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GROUND CONTROL

THE MAGAZINE OF HITACHI CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY (EUROPE) NV

HITACHI



WORKING TO THE HIGHEST STANDARD

GROUND CONTROL

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ISSUE 4, SUMMER 2006

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HITACHI NEWS

ALL OVER THE WORLD, WE'RE WORKING TO HELP YOU KEEP WORKING. HERE'S A SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE LATEST STORIES WHERE HITACHI IS MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

IMPRESSIVE MARKS REACHED BY HCME

The relative success of a business may be represented by its annual cycle of growth and development. This is invariably measured in financial and statistical terms for ease of reference by management, investors and other stakeholders.

There is no doubt that the rapid expansion of Hitachi Construction Machinery (Europe) NV (HCME) will be viewed favourably by all concerned. It is no coincidence that the Japanese construction giant has announced the opening of its extension to the existing factory in Amsterdam (see P.30-31).

It has also recorded two other impressive landmarks. The 10,000th Hitachi Zaxis excavator has been assembled in Amsterdam and the 15,000th Hitachi mini-excavator has rolled off the production in Oosterhout.

The manufacture of Hitachi Zaxis excavators began at HCME's new factory in Amsterdam in January 2003. The 5,000th machine was assembled in December 2004 with the 10,000 mark eclipsed on 5 May this year – impressive statistics for such a competitive sector of the construction industry.

The significance of machine number 10,000 was not lost on the dignitaries who were invited to a special ceremony to mark this accolade in HCME's history. It was the latest in a long line of ZX210s – the best selling Hitachi Zaxis excavator in Europe.

The production of the 15,000th mini-excavator was achieved on 24 March when an Hitachi Zaxis ZX18 was completed on schedule. This is a notable milestone considering that HCME only moved to the Oosterhout site in 1989. Today, the factory is producing between six and seven Hitachi Zaxis mini-excavators per day.

The arrival of the new Hitachi Zaxis short tail models has already proved a popular extension to the range. 2006 will see this line-up expand and hopefully allow HCME to supply its next 5,000 mini-excavators in record time as it seeks to double the current level of production.



The Amsterdam factory is now working towards the 15,000th machine landmark



Another new mini-excavator is close to rolling off the production line in Oosterhout

SED AWARDS HITACHI SUMITOMO FOR EXCELLENCE

SED is the UK's national event for the construction industry. This year the well-attended exhibition was held at Rockingham Motor Speedway in Northamptonshire.

The distributor of Hitachi Sumitomo cranes, NRC, used the event as the platform to launch the Hitachi Sumitomo SCX800-2HD. The 80-tonne hydraulic crawler crane was honoured with the exhibition's Award for Excellence in the cranes and access division.

The awards were presented to the most innovative new products introduced to the UK market during the past year. Each category was judged by an independent panel of industry experts.

"The awards are considered to be an accolade to the very best in plant, construction machinery, support products and applications," says Peter Van Der Staaij from HCME's International Sales Division.

"This is a great achievement for Hitachi Sumitomo. The SCX800-2HD has a number of improved features, including a heavy-duty boom, a new hydraulic counterweight removal system and the latest Hitachi Sumitomo moment limiter. The model has been very well received by the UK market and across Europe."



HITACHI

Hitachi Sumitomo collects an Award for Excellence in the UK



Paul Burger hands over the two ZX210LCs to John Henry, Chairman of Paul John Construction Ltd.

30th ANNIVERSARY EXCAVATOR

Paul John Construction Ltd (PJC) celebrated its 30th anniversary with a special gift to the company. Two new Hitachi excavators were unveiled at its office in Leicestershire, England by Paul Burger, General Manager International Sales for Hitachi Construction Machinery (Europe) NV. Mr Burger presented the machines to John Henry, Chairman of Paul John Construction Ltd during a visit to the UK.

The new Hitachi Zaxis ZX210 excavators with a special commemorative paint finish were purchased from the UK distributor HM Plant. "We have worked closely alongside HM Plant and Hitachi Construction Machinery over the past 30 years," commented Andrew Cartridge, Health & Safety Manager of PJC. "We were therefore delighted that Paul was able to visit us as part of our birthday celebrations.

"We feel that trading successfully over three decades during some difficult times within the building industry is a great achievement. Our new equipment is state-of-the-art and it will be an excellent platform from which to launch the company into the next 30 years."



IMAGE: WWW.JOOPKOPMANSCHAP.COM

A unique concept – a crawler railway crane in the Netherlands!

POWER ON THE RAILS

A mobile crane with a railway carriage is a relatively normal phenomenon. However, a crawler railway crane has never been used in The Netherlands – until now.

The unique ZX225US zero tail swing machine has been delivered to Rene Prinsen Spoorwegmateriaal (RPS) in Woudenberg. The base model was manufactured by Hitachi Construction Machinery, with the undercarriage assembled by Carl van Tetering of Steenberg.

RPS specialises in working with materials on the railways. This includes laying rails on concrete and recycling sleepers.

The overall design of the ZX225US provides a very high lifting capacity for such a compact unit. Its weight is more than 27 tonnes and its tracks are 2.8m wide.

The tracks can be hydraulically extended to a width of 3.5m and if necessary just on one side. They can also be adjusted to a height of 40cm above the rail bed to allow the operator to manoeuvre over signal boxes.

The excavator has many other modifications that meet the strict requirements of NS, the Dutch railway organisation. These include rubber blocks that have been fitted to the plates between the cams and the Total Moment Indication system for load limiting.

NEWS

ZAXIS FINANCE IN THE NORDICS

GROUND CONTROL IS PLEASED TO REPORT THAT THE SERVICE OFFERED BY ZAXIS FINANCE IS CONTINUING TO UNDERGO RAPID GROWTH AND EXPANSION. IT HAS NOW ALSO BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO HITACHI CUSTOMERS IN THE NORDIC STATES

Zaxis Finance offers flexible financial solutions to help customers with the acquisition of Hitachi construction equipment. The one-stop shop approach adopted by Zaxis Finance is tailored to meet the all-inclusive needs of the European construction industry.

"After successfully offering innovative financial solutions to Hitachi customers in the rest of Europe, it was time to roll out our financial programme in the Nordics," explains Thomas Bohlin, the Zaxis Finance Sales Manager for this region.

"This was particularly important as Hitachi is the market leader in the mid-range excavator sector in these markets. Finland is now up and running, with some successful deals already closed. The rest of the Nordics will follow in the third quarter of this year.

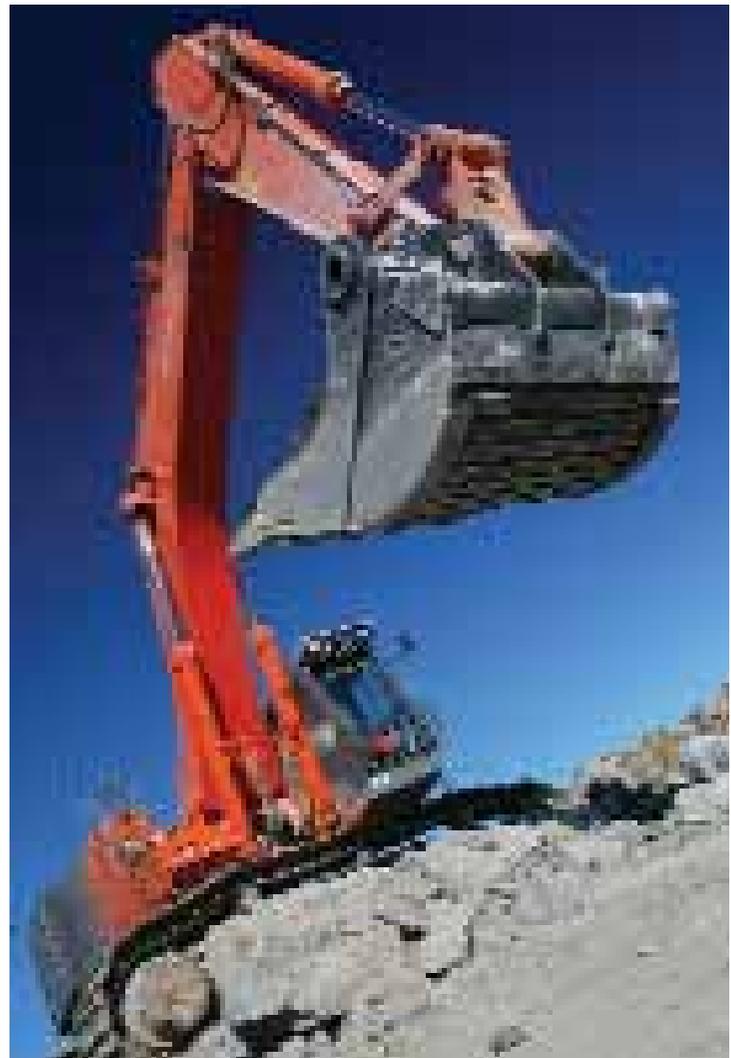
"We are already in the process of setting up dedicated financial units. If we measure the likely success of Zaxis Finance based on results from the rest of Europe, then we should have absolutely no problem in adding value to the business of Hitachi customers in the Nordics."

