required for warranty work. When you add this practice to no allowances for mileage, washdown, diagnostic time, administration and a host of other incidentals, the dealer is well out of pocket, even if they sold the product in the first place.

Is it fair that a dealer must take a cost hit on a warranty repair for a product they have not supplied? Well, one could argue that it is swings and roundabouts. If the dealer sells on the net and supplies well away from his or her base of operations, they will benefit from someone else having to handle the warranty. If this is not the case, it does become unfair for the dealer, who cannot benefit from distance selling.

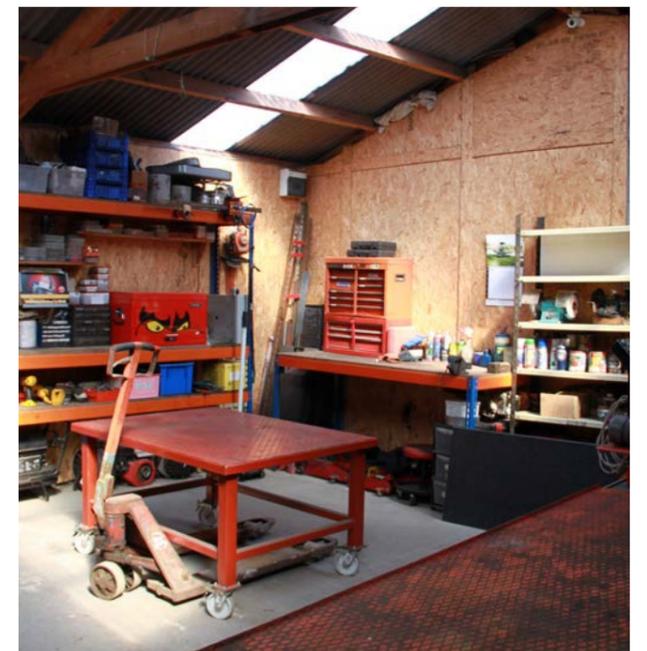
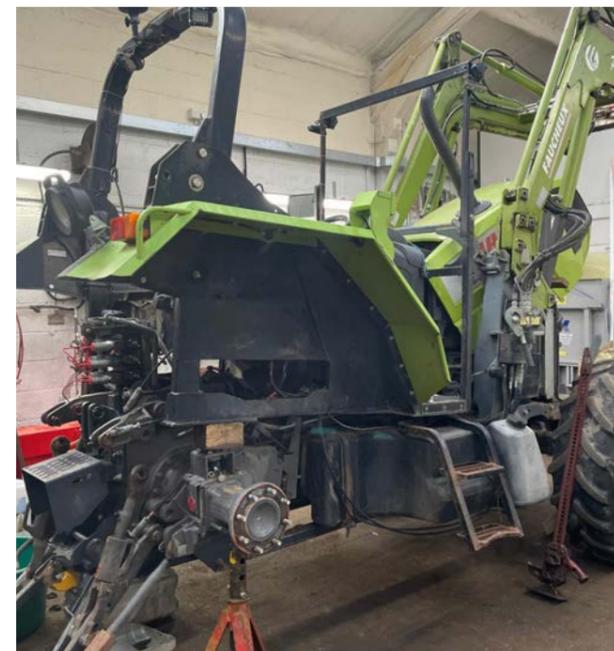
What can be done?

I am sure that my rantings will be well known to dealers when it comes to warranty reimbursement. The big question is: can anything be done about it by the suppliers, or is it a question of dealers voting with their feet? It is incredible that some well-known brand names across the industry are so mean with warranty reimbursement. They can be offering as low as 50% less than a dealer's

charge-out rate – and that is a measurable cost to a dealer when a qualified technician can be costing a dealership as much as £40 per hour, if not more. It is more important than ever, due to the cost of technicians and the shortages of skilled staff, that a dealership can ensure that a technician can be profitable within the business, and not be dragged down by low warranty reimbursement. At the very least, cost recovery should be the norm.

The industry is experiencing some hard times, with a high number of closures and mergers. We cannot afford to lose the dealer network, and those suppliers who are found lacking in their support for the dealer network need to step up and take notice before they have no dealer network to carry out their warranty work. It is time to reimburse fairly, and not make the dealer pay for the shortcomings of a supplier. Whilst it may be a cost to a dealer, the harm to a brand's reputation, and the effect on customer satisfaction, will be immeasurable in the long time.

So, it is high time the mean-spirited and tight-fisted suppliers followed their counterparts who do provide a fair warranty policy for dealers - and that the industry itself set some guidelines for a fair warranty policy across the board.





The *Service Dealer* contingent.
L-R: Pete and Emma McArthur,
Duncan Murray-Clarke, Steve
Gibbs and David Comiskey

A remarkable achievement

This was the assessment of *Service Dealer*'s UK contingent on the world's largest outdoor power equipment trade show. Editor STEVE GIBBS reports from Equip in Louisville, Kentucky.

Back in November, I had the privilege of attending Equip 2025 in Louisville, Kentucky - the world's largest trade exhibition for the outdoor power equipment (OPE) industry. Joining me from *Service Dealer* were Duncan Murray-Clarke, our owner; David Comiskey, our video specialist; and Pete and Emma McArthur from dealership Strathbogie Forest & Garden.

Returning after a personal three-year hiatus, I was struck by just how much the event has grown. The scale is extraordinary - it's a show on a completely different level, and it genuinely lives up to its reputation as "the place where the industry comes home." Despite the enormity of the undertaking, Equip maintains a celebratory community feel, drawing visitors and exhibitors from across the U.S. and around the globe.

Our visit kicked off on the Tuesday with a welcome celebration at Churchill Downs, home of the iconic Kentucky Derby. Thousands of attendees gathered to admire the famous

racetrack, enjoy food and drink, and prepare for the show's official opening - a fitting start to a week-long industry spectacle.

Day One: Dealer exclusives, innovations and traditions

Wednesday marked the official opening of the show. A standout feature of Equip for me is the dealer and press exclusive hours from 9am to 12pm on the first morning, allowing manufacturers to engage openly with their dealer networks without the prying ears and eyes of end-users. I feel it is a superb concept, and one that could potentially offer lessons for UK shows, providing quality time for uninhibited business discussion and networking.

Whilst this dealer-exclusive session was taking place, the commercial end-user attendees who were not yet allowed onto the showfloor were inspired by Jessie Cole, owner of the Savannah Bananas baseball team. His motivational keynote focused on

turning customers into fans, embracing risks, and using storytelling to build brand loyalty - an engaging way for these mostly small landscaping and contracting business owners to kick off the day.

Once the show opened to everyone, the scale became even more apparent. From vast indoor aisles to



Getting hands-on with equipment of all descriptions is a big draw for visitors

the expansive outdoor demonstration area, the footprint and visitor numbers are staggering. Chuck Bowen of the OPEI estimates that walking the full site would take at least 30 minutes - and that's without bumping into anyone!

The showfloor buzzed with innovation, with some interesting press calls I made, including:

- STIHL showcased over 80 new innovations for 2026, from water pumps and cut-off machines to advanced mobile and static charging solutions. Visitors could even sign up for an on-site STIHL tattoo!
- Honda launched two new ZTR mowers, including the autonomous Prozision Autonomous, capable of remembering multiple cut routes and operating without an operator.
- Briggs & Stratton promoted its For Pros, By Pros theme, featuring developments to Vanguard engines, new swappable battery packs, the Ferris Z1 32" with Oil Xtend, and the Z3002 Hurricane blower from Billy Goat.
- Toro focused on autonomy and hybrid solutions, as well as innovations across its Turf Master and fairway mower ranges, addressing the pressing challenge of staffing for end-users.

A highlight for our contingent on day one saw *Service Dealer* host a high-profile discussion with the North American Equipment Dealers Association (NAEDA), exploring the similarities and differences facing dealers on both sides of the Atlantic. See separate section for details.

Technology meets tradition

One of my most striking impressions from the first day was the contrast between the indoor and outdoor areas. Inside, the stands were sleek, futuristic, and technologically dazzling. AI-driven machinery, robotics, and battery-powered solutions dominated the conversations - a glimpse into a quiet, clean, and highly automated future for the industry.



The massive outdoor demonstration area had expanded again

Step outside, however, and the atmosphere was completely different. The air was filled with the roar of gasoline engines, the smell of exhaust, and the kinetic energy of contractors and landscapers testing machinery in real-world conditions. Here, one could tell the contractors and landscapers in attendance were enthralled by the power and performance of the traditional combustion engine.

This contrast highlighted a U.S. market that appears to currently be dual-natured. One eye is fixed on automation and sustainability, whilst the other is focussed on the raw power of traditional gasoline-powered equipment. Walking between the two worlds, it became clear that U.S. dealers are catering to a diverse customer base - some ready to embrace the cutting edge, others loyal to tried-and-tested solutions.

It was a reminder that the future of dealerships may not be about choosing one path over another, but balancing innovation with tradition.

Day Two: Mutt Madness and industry insights

Day two offered a unique diversion in the form of Mutt Madness, an adoption event for puppies that ran alongside the main exhibition. The event, held in the main atrium, drew media attention and resulted in a \$10,000 donation to the Kentucky Humane Society.

It was during this event that I also caught up with Kris Kiser, President of the OPEI, to discuss trends in

technology, robotics and gasoline-powered equipment, as well as the impact of tariffs on the U.S. market (see separate item for details).

Our contingent also held a roundtable with Sara Hey, of Bob Clements International, and Bob Clements himself, exploring AI in dealerships, future technology and workforce challenge. Pete and Duncan discussed where UK dealers differ and find overlap with our U.S. counterparts. You can watch this conversation in full as part of our Digital Special Report.

Final thoughts

Equip 2025 was a remarkable showcase of the global OPE industry. The scale, energy, and breadth of innovation was eye-opening. Interestingly for me, it did highlight a potential dichotomy in the market - balancing cutting-edge technological innovation with the enduring appeal of traditional, gasoline-powered machinery. For UK dealers, it may perhaps offer a reminder that the future will be about meeting diverse customer needs while embracing new opportunities.

I would once again advocate that if UK dealers ever had the chance to attend, it's an opportunity not to be missed. As Pete McArthur put it: "There is just nothing on this scale in the UK. It's really a remarkable achievement."

You can now watch extensive video coverage from this year's Equip by exploring our Digital Special Report that you can find at www.servicedealer.co.uk

UK and U.S. dealers share insights

On stage at the Kentucky Exposition Centre



L-R: Tom Healy, Jason Huber, Pete and Duncan

A significant development for *Service Dealer* at Equip 2025 was an exciting collaboration with the North American Equipment Dealers Association (NAEDA). Roughly the equivalent of the UK's BAGMA, the Association represents specialist dealers from across most of the USA and parts of Canada.

Service Dealer owner Duncan Murray-Clarke and Pete McArthur – director of Strathbogie Forest & Garden – were joined on stage in the massive, main keynote room at the Kentucky Exposition Centre by NAEDA's Tom Healy, director of dealer development for a live panel debate. Also joining them to give the perspective of a U.S. dealer was Jason Huber, owner of Central Equipment – based in Lexington, Kentucky – and NAEDA's vice chairman on their OPE dealer council.

Discussing issues impacting independent dealers on both sides of the Atlantic, Duncan chaired a fascinating discussion.

First up on the agenda was the impact of battery tools on the dealer sector. Interestingly, both Pete and Jason agreed that the tech's popularity was

most certainly ramping up amongst residential users - but it is taking some time for professionals to fully convert. "Commercially, many of these professional customers just aren't ready for it," said Jason.

Asked about the aftercare situation for dealerships considering a proliferation of battery in the market, Pete confirmed: "It's a situation now where we are looking for a new type of technician."

Also related to this new technology was the worry for dealers that some manufacturers might be looking increasingly to sell directly to the end-user. "Certainly, we are concerned about this on the residential side in the U.S. market," confirmed Jason.

The talk about battery products led naturally into wider thoughts about developing technologies in the industry. Regarding robotic mowers, Pete said: "The biggest problem I see with robots, is that there's too many options at the lower end of the market." He went on to explain how top-level golf courses in the UK want to offer that immaculate presentation to their members 24/7, so the quality commercial units are becoming an increasingly popular choice.

From robots, drones were touched upon. Tom from NAEDA explained how their promotion in the commercial turfcare sector is somewhat behind that of agriculture - but there's no doubt it's coming. He said progressive ag dealers in the States started down this drone route for their customers maybe 10 or even 15 years ago - and those that failed to embrace the technology "were left for dust." His advice was: dealers in the OPE sector need to get on board.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, an area that sounded remarkably similar for dealers on both sides of the Atlantic was the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. Tom confirmed that their Association sees that every specialist dealer sector in the U.S. (groundcare, ag, construction, etcetera) is short of staff. Jason said that his payroll bill had gone up by about 40% in the past three years - without increasing his staff numbers. To keep good people these days, other industries' pay scales must be matched, he said.

Pete completely agreed with Jason, and said that, to keep staff happy, they really must feel included as part of the dealership's family.

Speaking of family, the thorny issue of succession in the dealership was touched upon. Again, both Pete and Jason agreed that this is a hard subject for any family business to address - but it's one that cannot be ignored. With the average age of dealer principals on the increase in both the UK and US, it's a situation that individuals must take ownership of.

Finally, Duncan raised the question of: what will dealerships look like in five years' time? Tom predicted a drastic shift, saying: "We shall see mergers and acquisitions ramp up." Jason also felt there would be fewer individual dealerships in the U.S., and that "technicians will be the most important staff members that we have."

