

PRESS RELEASE – August 2015

Keeping vegetation trim on Lincolnshire highways, byways and drainage dykes

Diversifying into highways and grounds maintenance work has proved a good bet for eastern counties contractor Mick Wright and his son Peter.

Having started their Wisbech-based business with just a used tractor and farm hedge cutter 19 years ago, the MJ Wright & Son team now maintains public footpaths and other rights of way across half of Lincolnshire, trims 300 miles of grass road verges across a quarter of the county and keeps vegetation under control on countless lengths of drainage dyke embankments.

“We still do a lot of agricultural work but the municipal sector now accounts for three-quarters of our turnover,” says Peter Wright. “Apart from road verges and drainage dykes we also go grass cutting around industrial premises, hospitals and solar panel sites.

“It needs investment in different types of specialist equipment,” he points out. “But building long-term relationships with clients and delivering what we say we will, helps achieve a decent return on that investment.”

Nonetheless, good cost control is essential and the firm’s latest purchase has enabled the fleet of five tractors to be trimmed to four without losing capacity.

“We ran a 40kph McCormick MTX150 for jobs nearby and a Unimog that went to more distant contracts – but that meant one or the other was stood idle for much of the time,” explains Peter. “Both have been replaced by a new McCormick X7 Pro Drive tractor; it works and travels faster and is less tiring for the operator so it’s a viable unit to use on distant jobs, which might involve a two-hour journey, as well as work closer to our Wisbech base.”

As the operator who spends long hours in the seat, Justin Thomson had the final say on which tractor he would end up driving. Another McCormick would seem an obvious choice to replace his MTX150 but another two candidates were in the running.

“The McCormick X7 Pro Drive really stood out with its new cab layout and control set-up,” says Justin. “The electronic controls give you a lot more features but they’re not too complex or overwhelming, and everything felt right and easy to use.”

In addition to a top-spec ventilated air seat to complement the auto climate control and hydraulic suspension, the 160hp X7.450 Pro Drive's cab was specified with the optional 12in touch-screen control system, which is proving useful for configuring the hydraulics and pto when swapping between different types of equipment.

Introduced as an option across the X7 Pro Drive range this year, Data Screen Manager provides a number of functions over the tractor's standard 'dial and select' system, such as pto clutch modulation adjustment to suit different implements.

Others include powershift and power shuttle modulation, a fast-steer option, individual spool valve isolation, control of ISOBUS-compliant implements and GPS auto steering for accurate, low-stress bout matching.

"The touch screen is lovely to use, just like tapping on a mobile phone or tablet," says Justin. "And you can still see the colour display when the sun's bright, which was a problem with the other tractors we looked at."

Independent front axle suspension complements the cab springing and for added safety, the tractor is kitted out with extra warning lights on the roof and cab steps, as well as powerful air horns. A satnav with online tracking records where the tractor has worked and can be used to 'flag' hidden obstructions; it then provides an alarm on subsequent visits.

A bespoke hydraulic control arrangement installed by McCormick dealer Robert Crawford & Son at Frithville near Boston suits the left-hand verge mowing equipment. The tractor's stubby joystick was moved from the right-hand seat mounted console to a bespoke unit on the left with additional switches.

"I operate the rear mower with the joystick, the linkage with a toggle switch and the front mower with buttons on the right-hand console," explains Justin. "When I change implements, I can quickly assign different types of front and rear valves to these controls, and alter cylinder stroke and flow rate too."

For highways verge mowing, the tractor operates a 2.3m front-mounted flail mower with 700mm hydraulic sideshift in combination with a 1.45m rear-mounted offset flail.

A 6m rear-mounted reach mower is used on farm hedges and 3m of drainage dykes are mown in one go using an 8m telescopic reach mower and the 2.3m rear flail unit – which proves its versatility by also cutting and mashing bonnet-high mustard prior to being ploughed in as a green manure.

"This is one of the agricultural jobs the new tractor will be tackling, along with hedge cutting, potato planting, flailing ditches and trailer work," says Peter Wright.

But it's on the roadside work that Justin Thomson has come to fully appreciate his new mount: "It's really smooth; I've found I can work at a more consistent speed, which has increased my daily output, and it just glides along travelling from job to job, with the auto powershift making it a relaxing drive," he says.

"Also, it's so quiet and comfortable that even after 13 to 14 hours I don't feel like I've done a day's work," he adds. "It really is a step up to another level in terms of comfort and productivity."

Ends



McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive - MJ Wright 01

Mick Wright (left) with operator Justin Thomson and the new McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive tractor that's proving a popular addition to the MJ Wright & Son contracting fleet.



McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive - MJ Wright 02

Operator Justin Thomson chose the new McCormick X7 Pro Drive over two other candidates, liking the simplicity but also the extra features that come with the new control console and Data Screen Manager.



McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive - MJ Wright 03

The 160hp McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive operated by MJ Wright & Son tackles grass verges using front- and rear-mounted flail mowers alongside the A16 in Lincolnshire.



McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive - MJ Wright 04

The 160hp McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive tackles grass verges using front- and rear-mounted flail mowers alongside the A16 in Lincolnshire.



McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive - MJ Wright 05

Good manoeuvrability is essential when working alongside busy roads – extra roof and side warning lights have been fitted to the McCormick for this work.



McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive - MJ Wright 06

Justin Thomson's 'office' on the McCormick X7.450 Pro Drive, showing the bespoke mower controls in the foreground, the simple right-hand control console, 12in Data Screen Manager display, and window-mounted satnav unit.

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