If you would like to know more about Zaxis Finance in the Nordics, then please telephone one of the following national contacts:

Denmark:	Peter Englev	+45 (0) 44700716
Finland:	Ilka Hietala	+358 9 22850820
Norway:	Rune Hall-Henriksen	+47 98280089
Sweden:	Ola Mellberg	+46 (0) 8 7810738

Alternatively, please visit www.hcme.com and access the FINANCIAL SERVICES section (under PARTS & SERVICE).

ZAXIS FINANCE



Customers in the Nordics, such as this one in Norway, are set to benefit from the growth of Zaxis Finance

SINGING IN THE RAIN



Unlike the well-known song, most people do not feel like singing in the rain! However, Hitachi has a useful new item of merchandise for those who wish to put a silver lining on the next rain cloud that comes their way.

As we move from the summer season into autumn in Europe, the likelihood of rain will inevitably increase. The weather – like Hitachi – is a popular topic of conversation in every country. However, at least Hitachi is reliable, which is more than can be said about the weather!

With this in mind, Hitachi has a special offer that will help to take the winter blues away. The silver grey umbrella, with the distinctive black Hitachi logo, offers reliable protection from the elements at a specially reduced price of EURO 9.95 (normally EURO 12.95).

To purchase this umbrella, please visit www.hcme.com and click on the link for WEBSHOP, then enter the gift site under PRODUCTS. You can find the umbrella under OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT along with a full range of other Hitachi merchandise. To place an order, follow the simple instructions for payment and delivery.

EURO 9.95* including VAT

* Price valid from 01-09-2006 until 31-12-2006 or as long as stock lasts.

Order online at www.hcme.com

PROMOTION OF HITACHI TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

THE SECOND ISSUE OF *GROUND CONTROL* (SUMMER 2005) FEATURED A LOOK AT THE WORLD OF HITACHI ON A GRAND CORPORATE SCALE. AS WELL AS BEING A LEADING MANUFACTURER OF CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT, HITACHI IS ALSO RENOWNED FOR BEING THE LARGEST ELECTRONICS AND ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURER ON THE PLANET

The brand is probably most strongly associated with its range of consumer electrical goods. However, Hitachi also incorporates high technology power generators, innovative transport systems and cutting-edge IT solutions into its vast product range.

Hitachi Europe Limited (HEL) was formed in 1982 and is responsible for sales throughout the continent and the marketing of these products from 11 business segments. As a leader in IT, power and industrial systems, and electronic devices, Hitachi can help to transform lives via the benefits associated with its products and services.

This is the focus of HEL's latest European brand campaign. The television, print media and online advertising have been designed to communicate this message using different parts of the business – including construction machinery.

The prime-time television advertising was scheduled in the UK, France and Spain, with the press advertisements also being placed in Germany. Each advertisement takes a specific technology and demonstrates how it benefits people in real life.

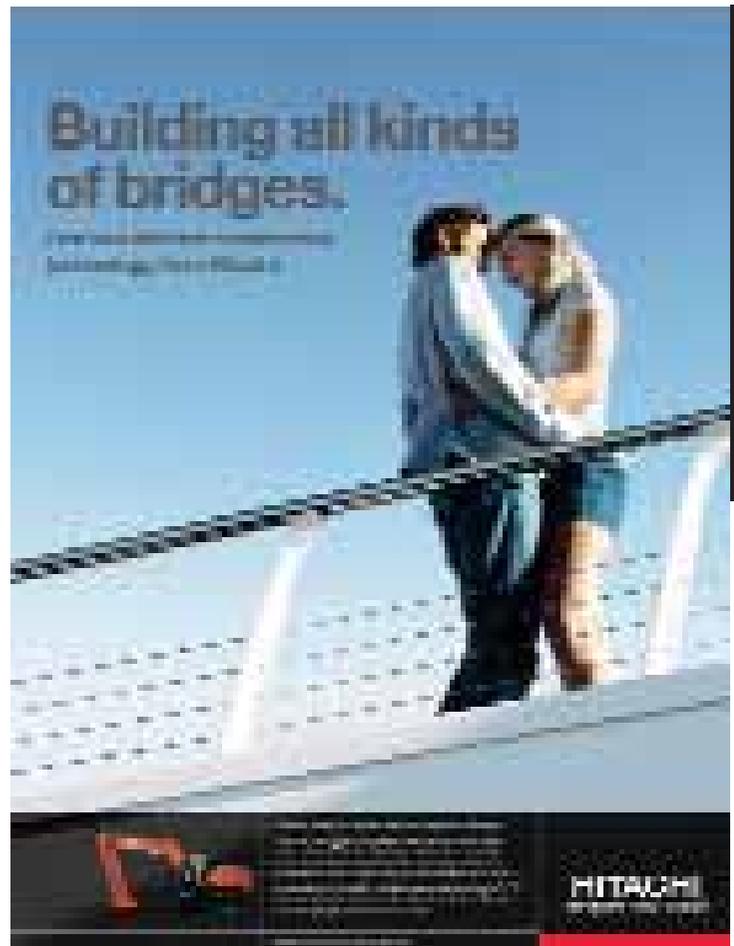
Some examples are shown on this page, including how excavators allow superior and faster building of homes and bridges.

Hitachi has also secured a sponsorship deal for Sky's World Cinema strand until December 2006. More than five million homes are now signed up to Sky Movies and the sponsorship means that Hitachi will reach more of its target market of 25-55-year-old business decision makers.

HEL's Head of Brand and Communications, Mark Wilkin, comments: "The objective of the overall brand campaign is to build a greater understanding of our capabilities – especially our business to business credentials. Not many people realise that we derive 80 per cent of our revenues from business to business activities.

"We are using Hitachi consumer electronics products to demonstrate some of our strengths, for example in innovation and stylish design. The campaign continues to showcase our track record in these areas while introducing further areas of expertise. These may currently have low awareness despite the benefits they bring to society."

A SELECTION OF THE EUROPEAN PRESS ADVERTISEMENTS



HITACHI



IT'S A LONG WAY FROM TIPPERARY

DURING THE 20TH CENTURY MANY IRISH PEOPLE EMIGRATED. THEY LEFT THEIR COUNTRY BEHIND IN SEARCH OF A BETTER LIFE FOR THEIR FAMILIES. A CLASSIC EXAMPLE IS THE CAREY FAMILY FROM COUNTY TIPPERARY IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND. SINCE ARRIVING IN ENGLAND, THE FAMILY HAS SUCCESSFULLY ESTABLISHED ITSELF IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY. *GROUND CONTROL* VISITED SOME OF ITS JOB SITES TO FIND OUT HOW THE BUSINESS HAS DEVELOPED OVER THE YEARS. TO CONTRADICT THE OLD IRISH FOLK SONG, IT'S A LONG WAY FROM TIPPERARY...

The Carey Group is a family business that was set up over 35 years ago. The three brothers, Pat, John and Tom, all worked on job sites before they decided to set up their own company. They are still heavily involved in the day-to-day running of operations and other members of the family have also been recruited.

John Carey is the Managing Director of the company. Pat and Tom are also both directors. All three work closely together to ensure that the Carey Group runs smoothly and continues to grow.

Originally, the Carey Group only had one small office. This was located in North West London. As it continued to expand, it relocated to Stonebridge Park – a great location on the North Circular (one of the main road roads in London). The Carey Group now operates from its headquarters in Wembley with another office at Milton Keynes in Northamptonshire.

Having established itself in England, the decision was made six years ago to return to the family's roots. In 2000, it opened its Irish division. This is now managed from the office based at Dardistown, Cloughran in County Dublin. Although the company now has facilities in Ireland, John, Pat and Tom have remained in England.