Pete agreed with these assessments for the UK, too, adding: "Technological developments will be the most crucial element that we must come to grips with in this industry - that, and more grey hair!"

You can watch the panel's discussion in its entirety on the Digital Special Report that can be accessed via www.servicedealer.co.uk



The resurgence of gas

Kris Kiser speaks with *Service Dealer's* Steve Gibbs

During Equip, I spoke with Kris Kiser, head of the OPEI, the trade association that organises the show, to gauge his thoughts on both the exhibition and the wider U.S. market.

An interesting observation that he had – and one that I felt was indeed apparent across the exhibition – was that petrol (or gas) was having a moment in the ascendancy. Kris' opinion on how traditionally-fuelled equipment was faring in the U.S. market was to say, "We're seeing the resurgence of gas - certainly in commercial applications."

He stressed that, for the homeowner market, battery is here to stay; it has deep U.S. market penetration and those numbers continue to evolve and expand. But in the commercial sector, Kris said, yes, battery is growing. However: "We are seeing a better evolution in gas products, with cleaner, more efficient products." He summed up the current market situation, saying: "Right now, gasoline is making a bit of a comeback."

Kris also spoke of the state of the OPEI sector in the States this year. Whilst not going as far to describe it as buoyant, he did say it was "coming back." He explained: "We're weather-dependent, and that has helped us this year. We've had a pretty good spring and summer, which has meant our guys have rebounded."

Kris went on to explain how the political situation, with all the changing talk of tariffs, has impacted the OPEI's

manufacturer members. He explained how US companies source their components from all over the world, including areas like China and Mexico, and how these routes have now become disrupted. Kris told me: "The uncertainty is a huge problem. In an industry such as ours, with many moving parts, I will say it's very, very challenging."

We also touched on the show relocating to different cities in the U.S. in the coming years – with Orlando and Las Vegas mentioned as possibilities. With both renovation works scheduled to take place in Louisville, and the fact that Equip is becoming ever more popular, maxing out hotel room capacity in the city, a temporary tour of other locations appears to be on the cards.

When this does take place it'll make travel that bit easier for potential UK visitors, as direct flights to Florida or Nevada are commonplace. To that end, Kris emphasised that, for readers of *Service Dealer* who may be considering a trip to the show in the coming years, Equip is a unique event. He said: "It's more than social; it's more than business; it's more than peer-to-peer. If you want to see all the stuff that's offered globally, it's likely here." He summed up by saying to our readers: "You're missing something if you're not here."

You can watch our whole conversation as part of the Equip Digital Special Report, accessible via www.servicedealer.co.uk

SALTEX enjoys focussed footfall

The GMA's show took place at the NEC back in November, and, whilst it felt more compact, stand-holders reported quality leads and good conversations with top decisionmakers. *Service Dealer* editor STEVE GIBBS reports.

After what had been a challenging season for many, SALTEX took place back in November at the Birmingham NEC - clearly determined to put on their best show possible.

The consensus I gathered from conversations with stand-holders and visitors around the new halls was that it was a decent, if more compact show.

Many stand-holders told me they had a degree of trepidation, or uncertainty, before the doors were opened on the Wednesday morning. Coming so soon after a successful GroundsFest, there were concerns pre-show regarding whether the end-user commercial customers - and indeed the dealers - would turn up to another turf machinery exhibition.

You can read about the official figures, and what Geoff Webb, CEO of the GMA, thought of the show in the separate box on these pages. But to me, from observing the busyness of the aisles, it felt like the show began quietly, filled to a good buzz between 10am and 1pm, and then eased down to a more relaxed hum until closing time. Almost regardless of numbers, there certainly seemed to be enough punters to create an atmosphere. Importantly, according to many who I chatted with, those that were there were the right people.

SALTEX has always enjoyed the reputation of being the higher-end business show. And good news for those trepidatious exhibitors - I heard that this was the case once again. Several stand-holders told me they met customers who they might not have discovered otherwise - the smaller, more obscure grounds care companies. Plenty of Irish and European visitors

were also coming on to stands. Alongside these, SALTEX is still attracting the top-level UK sporting facility representatives. There were major football, rugby and cricket turf professionals walking the show-floor, who the machinery exhibitors are always keen to meet.

But what about dealers? There were definitely some in attendance. I spotted various teams from some of our larger, multi-branded readers. But perhaps there were fewer representatives of the smaller dealerships who we would've bumped into in previous years?

One dealer who I did speak to summed up the show from their perspective when they said to me: "This event is becoming more about the people I can speak to, rather than the machinery. Because I can do all the machinery in two hours."

Which is a fair point. There were certainly fewer equipment players in attendance than some years. AL-KO, Kress, Toro, Honda, DeWalt, Makita, Overton and Briggs & Stratton were obvious omissions. The new halls felt like a smaller space than before, and, consequently, I think a dealer could get round their suppliers in not too long.

Maybe in future years the split

along the GroundsFest and SALTEX attendance will see more dealers continue to go to Stoneleigh (certainly if several manufacturers keep holding their get-togethers there), with the GMA's members supporting this long-standing event? It will certainly be interesting to observe.

Looking ahead

I think that, all in all, those who both exhibited and visited SALTEX 2025 will have left satisfied. Coming off the back of a season that plenty of stand-holders described to me as incredibly challenging (or, in a couple of cases, their worst ever), having the shop window of the GMA's show to display their wares to the top echelons of the professional turf care sector will have been important.

One theme certainly stood out: robotics and autonomous solutions are no longer emerging trends, but firm fixtures. Exhibitors repeatedly told me that turf professionals are now wholeheartedly embracing these technologies, not just exploring them. Dealers will no doubt be watching this shift closely.

As SALTEX closed its doors for another year, the hope, as always, is that the strong conversations and promising leads generated turn into meaningful partnerships and sales for our dealer readers.



Around the halls

With that overview in mind, here is what some key exhibitors of interest to *Service Dealer's* readers were talking about:



Husqvarna said they were busy with plenty of quality stand visitors. Andrew Lees, their global segment manager for robotics, told me there has been a real step change in recent years in turf professionals'

views on the use of robotic mowers in commercial settings. They no longer come along to the stand to be convinced - they are there to learn more and to expand their usage. Especially since the launch of the Ceora which was on show, top sporting venues are embracing the technology.



Kubota (who were stand-sharing with Baroness once again) had machines on their stand that demonstrated a full integration of their recent acquisitions. From the Gianni Ferrari factory came the FC4-411 front centre collect mower, which Henry Bredin

said filled a gap in their line-up. Also on show from the Escort range was the EK1-261 compact tractor which Henry said was proving especially popular with grassroots sports clubs who have tight budgets and are looking for a reliable machine. Also of interest to dealers, the company were promoting their new Terrako online parts look-up and ordering system. This portal allowed users to easily find the part they were after, and then order it through a Kubota dealer. I was told that, after having launched the system at the recent Plantworx, it was gathering momentum and finding favour with dealers.



EGO's well-populated stand featured their new range of robotic mowers, including the AURA-R2. All these robots feature the company's Path IQ system, which, they say, allows the machines to read

the space in which they are working, navigate obstacles with ease, and stay on course for a clean cut.



STIHL's national sales manager, Wayne Stone (pictured with *Service Dealer* owner Duncan Murray-Clarke) said they had been pleased with the show's turnout, with quality decisionmakers coming on their stand. As well as new charging options, also featured on their display were the new BRA 600 blower and the ASA 140 hedge-trimmer.



AriensCo featured the new AS Motor TAHR remote steep slope mower. UK general manager Sam Lewis said that the machine offered great efficiency, due to its open rotary mower deck and bidirectional cutting system, which means there is no need for operators to turn after each pass. Also on stand were the commercial Ariens zero-turn mowers, which, Sam said, there was a growing market for in the UK amongst the likes of parks and playing fields.



Cramer's John McCready told me they had enjoyed some good conversations on their stand with a variety of commercial end-users interested in their range of battery-powered tools. He said their

new charging options were proving popular, as were their mowers, blowers and robotic solutions.



Cobra featured the new Fortis stadium mower prominently on their eye-catching stand. MD Peter Chaloner said that the show had seen the product garner a lot of interest from European grounds staff who had come onto their stand - especially football clubs. They had also seen good enquiries coming through from bowls and cricket facilities.



STIGA were promoting their recent appointment as official Groundskeeping Partner of the RFU. As part of this new role, I heard from Amanda Kincaid and Sam Fletcher about how the company will be donating their robotic mowers to rugby clubs across the country who need them. Also taking pride of place ahead of its 2026 launch on their award-winning stand was the APX Pro professional-grade autonomous robotic mower designed for large areas, such as municipal grounds and sports pitches.



Price Turfcare had an interesting space in which to work with their Ventrac machine. A large, cordoned-off area at the end of the hall allowed them to, once an hour, practically demonstrate both the driven and remote-controlled versions' abilities to deal with uneven terrain and traverse steep slopes - with a ramp set up onto a flatback truck. These demo sessions attracted good-sized crowds, and stood out from the rest of the static stands at the show.



Iseki made a couple of big announcements. Firstly, MD David Withers announced he was retiring at the end of the year and handing the reins over to Alan Prickett (see this month's News) - and secondly, that they were celebrating their 100th anniversary. They had special liveried tractor on the stand to celebrate - alongside the new GPS Raymow remote controlled mowers.



Grillo had plenty to view on their stand, including the new Climber 9.22S hydrostatic ride-on brushcutter. MD Steve Gadsby said they had received some new end-user enquiries at the show, which is why they attend - as well as it being useful for brand exposure.



Plant Hire & Construction

Latest news for the sector *Edited by Dan Gilkes*



Dan Gilkes, editor of *Service Dealer's* new construction machinery and plant hire section, says that, with the new 40% First Year Allowance finally extended to assets purchased for hire, plant rental businesses could be poised for a long-awaited round of fleet investment from 2026.



Plant hire set for investment boost in 2026

confirmed the good news. This is a key win for the sector, and we will capture the detail in our report, as it should help stimulate sales for our members as well. The CEA has lobbied for this alongside the HAE and the CPA for many years, so it's encouraging to finally see progress."

The FYA is available to all types of business, including unincorporated companies, sole traders and partnerships, as well as limited companies. This means that smaller companies aren't excluded, and they will be able to compete on a level playing field with the larger national businesses.

However, it only includes assets that have been purchased for leasing or hire, and it is specific about 'main-rate' plant and machinery and does not include anything that is classed under a special rate. Second-hand assets are also excluded.

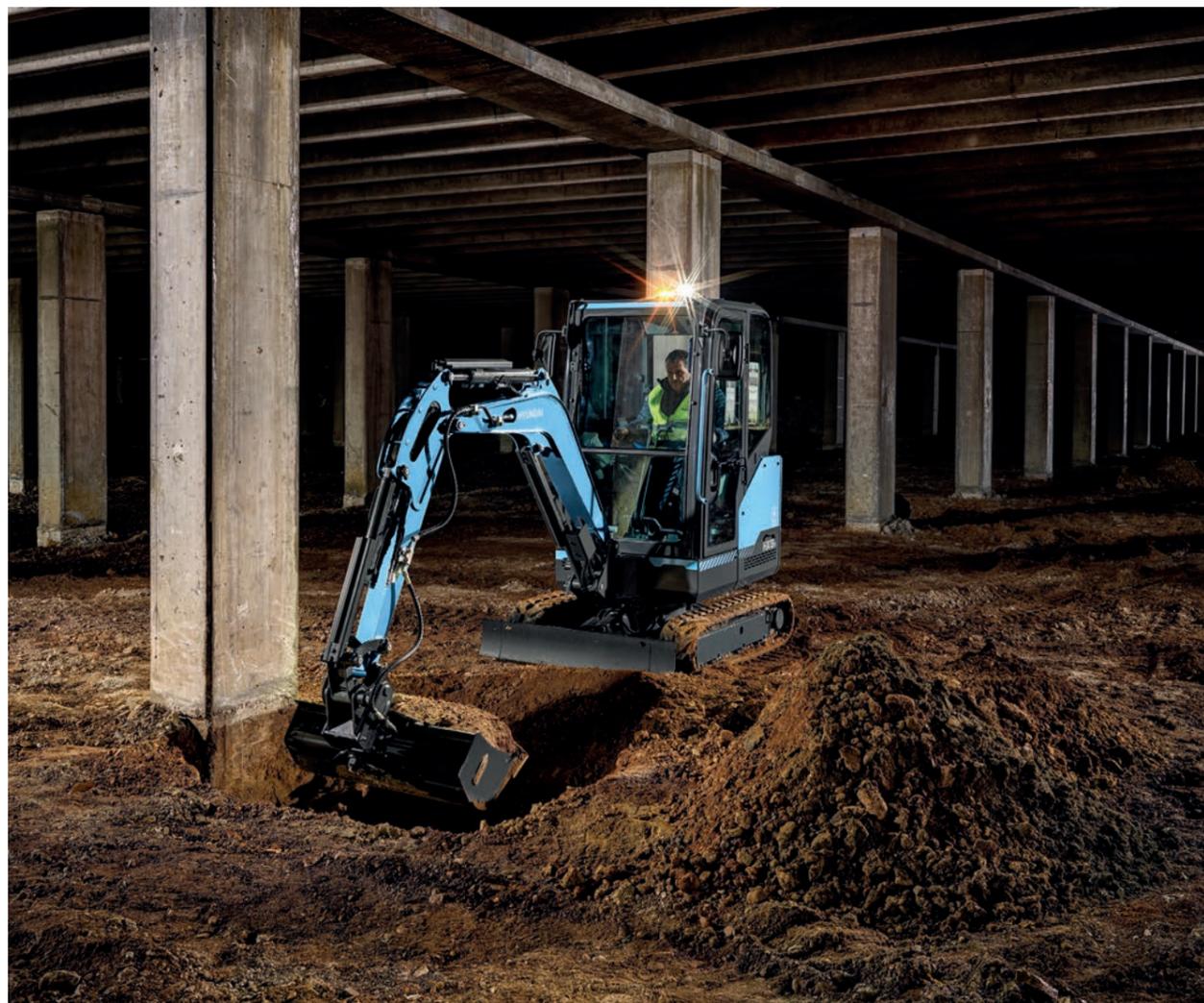
Viki Bell, CEO of the Construction Equipment Association, commented: "Mark Bradshaw from Hire Association Europe met with Treasury and HMRC officials following the Budget and

So, will plant hire businesses be investing in 2026? While market growth has been fairly modest in 2025, there are signs that demand should firm up slightly in the coming year. The recent UK National Infrastructure Strategy lists plenty of transport, energy, water and social infrastructure projects, while housing demand remains strong across the country. There is also growing demand from industrial and logistics projects, datacentre construction and in the distribution sector.

