Contractors Mechanical Plant Engineers

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

News and greetings from Hampshire Branch

As we start to enjoy getting some of our freedom back and can savour the simple pleasures in life such as sipping a pint at a pub, we are looking forward to what will be our first branch meeting in well over a year on 9th June, at the Nags Head in Chichester. There's no carvery on offer but it will be nice to catch-up on all the news and gossip.

One hot topic in our part of the world which is providing work and short-term business opportunities for many, relates to ash dieback. As you may be aware ash dieback is a chronic fungal disease affecting ash trees across Europe.

Ash is one of my favourite trees, in an historical context it was often used to make longbows and arrows which gave England some of its most effective moments on the battlefields of Agincourt, Crecy and Poitiers. When healthy, ash looks wonderful in summer, always allowing sufficient light through its canopy to provide a perfect balance of light and shade. To cut and process for firewood it is a pleasure to work with, splitting like a knife through butter. I estimate I burn 10 tons each winter in my living room stove, and it achieves a really high temperature.

We have 44 acres of woodland on the farm where I live and 90% of the trees are ash. Historically the South Downs, which I see from my office window, would have been covered in beech but all beech in this part of the world was felled and used during or just after the second world war. Following this there was no replanting as such and in most areas the invasive ash took hold.

Nationally, Ash represents around 10% of all our woodland with a greater density in the south of the county. As the disease spreads, I imagine it could be quite disruptive in particular alongside roads and railway lines.

As a 360-excavator driver myself who learnt to drive on a Liebherr 911 (anyone else operated or remember one of those?), I've been mightily impressed by the array of machinery available to contractors including long reach excavators with shearing attachments. Even more impressive is the competency and speed with which the operator can work them sometimes on very challenging terrain.

"Many thanks to Alex Levitt for this article".

Industry News

CITB consensus: no increase in levy proposed.

Next month sees the start of the delayed triennial consensus consultation process for the mandatory Construction Industry Training Board Levy – and on no increases in fees has been put on the table.

The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) board has decided, following a preliminary industry consultation in March, to keep levy rates the same for 2022-25 as they were for 2018-20. The one-off 50% discount for 2021, introduced as a concession to Covid-19 difficulties, comes to an end.

The final proposals are that the levy is assessed at the pre-pandemic rates of:

- PAYE at 0.35%
- Net paid (taxable) CIS subcontractors at 1.25%.

Approximately 40,000 employers with a wage bill below £120,000 will continue to be exempt, with 14,000 seeing a 50% reduction due to having a wage bill of between £120,000 and £400,000. It is anticipated that due to the pandemic, and lower wage bills, more construction businesses could qualify for exemptions and levy reductions.

The wider construction industry now gets its say on the proposals, with the official consensus consultation taking place from 14th June to 15th August.

The question to be answered is simply: *Do you agree that the levy proposals are necessary to encourage adequate training in the construction industry?*

Under the legislation that gives the CITB power to collect a levy from all companies that are in scope, it has to demonstrate industry support once every three years. This is known as the consensus process. Without industry consensus, CITB has now power to raise the levy, which it then redistributes across the construction industry on training programmes for the greater good. That's the theory, and while the CITB has always been a lightning rod of controversy, it has always retained broad industry support. (Bit like the BBC really…) In 2017, the last time the consensus process was undertaken, there was agreement to the levy proposals from 76.9% of construction industry respondents, according to CITB's methodology.

CITB director of strategy and policy Steve Radley said: "To support employers, levy bills were cut by half for 2021, with the consensus process delayed by a year to focus on supporting immediate skills needs."

The consensus process was initially due to take place in 2020 but it was postponed due to the logistical constraints presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We have since had clear feedback from industry, including the 14 prescribed organisations, that CITB should proceed with consensus this year," Steve Radley said. "We now expect significant growth in construction output and its skill needs over the next three years. We have recently agreed a plan to help meet these needs and we are now asking industry whether it supports the levy proposals to finance it."

Of 33,000 levy-paying employers, around 7,000 have declared they are represented by prescribed organisations (the major trade associations), so their views will be gathered through their organisation. Of the remaining 26,000 employers, a representative sample of 4,000 will be surveyed by telephone by IFF research, an independent research company.

The results of the 2021 summer consultation will be published in the autumn.

HS2 contractors showcase battery power.

A ministerial visit has given HS2 and its contractors an opportunity to show off some of the battery-powered machinery already on site to help build the new Curzon Street Station in Birmingham.

HS2 minister Andrew Stephenson visited the Curzon Street site on Tuesday for the formal contract signing with Mace Dragados, the Anglo-Spanish joint venture selected as main contractor for the £570m build.

However, it was the early works contractor LMJV (Laing O'Rourke and J Murphy & Sons Joint Venture) that had more to show off to the minister.