Originally involved in construction, The Carey Group now embraces four key services: construction, civil engineering, demolition and plant hire. This allows it to provide customers with the capability of undertaking either all aspects or just certain elements of a project. Its demolition arm trades under a separate name, TE Scudder Ltd.

The four divisions are strengthened by the Group's sustained skilled labour force – over 500 at the last count – and its up-to-date plant operation. The direct control and management of these resources has ultimately led to the success and solid growth of the company.

Plant Director Sean O'Donnell is keen to highlight Carey's close relationship with UK dealer HM Plant. "HM Plant has always been good to us," explains Sean. "This job moves so fast that it is important to pick up the phone and receive a high level of service. HM Plant has always provided this and that is why we have remained loyal to them."

BELOW: TWO OF THE CAREY GROUP'S ZX210LCs AT DIFFERENT JOB SITES IN COUNTY KILDARE. OPPOSITE: THE 10,000TH MACHINE FROM AMSTERDAM AT WORK IN BALLYMUN.





HITACHI

CUSTOMER





HITACHI

“Also, the quality of Hitachi construction equipment cannot be matched. The majority of our plant fleet is Hitachi. All of the machines that are working in Ireland are Hitachi and we are always placing orders for new recruits.”

The Carey Group has a machine replacement policy of five years. So, the condition of each excavator is monitored on a regular basis. One of its Hitachi Zaxis machines has already clocked up over 10,000 hours and has only had to have routine service inspections. All used machines are then traded back to HM Plant.

Safety is paramount as Sean explains. “The Hitachi Zaxis models meet all health and safety guidelines,” Sean continues. “This is another reason why the company stays loyal to the Hitachi brand. HM Plant also provides a full back-up service. You don’t have to go anywhere else for parts, after-sales or product support.” A slightly different policy is instigated in Ireland. Parts are bought from HM Plant’s sub-dealer TBF Thompson. This makes life easier for all concerned. The Irish division also looks after its own product support services – apart from the diagnostics.

The Carey Group has many mid-range Hitachi excavators in its fleet. One of these – a ZX210LC – was the 10,000th machine to roll out of Hitachi Construction Machinery (Europe) NV’s factory in Amsterdam (see P. 4). The ZX210LC is helping to breathe life into Ballymun. The district, located just outside Dublin, is famous for a series of high-rise flats that were built in the 1960s. The company has been working on this site for five years. It was the second contract to be won in the country after the Irish division was set up. Other successful tender processes have followed since this original deal in February 2001.

While on-site, the Carey Group brand appears everywhere. The distinctive blue and yellow logo is derived from the traditional colours of County Tipperary. There are Carey-branded vans, lorries and cars – as well as the construction equipment – all in operation. It also has mini-buses to transport its site workers to and from work and between jobs.

“The work at Ballymun is a big contract for us in Ireland,” says Plant Manager (Ireland) Donal Gray. “We only have two machines working on this particular phase, but over the past five years we have had quite a few other Hitachi models on-site. The ZX210LC and ZX70 are involved in drainage work and the realignment of 6km of roads and associated utilities.”

Ballymun Regeneration Ltd was set up by Dublin City Council DCC in 1997 to plan and implement a regeneration programme. The end result will be a new town with improved facilities for 30,000 people. In total, 13 blocks of flats will be demolished and nearly 5,000 new homes will be built.

Another of the Carey Group’s ZX210LCs was working on a second site in County Kildare, one hour from Dublin. Once again, it is helping to lay a new drainage system and build an access road for an impressive new housing development. One of its wheeled excavators, a ZX130W, was also working on a third site nearby. This was a new bypass road for the town of Naas.

In total, the Carey Group normally has at least 20 projects operating at any one time. Sites in England are spread throughout the country and include Huntingdon, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Middlesbrough and Plymouth. Sean and his team of contracts managers in the UK work very closely with the Irish office to ensure that all machines are in the correct location. The Carey Group moves machines between the two countries. This is a system that appears to be working well thanks to a regular ferry timetable. The professional attitude and management of the company also ensures that any such movements are as seamless as possible.

Family-run businesses are not uncommon in the construction industry. Many are passed down from generation to generation. However, the Carey Group has taken this one step further. The relationships it forms with its employees and suppliers are based on a similar footing to those found within an average family unit.

Loyalty and trust is instilled in all parties. Everyone from the operators to senior management and directors have a small piece of the Carey Group in their blood. It appears that this – combined with the quality and reliability of the Hitachi product – has been the recipe to its hard-earned success.

ABOVE LEFT: ONE OF THE CAREY GROUP’S ZX130Ws ON THE NAAS BYPASS.
ABOVE RIGHT: THE COMPANY HAS BEEN ON-SITE IN BALLYMUN SINCE 2001.
BELOW: THE COLOURS OF THE CAREY GROUP’S LOGO ARE DERIVED FROM THE TRADITIONAL COLOURS OF COUNTY TIPPERARY.





SWISS FAMILY PROBST

SWITZERLAND IS A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY. STUNNING ALPINE SLOPES SWEEP DOWN TO PICTURESQUE LAKELAND VISTAS. IT IS IDYLIC TERRITORY FOR TOURISTS AND ADVENTURE SPORTS ENTHUSIASTS ALIKE. HOWEVER, IT IS ALSO THE SETTING FOR THE RESURGENCE OF HITACHI CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY THANKS TO THE HARD WORK AND LOYALTY OF PROBST MAVEG. *GROUND CONTROL* INVESTIGATES THE SECRETS BEHIND THE NATIONAL HITACHI DEALER'S SUCCESS STORY

The quality of Swiss craftsmanship is renowned around the world. The country's precise watches and gorgeous chocolate are just two examples of the pride that its people take in their work. The countryside is unspoilt and even urban areas are remarkable for their general cleanliness. All of these attributes are apparent when visiting the nation's official Hitachi distributor for the first time.

Jean-Marc Probst is the Managing Director of Probst Maveg. He is friendly, outgoing and immaculately dressed, setting the scene for a tour of the company's impressive facilities. As it unfolds, Jean-Marc's attention to detail, shrewd business manner and enthusiasm for the Hitachi brand become clear.

Probst Maveg is a subsidiary of Probst Group Holding. Among the other companies directed by Jean-Marc and his management team are Prowimat and Prodimat, the respective Hitachi dealers in the south east and north east of France. However, Probst Maveg accounts for just over 70 per cent of the group's turnover and one third of this is generated by Hitachi sales.

The company's roots date back to 1945, when Maveg was founded after the end of World War II. Jean-Marc's father Eric then established Eric Probst Baumaschinen in 1960. Notz Baumaschinen AG became the official Hitachi importer for Switzerland on 19 May 1983. The merger of Maveg and Notz created Maveg Notz Baumaschinen AG in 1994. Finally, Probst Maveg AG emerged after a takeover in 1999 when Jean-Marc took over the reins of the business.

The teamwork and friendly manner associated with a family-run company are still evident seven years later. "The structure of Probst Maveg's management team is strong," says Jean-Marc. "I am pleased to report that the company is performing well and confidence is high among the ranks.

"We have retained a special affinity to Hitachi Construction Machinery and its national traditions. The key word in Japan is respect. The Japanese have a different mentality. I admire their respect for each other and themselves. This includes work, where they respect their jobs and the hierarchy of management. This results in

attention to detail and the quality of manufactured products.

"Probst Maveg has a loyal supplier in Hitachi for the Swiss market. This has been the main reason why we have stayed together. It was the correct decision and we are all happy with the progress that has been made. I am proud to be with Hitachi and believe in what they are doing."

Today, there are 76 employees and eight apprentices at Probst Maveg. The company places particular emphasis on its trainees as they hold the key to the future.

There are four locations in Probst Maveg's Swiss network, which take the different languages and sales areas into account. Crissier is the company's original head office in the French-speaking region, with Embrach and Osogna representing the needs of the German and Italian-speaking areas respectively. However, Probst Maveg's biggest office is in Lyss, which falls between the French and German-speaking regions.

The biggest sector in the Swiss construction industry is the mini-excavator market, with Hitachi holding a 5.1% share. However, Hitachi enjoys a 7.7% market share in the over six-tonne category, which increases to 9.4% for machines over 20 tonnes.

"There are only seven million people living in Switzerland, so it is a relatively small market," says Jean-Marc. "Our best selling model is the ZX50U-2, which has been a useful addition to the range.