With a host of new and updated equipment due to the market over the coming months, manufacturers and dealers can hopefully take some comfort from that.

Whatever your views on the recent Budget, the confirmation that the new 40% First Year Allowance (FYA) will apply to assets purchased for hire and leasing from January 2026 has to be positive news.

It means that hire companies will be able to write down 40% of the cost of new plant, tools and equipment in the first year, which will improve cashflow and promote further investment.



Electric future

As manufacturers steadily expand their electric ranges, battery-powered construction kit is edging from novelty to necessity – but convincing hire customers to make the leap remains a challenge. DAN GILKES reports

While battery electric drive may be an increasingly common option in the groundcare business, full electric construction equipment remains relatively rare on-site. That's not to say that battery-powered machinery is not available.

More and more manufacturers are at least dipping a toe into the electric market. Convincing customers, however, is taking a little longer.

Understandably, many have started small. Batteries are expensive and electric machinery inevitably costs more than similar models powered by petrol or diesel. There have also been concerns around running times.

Being able to operate a machine throughout the working day, while recharging on a site that doesn't even have its own grid connection, is a difficult task to overcome.

So, it's not for everyone – at least, not yet. But make no mistake, client demand and government legislation will drive the adoption of alternative fuels and drivelines, of which battery electric is one. It won't be the answer to every requirement – there will have to be a mix of technologies available – but battery electric will play an important role, as we are already seeing in the automotive market.

Starting small

As mentioned, most manufacturers start small, with mini excavators being an obvious choice for battery power. JCB was perhaps the most noticeable entrant into the market, with the 1.9-tonne 19C-1E that was launched in 2018. The machine was powered by a 15kWh automotive battery pack, driving the standard hydraulic system. It offered around four hours of non-stop operation, which was thought to be more than enough to get through a typical day of on/off mini excavator use.

Since that time the compact JCB has been joined by numerous competitors, from Volvo, Case, Bobcat, Sany, Yanmar, Wacker Neuson and others. Most sit in that popular sub-two-tonne market, offering batteries of around 15-20kWh capacity. Komatsu recently added the PC20E-6 to its line-up, a 2.2-tonne mini with a 23.2kWh battery pack, while earlier this year, Hyundai launched its first electric mini, the HX19e. This machine tips the scales at around 2.3 tonnes operating weight. However, the Korean company moved the game on somewhat, by

offering the mini excavator with a choice of 32kWh and 40kWh battery packs, the larger guaranteeing a full working shift of up to 10 hours, even when operating constantly.

Manufacturers have not stopped at mini excavators, however. Case, JCB, Volvo and others have also launched battery electric compact wheeled loaders, available to both the agricultural and construction sectors. Again, these are not machines that tend to be worked continuously throughout a daily shift, particularly in a material-handling application, which suits the electric driveline's capabilities.

Growing in size

Electric machines are growing in size as well as application. At the Bauma exhibition in Munich earlier this year, there were several crawler excavators in the 20-22 tonne class that were battery-powered. Most weren't yet available to paying customers, but the technology is being proven on-site. Indeed, every machine on the Volvo stand was battery-powered, from excavators to wheeled loaders, even including the firm's market-leading articulated dump trucks.

There are other areas of the business where electricity already offers a real alternative to internal combustion. The industrial forklift market has for some time provided electric options, leading to electric telescopic handlers from a number of firms. Powered access equipment can often be battery-powered, particularly when it is intended for internal use, where a lack of exhaust emissions is critical.

In quarrying applications, larger crushing and screening equipment often uses a hybrid driveline, with a diesel engine powering the machine's tracks to its place of work within the quarry and a moveable cable then providing electricity for the actual crushing or screening process to function.

Keeping powered

Of course, building the machine is only part of the problem. Providing an electrical supply to keep it running, can be far more difficult, particularly in off-grid construction. There seems to be general agreement among manufacturers that machinery under around 10 tonnes will return to the main compound every night, so can





potentially be charged there if there is a grid connection.

However, larger equipment – particularly on major construction projects – can often be left in smaller compounds, or on-site overnight. In that case, the fuel or electrical power has to be transported to the machine. That's fine with a diesel bowser, but not as practical with electricity – that would have to be transported in a battery.

As mentioned, battery electric is not going to suit every application.

However, there can be benefits to electric power, not least the lack of exhaust emissions and lower noise levels. There are no engine oils or filters to change on a regular basis, reducing service cost and downtime. Electric machines are also better able to cope with over-the-air upgrades and telematic communication.

Electric vehicle charging points are an increasingly familiar sight within project compounds, and there are plenty of plant hire companies and contractors looking at every opportunity to reduce their carbon footprint. This can be internally-led or under pressure from client tender requirements. The development of battery electric construction machinery looks set to continue.



Repowering Options



Given the additional cost of a battery electric driveline, some manufacturers and specialist converters are looking at repowering existing older diesel machines with electric drives.

This was seen at Bauma, with the Moog Construction ZQUIP concept on the Case stand. Engineers from the company can simply remove the diesel engine and install a modular electric driveline, with multiple batteries, depending on customer requirement.

At the lighter end, Kubota recently launched its Requip Electric Retrofit technology for existing mini

excavators (see separate story in this section). As with the larger Moog setup, Kubota dealers can remove the diesel engine from an older Kubota mini excavator and replace it with a battery and electric drive motor, along with the technology to make it function.

These repower solutions offer customers a far less expensive initial investment than a completely new electric machine, allowing them to assess electric models in the field and to gauge customer reaction to the technology before investing in the future.



NEWS



First Hyundai dozer starts work

Plant hire company purchases UK's first

Northumberland-based DA Johnstone Plant Hire has purchased the UK's first Hyundai HD130A dozer, putting the machine to work on a windfarm project in Scotland.

The 15-tonne mid-weight dozer is working for specialist renewable energy contractor AE Yates Civil Engineering, creating roadways and installation sites for seven 200m tall wind turbines on the Garbet Wind Farm site in Moray, near Inverness.

With more than 150 items of plant, Johnstone offers excavators from

1.5-50 tonnes, dozers, articulated haulers, telehandlers and backhoe loaders, on operated or self-drive hire. The company already has 14 Hyundai excavators, from the 13-tonne HX130A through to the HX480A, which tips the scales at almost 50-tonnes.

"They are a fantastic digger," said company owner David Johnstone. "We have a lot of remote work, where reliability and back-up are essential. The Hyundai machines are really reliable, and the support from our dealer, Taylor & Braithwaite,

is first-class."

The HD130A is powered by a 117kW (157hp) Stage V diesel engine, driving through a two-speed hydrostatic transmission. This combination delivers up to 22,000kgf of drawbar pull, making it one of the most powerful dozers in its class. Available in standard or wide-track LGP configuration, the machine is equipped with up to a 4.18m³ six-way angle-tilt blade. It has also been specified with a three-tooth ripper at the rear.



WHC Hire Services shows first electric Kubota mini

Lister Wilder removes the diesel engine and ancillaries

Tewkesbury-based plant and tool hire company WHC Hire Services is the first in the UK to offer customers an electric Kubota mini excavator.

The KX019-4e is based on a two-year-old mini from the firm's fleet. Local dealer Lister Wilder has removed the diesel engine and ancillaries, replacing them with a 18kWh battery and an electric motor within the same bodywork, which turns the conventional hydraulic pump. The electric model offers the same digging and lifting performance as the diesel, but with zero emissions.

Kubota's Requip Electric Retrofit technology was launched earlier this year, as a way of providing customers with a lower cost entry into the electric machinery market. If, after a couple of years of running, the machine is to be sold into the used market, the customer can either market the machine as an electric mini or refit the diesel engine to sell it as a conventional KX019-4. The conversion is also offered on the U27-4e, though using a slightly larger 20kWh battery pack.

The machine is equipped with an on-board charger and a standard Type 2 connector. This allows customers to connect to a domestic 240V power source or a higher powered three-phase supply on-site. Alternatively, the machine can connect to an EV charger if one is available. A full charge will provide around five-to-six hours of operation, which, for a mini excavator is thought to represent a day's work, with charging times dependent on electricity feed power.

A new screen is added as part of the conversion, and this controls the two working modes, standard and power boost. In all other respects, the mini excavator is much like the diesel model to operate.

"The real beauty of the machine versus the competition, though, is the weight," said WHC managing director James Clutterbuck. "We have designed and built a trailer that can carry the electric machine, with buckets and a breaker, that is still within the permitted towing weight."

Many of the purpose-built electric

mini excavators on the market are at least 2 tonnes in weight, which makes it difficult to tow with buckets and a breaker on a 3.5-tonne trailer behind a pickup or van. The KX-019-4e tips the scales at just 1,860kg, making it easier to transport even with a quick hitch fitted.

WHC, which has depots in Chipping Norton and Worcester, alongside the head office site in Tewkesbury, has given customers a chance to drive the machine, prior to its launch onto the fleet in 2026. Although many may concentrate on the zero-emission message, using the electric mini indoors in demolition or in tunnel construction, the company also believes that there will be demand from other sectors. The lack of noise should make it a popular choice for urban work, particularly nighttime operation.

"We're bringing a new option to the customer," said Mr Clutterbuck. "We've been doing a lot of work on sustainability and carbon reduction, and I'd like to think that we can get a wider audience for it with this machine conversion."



Caterpillar updates articulated hauler line

Adding automated features

Caterpillar has updated its articulated dump truck (ADT) range, adding automated features to enhance performance, safety and efficiency.

The 725, 730, 730EJ and the 735 models benefit from a revised interior, which puts many of the controls through a new touchscreen and keypad. The system can hold up to 50 operator settings, allowing fleet personalisation and preventing unauthorised use.

The trucks are powered by the Cat C13 Stage V diesel engine, delivering 257-316kW (345-424hp), with a power-to-weight improvement of 14% on the 725 model. Automatic traction control prevents wheel slip, to boost productivity and the new engine's overspeed control works with Automatic Retarder Control to manage braking and automatically adjust engine speed.

A redesigned body is said to deliver

easier loading and to maximise payload, with a rerouted exhaust system used to reduce material sticking. Improved payload weighing technology allows the operator to view real-time load weights, and there are external payload indicator lights to alert the loading operator when they are approaching rated payload.

Working with Stability Assist, the Dynamic Roll Protection system prevents body hoisting on uneven terrain. The system can be configured to individual site and material conditions, to detect when the truck is experiencing high lateral acceleration, with visual and audible alarms, cutting fuel supply and applying the brakes automatically to reduce the risk of a rollover due to high-speed cornering. The system also reports through Cat's Vision Link telematic software, allowing site managers to see when an event has occurred.

Change of distributor for Komatsu

McHale Plant Solutions

After 53 years as the UK distributor for Komatsu construction machinery, ownership of Marubeni-Komatsu will be transferred from the Marubeni Group to McHale Plant Solutions.

McHale has been the Komatsu dealer in the Republic of Ireland for some years and the company will rename the UK business as McHale Komatsu from January 2026. Komatsu itself will acquire a minority equity interest in McHale Plant Sales.

The new company will remain the sole UK distributor for Komatsu construction and utility products throughout the UK, with no immediate changes to operations, organisational structure or personnel.





Darren and Roxanne Cook (centre) collect Merlo's Overall Dealer of the Year award with Merlo's Robin Cooch, Owen Buttler and Shaun Groom

Merlo name their top performing dealers

Including for Construction at their virtual event

Merlo UK recently held its 2025 Dealer Conference in a new virtual format, bringing its network of dealer principals together for a 90-minute session.

The event, led by general manager Shaun Groom, combined live presentations and short films, including highlights from Agritechnica showcasing the latest agricultural product updates. Shaun opened the conference with an economic review and outlook for both the construction and agricultural sectors. This was followed by sessions on sales, after-sales and marketing.

Shaun explained, "Our goal was to create a dynamic and informative event that reflects the innovative spirit of Merlo. The positive feedback from our dealer principals confirms that this new format delivers real value."

The event culminated with the announcement of the Merlo Dealer Awards 2025, recognising outstanding performance across the Merlo dealer network. Winners were celebrated later in the week at an Award Winners' Dinner.

Darren Cook, managing director, Cooks Midlands and recipient of the Overall Dealer of the Year award credited his team for their hard work and dedication adding that winning the award had been his ambition since taking over the family business in 2020.