The signing event took place during a Cleaner Construction Showcase on site in which LMJV demonstrated some of their emission-free machinery.

Battery powered plant on site includes Select Plant's Liebherr LR 1250.1 Unplugged crawler crane, a Faresin 6.26 electric telehandler from Murphy and a Galizia G90 pick & carry crane supplied by Preston-based Lifting Projects UK. (Select Plant is Laing O'Rourke's plant division.)

The Faresin telehandler and Galizia crane are both made in Italy and distributed in the UK by GGR.
On the Curzon Street site there are also eco-hybrid trucks, an electric sweeper, a generator powered by hydrogenated vegetable oil, solar-powered generators, recycled curbing and sustainable asphalt – all brought in to help cut carbon emissions on this site as well as other HS2 sites between London and Birmingham.
HS2's senior project manager for Curzon Street Station, Nicola Henderson-Reid, said: "Not only is HS2 playing a critical role creating jobs and contracts, the project is also committed to building the new railway in the most sustainable way possible. The green technology on show in Birmingham today places HS2 at the forefront of the UK ambition to reduce carbon emissions in the construction industry."

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Plant Machinery News

The big machine with the short tailswing.

The SK380SRLC from Kobelco Construction Machinery Europe (KCME) is its largest short radius (SR) excavator, weighing in at over 36 tonnes.

The smaller working footprint means it can operate within a single carriageway when working on roads.

This machine has a Stage V-compliant turbocharged Hino diesel engine with Power Boost for a quick injection of 10% more beef. The powertrain delivers a drawbar force of 314kN for smooth and steady operation across rough terrain and slopes – even when lifting heavy objects, the Japanese manufacturer says.

In addition, the combination of high hydraulic pressure (Heavy Lift) and balanced chassis layout delivers lifting capacity of 12,390kg (from ground level) even when digging at a reach of six metres.

Inside the cab, the premium operator station is sealed and pressurised, with automatic climate control. The Kobelco-branded Grammer seat is air-cushioned and heated. The colour LCD multi-display screen shows fuel consumption, maintenance intervals, digging mode and other operating information. Up to 10 pre-set attachment settings can also be selected from the cabin – the one-touch attachment mode switch converts the hydraulic circuit and flow amount to match attachments.

Safety features includes the tilt-up opening FOPS guard level II that comes as standard, and three standard cameras on the left, right and rear of the machine. Ground level access to the DEF tank and a special lower-access step near the engine simplify maintenance.

A two-piece boom option for the SK380SRLC is promised for later this year, which will provide additional benefits on sites with restricted space, and particularly in maintenance and utilities.

Kobelco product manager Peter Stuijt said: “The arrival of the SK380SRLC is a result of extensive market research and customer feedback, coupled with Kobelco’s extensive experience in innovative technologies. We’re seeing more demand for short radius machines, due to increased requirements for urban infrastructure and utilities, and the SK380SRLC offers all the benefits of a heavy machine, including high power and increased lifting capacity, but in a much smaller working footprint.”

Engcon UK and Scot JCB team up.

A new partnership will see Engcon UK supply its range of machine hitches, tiltrotators, control systems and other products to the Scot JCB Group.

The collaboration will enable Scot JCB to fit tiltrotators to its range of JCB excavators. Scot JCB Group is made up of Scot JCB, AM Phillip Agritech, Kelso & Lothian Harvesters,

Stewart Plant Sales and Scot Industrial Air. The companies operate from a network of 17 depots across Scotland and the North of England from Fraserburgh in the North East of Scotland to Carnforth in Lancashire.

Iain Bryant, joint managing director of the Scot JCB Group, said: “This new partnership with Engcon is another key development in our strategy to be the industry leading construction solutions provider in Scotland and the North of England. Our range of JCB excavators are class leaders however the addition of the Engcon tiltrotator makes the machines much more versatile to the end user.

We have over 100 factory-trained engineers available across our territory who will ensure Engcon tiltrotators are supplied, fitted, and tested ensuring they are ready for use from delivery. The market for tiltrotors in the UK is growing and we are in a great position to help meet the demand thanks to this new partnership."

Andre Nordström, MD of Engcon UK, said: "Engcon UK Ltd is pleased to announce the agreement with The Scot JCB Group whereby we will both have the opportunity to increase the productivity and profitability for our mutual customers. This is another important step for Engcon and the tiltrotator concept in the UK where we will be able to access Scot JCB's network for sales, service and support throughout Scotland and the North of England."

Kubota expands its dumper family.

Kubota has added two new models to its range of tracked site dumpers with the launch of two new EU Stage V compliant models.

The KC300H-5 and KC300HR-5 both have a maximum load capacity of 2,875 kg but they have different tipping angles. In the H version, the machine has a hydraulic three-sided tiltable loading trough with a maximum tipping angle of 55 degrees.