"Probst Maveg shares the same goal as Hitachi Construction Machinery (Europe) NV – to double its turnover in the next five years. By achieving this, we can reach a 15% market share. This is possible with the expansion and development of the Hitachi product range."

Hitachi was the number one mid-range excavator brand in Switzerland in 1989-90. Probst Maveg's position in the market fell during the Fiat-Hitachi years, but it is now driving forward once again. The aim is to reach the top position over the next few years and this is possible thanks to the competitive advantage now presented by Hitachi.

"The new Zaxis-3 series is a revelation," continues Jean-Marc. "We are confident



ABOVE: JEAN-MARC PROBST, THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PROBST MAVEG. ABOVE LEFT: ANOTHER NEW ZAXIS LEAVES PROBST MAVEG'S DEPOT IN LYSS. BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT: PROBST MAVEG'S TECHNICIANS HARD AT WORK IN THE COMPANY'S IMPRESSIVE FACILITIES.



DEALER



ABOVE LEFT: ALL EXCAVATORS IN SWITZERLAND ARE FITTED WITH DIESEL PARTICLE FILTER SYSTEMS. ABOVE RIGHT: PARTS DELIVERIES ARE AFFECTED BY SWITZERLAND'S NON-MEMBERSHIP OF THE EU.

that operators will like the machines when they test them. The better performance – through features such as the advanced hydraulic system – will hopefully continue to give us the edge over the competition.

“The new mid-range excavators will supersede our best selling models, such as the ZX225US. We have supplied this machine for various applications. There are no dominant sectors in the Swiss market and our customers cover a broad range of construction activities.

“No construction companies have a fleet of more than 15 excavators. Rental companies only deal in small numbers with machines of less than 30 tonnes. Most customers wish to retain their own corporate identities. Therefore, they choose to buy rather than to hire machines and over 70% are specially painted before delivery.”

Parts and service are obviously big priorities for Probst Maveg. A three or five-year “full service” agreement is available for Hitachi customers. This is a reflection of the confidence that the dealer and its customers retain in the Hitachi brand.

“We don’t really have any problems with after-sales,” says Jean-Marc. “Everything is running smoothly and we are looking forward to new technology arising from ongoing research and development. This is an important consideration in the Swiss market and we believe that we are pioneers in many areas.”

A good example is that all excavators in Switzerland are fitted with diesel particle filter systems. This ensures that they are compliant with the country’s special regulations on emissions.

Another characteristic of the Swiss market is the nation’s non-membership of the EU. This means that parts deliveries need an extra day to reach Probst Maveg due to customs control.

So, Swiss Hitachi owners would normally have to wait two days for an urgent parts delivery rather than the normal 24-hour turnaround time for EU countries. However, Probst Maveg provides an invaluable service to avoid any unnecessary delay by holding a huge stock of 48,000 parts items.

Probst Maveg’s Marketing Manager Christoph Spahni works closely with Jean-Marc and National Sales Manager Roger Widmer to ensure that the dealer’s

promotional activities are integrated with sales. A good example occurred in 2004 when six excavators, three minis and a wheel loader were taken on a “roadshow” to be tested by operators on selected job sites.

Another successful promotion on mini-excavators centred on customers being given a free supply of fuel for one year. Twenty additional machines were sold within a period of one month as a result of this joint promotion with Shell.

Probst Maveg’s position in the Swiss market has focused on the following slogan for the past decade: “The quality remains when the price is forgotten.” This is a quotation by Frederick Henry Royce of Rolls Royce. It also forms the rationale behind Probst Maveg’s sales strategy.

This message comes back to the quality associated with Swiss products and the respect philosophy exhibited by Japanese companies. Jean-Marc has united these values and promoted his own approach throughout every aspect of Probst Maveg’s business.

“The first priority is our customers,” he explains. “Without them, we have nothing. So, more than anything, the customer is always right.

“Our employees are the second priority. We try to make them feel part of the team and retain their services on a long-term basis.

“Number three is the suppliers. They are of course important to the business. Loyalty is the key, as with our Hitachi relationship.

“And last, but certainly not least, is the shareholders. The reason for doing business is to make money.”

As Jean-Marc points out, not every company follows this order of priority in its business strategy. Some corporate giants are more concerned with making money than looking after their customers.

To summarise, he quoted Henry Ford to emphasise his own thought process: “It’s not me that pays your salary, it’s the customers.”



HITACHI

PHILOSOPHY BECOMES A REALITY

PROBST MAVEG'S BUSINESS STRATEGY IS OF COURSE BEST INTERPRETED IN THE REALITY OF A JOBSITE. SO, *GROUND CONTROL* TRAVELLED FROM LYSS TO ARVIGO, NEAR THE DEALER'S OSOGNA DEPOT, TO PUT IT TO THE TEST.

This is the setting for a spectacular quarry managed by Alfredo Polti. Probst Maveg's highly valued customer bought two ZX500LCHs for general usage in 2004. The machines endure the toughest working conditions, but this is where Hitachi excavators excel.

There is a strong relationship between Probst Maveg's Regional Sales Manager for the Ticino and Graubünden areas, David Frapolli, and Alfredo Polti's Director, Giovanni Polti. David has worked alongside the Polti family for 15 years and declares that his "heart is beating for Hitachi".

It is this type of passion which makes a difference to Giovanni Polti as well as Probst Maveg's other customers. "Our company has an excellent working relationship with Jean-Marc Probst and the rest of his team. I am also delighted with the two Hitachi machines.

"I have been to visit the impressive facilities at the Hitachi Construction Machinery (Europe) NV headquarters in Amsterdam. This helped me to understand how much product support can be offered to my company if required."

David is also keen to point out how well the two large excavators have performed. "There are some difficult tasks undertaken by these machines. However, they have proved to be solid acquisitions which have exceeded expectations. We aim to prioritise Alfredo Polti and our other VIP customers to ensure that they receive a fast and professional service at all times."

LEFT: ALFREDO POLTI'S ZX500LCHs ENDURE THE TOUGHEST WORKING CONDITIONS. ABOVE: DAVID FRAPOLLI (LEFT) AND GIOVANNI POLTI ENJOY A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP.

REACHING FOR THE SKY

POWER, PERFORMANCE AND DURABILITY ARE QUALITIES THAT ARE NORMALLY ASSOCIATED WITH ALL HITACHI PRODUCTS. HOWEVER, AT THIS JOB SITE IN THE UK, THESE SAME QUALITIES COULD ALSO BE USED TO DESCRIBE THE CUSTOMER

Rugby union is one of the toughest field sports. To reach the top, teams need to display power, speed, versatility and above all strength. It is really a true test for any sportsman.

When the Exeter Chiefs club needed a contractor to build its new stadium at Sandy Park Farm, it found a local construction company with similar attributes to itself – Dean and Dyball.

The regional contractor was founded in 1970 when John Dean and Peter Dyball created a construction business based in the New Forest, Hampshire. Thirty-six years later, the firm has come a long way, employing more than 1,000 people through six regional offices. These are spread across southern England, the Midlands and Wales.

Naturally Dean and Dyball relies heavily on its plant equipment and puts its faith in Hitachi. When the firm was looking for lifting equipment, it turned to the Hitachi Sumitomo range and more specifically the SCX700.

Dean and Dyball's SCX700 is currently being used to erect a cable-tensioned bridge that will span the A379 dual-carriageway. This will allow spectators to cross from the car park to the stadium. It will be 108 metres long, three metres wide and 40 metres at its highest point.

The bridge is constructed from nine steel frame sections that were delivered to the site on articulated lorries. The actual fabrication and installation of the bridge has been subcontracted to a specialist firm, Taylors, albeit Dean and Dyball has undertaken all the setting out, foundation and abutment works. It is also supplying the heavy lifting and excavation equipment.

Each section of the deck weighs nearly six tonnes. The subcontractor's staff will weld three of the sections together before the SCX700 then lifts this into position. The SCX700 is capable of lifting 70 tonnes and can even move this load around.

The date for completion is the beginning of August – nearly six weeks before the actual handover date – but it isn't just the deadline that is making the speed of operation so crucial. The busy A379 will be closed while the bridge sections are lifted into place. Consequently, one of Dean and Dyball's main priorities is to prevent as much disruption as possible.

Considering how impressed Dean and Dyball has been with Hitachi Sumitomo, it comes as no surprise that there are other Hitachi machines in the firm's fleet.