2025 Merlo Dealer Award Winners

Construction Equipment Sales Dealer of the Year
D. A. Forgie

Parts Dealer of the Year
Ramsay & Jackson Ltd

Service Dealer of the Year
Hardwick Agricultural Engineers Ltd

Agricultural Sales Dealer of the Year
A F Wiltshire Ltd

Dealer of the Year
Cooks Midlands Ltd



Joseph Mandolil, fleet manager for Fingal County Council

First Develon electric excavators delivered

By Irish dealer, EMS Machinery

EMS Machinery, based in Naas in Co. Kildare, the main dealer for Develon (formerly Doosan Construction Equipment) in the Republic of Ireland, has completed delivery of Ireland's first ever Develon electric excavators - two DX20ZE-7 Electric 2 tonne mini excavators - to Fingal County Council.

A local authority, north of Dublin City, Fingal County Council has offices at Swords and Blanchardstown. Fingal County Council serves a geographical area of 448 sq km which spans rural, coastal, urban and suburban communities and is home to several key elements of national and regional infrastructure, including Dublin Airport.

EMS say the arrival of the new electric excavators underscores their shared commitment with Develon and Fingal County Council to pioneering innovation and sustainability in the construction industry.

Seamus Flynn, sales director at EMS said, "This milestone signals a significant step forward in the Irish construction sector's journey towards sustainability."



Pyramid Dealer Management System A comprehensive cloud-hosted Dealer Management System

True Track Software offers innovative, cloud-hosted tailored business management solutions. Our leading Dealer Management System, Pyramid DMS, empowers dealers to boost profitability and streamline operations from a single platform with seamless integrations and custom development.



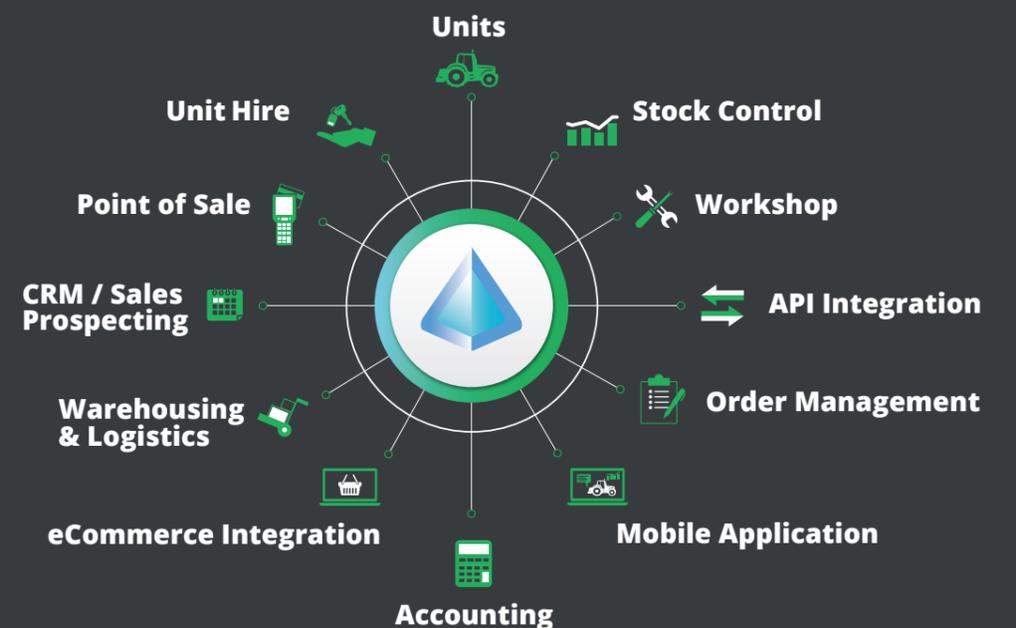
Dealer Management System



Warehouse Management System



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"After using the same software system for more than 25 years, the prospect of changing to something new was daunting. However, choosing Truetrak proved to be an excellent decision. Jez Shave and his team went above and beyond to ensure a seamless transition, making the entire process silky smooth from start to finish.

The new system is a joy to operate, and we've already seen significant savings in our running costs. We couldn't be happier with the outcome."

Steve Gammon Managing Director - Garden Machines

Robotics on the rise (and the fairways)

LAURENCE GALE Msc, MBPR, recently attended a demonstration day organised by dealers Buxtons Ltd, designed to help local greenkeepers explore the future of turf care.

I recently attended a robotic mowing solutions seminar at the prestigious Beau Desert Golf Club in Staffordshire, an event organised by local dealer Buxtons, based just outside Penkrudge. Having been kindly invited by the company's managing director, Kelly Burgess (Service Dealer's new diarist of a season for 2026), I went along to hear the latest developments in Husqvarna's rapidly-evolving range of robotic turf care machines – and to discover how the technology is being received by the local greenkeeping community.



The day allowed the guests to view the robots in situ

The day was spearheaded by Ellis Adderley, Buxtons' commercial area sales manager, who has been with the company for just over a year and now looks after everything on the commercial side of the business: sports turf, contractors, local authorities, large-scale equipment, and, increasingly, robotics. For Ellis, hosting an event like this wasn't simply about showcasing products – it was about helping turf professionals see the potential of a technology that is no longer theoretical, but very much ready to be deployed.

More than 20 greenkeepers attended, representing several local golf clubs. Their presence alone said something about where the industry currently finds itself: curious, cautious, but increasingly open to the idea that robotics may help them manage their courses more efficiently at a time when labour shortages, stretched budgets and rising expectations are part of daily life.

The day began with a warm welcome from Ellis, who outlined the purpose of the event before introducing Husqvarna's Craig Stoba, key account manager for the Automower Pro range. Craig's presentation focused on one central idea: that robotic mowing is not designed to replace skilled greenkeepers, but to free them from the repetitive baseline tasks that consume so much of their time.

Robots, he explained, can now handle a wide range of basic mowing duties - from fairways to semi-roughs - at consistent quality, low energy cost, and minimal noise.

A single unit can cut roughly 1,800 square metres per hour, and entire fleets can be managed remotely. According to Craig, such clubs as Hillside and Royal Birkdale are already seeing the benefits, reporting significant reductions in labour costs and improvements in course condition. It is still early days, he admitted, but the performance and reliability of Husqvarna's machines have improved dramatically in recent years.

He also emphasised the environmental angle. Husqvarna's robotic units are manufactured in the UK, and produce an estimated 83% lower carbon impact compared with a traditional diesel mower. Because the machines are battery-powered, they also allow operations to be carried out quietly, and during hours when petrol machinery would be disruptive - a selling point for clubs looking to demonstrate greener practices.

A demonstration on the fairway

After the indoor session, we headed out onto the course to see one of the units in action. Husqvarna had prepared a fairway cut at 10mm, giving the attendees a clear sense of the machines' capability on managed turf.

Craig opened up the cutting deck to show just how straightforward the machines are to set up, operate and maintain. He spoke about versatility – an important theme throughout the day. For smaller areas, hilly sections, or tricky corners of semi-rough or rough, the compact professional

models can manage up to 16,000 square metres every second day, while the all-wheel drive version can conquer slopes up to 70%. That steep-slope capability caught the attention of several greenkeepers, especially those who regularly face the health and safety challenges of mowing banks and awkward gradients. These are precisely the places where a robotic mower can be safer and more consistent than a brushcutter or ride-on.

Craig also presented the Ceora platform, Husqvarna's flagship large-area robotic system, designed for up to 50,000 square metres. The performance differences across the range were laid out clearly:

- **Ceora:** cuts up to **25,000m²** per day
- **AWD model:** cuts up to **2,500m²** per day
- **Automower 580L EPOS:** cuts up to **8,000m²** per day

As for pricing – a topic everyone was keen to understand – Craig explained that a Ceora setup retails around the £30,000 mark, while an Automower 580L EPOS is £7,799. A typical 18-hole course, depending on terrain, layout and desired finish, might require anything from four to more than ten robots deployed in different roles. The investment is not insignificant, but the potential long-term savings in labour and fuel are becoming increasingly attractive to clubs already battling seasonal staffing pressures.

Cautious optimism from greenkeepers

Inside, many of the attendees voiced a similar sentiment: robotic mowing could have a role at their clubs - provided it complements, rather than threatens, their teams. Several greenkeepers told me they were intrigued by the idea of redeploying staff time into higher-skill tasks, such as irrigation management, presentation work or course

enhancements that usually drop down the priority list during busy periods.

But the big concern, voiced quietly but clearly, was job security. Some fear that certain club managers may see automation as a way to trim staff numbers and cut costs.

From my own standpoint as an ex-greenkeeper, it feels like early days for any wholesale adoption on fine turf surfaces, such as greens. Expectations are extremely high in that arena, particularly at championship venues. But it is equally clear that Husqvarna and other manufacturers are making rapid progress in the quality of cut, reliability and topographic adaptability of these machines. The technology is no longer in its infancy – it is maturing fast.

As the innovation curve continues, it seems increasingly likely that clubs will use robotics not as a replacement for traditional turf equipment, but as a complement. A hybrid machinery strategy may well become the standard – robots carrying out the repetitive work, while trained greenkeeping teams focus on the finesse and detail that define course quality.

Why Buxtons back robotics

In our conversation, Ellis explained how Buxtons' journey with robotics has evolved. The dealership has been selling domestic robot mowers since the early-2000s, building a reputation largely through word of mouth. However, the professional robotic market is still relatively new for them - their big step forward came with Husqvarna's launch of Ceora in 2022. That, Ellis said, was the moment when professional robotics "went from interesting to genuinely viable."

While Buxtons used to stock several robotic brands, they have streamlined the range to concentrate on Husqvarna for the commercial and professional market, supplementing it with one or two domestic options. For Ellis, focusing on one



Service Dealer's Laurence Gale (centre) with Buxtons' MD Kelly Burgess, Ellis Adderley and the invited local greenkeepers

premium brand allows them to fine-tune support, installation and aftersales service - the areas where customers most need confidence.

Husqvarna, he said, offers machines that cover everything from the smallest garden to the largest sports field or golf environment, and the consistency of the range means Buxtons can support customers with clarity and depth of knowledge. With more customers now exploring battery-powered solutions for both environmental and practical reasons, the interest in robotics is accelerating. Their demonstration diary is "always full," Ellis said, particularly with golf clubs wanting to see the machines in action on their own turf.

And, unsurprisingly, the demonstrations are often the turning point. Seeing a robot quietly negotiating a fairway - and leaving behind a surprisingly even cut - tends to shift opinions more effectively than any brochure or sales call.



Ellis Adderley, Buxtons' commercial area sales manager



Demonstrating the Ceora to the assembled turf professionals

What's driving the surge in popularity?

Ellis pointed to GPS-guided movement as the single biggest leap forward in recent years. The ability to operate cable-free is a major benefit, particularly for customers who regularly aerate, scarify or top-dress their surfaces. No perimeter wires means no risk of accidentally slicing through critical infrastructure, and no limitations on future turf renovations.

AI integration is also starting to creep in. New Husqvarna models can recognise golf balls and hose pipes - obstacles they should avoid - while continuing to mow through innocuous barriers like leaves or long grass. This selective object detection is a significant step towards making robots more autonomous and more suited to the unpredictable environment of a working golf course.

Buxtons also place strong emphasis on aftersales support, and Ellis was keen to highlight this. The dealership has a dedicated team for installs, repairs and on-site diagnostics: Ellis and colleague Jon operate on the road, while the workshop includes a specialist mechanic dedicated to robotics and battery systems.

Customers also have access to Husqvarna's Lease Plus programme, which bundles servicing, warranty, parts and insurance into one predictable cost - something many clubs find reassuring when dealing with new technologies.

Maintenance, Ellis said, is relatively straightforward. Annual servicing - usually carried out over winter - keeps the software updated and the machine in good mechanical condition. Day-to-day upkeep remains the customer's responsibility - cleaning the cutting deck and refreshing blades every four to eight weeks.

Not all Buxtons' robotics customers come from golf. Schools, National Trust sites, country estates, sports clubs, power plants and even airfields are investing. The variety of applications is broad and expanding, and Ellis believes that, as more people encounter the technology, the more they start to see new possibilities for it.

Sales are rising year on year, and trends across Europe indicate the UK market still has huge room to grow. While robotic mower prices aren't dropping dramatically, the rapid improvement in technology means customers can now get advanced features without needing to buy the most expensive machine in the range. For many, the equation is shifting: the upfront cost is increasingly offset by long-term reductions in labour and fuel.

Looking ahead

As for the future, Ellis believes Husqvarna - with robotic mowing experience dating back to 1995 - will continue to lead for some time. Other companies are investing heavily, but the Swedish manufacturer's long history has allowed them to iron out many of the early challenges the sector faced. He told me he doesn't expect the core principles of robotic mowing to change dramatically. Instead, refinements will continue - longer battery life, better AI, improved efficiency, smarter connectivity.

From my own perspective, I believe robotics will become a valuable tool in the turf professional's arsenal, but not a silver bullet. Choosing the right machines, and integrating them intelligently with traditional equipment, will determine how successful clubs are in meeting the expectations of players and members. It feels very much like the beginning of a hybrid future - one in which human expertise and automated support work together rather than in competition.

As the greenkeepers at Beau Desert made clear, the technology is promising. The interest is real. And the potential is growing. Events like Buxtons' seminar play an important role in helping turf professionals understand what robotics can do today - and where it might take their courses tomorrow.