The HR model has an 84-degree dumping angle and – as HR stands for hydraulic rotation – a 180-degree rotary function for sideways tipping.

With this version, the rotation function can be actuated at the same time as the tipping of the body for more precise unloading.

Both are powered by a liquid-cooled four-cylinder Kubota diesel engine V2403, giving a maximum travel speed of 11 km/h, even when loaded. Ground clearance is 330 mm to cope with rough ground.

It is operated by joystick control. The driver's seat and operating console are reversible through 180 degrees to face the opposite direction of travel.

Glen Hampson, construction division manager at Kubota, said: "These two KC300H-5 and HR-5 models are an exciting new addition to our track dumper range and the result of years of experience and continuous investment in new product development. The KC300-5 meets the latest European Stage V diesel emissions regulations and combines power and speed with unbeatable flexibility - all in a compact design."

Case introduces its G-Series Evolution wheeled loader.

Case Construction Equipment has launched its new G-Series Evolution wheeled loader range in Europe.

Case says that the G-Series Evolution wheeled loader features series of incremental improvements that combine to produce a significant reductio in operating costs.

Thanks to extended service intervals from 500 to 1000+ hours the total cost of maintenance has been reduced by up to 20% when compared to the current range.

“Wheel loaders that are designed to work in the most extreme working environments benefit from improved performance and profitability when you shorten cycle times, by simplifying operations and increasing uptime,” says product management director Egidio Galano. “Each of the enhancements included in the new CASE G-Series Evolution loaders drive those incremental improvements that lead to big gains in productivity and efficiency.”

For example, there is a new payload system integrated directly into the primary display, providing bucket weight, pass counts, accumulated/running weight, job tracking data and other information. This helps operators track total loads including the total volume of material moved over a specific time, load history by customer, ticket or material, as well as providing a comprehensive ticket history.

There is a new touchscreen display that provides tablet-like performance for accessing all machine settings and operational data. This includes electro-hydraulic controls that enable the operator to independently set lift (boom) and tilt (bucket) responsiveness to match operator preference and loading situations. Each function can be independently set with a choice of three responsiveness modes: smooth, moderate and aggressive.

Case says that it has simplified the previous engine power management operating mode offering with two new ones: Smart and Max. Max mode is chosen when the operator wants to work with maximum engine performance in tough conditions, while the new Smart Mode delivers “an enhanced operating experience through improved communication between the engine and transmission” when the work is not so tough.

The new parallel lift functionality automatically maintains the angle and position of the bucket or forks to prevent load spillage.

The telematics systems SiteConnect and SiteWatch come as standard for three years.

And there is a new telematics enabled 4G SiteConnect Module installed on the machine that can be accessed via the new SiteManager App.

“With SiteConnect, we are enabling two-way communication between machines and Case dealers, who can run remote diagnostics and best advise operators on any issues identified without even visiting the site. Algorithm-driven proactive

analysis of potential failures and reduced time to fix issues means more uptime and productivity. If a potential problem is detected, an alert is sent to the CASE dealer with specific recommendations and actions to fix issues before they become problems. SiteConnect and telematics come as standard with the G-Series Evolution" says Egidio Galano.

Tyre monitoring has also been improved. The new tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS) has individual sensors that mount to the valve stem of each tyre along with a receiver module that communicates the pressure for each tyre onto the display and alerts the operator when the tyre pressure is outside of a set range.

Egidio Galano concludes: "All of these new features have been driven by direct feedback from customers and dealers — from the tyres to the bucket to the engine and to the controls — to provide comprehensive connectivity and systems improvement that will increase productivity, increase profitability and increase reliability."

Liebherr revamps plug-in digger.

Liebherr has revamped its cable electric excavators with new power systems designed in-house.

The Liebherr R 976-E and R 980 SME-E electric crawler excavators replaces the previous ER 974 B, designed for mine and quarry extraction work.

The new models are not just converted diesel machines, though. The excavators and their electric power system are designed and produced entirely by Liebherr-France in Colmar.

The electric system in the new Liebherr R 976-E 400 kW crawler excavator is supplied with 6000 V power via a plug-in cable connection, with the cable inlet in the centre of the undercarriage, or on the sides if requested. A motor cable drum is also available as an option. The machine is powered by a 6000V/50 Hz current collector. There is a switch cabinet transformer (high voltage/low voltage) and a low voltage cabinet for power distribution and control of 690 V, 230 V and 24 V networks on the upper carriage. The low-voltage electric squirrel-cage engine drives the hydraulic system.

Liebherr says that the plug-on excavators are cheaper to run and maintain than a conventional diesel machine as well as being cleaner and quieter.

Contracts Awarded

Sisk returns to Blackpool for tram terminus phase two.

John Sisk & Son has returned to Blackpool for phase two of the town's Tramway North Terminus project.