"In 2002 we bought two cranes, including an Hitachi Sumitomo SCX550," says Managing Director Chris Haworth. "When we were looking at a 70-tonne crane,

the performance and reliability of the SCX550 persuaded us to invest in Hitachi Sumitomo."

It's not just the management that is happy with the SCX700's performance. Dean and Dyball's operator, Kevin Beamin, is equally impressed with Hitachi Sumitomo.

"It's a fantastic machine to use," he explains. "It is extremely versatile and can be used on a wide range of jobs. The reliability has also been first class."

The crane arrives on-site in two parts on the back of two articulated lorries. "One major benefit of the SCX700 is that its tracks can be retracted into the body to make the overall width narrower and much more practical for transportation," he continues. "It makes it less expensive and faster to transport between sites."

There are many other details that make the SCX700 stand out. "Unlike many of its competitors, the Hitachi Sumitomo doesn't require the ballast to be removed before transportation," he continues. "The ballast also doesn't need to be increased to allow the crane to lift more. This again makes it faster, more practical and economical for transportation."

Dean and Dyball purchased the crane from the official authorised UK dealer, NRC. The Essex-based firm has been the sole UK distributor for Sumitomo since 1988.

"We supply all sizes of crane from five tonnes up to 400 tonnes," says NRC Managing Director Rod Abbott. "The SCX700 really is our most technologically advanced product. We're getting great feedback from all our customers. Mid-weight cranes, such as the SCX700, make up a large proportion of our business."

It seems that many firms are finding out what Dean and Dyball already knows. The Hitachi Sumitomo crane is a major asset for any construction team and gives its operators a product that always delivers top level performance.

"The Hitachi equipment is competitively priced, maintains a good resale value and is the driver's preference," confirms Chris Haworth. "All this means that we have a constant rolling programme of upgrading our Hitachi fleet, which also contains over 30 Zaxis excavators."

With the Sandy Park stadium looking set for completion on schedule, the Exeter Chiefs will have a fantastic new home ready for the first game of the season. By then, Dean and Dyball's SCX700 will be moving onto a new project. However, considering the character traits shared by both the crane and the rugby club, there can be few more fitting places for Hitachi Sumitomo's equipment to be seen in use than on this particular site.

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: THE SCX700 IS USED TO LIFT ONE SIX-TONNE SECTION. IT IS ALSO USEFUL FOR POURING CONCRETE. SITE MANAGER ROB ROUSE (LEFT) WITH OPERATOR KEVIN BEAMIN. DEAN AND DYBALL RELY ON POWER, PERFORMANCE AND DURABILITY



HITACHI



A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

THE LATEST RANGE OF WHEEL LOADERS FROM HITACHI GRABBED THE HEADLINES AT INTERMAT. SINCE THEN A NUMBER OF MACHINES HAVE BEEN SOLD ACROSS EUROPE. GROUND CONTROL VISITED GERMANY TO SEE ONE OF THE FIRST ZW220S AT WORK CLOSE TO THE FORESTS AT THÜRINGEN

The people in the eastern part of Germany have experienced many changes since the border that divided them from the west was removed. The Government is now investing heavily in the area to create a more unified country and prevent the younger generation from migrating away from the eastern towns and cities.

"In 1989 businesses such as this were given the freedom to expand into the eastern side of Germany," explains Wilfried Zollikofer, Director of wood processing company Zollikofer Holz. "We have been able to choose new locations for our operations. In some cases we have received funding to help establish new sites and purchase machinery and tools. We now have two sites in the east of the country and three in the west."

In contrast to most of other companies in this industry, Zollikofer Holz is a family business. Also the senior director Otto Zollikofer, who founded the business more than 40 years ago, is still hands-on in the day-to-day operations. He is mainly in charge of business in the western part of the country (Bad Wurzach, Kehl am Rhein).

The forests in Germany cover only 35 per cent of the country compared to the European average of 45 per cent. However relatively fast growth, and its intensive maintenance and use, results in ample stocks of high-quality wood. It is home to Europe's largest sawmill and has some of the world's most modern facilities in the wood products industry. The country also has an excellent infrastructure for transportation.

The growing demand for wood to be used as fuel and to make furniture means that Zollikofer Holz has to work around the clock to maximise output. "All of our sites work 24 hours a day, seven days a week," continues Mr Zollikofer. "Downtime means a loss in production and also earnings."

"The reliability of the machines that we operate is the key to ensuring that production doesn't stop. That is why we have purchased three of the new Hitachi ZW

wheel loaders. These are all ZW220s and each is working on a different one of our sites. In total we have 25 wheel loaders and these are the first Hitachi models to be added to the fleet."

Zollikofer Holz has a strong relationship with Kiesel, Germany's sole distributor of Hitachi Construction Machinery. "We only like to have one point of contact," continues Mr Zollikofer. "In this case for the last 25 years it has been sales manager Hubert Wall. He has looked after all of our equipment needs and this was the main reason for the latest purchase." Mr Zollikofer also feels that the new models have brought Hitachi Construction Machinery into line with its competitors and even surpassed them in some cases.

The ZW220 in Thüringen has 500 hours on the clock after four weeks. It is suited to this kind of work as it is so versatile and, due to its quick hitch connect system, can be fitted with a number of different attachments.

"As soon as you step up into the cab it is clear that these wheel loaders have been designed to make the operator's job easier," explains Mr Zollikofer. "The new hydraulic system has made handling easier and provides a greater feeling of control. This is perfectly complemented by its direct and exact steering."

"The Total Torque Control System also means that fuel consumption is reduced as the machine can be adjusted to suit the type of job. This is very important when they are working so many hours!"

"The new design of the cab provides the operator with excellent all-round visibility. The roll-back angle of the bucket ensures that they can see over the bigger buckets that are used for lightweight material. Some competitor models have had to fit cameras on the top of the cab to overcome this problem. These are only small modifications but they make a world of difference."

The two Zollikofer Holz sites in the new federal states of Thüringen and



HITACHI

JOB REPORT



**ABOVE: KIESEL'S SALES MANAGER, HUBERT WALL (RIGHT) VISITS MR ZOLLIKOFR ON SITE AT THÜRINGEN
BELOW: THE ZW220 HAD 500 HOURS ON THE CLOCK AFTER JUST FOUR WEEKS ON-SITE**



Brandenburg are shared with two other companies. They are all situated together in a "wood cluster". In all cases these are a sawmill and a factory that manufactures wood board. While on-site the synergy between the three businesses becomes clear.

Each site is located close to a forest area, such as Baden Württemberg, Thüringen and Brandenburg. The company has three separate areas of wood processing.

The sawmill supplies Zollikofer Holz with the bark from its logs. These are usually from spruce or fir trees. It then processes the bark to produce mulch. There is a facility on-site to screen the material to ensure it is of the highest quality. Once prepared, this goes through Zollikofer Holz's factory and is put into 50 or 60-litre bags. This is then distributed to the trade for sale to garden centres across Germany, Czech Republic, Austria and Switzerland.

In Thüringen alone the company produces 300 pallet loads a day. These hold between 50 and 70 bags – that is a lot of mulch! The busiest time of the year for this product is between March and June as people are preparing gardens for summer. The ZW220 is helping to transport the mulch from the screening machine to the packaging factory.

It also produces wood chips from logs (beech and spruce) that come straight from the forest. These are then sold on to the factory by weight or tonnage. The sawmill supplies the factory with its sawdust waste and the two products are combined to produce the wood panels (plywood and MDF). In Thüringen the ZW220 is involved in loading and carrying. It transports the material in the high-tilt bucket to large capacity trucks (with walking floors) and with a spar-gripper it also moves the big tree trunks to the chip facility. Occasionally it also piles the wood chips into huge mounds.

Finally, Zollikofer Holz recycles wood. This is brought to the site from up to 200km away. It is processed again and then supplied to the factory for fuel. It is also distributed elsewhere in Germany to fuel homes and other manufacturing plants. In Germany wood is becoming quite a popular source of energy and Zollikofer Holz recycles 600,000 tonnes a year.

Kiesel's Sales Manager Hubert Wall comments on the environment that the machines are working in. "This site is very dusty, especially when it is not raining!" he laughs. "I have to clean my car thoroughly after every visit and make sure that all windows are closed. Imagine how dusty the machine is after 24 hours. One of the new features is a reversible fan on the back of the wheel loader, which can be reversed by the operator to clean the radiators.