Agritechnica 2025 attracted over 476,000 visitors from 171 countries to view the wares of 2,849 firms from 52 countries across the 140-hectare site.

Agritechnica attractions

The world's biggest ag machinery show is always an antidote to industry angst – even in farming times as tough as the current ones, the innovation on display tends to boost sector optimism. November's Agritechnica was no different, reports MARTIN RICKATSON.

When *Service Dealer* published its Agritechnica 2025 preview in the previous issue, we reported how the DLG, the event's organisers, were anticipating an attendance of 430,000 across the seven days of the show. It's a mark of its importance to all those involved in farm equipment that the final numbers at November's event exceeded 476,000, and that - after initially announcing bookings from 2,700 exhibitors - a total of 2,849 firms from 52 countries took stand space across the 140-hectare site. And with those visitors reckoned to have come from 171 countries, Agritechnica's global reach is clear.

Among the equipment developments revealed were many that will be directly available to UK dealerships in the next few months. Equally, though, there were many machines from names not yet established here, but which could

represent new opportunities for dealers as the franchise landscape continues to evolve. From tractor makers looking to expand into Europe, to familiar implement makers entering new sectors, there were plenty of reasons to suggest some can see light at the end of the tough tunnel in which farming currently finds itself.

Of the industry's primary tractor/full-line companies, almost all had significant developments to show. **John Deere** had revealed its F8/F9 SP foragers of up to 1,020hp during the summer, as well as the 500R front-cabbed sprayer developed through its acquisition of Italy's Mazzotti, plus various new round balers and the 9RX tractors of up to 830hp. Kept under wraps until the show, though, was its full battery-electric E-Power tractor prototype, which develops 130hp through five Kreisell battery packs.

AGCO news included **Massey Ferguson's** latest 5S Series Dyna-VT mid-range and 3 Series specialty tractors, while **Valtra** showed a CVT-equipped G series and an artificial intelligence-based assistance system that acts like a two-way verbal operator's manual. From Fendt, there were five updated tractor series, plus a Xaver GT development of its original autonomous tractor prototype, designed primarily for inter-row operations in vegetable crops.

Kubota was another to show an autonomous tractor, this time via a marketing agreement. The Japanese firm is now branding, marketing and supporting the Robotti, made in Denmark by Agointelli and powered by Kubota engines.



Kubota is now branding, marketing and supporting the Robotti, made in Denmark by Agointelli and powered by Kubota engines.

There were multiple new tractor products from the CNH brands – in particular, a new series of **New Holland T7XD / Case IH Optum 360-435hp** models designed and built at the firm's St Valentin factory in Austria. Case IH also showed refreshed Puma models with a new front axle, and a new M

Series to top its Farmall line, with three 100-120hp models featuring its ActiveDrive 4 semi-powershift 16F/16R transmission with eight automatic shifts and a clutchless shuttle, plus optional front axle suspension. On the New Holland front were T7 and T5 tractor upgrades, a new Forage Power version of the W170 wheel loader, and prototypes including a tracked robot for orchard/vineyard applications and a battery-powered electric telehandler.

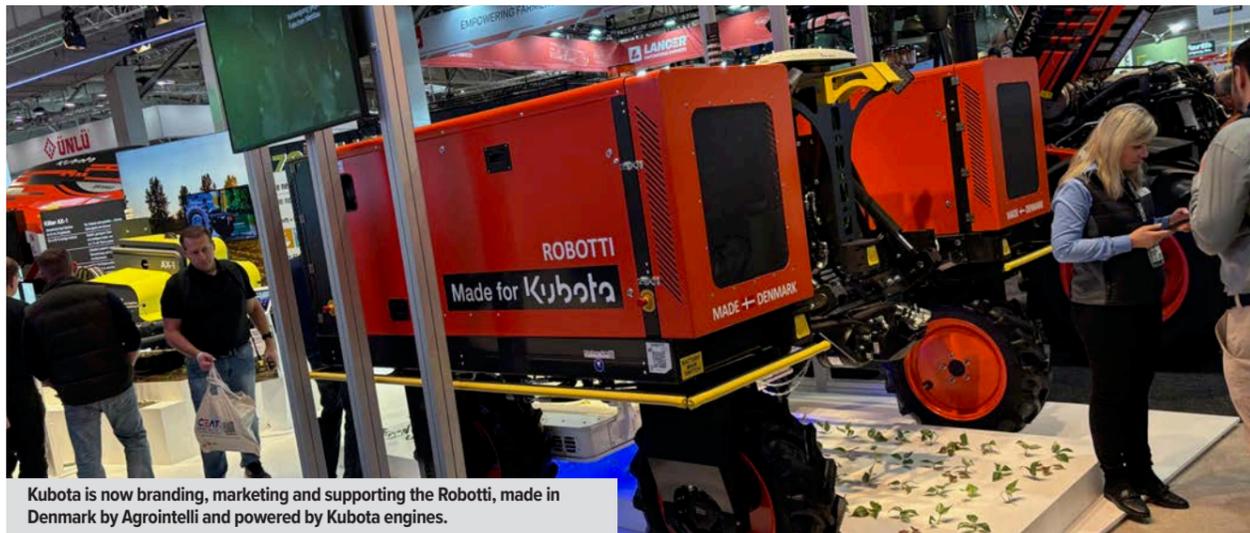


Developments from Case IH included the new Farmall M series of 100-120hp, which effectively replaces the Luxxum range.

New 9 Series **Claas Axion** conventional tractors replace the 900 models. Engines still come from FPT, but component upgrades extend service intervals to 750 hours, and eliminate the initial 100-hour service. The transmission incorporates the automatic stretch brake first introduced on top-end Arion models, with sensors that monitor engine and transmission loads to automatically activate trailer air braking if a trailed implement imposes too high a load on the drivetrain. The revised cab is reckoned the biggest in its class, with 17% more volume. Terra Trac upgrades include tougher 'puncture-resistant' belts for stony soils and a new drive wheel pad tread profile to boost friction. Entering production in 2027, there was also the new 120x90cm **Cubix** big square baler, which will supplement existing Quadrant models and is reckoned capable of processing up to 70t/hr in straw, with consistent bale densities of 210kg/m³ thanks largely to a pair of longitudinally-arranged 202kg flywheels.



Entering production in 2027, the 120x90cm Claas Cubix big square baler, which will supplement existing Quadrant models, is reckoned capable of processing up to 70t/hr in straw.



Kubota is now branding, marketing and supporting the Robotti, made in Denmark by Agointelli and powered by Kubota engines.

The new **Deutz-Fahr** 8 Series TTV tractors, comprising models of 313hp and 340hp, feature a new SigmaVision cab, a four-pillar unit with air suspension, and a new interior (including a new iControl armrest). A new front suspension system acts on an axle that incorporates an extra-long swing arm and dry disc brakes. The tractors are powered by FPT NEF N67 engines with electronic variable geometry turbocharging, and oil change interval is 1,000 hours. Other specs include a 60kph TTV CVT transmission and load-sensing hydraulics with 220 l/min maximum flow rate, plus 12t rear/5.5t front linkages.

Established in 1992, **Zoomlion** is one of China's largest farm and construction equipment makers, and has manufactured farm machinery since 2014, when it purchased fellow Chinese firm Chery. In 2015, it showed tractors of up to 210hp at Agritechnica. Now, though, it has a significantly redeveloped product line, and is seeking European dealers.

On display were machines of 160-350hp, most likely to find mass-market arable favour in Europe. Currently, the Chinese engines in the two largest CVT-driven tractors meet only Stage III emissions legislation. The six-cylinder engine in the semi-powershift PL1604, though, is Stage V-compliant.

While diesel-powered, the larger models incorporate



The new Deutz-Fahr 8 Series TTV tractors, comprising models of 313hp and 340hp, feature a new SigmaVision cab.

what Zoomlion calls its MIDD distributed intelligent electric drive system, paired with a battery pack that powers key components electrically according to demand. Further specification includes CVT and full A-B and headland turn autonomy.

Alongside this, Zoomlion showed its drum and concave/rotary separation H7-600E combine, which also features a Stage V engine and electric drives in place of key belts and chains. Claimed benefits include a 70% reduction in mechanical linkages and 30% lower power demand. Also present were multiple Rabe implements in Zoomlion colours – the Chinese firm purchased the German cultivation/drilling specialist in 2020.

Few in the UK may be familiar with **Basak**, but the tractor maker - from Turkey, one of Europe's largest markets – may yet become more widely known globally. Asko, its parent company, recently purchased Buhler Industries, parent of Canadian tractor maker Versatile, from Rostselmash, its former Russian owner. Four years ago, Basak showed its first new-style 5100 series tractor, the 120hp four-cylinder 5120, which has also made a previous appearance at LAMMA.



Chinese manufacturer Zoomlion had an extensive presence at Agritechnica, underlining its European ambitions – but not all its products are Stage V-compliant.



Turkish tractor maker Basak, which now share the same parent firm as Canadian manufacturer Versatile, has entered six-cylinder territory with the 170hp 5165.

Now it has its first six-cylinder tractor, the 170hp 5165. Deutz again powers the new model, while SDF provides the RCshift 30-speed 50kph powershift.

Versatile – which has long lurked in the background of the UK tractor sector with its articulated high-horsepower tractors through Fiat, Ford/New Holland and under its own brand – is looking to move more heavily into Europe. On show at Agritechnica were the firm's smallest tractors, the 170-250hp Nemesis, as well as larger 275-365hp machines and 400-616hp articulated wheeled/tracked models. The firm says it is working on European homologation for the smaller tractors and is keen to target new markets.



Lemken has entered the direct drill sector with the Solitair NT, featuring two rows of 480mm ProDisc single coulters providing up to 340kg of downforce.

Austrian manufacturer **Lindner** is another name that's little-known in the UK and Ireland. Its particular design speciality is in four-wheel steering, which is an option on its new flagship, the Lintrac 160 LDrive. A four-cylinder FPT engine powers the new 175hp model, and transmission is a 50km/h ZF CVT. With 52-degree steering on the front axle and 20 degrees at the rear, the tractor has an 8.5m turning circle.

The company, which makes around 1,400 tractors annually at its factory in the western town of Kundl, says it is always keen to talk with prospective importers and dealers.

Lemken has entered the direct drill sector with the Solitair NT, featuring two rows of 480mm ProDisc single coulters providing up to 340kg of downforce. Spaced at 16.7cm, they are angled at seven degrees, with a ten-degree downward angle. Sowing depth is infinitely adjustable from 0-10cm, via a lever for each seed coulters. Each is followed by a pressure- and angle-adjustable steel press wheel to close the seed slot. There are 4,400-litre standard or 5,100-litre split hopper options.

The new TriForce II coulters arm suspension for **Väderstad** Spirit and Inspire drills boosts maximum double-disc coulters pressure by 50% for heavy soil users, reaching 120kg. New cast coulters arms mounted on a three-point profile provide full weight-spreading. Drivers can now adjust working depth from the cab, and there are coulters spacing options of 16.7cm and 12.5cm.

Three years after purchasing Italian precision drill specialist MaterMacc, Austria's **Pöttinger** has begun integrating the firm's products into its own arable equipment range. The first fruit of this programme is the six-row Puro H 3000, with 75cm-spaced Dual Disc coulters pressured at up to 180kg. Each seed hopper holds 68 litres, or around 900,000 maize seeds, and has a shut-off plate for seed plate changing even if the hopper still contains seed. A 1,300-litre fertiliser hopper is optional, with sprung double-disc fertiliser coulters. Each fertiliser band can be individually set independently of the seed row. Bigger models are in development.

Bednar has entered the mounted combination drill market with the ISOBUS-compatible 3.0m Soniq ON. The machine can be mounted on any brand of compatible power harrow, including Bednar's own Kator KN. The drill itself features a single-chamber pressurised hopper of 1,000-1,600 litres. Double-disc seed coulters spaced at 12.5/15cm have a maximum pressure of 60 kg/coulter.



Three years after purchasing Matermacc's precision drill business, Pöttinger has begun integrating the firm's products into its own arable equipment range.



BUSINESS MONITOR

Warranty claims remain a source of frustration

Payments, support and turnaround times again highlighted as pressure points

Our end-of-2025 warranty claims survey, carried out with our dealer readership, shows that frustrations with manufacturer processes remain largely unchanged.

When asked whether they felt warranty pay rates were fair and reasonable, only 7% of respondents agreed this was true for all their suppliers. A majority - 57% - said it applied to some, but not others.

A most concerning response was to the question of whether your suppliers cover the cost of a technician's time from your warranty reimbursement. Here, only 4% said they found this with all their suppliers.

Dealer feedback comments echoed this mixed picture. While some noted slight improvements compared to last year's results, many felt a number of suppliers still have considerable ground to make up before warranty arrangements meet their expectations.



Your say...

What is your take on the warranty situation this year?
Are there any changes you'd like to see the manufacturers make?

