

Kubota extended its tractor range into the 130–170hp recently with the new M7001 series. **Jane Carley** finds out how a contractor is getting on with the flagship M7171.

Contractor takes plunge with new tractor model



> On jobs such as laying tracks, the set speeds mean road planings are distributed evenly by the spreading bar
>
> JAMES JOLLIFFE

Taking on a newly-launched tractor always brings an element of risk, particularly for a contractor, who is very much working in public and can afford little downtime.

James Jolliffe's purchase of two new Kubota M7171s appears to be a leap of faith, but there is no doubt he has done his homework.

He says: "We are based half a mile from Kubota dealer George Brown, and have a number of other Kubota machines in our fleet, including excavators and compact tractors, so we know we can rely on the back-up.

"When Browns lost the franchise for our previous mainline brand, Valtra, we started thinking about a Kubota replacement."

Determined not to go in blind, Mr Joliffe and his foreman Ben Farnell took a trip to see the M7001 series prototype working in Germany.

Mr Jolliffe says: "It was almost the finished product and we were so impressed I ordered a pair of 170hp M7171s for summer 2015. There were delays with the delivery, but Browns honoured the trade-in for the Valtras and we took them in March."

Services

Mr Jolliffe runs a specialist contracting business, offering niche services for farms, equestrian establishments and large properties, ranging from hedgecutting and fencing to laying tracks, drainage and ditching.

Work is mainly close to his base in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, but one-off jobs can take his team as far as Gloucestershire and Northamptonshire, with plenty of road travel.

He says: "Our busiest time is from September to February and one tractor can be taken up with hedgecutting for 10-12 hours a day in that period.

"The other is used for moving materials and fencing, with a Quickfencer mounted on a fore-end loader, although we will run two hedgecutters together if need be."

Given the workload intensity, another major selling point was Kubota's five-year warranty, which Mr Jolliffe has topped up to 5,000 hours from the standard 3,000.

He says: "We do not want to face big repair bills or have a tractor out of action. We would normally run them for 5,000 hours, but may trade these in at 4,500 hours so the dealer can sell them with the balance of the warranty and boost resale value.

"Residuals are one area of concern with the M7171 being such a new tractor, as there is always more demand for upgraded versions. Kubota has reassured us any upgrades made in the first 18 months will be applied to our tractors and we have already had a couple of software updates."

The M7171s have been specified with front linkage and pto to allow a heavy duty Spearhead front flail to be fitted and work in conjunction with a McConnel telescopic reach arm if required to cut grass margins and hedges at the same time.

Loader brackets

Both tractors are fitted with loader brackets to allow the Kubota loader to be swapped between them and even out working hours.

One departure from the mechanical transmission used on the Valtras



Good balance, a solid back-end and plenty of lift capacity are among the qualities praised.