"I have also had these three models fitted with special rotating air filters, again to stop the dust being drawn in by the machine. We use L5 Rock Tyres with 250 per cent Profil. This is because the site is full of wood, nails and other scrap metal. These last up to five times longer!"

Kiesel is happy with the range of Hitachi wheel loaders that can now compete with all others in the market. "In the past I have sold many Hitachi excavators. Now that we have these new models I am sure that I can continue this success with the Hitachi wheel loaders."

As well as having a good relationship with Kiesel, Zollikofer Holz is also delighted with the excellent product support service that is provided by the dealer. It makes a point of constantly checking machines and visiting sites to make sure that they are still performing at their best. Zollikofer Holz also insists on a full service contract and this is something that is offered by Hitachi Construction Machinery.

As these are the first Hitachi wheel loaders for the team at Zollikofer Holz, it is difficult for them to compare the new models with the LX series. However, their versatility, reliability, performance, safety and comfort have not gone unnoticed.

With the price of wood fluctuating in Germany all the time, but generally on the increase, margins are constantly being monitored. It is hoped that the ZW models will help to increase profitability for Zollikofer Holz.

With production levels at an all-time high, a team of happy operators and demand for wood waste on the increase, Zollikofer Holz is already researching and planning the construction of new sites. Whether these are in the eastern or western side of the country, it is likely that more wood processing clusters will develop in the next few years. In the meantime, it is likely that further Hitachi wheel loaders will be added to the three ZW220s in order to promote the success and growth of the company.



HITACHI



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: LOGS ARE BROUGHT TO THE SITE FROM THE SURROUNDING FOREST AND PROCESSED INTO MULCH. THE SCREENED MULCH IS TAKEN TO THE ON-SITE FACILITY WHERE IT IS PUT INTO 50 OR 60-LITRE BAGS. ZOLLIKOFER HOLZ BAGS 300 PALLET-LOADS OF MULCH PER DAY.

JOB REPORT



COLD AT THE TOP

AS THE ZAXIS ZX670LCH-3 WAS BEING UNVEILED AT THE INTERMAT EXHIBITION IN PARIS (SEE P. 32-33), ONE OF THE NEW GENERATION OF LARGE HITACHI EXCAVATORS WAS ALREADY MAKING AN IMPACT ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD. *GROUND CONTROL* VISITED ICELAND – HOME TO THE FIRST EUROPEAN DELIVERY OF THE ZX670LCH-3 – TO WITNESS THE MACHINE AT WORK IN RATHER UNUSUAL SURROUNDINGS

Leaving Keflavik International Airport to travel towards Reykjavik, the amount of construction work on the island is immediately evident across an ever-changing landscape. Iceland is growing rapidly and it needs new housing and roads to keep up with the pace of development.

“Time is everything,” explains Sövlí Jónsson, one of the owners of Verktakar Magni ehf, a local construction company. “We must work to tight deadlines and the schedules for projects are always being shortened. However, competition for contracts is extremely high, so we must be able to complete the job within the specified time frame and to a high standard.”

Verktakar Magni’s guarantee to achieve these objectives is the frequent rotation of construction machinery. Each model is only used for a maximum of three years, before being sold or traded in for a new machine.

This has been Verktakar Magni’s policy since the company started ten years ago with just six employees. It has since grown almost ten-fold and during this period, Verktakar Magni was loyal to two Hitachi competitors. However, the introduction of the new Zaxis ZX670LCH-3 has changed this policy.

Sövlí compared the benefits and specification of the new excavator against the competition. He felt that Hitachi offered the most competitive package in terms of productivity and reliability. Within weeks, another customer – who had also been loyal to a rival manufacturer – ordered a second ZX670LCH-3.

It is already proving popular on its first job site. In fact, the operator is so at ease with the new machine that he was working inside the cab in his socks – with no shoes or boots!

“The Zaxis is working on a job that is usually undertaken by a smaller machine,” explains Sövlí. “The operator has found the ZX670LCH-3 to be so precise that it is capable of carrying out work that requires a high degree of accuracy. This is as a result of the greater control that is possible through the innovative new hydraulic system.

“The controls on the Zaxis make the operation of the machine extremely smooth. The tracks are relatively stable on the uneven surface of the lava rock on the job site. The machine’s larger capacity and enhanced performance also enable the work to be completed much more quickly than before.”





HITACHI





HITACHI

Verktakar Magni is one of four contractors working on projects within this area. It is at the halfway stage of the four-month project and it looks as if it will be the only company to complete its contract on time.

The job involves laying new roads and preparing the ground for housing close to a new aluminium factory – the third of its kind on an island with a population of only 300,000 people. Iceland’s exclusive use of pure energy is attracting industry and boosting the economy.

Only geo-thermal and hydro-electricity are used on the island, which means that energy is cost-effective and in plentiful supply. In addition to this, a growing tourism trade more than doubles Iceland’s population on an annual basis.

All of this means that the construction industry is booming. Sövlí verifies this fact when he states that the company already has work guaranteed for the next three years.

Iceland’s sole distributor for Hitachi Construction Machinery, Íshlutir ehf, is finding it difficult to keep up with its customers’ demands. 2005 was a record year for the dealer, when Hitachi was established as the market leader for mid-range excavators on the island.

However, Íshlutir has almost reached last year’s total in the first five months of 2006. There also seems to be an increased demand for larger excavators.

“It’s cold at the top,” jokes Íshlutir’s Managing Director Gunnar Björnsson – and he’s not referring to Iceland’s sub-zero temperatures. “We will not be popular with dealers who sell other construction machinery on the island. However, this is a competitive industry, so we must try to secure as many customers as possible.

“The only reason that we are not further increasing the market share for Hitachi is that we cannot import them fast enough. This is despite the fact that we have a fresh delivery every week from Amsterdam.”

The company’s premises are situated close to Reykjavik. This location is cost effective and allows easy access for the arrival of new machines. A shipment from Hitachi was due to arrive on the day of *Ground Control’s* visit. It was evident from the lack of stock at the dealer’s premises that it would be welcomed.

This is no surprise. Hitachi is in demand on the island because the Zaxis range is becoming renowned for performing better and more efficiently than its rivals on a wide range of job sites.

The other important factor is the effective service that Íshlutir provides to its customers. This is what sealed the deal with Sövlí for its first Hitachi excavator and persuaded him to invest in a second Zaxis machine within weeks.

Verktakar Magni operators are working 12 hours a day, six days a week on-site, particularly at this time of year when the island enjoys almost 24-hour daylight. So, excellent service is vital, even though it has not been necessary yet.

The ZX670LCH-3 started work on the site six weeks ago and – despite high usage – there have been no problems with the machine to date. Sövlí already thinks that the Hitachi is better than its rivals in terms of performance and the operator is extremely satisfied with the new machine.

Íshlutir has fitted the ZX670LCH-3 with an FRD quick hitch system, which allows the operator to switch easily between the bucket and an hydraulic breaker. The



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: THE ZAXIS HAS ALREADY PROVED TO BE PRODUCTIVE; GUNNAR BJÖRNSSON (LEFT) HAS SUPPLIED THE MACHINE TO SÖVLI JÓNSSON; IT’S EASY TO SWITCH APPLICATIONS ON THE ZX670LCH-3. OPPOSITE: THE BREAKER GETS TO WORK ON THE THICK LAVA ROCK.

quick hitch fitted by the dealer is the largest that can be used by a machine of this capacity. It is necessary for penetrating the large volumes of thick lava rock on-site.

The operator seems to cut through the ground effortlessly. However, the machine is also adaptable enough for effective use on another site with a completely different landscape.

It is this versatility that is already helping to increase profitability for Verktakar Magni. Sövlí is not yet sure how the Hitachi performs in terms of running costs compared with its rivals. However, as a result of the work being completed faster, the profit margins for each job have automatically increased.

That alone is enough to ensure that Sövlí is happy with his purchase and the ZX670LCH-3 has proved that it is more than capable of keeping up with the pace of Iceland’s rapid development programme.