- With ever increasing costs to run a service business, the warranty labour rates and fixed repair times are not realistic. Warranty repair times are always well below the 'real-world' time to complete the repairs, and, as a double whammy, the hourly rate being paid is often 30-40% less than our retail labour rate. Labour rates are something we spend a lot of time monitoring and adjusting to suit the market and the cost of running the workshop. We have our retail rate set at a happy balance of being competitive and making enough money to survive, and [making] some profit to reinvest. Warranty should not be putting the squeeze on dealers – it should be paid at our labour rate and a fair time to ensure we aren't losing money, and to incentivise us to want to do warranty work, especially on products not sold by us. Manufacturers need to listen to their dealers and respect our position on workshop pricing, and pay us accordingly. It isn't 1990 anymore!
- I would like to see the warranty claim systems easier to use. Some suppliers' systems are time-consuming and hard to use.
- Dealers should be allowed to make 10/15% profit on warranty, as, within the dealer's business plan, each department is contributing to the business overheads. On the whole, warranty at best is breakeven, which is not contributing to the dealer's overheads. There is no longer a large enough margin in selling the machine for this sale to subsidise warranty losses. Additionally, we see machinery costs increasing year on year, with the manufacturer sighting many reasons for the cost increase – labour, energy, raw materials. The dealer is also exposed, too, and sees these increases, but, when the manufacturer increases machine costs by a percentage, they do not apply that percentage to the warranty rate - so, with inflation, the dealer is subsidising the manufacturer's warranty, and things need to change for a dealer network to maintained.
- Smaller manufacturers seem to be more understanding, and pay better rates than the larger manufacturers. Flat rates need to be looked at. They are run during controlled environments in a high-spec supplier centre, with all the tools and parts available. It does not factor in real-life conditions, such as weather, state of machine, or working in a field in the middle of nowhere. Enforcing warranty jobs on machines that we have not sold is going to create huge issues in the future. We have to bear the brunt of cost, which impacts cashflow if there are complications (there always are) and we have the opportunity cost of missing out on retail work.
- We don't get paid travel time, so would like to see that implemented. Also, time to diagnose a problem is not paid. Hours allowed to do a job are not realistic. Processing of claims can take hours. Hidden costs, like prop up machines, are not covered.
- I agree that many manufacturers have made it difficult to claim, So we now refuse to touch any machines not purchased from our store. This is the only way the manufacturers will take note. Why should I work for less when I made nothing in the sale. And if that means losing a certain brand, then b***** to them.
- Some manufacturers have changed their warranty procedures. One, in particular, has changed – where last year it was approved on the same day, now it takes weeks. Very disappointing.
- Manufacturers abuse the dealer with these low rates and short times allotted for the repair – and not taking into consideration all the hidden problems. Discussion to ascertain what the problem is, diagnosing, invoicing and fighting for the just rewards. Manufacturers mostly fail to understand that we subsidise their problems.
- Speed up processing - days, not weeks. Make allowances for form-filling time, and a percentage for parts used. Also, a rate for booking in and customer contact. To pay a minimum for labour is an insult, and to expect the job to have priority with some companies is an insult.
- Pay retail rate, allow for diagnostic time, allow reasonable time to complete the repair, allow for final test before returning the machine to the customer, admin allowance to submit the claim.

Turning used stock into cash flow

Sara Hey, president of business development at Bob Clements International – the dealership development company based in Missouri, shares the insights she offers U.S. dealers with *Service Dealer's* UK readership every issue.

This issue: Sara discusses techniques dealers might use to shift used stock.



I have been asked by many of our U.S. dealers. lately about the best way of dealing with a mountain of used equipment. They ask me: “Sara, what’s the fastest way to move it without losing my shirt?”

First, I tell them: you’re not alone! You wrapped up your selling season, you took in some trade-ins you thought would fly off the lot, and now – surprise – they’re sitting there staring at you like expensive lawn ornaments. Between manufacturers pushing next year’s orders, talk of tariffs, and that off-season lull, it feels like all your cash is trapped in a unit you can’t move fast enough.

Here’s the good news: your best customers to move that inventory quickly aren’t strangers on Facebook Marketplace. They’re the people who’ve bought from you before, the ones who already know you, trust you, and are more likely to say yes if you just show up in front of them.

And I’m not just talking sales. This

works for your parts, service, and rental customers, too – the whole shebang. If they’ve done business with you once, there’s a good chance they’ll do it again.

That’s why I love running ‘30 Days of Deals’ campaigns. It’s not complicated, and it gets people talking. For 30 days, feature your used units - tractors, UTVs, RVs, mowers, and any other used items currently on the lot - and invite customers to make an offer. Yes, you set the minimum. But keep in mind that our philosophy is that it’s better to make one dollar of profit than to pay one dollar of interest. Cash flow is the goal. So, no, you don’t have to take the £3 bid on that mini excavator (someone will always try it). But at least you’re starting conversations, getting engagement, and – most importantly – creating cash flow. And in the slow season, cash flow is your best friend. Protect it at all costs, because selling one giant item doesn’t help you make payroll if it just sits there looking pretty.

Here’s how to get started:

1. Get your customer list together.

Grab names, email addresses, and phone numbers from your CRM, Excel sheet, or even your Rolodex (yes, we had a dealer recently whose entire customer database was handwritten on cards – hey, it worked for them). The goal is to get them in one place where you can actually use them.

2. Tell them what you’re doing.

Send an email or text that says: “Hey, we’re running 30 Days of Deals. We’ve got great used units ready to move. Come make us an offer.” Make sure you’re only emailing people who’ve opted in, because otherwise you’re just another spam caller with bad timing. If you need an easy place to start, we really like Mailchimp. It’s simple, effective, and you can get going for as little as £0 (our favourite marketing spend), depending on the size of your list.

3. Follow up.

Most dealers miss this step. Once someone clicks or shows interest, reach out personally. Not in a creepy “I saw you clicked on the zero-turn in my email, and I’ll now text you every single day for the rest of the month... and it’s only the 3rd” kind of way. Instead, say something like: “Hey, this is Sara at ABC Dealership. I saw you checked out our 30 Days of Deals. Anything I can help you with?” Friendly. Helpful. Human. That’s it. Here’s the last thing to remember. Marketing’s job isn’t to sell. It’s to create opportunity. You can’t expect an email to close the deal on a £15,000 side-by-side. The email’s job is to get someone interested enough to talk. Your team closes the sale.



Where do I begin?

In her first Diary entry, **Kelly Burgess**, MD of Buxtons Ltd – based in Penkridge, Staffordshire – reflects on the tough trading conditions of 2025, and looks ahead to the new season with cautious optimism.



I suppose that, for those who missed my face on the front of the July/August magazine (!), I should probably introduce myself. My name is Kelly, and in December 2024, I took over as managing director of Buxtons Ltd after the long reign of Neale Hopley, who stood at the helm for 35 years. I’ve been in the business for 10 years now, and, whilst it certainly has its challenges, I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.

First of all, a shout-out to Neale – he wouldn’t let me throw a grand retirement party, so a little mention will have to do! I must thank him for a lifetime of hard work, and for the business I’ve been fortunate enough to take over. My key takeaways from Neale will be his incredible care and attentiveness to customers – a trait I hope to continue across our business as it grows.

Secondly, there’s his involvement in the industry. He’s always been passionate about our dealer network, and firmly believes we should work together where possible. If anyone knows the trials and tribulations we all face, it’s us. His involvement over the years in dealer councils, events and so on is what encouraged me to say ‘yes’ to writing the Diary of a Season for *Service Dealer*, and I hope to continue my involvement in the wider industry for years to come.

Also, a massive shout-out for retiring right before one of the worst droughts we’ve seen in a long time! He must have had a glimpse at that crystal ball we all keep going on about!

In all seriousness, the groundcare side of our business was a real challenge throughout 2025 – as I’m sure I don’t need to point out. We did reasonably

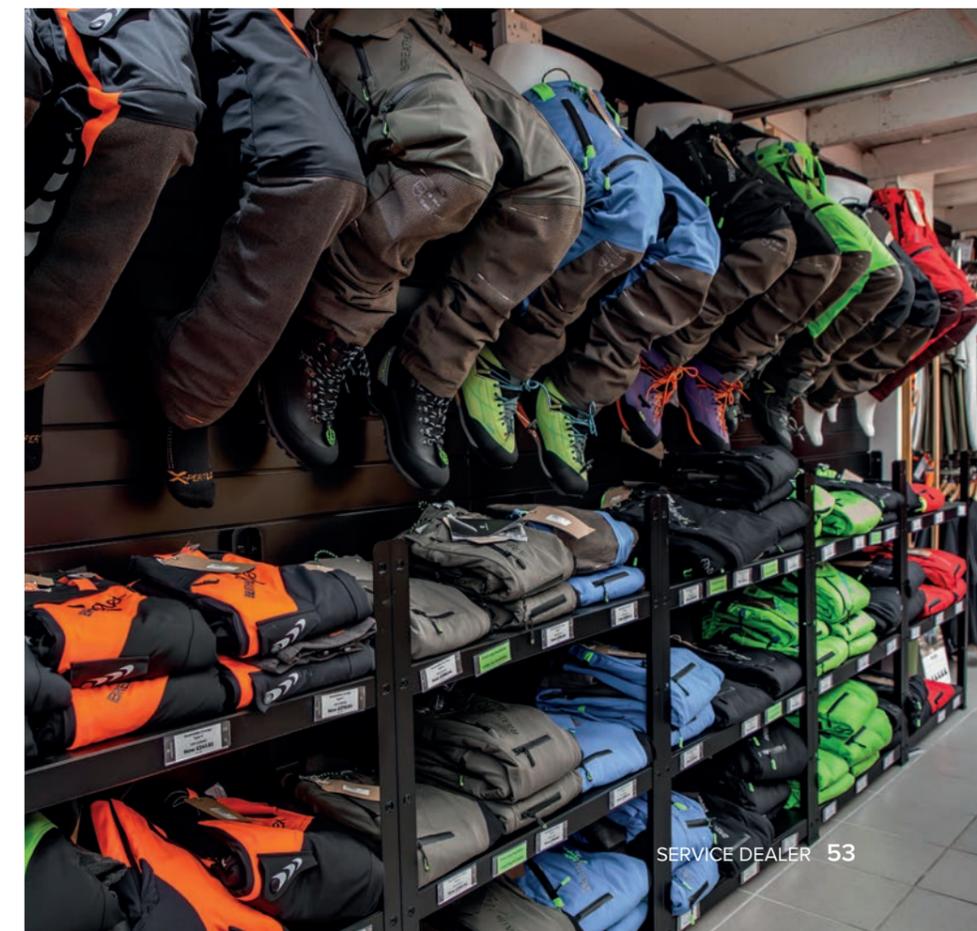
well, all things considered, and ended our year in September with an increase from the previous year. But, my goodness, we had to work harder for those sales! I hope that, going forward, I’ll have a greater appreciation for a good sales year – and for knowing that, even in hard times, we can push through.

That being said, I know we’re fortunate that a good portion of our business comes from supplying arboriculture equipment, which is much less weather-dependent and generally sees us through a tough year weather-wise. The launch of our new website in 2019 catapulted our growth in this market, and, by the time this is printed, we’ll have launched another

site - largely developed in-house by our talented IT team, headed up by my sister, Sophie. This will enable us to continue improving the customer experience, and to create features that our old platform was holding us back from implementing.

However, no matter how strong our arb department was, it didn’t help me occupy five mechanics and a full-time driver when there was very little service work coming in over the summer months! Every cloud, I suppose - I now have a newly-painted showroom ready for what I hope will be a much better season.

I’m looking forward to 2026 with apprehension, excitement, and a few prayers for a bit of rain!





SME DIGEST

Advice for small and medium-sized enterprises

Edited by Adam Bernstein



MENTAL HEALTH

Neurodivergent staff in businesses

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the value of diversity in the workplace, not just in terms of race, gender, and background, but also in terms of neurological diversity says Adam Bernstein, SME Digest editor.

Importantly, neurodivergent individuals - those whose neurological development diverges from what is considered typical, including people with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and other cognitive differences - can bring unique sets of skills and perspectives that can be especially useful.

Indeed, an employer that understands neurodiversity stands to gain from

improved efficiency, enhanced problem-solving, different perspectives on problems, innovation, and a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.

So, what can neurodivergent staff bring?

Enhanced attention to detail

One of the most commonly recognised traits of a neurodivergent individual, particularly those on the autism spectrum or those with obsessive-compulsive tendencies, is extraordinary attention to detail. In a retail or commercial setting, where detail is everything, this trait can be incredibly valuable.

Strong work ethic and focus

Many neurodivergent people have the ability to focus, particularly on tasks that interest them or fall within their

area of expertise. This can translate to exceptional performance in roles that require concentration, routine, or repetition, such as diagnostics, inventory management, or product preparation.

Creative problem solving

Most business sectors can require 'thinking outside the box', especially when dealing with exacting customers, unusual problems or complex issues. Consequently, neurodivergent employees can find different and innovative solutions to problems.

Exceptional memory and technical skills

Some neurodivergent people have superior memory skills, particularly in recalling facts, numbers, or processes. This can be particularly advantageous in a setting where remembering how to configure machinery, give advice on specific fertiliser treatments, or maintain detailed product ranges is essential.

Fostering a culture of inclusion

Hiring neurodivergent staff promotes a more inclusive and compassionate workplace culture, which is not only valuable but also beneficial to team dynamics as all see a caring employer. Firms that look out for diversity are more likely to see open communication, empathy, and mutual respect among team members.

But let's not forget that firms often serve a diverse customers base, including neurodivergent buyers. Having



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neurodivergent employees can increase the employer's ability to understand a wider range of customers effectively and with empathy.

Reputation and community impact

In an age where businesses are increasingly considered on their social responsibility, hiring neurodivergent staff can enhance a reputation. Firms that actively support diversity and inclusion initiatives may be viewed more favourably by customers, communities, and potential employees. By being neurodiverse an employer may attract like-minded customers because of how the business operates.