The new £23.4m terminus is being built as part of the wider £250m Blackpool Council Talbot Gateway regeneration project that Muse Developments is leading for Blackpool Council.

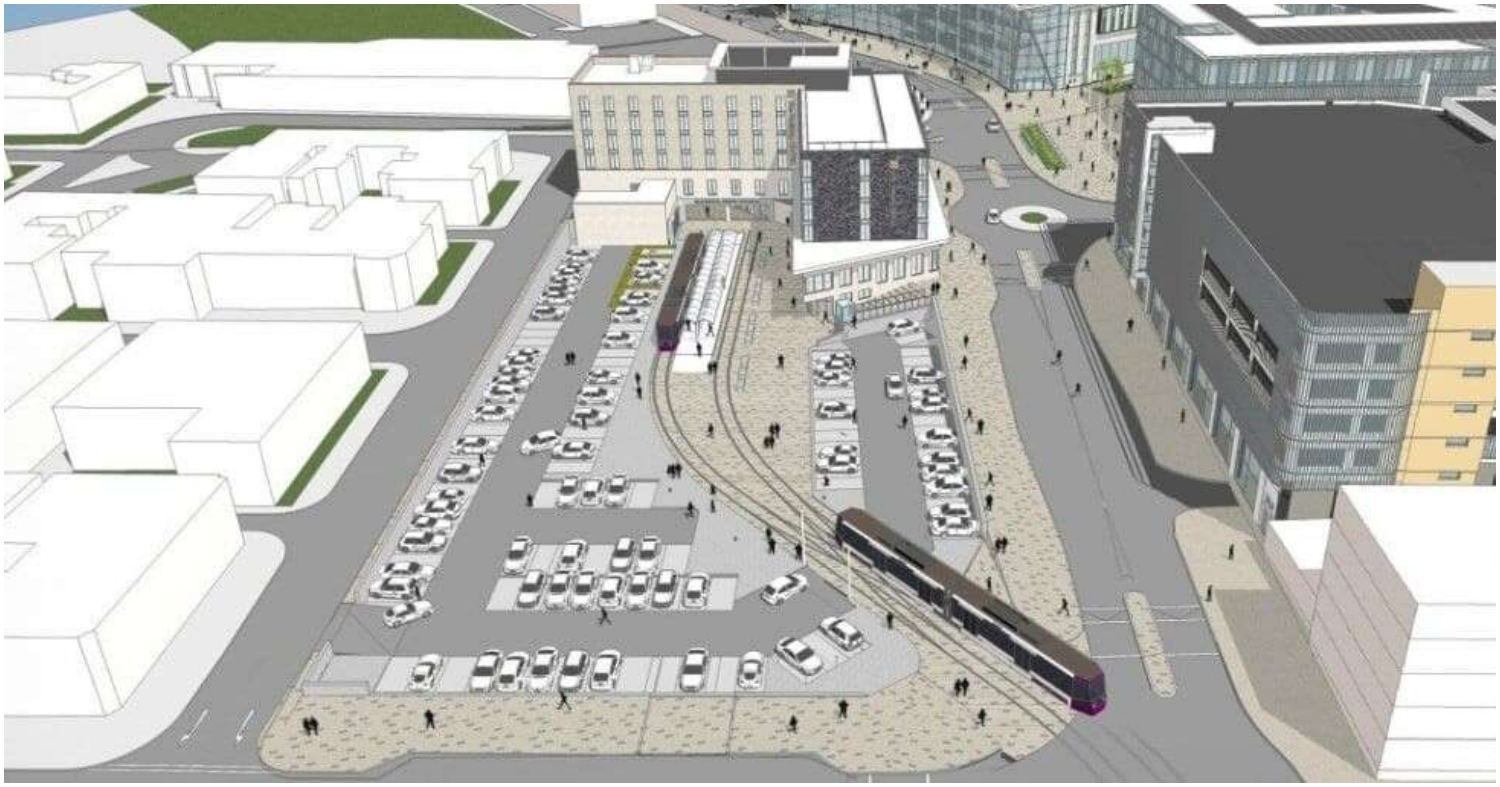
The project will connect the promenade tramway with Blackpool North Railway Station.

Sisk's works will include the construction of a new raised platform area. It will also install the connection of a new track to the previously installed line along Talbot Road, Blackpool Promenade and new public realm finishes.

Sisk previously did the first stage of works on the Blackpool tram extension between 2018 and 2020, installing 500 metres of new tramway, created new highway layouts and repaving Talbot Square.

Dave Hill, regional director of John Sisk & Son, said: "We are very proud of the work already completed in Blackpool and are excited to be back on site to complete this important infrastructure scheme. The tramway extension will not only provide greater connectivity to the local community and tourists visiting Blackpool, but it will also play a significant role in the wider regeneration and recovery plans for the area."

Construction of the terminus is expected to take 26 weeks.



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