ZAXIS 27U-2: SHORT TAILS COME IN TOUGH PACKAGES

THE LAST EDITION OF *GROUND CONTROL* FEATURED THE HITACHI MINI-EXCAVATOR FACTORY IN OOSTERHOUT. THE STORY CONCLUDED THAT HITACHI CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY (EUROPE) NV (HCME) WOULD SHORTLY BE MOVING INTO THE NEXT PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT FOR ITS RANGE OF MINI-EXCAVATORS. THIS HAS ALREADY COME TO FRUITION WITH THE LAUNCH OF THE NEW ZAXIS 27U-2 SHORT TAIL SWING MODEL



HITACHI

THE HITACHI ZAXIS 27U-2 PROMISES ENHANCED STABILITY, DURABILITY, OPERATOR COMFORT AND EASE OF MAINTENANCE

There was a hugely positive response to the introduction of the new Zaxis-3 and ZW wheel loaders at the Intermat show in Paris (see P. 32-33). However, one mini-excavator also stole the show as Hitachi displayed the Zaxis 27U-2 in public for the first time.

The launch of the latest short tail swing mini to the European market was no coincidence – it is being targeted directly at HCME's market. The new machine comes in a choice of cabin or canopy and short or long arm to suit the operating needs of the customer.

Indeed, the canopy version can easily be transported by trailer because it falls under the maximum weight limit of 2.8 tonnes. This means that it can be moved around to different job sites without the need for special transport.

The Zaxis 27U-2 was launched with the promise of enhanced stability, durability, operator comfort and ease of maintenance. *Ground Control* explores these technicalities in more detail.

Stability

Hitachi has designed the Zaxis 27U-2 with a number of stability-enhancing features. Firstly, the track frame and enlarged counterweight have been made as heavy as possible. These components lower the centre of gravity, which in turn helps to stabilise the machine when it is working on uneven surfaces.

The swing post has been specially manufactured with lightweight materials. It has been positioned as central as possible in the machine. Both of these measures will aid stability under heavy working conditions.

Finally, a standard additional counterweight can be used when the machine is operated with a heavy attachment. When this is added, the upper structure only exceeds the track width by a few centimetres. So, the all-important compromise between the tail swing and stability is minimised.

Maintenance

The Zaxis U-2 series adopts the benefits associated with the larger excavators in the Hitachi range. These include unshakeable reliability and low and easy maintenance. Basic service requirements can be handled with convenient access to most components.

The cabin or canopy can be tilted to an angle of 50 degrees – the widest in its class – which gives easy access to the main control valve and the swing device. The maintenance cover can be found on the right-hand side of the machine, where the battery, radiator, fuel

tank and hydraulic oil tank can be located.

The engine cover is also unique. It can be opened by sliding it up vertically. This means that at no time does it exceed the width of the machine. It also doesn't block off any natural light or cast shadows over the engine. This enables a technician to work in confined spaces with maximum possible visibility – even on a job site.

With the engine cover open, there is easy access to the engine oil filter, engine oil inlet, water separator and air cleaner. There is another cover on the left-hand side of the machine, which allows work to be carried out on the hydraulic oil filter and the pilot filter.

Durability

The Zaxis 27U-2 has also been designed with durability in mind.

Firstly, a one-pin system reduces the jerking movement of the swing post. The front corners on the upper structure have also been reinforced with D-shaped protection.

Finally, original Hitachi HN bushings have been utilised on the front attachment's pin joints. These help to extend the lubricating intervals to 500 hours.

Operator comfort

Like all of the new Zaxis machines, the safety and comfort of the operator have been prioritised and contribute to the user-friendliness of the Zaxis 27U-2. The cabin's ergonomic design, air conditioning and shock-absorbing rubber mounts all contribute to increased productivity.

A radio and air conditioning come as standard to help put the operator at ease in the cabin. The door opens in two sections within the width of the tracks, so that it doesn't compromise the performance of the machine.

The LCD monitor is conveniently located so that the operator can see it just by glancing to the right. The second speeds switch has been moved to the console which means that this can be operated with the pedals.

The Hitachi Zaxis 27U-2 is a short tail swing mini-excavator that comes in a tough all-round package. It has been designed with utility and productivity in mind and – like all Hitachi construction equipment – it has been designed to perform a wide range of tasks under the most challenging of working conditions.

SATELLITE COMMUNICATION AT YOUR SERVICE



HITACHI HAS ALWAYS BEEN RENOWNED FOR BEING ONE OF THE MOST TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED EXCAVATOR MANUFACTURERS. HOWEVER, THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS HIGHLY COMPETITIVE AND SO HITACHI MUST CONTINUALLY INNOVATE TO STAY ONE STEP AHEAD. ONE OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS HAS BEEN IN THE FIELD OF SATELLITE COMMUNICATION

The launch of the Zaxis-3 range of excavators and ZW wheel loader series has introduced better performance, reduced running costs and ultimate comfort and safety to the construction industry.

The latest phase of development from Hitachi Construction Machinery (HCM) has culminated in these IT-based models. They have superseded the early cable-operated and subsequent hydraulic excavators. As part of this process, the research and development team has also pioneered an enhanced satellite communication system.

“This has been a huge project to manage and co-ordinate”, explains Marten Bootsma, who is the Assistant Manager of Service Development in Product Support at Hitachi Construction Machinery (Europe) NV. “After years of development at HCM, we are now embracing the challenge of implementing this new service at HCME.”

So what is the latest development and how does it work? Basically, the excavator or wheel loader communicates its own technical data and geographical position to the owner via satellite at midnight in each time zone, i.e. when the machine would normally not be working.

All of the data from every machine on the planet arrives at HCM's server in Japan. The relevant information is then directed to HCME's dealer network across Europe via a secure internet connection.

The dealers can then see all of the machines that they have sold within their territory online. Finally, a unique feature – the Owner's Site – enables customers to see the operational data for each of their Hitachi models.

While this information is still available for download on to a technician's PDA, the dealer and customer can now access the files on a daily basis from their office desks. This system is not only convenient, but it is also incredibly useful for both

parties in the unlikely event of a mechanical problem.

When a fault code appears on the colour LCD monitor in the machine's cabin, it is also sent to the satellite at the earliest possible opportunity. Then the dealer can discuss this with the customer by looking at the same technical data online – without needing to send over a technician with diagnostic equipment.

Access to the Owner's Site is provided to the customer by the dealer. The complete facility is standard on all new Zaxis-3 excavators and ZW wheel loaders. The hardware in the machine, satellite communication and Owner's Site application software are available at no further cost for a five-year period of ownership. Other manufacturers only offer a similar service as an optional extra for an additional fee.

“HCME has only recently started using this system after the distribution of the first batch of machines to the dealers and their customers,” continues Marten. “Therefore, it is still early days in terms of how the end users are adapting to the new technology.

“There is a downloadable manual available for easy access by customers supported by dealer training. There is a lot of useful information in one place, and while it may seem a bit complex at first, the assumption is that the customers' appreciation of the system will increase with experience.”

Once the system has been accessed and viewed on the internet, the full picture of how beneficial the system can be unfolds. The maintenance schedule and service record is displayed for each machine. This can then be updated by either the dealer or the customers for a complete and accurate reference of the excavator or wheel loader's mechanical history.

Another useful function of the Owner's Site is the Geographical Information System (GIS) which works like the more familiar GPS. The relevant page on the internet site reveals a 3D map and the exact location of all of the owner's machines.



ABOVE: A MACHINE IS LOCATED ON THE OWNERS SITE. ABOVE RIGHT: THE EXTERNAL ANTENNAE IS THE ONLY VISIBLE SIGN OF SATELLITE COMMUNICATION

Once a specific machine is selected, a click of the mouse displays the required technical information for that machine.

"This is a big step forward for the way in which Hitachi services its excavators and wheel loaders," concludes Marten enthusiastically. "This is an invaluable new service which will undoubtedly maintain the competitive advantage that Hitachi has in the construction market.

"Overall, the dealer will be providing a more comprehensive product support

package to the customer. They can now discuss the fault code – without having to leave the office – and agree on a solution to any technical problem. The speed and accuracy of the satellite communication technology means that they can view the machine's location and corresponding data online, even before the technician goes to the site."



BUILDING ON SUCCESS

THE SUCCESS STORY BEHIND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ZAXIS RANGE OF EXCAVATORS HAS BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED IN THE PAGES OF *GROUND CONTROL* AND THE CONSTRUCTION PRESS. WITH DEMAND INCREASING ACROSS EUROPE, HITACHI CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY (EUROPE) NV (HCME) HAS TAKEN A BOLD STEP IN PURSUIT OF ITS 2010 BUSINESS STRATEGY. THE OPENING OF A NEW EXTENSION TO ITS AMSTERDAM FACTORY IN AUGUST 2006 WILL HELP THE MANUFACTURER TO MEET ITS TARGETS IN THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

HCME Manager of Production Engineering, Robin Huijsman, has been given overall responsibility for the implementation and management of the new-look factory. When *Ground Control* visited him at the height of the construction project, he seemed remarkably relaxed and calm for someone with so much responsibility.