Loyalty and job retention

We touched on this earlier, but neurodivergent individuals often face challenges in traditional employment settings due to misunderstandings with colleagues. As a result, when they find a supportive and accommodating employer, they tend to show exceptional loyalty and commitment. Employers that take the time to create inclusive spaces and provide reasonable adjustments often experience lower turnover and benefit from a more stable and committed workforce.

Legal and ethical advantages

Lastly, the Equality Act 2010 requires employers make reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent staff. By hiring neurodivergent employees, and by providing the right environment, an employer can both stay compliant with the law and avoid the legal and reputational risks associated with discrimination claims.

Conclusion

Hiring neurodivergent individuals is nothing to do with charity - it's a strategy decision that can significantly benefit a business in many ways. From operational efficiency and technical skills to team function and community impact, neurodivergent staff can offer skills and perspectives that are not just valuable, but often exceptional.

WORKERS RIGHTS

The Employment Rights Bill: A new era for UK workplaces

At the start of July 2025, the government published a policy paper, *Implementing the Employment Rights Bill: roadmap*, setting out how and when new workplace rights and protections will take effect writes *Mark Stevens, legal director at VWV LLP*

Although the Bill is still progressing through Parliament, certain provisions are expected to come into force following Royal Assent. Other changes will be introduced in stages, with the final measures expected to be rolled out by 2027.

The Bill builds on long-standing discussions about updating UK employment law to reflect modern working practices. Its proposals are wide-ranging, from changes to unfair dismissal protection to new measures tackling workplace harassment and zero-hour contracts.

Protection against unfair dismissal

Currently, most employees need two years of continuous service to be protected from unfair dismissal unless the dismissal is for an automatically unfair reason. The Bill had initially removed this qualifying period, extending unfair dismissal protection from the first day at work. The government is no longer pursuing day-one protection against unfair dismissal. Instead, following agreement with business groups and trade unions, the current two-year qualifying period will be reduced to six months. This represents the new threshold for bringing an ordinary unfair dismissal claim once the legislation takes effect. The new protection will not extend to individuals whose prospective employment is terminated before they

have actually started work. However, the definition of "started work" remains unclear which may create further litigation risks in marginal cases - for example, where an employee has attended a paid induction meeting or receives IT equipment in advance of a formal start date.

The Bill also proposes an initial period of employment (IPE) during which a simplified test of fairness could apply to dismissals related to conduct, capability or other substantial reasons, but not to redundancies or business reorganisations. The duration of the IPE is yet to be defined, although a nine-month period has been suggested. Until this is confirmed, employers will not know exactly when the standard or modified test will apply. However, press reporting at the end of November 2025 indicated that the IPE model is now expected to be dropped as part of the revised approach. The government has not yet formally confirmed this, and the position will only become clear when the amending provisions to the Bill are published.

Limitations on 'fire and rehire' practices

The Bill introduces stricter limits on the use of so-called 'fire and rehire' practices. The Bill provides that it will be automatically unfair to dismiss an employee solely because they refuse to agree to changes to their contract terms, or to dismiss someone in order to re-engage them on new terms for the

same or similar work.

There is a potential defence if the employer can show that the changes were genuinely needed to prevent or significantly reduce serious financial difficulties in the near future and that no reasonable alternatives were available. However, the test will be applied narrowly as tribunals are expected to look for clear and credible evidence, and general aims such as cost reduction or efficiency improvements are unlikely to be sufficient.

Where changes are genuinely needed, securing agreement will generally be safer for employers than relying on dismissal and re-engagement.

Though these provisions are expected to take effect from October 2026, they signal a clear shift in approach to the current legal position.

Zero-hour and casual worker reforms

The Bill introduces greater protections for zero-hours and casual workers through three core statutory rights:

- A right to be offered guaranteed hours once certain thresholds are met
- A right to reasonable notice of shifts
- A right to compensation where shifts are cancelled, changed, or curtailed at short notice

The Bill aims to align contractual hours more closely with actual hours worked. Once a worker regularly works above a minimum threshold over a defined reference period (expected to be around 12 weeks, but this is subject to further consultation), they must be offered guaranteed hours reflecting that pattern. This offer must fairly match the pattern worked and cannot be for a fixed term. Any less favourable terms must be justified.

Workers will also have the right to reasonable notice of shifts. If shifts are cancelled or changed at short notice, compensation will be payable. Regulations will set out what counts as 'reasonable' notice and 'short' notice, but advance planning and clear communication will become increasingly important. These rights will apply to agency workers as well, with responsibilities divided between the end

hirer and the agency.

Employers will need to inform workers of their rights within two weeks of starting work, or within two weeks of it becoming reasonable to believe that they might qualify. This obligation continues throughout employment to ensure ongoing access to information about these rights. There will also be an opt-out mechanism for employers and unions to agree alternative arrangements via a collective agreement, provided strict conditions are met.

Stronger protections against harassment and ban of NDAs

The Bill strengthens employers' obligations to tackle workplace harassment by expanding the current duty to require them to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of staff. Although this new duty may not give rise to standalone tribunal claims, it may influence the outcome of harassment claims.

Additionally, a separate provision will introduce protection for workers who experience harassment by third parties, such as clients or customers, if the employer has not taken all reasonable steps to prevent it. This applies to any form of harassment, not just sexual harassment.

Further guidance will clarify what amounts to 'all reasonable steps', but employers can expect to see hopes for clear policies, risk assessments and effective reporting and response procedures. Reviewing current policies and providing regular training for managers and staff will be key to ensuring everyone understands how to raise concerns and how they will be addressed.

It is also understood that the Bill will ban non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) that attempt to prevent workers from speaking out about workplace harassment or discrimination - whether relating to an employee's own experience or that of another employee. Whistleblowing protections will also be extended to cover sexual harassment complaints, giving workers stronger safeguards.

Other planned measures

In addition to the headline reforms, the Employment Rights Bill includes a range of other significant proposals that employers should have on their radar:

- Trade Unions and Industrial Action: Protections for workers involved in lawful trade union activity or industrial action will be strengthened, including new safeguards against dismissal and clearer rules on picketing and balloting procedures.
- Family rights: Right to take unpaid parental leave and paternity leave will become a day one right and there will be a new right to bereavement leave.
- Flexible Working: Employees will gain greater rights to request flexible working arrangements from day one of employment. Employers will need to handle requests promptly, consult with employees and provide sound business reasons for refusal.
- Collective redundancy: The Bill tightens obligations on employers undertaking large-scale redundancies, including more detailed information and earlier consultation requirements.
- Statutory sick pay (SSP) and holidays: SSP will become payable from the first day of sickness; the lower earnings limit will be removed; and new rules will require employers to keep clearer records of working hours and holiday accrual to ensure compliance with working time regulations

Preparing for change

While some measures may not come into force until late 2026, or in 2027, taking steps now to understand the changes and plan ahead should make the transition smoother when the final provisions take effect.





Products

DOMESTIC

First leaf vacuum from EGO

The new 3-in-1 LV5000E

EGO Power+, has released its first leaf vacuum, the three-in-one LV5000E, designed for use as a blower, vacuum and mulcher.

Featuring a variable speed dial that can produce up to 850m³/h output, the tool has the power to tackle small-to-medium-sized gardens. Powered by the company's 56V ARC Lithium battery technology, its all-in-one functionality means users can blow fallen leaves into a pile by replacing the vacuum bag with the supplied suction tube, before reinstating the bag to clear up the leaves with the vacuum function.

Suitable for domestic gardeners, the three-in-one leaf vacuum maximises space in the collection bag by mulching the leaves and debris as they are collected, fitting more into the bag and requiring less emptying. Due to the high suction power and metal impeller, the vacuum reduces the potential for blockages.

Neil McGuinness, product manager for EGO, said: "We are proud to be bringing our first ever leaf vacuum to market. Years of product development have gone into creating our range of blowers, which offer market-leading power and performance. And now we have been able to take our offering a step further with the LV5000E."



COMMERCIAL



Precise spraying for landscapers

STIHL launch new battery-powered SGA 30

STIHL has expanded its sprayer offering with the launch of the SGA 30, a sprayer which, they say, is designed to combine operator comfort with precise liquid application.

Purpose-built for groundskeepers, landscapers and gardeners, the company boast that the new model eliminates the need for manual pumping, ensuring steady pressure delivery.

Delivering a working pressure of 1.5 to 2.5 bars, the SGA 30 uses the AS System battery, and features a 5-litre tank capacity, whilst enabling users to tailor output depending on the application, whether applying fertilisers across lawns or pesticides to specific plants. The manufacturer says this adjustability helps to ensure effective coverage while cutting down on unnecessary product use.

The adjustable nozzle provides flexibility to alternate between fine misting and direct spot treatments, while the telescopic lance ensures operators can reach awkward or elevated areas. For further convenience, the sprayer shuts off automatically when the tank is empty or inactive, conserving energy and supporting longer battery life.

With straightforward pressure controls, an intuitive ON/OFF switch and a clear battery charge indicator the unit weighs 2.1kg without the battery (and 7.1kg when filled with liquid and with a battery in place), design remains lightweight, with a carry strap and handle.

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DOMESTIC

40V expansion for medium to large gardens

Webb Eco introduces the X Series for '26

New for 2026, British garden equipment brand Webb has expanded its Webb Eco cordless garden machinery range with the introduction of the X-Series.

Powered by two interchangeable 20V lithium-ion batteries working together to deliver 40V, the series features a full family of tools - from lawnmowers and trimmers to hedge trimmers, blowers, vacuums, chainsaws, and scarifiers.

The company says the new X-Series builds on the success of their existing 20V Webb Eco range, which is suited to



smaller gardens and everyday maintenance. By introducing the 40V X-Series, Webb say they now offer a more powerful option for tackling larger gardens and tougher jobs, giving retailers a cordless solution that meets the needs of customers transitioning from petrol.

Designed to deliver high performance and long runtimes, every tool in the X-Series features "advanced brushless motor technology for greater efficiency, less maintenance, and extended product life."

Each machine is backed by Webb's three-year warranty and full spares availability.

"The new 40V range marks the next generation of cordless garden power from Webb," said Mark Moseley, sales and marketing director at Handy. "The Webb Eco X-Series delivers a real step forward in performance and sustainability for medium-to-large gardens, offering exceptional power, efficiency and ease-of-use – all at an accessible price point."

AGRICULTURAL

Kuhn has introduced the Karan range of high-capacity trailed sprayers, designed, they say, for operators seeking greater output and improved application accuracy.

The mid-range Power model is the first to arrive, with steel or aluminium booms from 24m to 39m. The full lineup will expand to offer 18m–45m booms, and tank sizes from 4,500 to 8,000 litres.

A major feature of the new sprayer is the company's Eagle1 automatic contour control system, which uses ultrasonic sensors to continually adjust boom height to crop or terrain. With precision spraying at speeds up to 25kph, Eagle1 integrates with the manufacturer's 25cm nozzle spacing and I-Spray spot application technology.

Other specification highlights include high-capacity Autoset filling (900L/min), spraying at up to 500L/min, twin 360-degree tank-wash nozzles, and a



new induction hopper capable of 220L/min, with optional closed transfer. Autospray PWM technology provides independent nozzle control and consistent droplet size across varying speeds, supported by XEA3 aluminium booms.

Despite its capability, the design focuses on compact handling, with an unladen weight of 5,690kg, 5m overall length (on 5200 and 6000 models), and a 28-degree steering axle. Maintenance features include an integrated winch for fast pump removal and a removable tank sump and roof.

UTILITY VEHICLES

Aodes Workcross arrives in UK

From Boss ORV

Boss Off-Road Vehicles has announced the arrival of the Aodes Workcross 1000-3 HVAC utility vehicle in the UK.

As the sole UK distributor, Boss say they are supplying its growing dealer network with the Aodes range. The new vehicle features a V-Twin 75hp 1000cc engine with fuel delivered through electronic fuel injection.

A walk-round reveals adjustable suspension and shock absorbers, an electronically remote-controlled winch, and a large-capacity tippable rear bed.

The name "HVAC" stands for a climate-controlled cab with Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning. Also featured is a touchscreen multifunctional digital display for radio, Bluetooth and USB sockets, offline navigation, and a reversing camera.

Beadlock wheels add to the clean lines of the vehicle, which comes with a variety of bonnet colours – including desert brown, seen in the picture. The drivetrain is 2WD-4WD, and the drive is enhanced with electric power steering. Parking is made easy with a gearbox brake.

The UTV also comes with a two-year limited warranty.



New Echo takes on bigger jobs

DCS-3500T top handle chainsaw

Echo have recently launched the DCS-3500T, a 56V battery top handle chainsaw. It joins the DCS-2500T in the 56V professional line-up.

The manufacturer says the new saw can take on bigger jobs than its smaller sibling, as a result of a longer 35cm (14") bar and, by swapping to the 252Wh battery, more power. But it is still lightweight and compact in design. Switching to the larger battery also means longer runtimes.

With safety in mind, the company have introduced a two-step, single-finger throttle lockout safety system which prevents accidental activation. Additional safety and comfort come in the form of the patented QuickDraw hook, enabling hooking and unhooking with one hand, while the reduced gap between the roller chain catcher and the sprocket guard prevents accidental climbing rope damage.

Other useful features include an air inlet filter that prevents dirt and dust from entering the cooling passage, electronics and motor compartment, providing less maintenance and longer lifetime. A drop prevention nut and side chain access tensioner come as standard for quick chain adjustment.



