



Despite the inclement weather during this year's three-day IOG SALTEX turf and open space management show, exhibitors were reporting a high number of serious enquiries – and sales leads – starting right from the first few hours of the exhibition.

D J Turfcare was among a number of companies that reported sales almost as soon as the show opened. David Jenkins, Managing Director, announced that he had sold a Plugger PL855 Pro HD aerator which was being launched at the show. And Gary Mumby of BLEC Global reported the sale of a BLEC Laser Grader. Gary said that “despite the heavy rain during day one, I still took lots of serious enquiries”, which will be followed up after the show. As the show closed, Gary added: “IOG SALTEX was a terrific show; we sold eight machines from the stand (including our new Shakervator, Stumpgrinder and Blecavator) and took dozens of enquiries.”

Day one was also a good time for The Grass Group, as Managing Director Tim Merrell, reported: “A national contractor came to our stand last year and expressed an interest in a Trilo vacuum/sweeper. On the first day this year he came to the stand and ordered the machine. What a start! We've seen a good mix of visitors – including local authorities, schools and colleges – and took an order from a golf club for a SmartCut.”

...It is no surprise, therefore, that DJ Turfcare, BLEC Global and The Grass Group were first among the almost 70 per cent of exhibitors which have already re-booked for next year's event.

The 9,500 visitors (unaudited) from across the open space management sector had plenty to see on the 360 stands that housed a total of 429 companies: the showground was dominated

by new products, details of many being shrouded in secrecy until the show opened. Etesia, for example, unveiled no less than 15 new products – including the Bahia M2E, the world's first fully electric ride-on cut and collect mower.

Numbers aside, it was clear that many exhibitors were, of course, focused as much on the quality of visitors who attended – and IOG SALTEX did not let them down.

Nick Darking, Sales Manager at Charterhouse Turf Machinery, led the plaudits: “We’ve seen a good quality of visitors, ranging from local authorities, schools and colleges to golf clubs. There’s been a lot of interest in our new products, and we’ve seen an increase in the level of enquiries for our synthetic surface maintenance equipment.”

Ian Howard, Managing Director of Dennis/Sisis, added: “Fantastic! We’ve had a great response. We’ve seen a lot of dedicated Sisis customers and we’ve had some very complimentary comments. IOG SALTEX was particularly critical for us this year and I’m pleased to say that we’ve seen visitors from local authorities as well as bowling, cricket and tennis clubs – a good variety. We’ve seen some overseas visitors as well, with good export potential.”

And Greenmech was celebrating the success of its new Quad-Chip/-Trak wood chipper, which was pronounced as the winner of the EDGE (Expo Demo Green Europe) Product Innovation Award. This will now go forward to be judged internationally with the overall winners.

Continuing the awards theme, the IOG SALTEX Stand Awards were presented:

[] Stands up to 75 m2

Gold – CED

Silver – Hitachi Power Tools (UK)

Bronze – R C Smith.

] Stands 76- 99 m2

Gold – Toro Consumer Equipment

Silver – Barrus

Bronze – Autoguide Equipment.

] Stands 100-149m2

Gold – Sodexo

Silver – Autoguide Equipment

Bronze – Vitax Supaturf.

] Stands 150-199 m2

Gold – Toro Turf Equipment

Silver – SCH Supplies

Bronze – Etesia UK.

] Stands 200-299 m2

Gold – Honda UK

Silver – Amazone

Bronze – Dennis Howardson

Highly commended certificates – Charterhouse Turf Machinery and FGM Claymore.

[] Stands 300-399 m2

Gold – Wiedenmann UK

Silver – Fleet Line Markers

Bronze – Sanli UK.

] Stands 400 m2 and above

Gold – Wicksteed Leisure

Silver – Ransomes Jacobsen

Bronze – John Deere.

The football Playing Surfaces Committee's Conference and lunch also included the presentation of the Premier League and Football League Groundsman of the Year Awards:

[] Manchester City's Lee Jackson won the Premiership Award

[] Ewan Hunter, Nottingham Forest, won the Championship Award;

[] League One's trophy was won by David Mitchell of Carlisle United; and

[] Chesterfield's Anthony Haywood won the League Two Award.

With a busy programme of outdoor live demonstrations and special feature areas including the BTS-organised World of Arb, the Polaris 4 x 4 off-road course and the Education Zone (embracing the Sports Turf Skills Village), visitors could also tap into an equalled fount of education and learning, including the free seminar programme.

The comments by one visitor - Tony Bolton, Head Gardener at Ackergill Tower – summed up the mood of delegates to the education programme. Tony, who travelled all the way from Caithness in Scotland, commented:

"I attended a number of seminars and all were excellent. I also spent some time in the Skills Village, including the demonstration on mower safety given by Ransomes Jacobsen. These were fantastic sessions. Grounds staff and gardeners alike are missing out on a wonderful learning experience and wealth of knowledge from industry experts at these seminars and demonstrations - especially in the back-to-basics skills village".

Back out on the showground it continued to be a case of 'busy, busy, busy', as Chris Harris, Managing Director of TYM Tractors UK, confirmed: "The traffic flow of visitors has been greater than expected and has led to more positive leads and business that we had anticipated."

And the visitor 'quality' theme continued with Rob Norton, Managing Director of Artificial Grass Maintenance. "We've seen some good quality visitors," he said. "Interestingly, we've had quite a few positive enquiries from councils and local authorities, which somewhat bucks the trend of local authorities not having any money to spend. We've had such a good show that we've already booked for next year and have taken more space."

IOG SALTEX 2012 (www.iogsaltex.co.uk) will be held on September 4-6 at Windsor Racecourse, Berks, and will embrace fine turf and sports surfaces, turf maintenance equipment, children's outdoor play and safety surfacing, landscaping, contractors, commercial vehicles, outdoor leisure and facilities management, as well as software and security equipment. The show is attended by open space management professionals and contractors – from groundsmen and greenkeepers through to play officers, architects, designers and surveyors as well as local authority and outdoor leisure facility managers.