"I actually feel as if I am in control of my own destiny at the moment," Robin says, with confidence and enthusiasm for the challenges that lie ahead. "It is important to keep one step in front of the whole process and so far we have been able to do that."

The Amsterdam factory has been expanded in two areas. The first phase – a new 2,400m² wing built on to the existing building – was officially opened at the beginning of May. This houses the area where the finishing touches are made to the distinctive orange Zaxis excavators.

HCME operates an integrated management system which has been the blueprint for the second phase. With the certifications already in place for quality (ISO 9001), environmental procedures (ISO 14001) and health and safety (OHSAS 18001), Robin has good reason to be calm and collected about this larger 19,600m² extension.

The reasons behind Hitachi embarking on its own construction project are simple: to meet its challenging production targets and to supply Hitachi dealers with sufficient quantities of the new Zaxis-3 excavators so that they can meet the demand from their customers.

The overall aim is to increase the production figures from 3,500 to 6,000 units per annum. If everything goes according to plan, HCME will reach a maximum output of 23 units per day by 2010.

Hitachi is gaining an impressive share of each key European market (including Russia) and the Middle East with its critically acclaimed excavators. The gradual introduction of the new Zaxis-3 mid-range and large machines has seen demand for these models reach new heights.

HCME management knew that the only option was to build a new production plant alongside its existing facility. The work began in December 2005 and it only took eight months to complete – an impressive schedule by any standard.

Robin explains how the revised production flow works: "The new extension houses the component factory and the existing building becomes the assembly floor. This allows HCME to manage a simple production process from one section to another."



To do this, the existing machine centre moved to the new unit with further investment in an additional paint line, another machine centre – with better jigs – and a washing/preparation area. Much of this work took place during the three-week holiday period in August when the factory was closed. This made the transition from one system to another much easier than expected.

The overall objective of this project is to improve productivity. The €20million investment must achieve this in a relatively short period of time. The biggest challenge has been to implement change, while also keeping the production cycle on schedule. This is being managed by maintaining a direct link between the relocation process and the production plan.

“We must be ready to meet the targets set in our five-year business plan,” continues Robin. “That’s why HCME is making this investment now. Without this important measure, it would already be too late! It’s been difficult with the introduction of the new Zaxis-3 machines happening at the same time, but it will be worth all the hard work in the end.”

There has been detailed planning at every stage of the process. The emphasis has also been placed on flexibility with the future in mind. A ring road has been built around the periphery of the whole site to enable the efficient delivery of components into the factory. A 400m² sheltered passage allows the swift transfer of materials between the two units. It has even been calculated that a forklift will use this corridor every three minutes when peak production has been reached!

The new factory floor has been laid to the same specification as the original. This means that it is possible to drive an excavator over it if necessary. All of the new equipment has been positioned alongside the walls and towards the corners so that the central areas can be left as open – and therefore flexible – as possible for future production requirements.

The paint line has been installed with European environmental regulations in mind. The focus is shifting towards reducing the proportion of solvents in paint and therefore minimising the impact on the environment. Hitachi is leading the way with water-based materials for the innovative new paint process.

Productivity will also improve with increased lifting capacity for heavy components on the paint line. The attention to detail even extends to a window on the exterior wall through which visiting customers can see the parts being sprayed.

Overall, Robin and his team have the ongoing project under complete control. They are embracing change with the experience gained by HCME over the past four years. Thanks to the strategy being employed on the factory floor, there will be an increasing supply of Hitachi excavators to an ever-increasing and appreciative customer base.

OPPOSITE: ROBIN HUIJSMAN SURVEYS WORK IN PROGRESS BEFORE THE NEW FACILITY OPENED IN AUGUST. ABOVE: THE IMPRESSIVE NEW PAINT LINE CONFORMS WITH NEW EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS. RIGHT: THE MACHINE CENTRE MOVES FROM THE EXISTING FACTORY TO THE NEW FACILITY (TOP) AND THE 400m² SHELTERED PASSAGE BETWEEN THE TWO UNITS



EXHIBITIONS



SHOWS OF STRENGTH BY HITACHI

INTERMAT 2006

THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY GATHERED ON 24-29 APRIL AT INTERMAT IN PARIS TO SHOWCASE ITS LATEST PRODUCTS AND SERVICES. THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF EQUIPMENT, MACHINERY AND TECHNIQUES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING MATERIALS INDUSTRY ATTRACTED MORE THAN 200,000 TRADE VISITORS TO THE PARIS-NORD VILLEPINTE EXHIBITION CENTRE



All of the leading construction equipment manufacturers had a major presence among the 1,500 exhibits. This included Hitachi (3,500m²) and Hitachi Sumitomo (405m²). The full range of construction equipment was on view for Hitachi dealers and existing and prospective customers, featuring some of the new additions to the product line-up.

The new generation of large excavators was unveiled at the exhibition, with the Zaxis ZX520LCH-3 and ZX670LCH-3 displayed for the first time. The Zaxis ZX280-3 was also launched in Paris to join the other new mid-range machines which were introduced earlier in the year.

Hitachi continued to grab the headlines with the long-awaited first public appearance of the latest range of wheel loaders. The ZW series was one of the most eagerly anticipated new product launches at Intermat, with the ZW310, ZW250 and ZW220 all on show before an appreciative audience.

The Hitachi stand was designed in keeping with the brand's striking corporate identity. There were many reliable solutions demonstrated for various sectors of the construction industry. The main selling points of the new machines were also presented in the distinctive Ground Breaking News campaign.

There were hundreds of enquiries made about the purchase of new Hitachi machines. The hard working team of Hitachi staff answered a wide range of technical questions, with other personnel available from Zaxis Finance, Product Support and the merchandise shop.

"This was the biggest presence held by Hitachi at Intermat, so it was important to put on the best ever display," explains HCME Corporate Communications Manager, Raymond Hendriks. "We had a very positive response from our corporate guests, dealers, customers and other visitors, so it was certainly worth all of the hard work.

"We produced a series of movies for the show and they made a huge impact on the stand. In addition, all of the photography, advertisements and promotional materials delivered a clear message... The new Hitachi products offer better performance, ultimate comfort and safety, and reduced running costs throughout the range."



SWEDEN



The most important construction exhibition of the year in Sweden is Maskin-Expo, which this year took place on 18-20 May in Stockholm. The growth in popularity of the show in recent years saw its relocation from a racecourse to a former military airport.

The new 100,000m² venue was more spacious for exhibitors, including the expansion of the demonstration area. This helped to attract an exhibitor list of 330 stands and a total attendance of 18,500 visitors.

The 2,000m² Hitachi demonstration stand was managed by Swedish dealer, Delvator AB. The focus of attention was on the new Zaxis-3 series with three ZX250-3s on display. The other six models ranged from the short tail mini-excavator range to the ZX160WT. Five of the machines were available for operators to test, including the ZX250-3.

"The exhibition was a big success for Delvator," says Marketing Co-ordinator, Maria Arvidson. "The demonstration facility was extremely busy. The operators were able to explore the benefits of the new Zaxis-3 mid-range excavators for themselves.

"This was a very important show for the Swedish market. It was also Delvator's key promotional event in 2006. It was such a resounding success that we're already planning for next year's event which will run from 31 May until 2 June 2007."

THE NETHERLANDS



The biannual Technische Kontakt Dagen (TKD) show was held on 18-20 May in Amsterdam. Hitachi joined the major construction equipment manufacturers and other suppliers at the three-day event.

This is an unusual exhibition in that there are certain restrictions placed on the exhibitors. With no large promotional stands or the distribution of marketing materials permitted, TKD provides a level playing field for all concerned. Therefore, the exhibitors have to show some creative flair to make their display stand out from the crowd.

The timing of the event before the World Cup appealed to Dutch football fans and so Hitachi displayed its distinctive orange colour in an unusual way. Some of the machines were adorned with Dutch flags, banners and even footballs to portray a topical theme before the tournament kicked off in Germany.

There was a strong line-up of products on the 1,600m² Hitachi stand, including a broad selection of excavators, wheel loaders and an aerial working platform. The main attraction was of course the new generation of ZW wheel loaders and Zaxis-3 excavators, with a facility for visitors to test five of the exhibits in a demonstration area.

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