AGRICULTURAL



Higher capacity Loadalls launched

JCB offer increased lift performance

JCB has expanded its agricultural telescopic handler line-up with two new 7.0m Loadall models, which, they say, offer increased lift performance without adding to overall machine size.

The new 546-70 delivers a 4.6-tonne lift capacity - around 400kg more than the 542-70 it effectively supersedes - while maintaining the same compact dimensions for work around buildings. It will be available in AGRI Super (130hp), AGRI Xtra (150hp) and AGRI Pro (173hp) specifications.

Above it sits the 555-70, offering a 5.5-tonne lift capacity, almost 24% up on the 542-70. This model will be offered in AGRI Xtra and AGRI Pro variants.

Both machines feature a 160-litre/min load-sensing Smart Hydraulics package and JCB's DualTech VT hydro/powershift transmission. AGRI Super and AGRI Xtra versions use the 40kph unit, while AGRI Pro models receive the 50kph version along with updated braking.

Additional options include air trailer braking, the new IntelliAssist automated boom and attachment control suite, the IntelliWeigh integrated weighing system, and Sway Control chassis-to-axle levelling on AGRI Xtra and AGRI Pro variants to aid stability on uneven ground.

JCB say the new models are aimed at farmers and contractors needing higher productivity from a handler package that remains agile in tight working environments.

COMMERCIAL



Deep-Clean for artificial surfaces

GKB unit is designed to tackle microplastic contamination

GKB has released an updated version of its Deep-Clean machine, designed to tackle microplastic contamination within artificial turf surfaces.

The launch follows research from the University of Barcelona indicating that a significant proportion of microplastics found in open water may originate from synthetic pitches through fibre degradation or infill materials. The new Deep-Clean is built to extract these particles by penetrating the surface to remove broken fibres and fine contaminants lodged within the infill layer.

Available in 1.2m, 1.5m and 1.8m working widths, the machine uses brushes to lift fibres and infill before passing material through a vibrating sieve. Cleaned infill is returned to the surface, while dust and debris are collected via an integrated extraction system. A self-cleaning filter is designed to reduce maintenance by depositing collected dirt directly into a container.

The update is the first product development to result from GKB's partnership with SMG Sportplatzmaschinenbau, announced in 2025.

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How does rural crime impact machinery dealers?

Mystery columnist THE SPROCKET looks at the growing blight of criminals targeting showrooms - and what owners can do to protect themselves



It is clear that rural crime significantly affects machinery dealers through direct and indirect impacts. The high value and demand for agricultural equipment – particularly items like quad bikes, ATVs, and GPS technology – make them prime targets for organised criminal gangs, who often operate internationally.

It is my experience that machinery dealers can suffer as much as other victims across the country because of rural crime. Where demand is outstripping supply, even a well-protected dealer can be targeted by break-ins or fraud so criminals can line their pockets. Mostly, we are talking about well organised international gangs that carry out rural crime.

A dealer I spoke to had a quad bike stolen from his showroom. The gang simply ram-raided the premises' frontage with a pickup, hooked up the quad bike, and dragged it. Gone in a few minutes. All on camera but not clear enough for the local police to do anything about it. Insurance covered the quad bike and the £5,000 worth of damage to the building. Nothing covered the wellbeing of the owner and staff, or the time taken to sort things out.

If we accept that dealers will mostly operate outside of towns and cities, we can assume that they are targets for rural crime because of the equipment they handle, and because they will be more vulnerable. All the usual things that go toward securing premises and minimising fraud issues are, perhaps, obvious. Security maybe top-notch, but these bad guys know more about nicking stuff than the security specialists know about protecting stuff. If they didn't, not so much would be disappearing from the countryside and the dealer network.

A dealer near me was constantly targeted by 'local' thieves, despite having high-security cameras and alarms. Again, caught on camera, but the images were not clear enough. The bad guys were customers, and could check out the premises during opening hours, and work out how to get in - which they did on several occasions. The frustrating thing is that the owner knew who it was, but simply could not prove it.

Being a biker, I was at the Motorcycle Live show in November 2025. I was interested in security for bikes,

having had a high-tech cable-lock cut off in seconds when my bike was locked to another. I saw some rather hefty squared-off U locks. When I asked how long it would take a thief to cut through one, I was told it would take about 10 minutes. How much, asks I? £250, says they - for one. Then I was told put as many locks, disc locks, deterrents, alarms and immobilisers that you can on your bike, and chain it to an immovable object. It will delay a theft. Only delay a theft! In simple terms: if they want it, they will take it. The answer to bike theft is to use an old bike that nobody would be interested in nicking.

The criminal is ever-evolving, well-equipped, and savvy about market demand for products than many. They specifically target what is in-demand, and, until this becomes obvious to the victims, security measures can be slow in catching up. Whatever way this is viewed, there will be a high price to pay for state-of-the-art security that can cover, yards, warehouses, offices and showrooms. One thing I have learned is that if you use cameras, make sure that they have high-resolution imaging and night vision. After all, if you can bring one or two of these crooks to book, you will be doing everyone a favour.

A long time ago a dealer who was getting more than their fair share of burglaries introduced a system into their several showrooms that simply filled the space with a dense smoke or fog so the bad guys could not see what they were nicking. I seem to recall that it attracted the attention of the police at the time, and, after much debate, was allowed to remain in place. I noticed that BAGMA have partnered with Bandit UK, who are offering the Fog Bandit security fogging system. BAGMA members get a special deal, but I guess you don't have to be a member to explore the benefits of this system. Maybe it is a valuable deterrent, and maybe I can get a beer out of BAGMA for mentioning it?



Countryside Crime

Let us shift away from dealer premises stuff to the bigger picture of rural crime in general, and what is going on with our law enforcement and government bodies. In essence, rural crime creates a complex web of challenges for machinery dealers, influencing their product design, operational costs, and market reputation. It has been reported that an estimated 900 to 1,200 quad bikes and ATVs are stolen in England and Wales each year (sorry, Scotland and Northern Ireland – I couldn't find figures for you). The NFU reported that they alone had over £2.7 million losses reported to them and an estimated £1.2 million just in GPS systems.

Something that has been going on for a few years is the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023 (c. 34), which has been trundling its way through the two Houses of Parliament for a few years, and which has been fought over by various organisations concerning a number of issues that blanket legislation could affect. The act essentially supports 'the introduction of immobilisers and forensic marking as standard [which] would help prevent them being stolen. Importantly, it would also make it harder for criminals to sell on stolen valuable property, acting as a strong deterrent.'

The Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act is described in a Ministerial Foreword from the Government, with an executive summary which is copied, in part, here. This act only applies in England and Wales.

- The Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023 seeks to prevent the theft of All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), such as quad bikes. It provides the Secretary of State with the power to make regulations to ensure, prior to sale, that immobilisers are fitted as standard to all new ATVs, and there is a visible marking and forensic marking applied on all such new vehicles. The seller will also be required to record the buyer's details for a period to be determined in regulations. This will assist police to identify the owner of a recovered stolen ATV.
- The Act provides a power for the Secretary of State to extend the legislation via secondary legislation to other equipment designed or adapted primarily for use in agricultural or commercial activities. This could include – for example – requiring forensic marking of tradespeople's power tools.

The Act does come up against several issues when it comes to retrofitting immobilisers to new equipment, one of which may contravene the original Type Approval registration. There are also cost issues, and dealing with the process of registration. This is a big issue that is creeping up on the LBE sector, and, whilst the intentions are admirable, the implications of the Act may bite the industry on the bum.

There is also a new Home Office three-year rural crime strategy launched, which aims to target the threat of organised crime groups. It is intended to use more visible policing, and give officers authority to recover stolen agricultural equipment without a warrant. Police will be using intelligence led investigations to combat rural crime.

No doubt dealers, especially agricultural machinery dealers, will be aware of these measures and the issues involving machinery theft. Do any dealers offer a service that helps their customers protect against rural crime? Things like security advice, data tagging equipment, keeping serial numbers to hand in case a machine gets nicked, securing equipment overnight and not leaving vulnerable equipment in full view for the bad guys to lift. Maybe it is a sales benefit, or at the very least an additional customer benefit.

Do dealers actually benefit from rural crime, inasmuch as they would be the go-to for replacement equipment? Could the dealer provide replacement equipment with enhanced security devices and data tagging? Insurance companies may start to insist on equipment being protected and keys removed at night, and kit being locked up to reduce theft opportunities. Certainly, the Equipment Theft Bill would eventually ensure better traceability of stolen equipment, but it has to be fair and comprehensive – and it does not really ask for anything other than a common-sense approach to securing machines.

If dealers don't already track serial numbers and do some of the above with their own stock and equipment, they should. There are ways to do this and keep digital records. The bad guys are out there, and they will find your weak spots - so do everything you can to protect your stock and your premises. Lastly, think about what your insurance will go up by every time you make a claim for stolen equipment or damage to your premises as a result of theft.

The Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA) have been lobbying government on issues to do with The Equipment Theft Bill and have recently reported that regulation will only proceed in two areas. Forensic marking of ATVs and Forensic marking of removable GPS units for ag and commercial use. Immobilisers will not be required for ATVs and no marking of powered hand tools will be required.

It is expected that the relevant legislation will have been published by the end of 2005 but it is unlikely to clear through Parliament until the spring of 2026. Time will tell if more regulations will be added.



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.

JANUARY 2026

Oxford Farming Conference www.ofc.org.uk	7-9
LAMMA 2026, Birmingham NEC www.lammashow.com	14-15
BTME 2026, Harrogate International Centre www.btme.org.uk	20-22
Golf Industry Show, Orlando, Florida www.gcsaaconference.com	31-5/2

FEBRUARY 2026

Spring Fair 2026, Birmingham NEC www.springfair.com	1-4
Doe Show 2026, Ulting www.ernestdoe.com	3-5
Dairy-Tech, Stoneleigh Park www.dairy-tech.uk	4
Yorkshire Agricultural Machinery Show (YAMS) www.yams.uk.com	4
World Ag Expo, Tulare, California www.worldagexpo.com	10-12
Executive Hire Show, Ricoh Arena, Coventry www.executivehireshow.co.uk	11-12

MARCH 2026

The Scots Turf Show, Hamilton Park Racecourse www.scotsturfshow.com	4
ConExpo, Las Vegas www.conexpoconagg.com	3-7

APRIL 2026

Ideal Home Exhibition, Olympia, London www.idealhomeshow.co.uk	10-19
AEA Conference 2026, One Great George Street, London www.aea.uk.com	14

The Commercial Vehicle Show, Birmingham NEC www.cvshow.com	21-23
Harrogate Spring Flower Show www.flowershow.org.uk	23-26
Newark Garden Show, Newark Showground www.newarkgardenshow.co.uk	24-26
East Anglian Game & Country Fair, Euston Estate, Thetford www.ukgamefair.co.uk	25-26

MAY 2026

North Somerset Show www.nsas.org.uk	4
Nottinghamshire County Show www.nottinghamshirecountyshow.com	9
Scotgrass, Slacks Farm, Lochmaben www.scotgrass.co.uk	13
Balmoral Show, Belfast www.balmoralshow.co.uk	13-16
Hadleigh Show www.hadleighshow.co.uk	16
Chelsea Flower Show www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show	19-23
Shropshire County Agricultural Show, West Midlands Showground www.shropshirecountyshow.com	23
Northumberland County Show www.northcountyshow.co.uk	23
Suffolk County Show www.suffolkshow.co.uk	27-28
Staffordshire County Show www.staffscountyshowground.co.uk/staffordshire-county-show	27-28
Royal Bath & West Show www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show	28-30



2026

TAP is the content and communications agency specialising in groundcare machinery and agriculture. As proud publishers of Service Dealer for over 9 years; we launched, and have nurtured, the Service Dealer Conference from the start. Our expertise in this sector has helped evolve the dealer support content of related websites in the form of toolkits and special reports; as well as the dealer website Garden Trader.

We have been privileged to get to know and become friends with the servicing dealer community and machinery manufacturers; and understand how difficult and vulnerable it can be at times – especially when product technology is moving so quickly. It's a pleasure to witness just how close the dealer network can become and also to see its resilience.

We feel blessed to be working with you all and simply want to wish you success, happiness and good health in 2026. Because if the servicing dealer community is successful, the whole industry does well.



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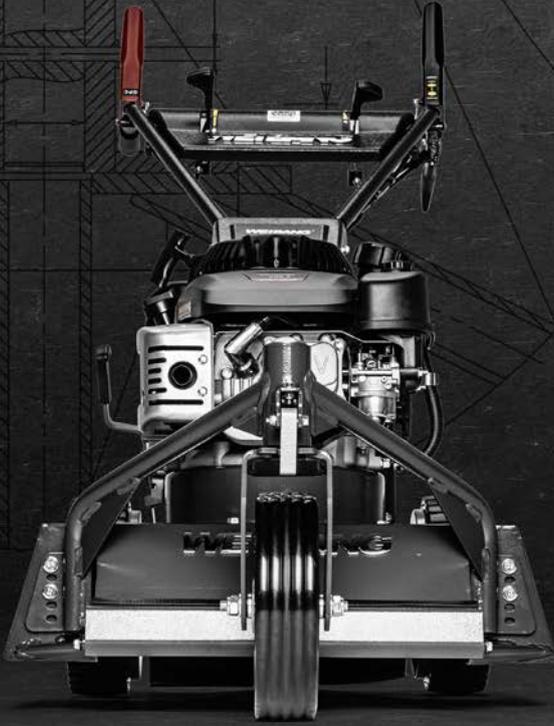
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