

## **Exhibitors And Visitors Celebrate IOG Saltex Success**

"If grounds professionals cannot find what they want at this show, then something must be wrong!" That's how one visitor – the head groundsman at a large private school in Lincolnshire – summed up this year's IOG SALTEX show at Windsor Racecourse. Europe's leading annual event for open space management once again this year presented an unrivalled range of products, techniques, technologies and strategies to enable grounds professionals to be more effective and efficient in their day-to-day roles.

The success of the three-day event highlighted how IOG SALTEX continually meets the needs of exhibitors – 80 per cent of stand space is already rebooked for next year's show – and visitors, with over 13,000 open space professionals (subject to ABC Audit) taking time out from their busy schedules to survey the comprehensive range of products on show and to benefit from the unrivalled series of education presentations, as well as enjoy the special events that included:

- The World of Arb feature, based around serial tree climbing demonstrations and including the launch of the Find An Arborist campaign, complemented by a series of informative seminars by the Arboricultural Association;
- Football Foundation's inflatable football pitch – jointly staged by County Turf, Kestrel (Contracts) Group, TigerTurf UK and Wall 2 Wall, and featuring former Everton and Wales International goalkeeper Neville Southall;
- UK Landscape Skills finals; and
- Machinery Dealer Village.

In addition to an informative education programme in the Central Pavilion, where the presentations covered a range of 'hot button' issues, the introduction this year of the BAGMA-supported Machinery Dealer Village, the expanded UK Landscape Skills contest organised by BALI (the British Association of Landscape Industries) and the enlarged World of Arb feature all attracted much attention and, of course, added to IOG SALTEX's ever-evolving content which, year on year, continues to meet visitors' demands.

Of course, thousands of products (including over 100 new products) were also being shown by the 455 exhibitors – a new record for the show.

The result was, in IOG SALTEX tradition, a memorable event.

With exhibitors like Active Grounds Maintenance, Groundsman Industries, Kersten UK and Mercedes-Unimog, for example, all quick to relate news of their show successes, Colin Gale, sales and marketing director at Allen Power Equipment, and Russell Bowlby, proprietor of Flights of Fantasy, both concurred with the general end-of-show atmosphere among exhibitors.

Colin Gale said: "The quality of enquiries has been very good; there's no doubt the right people are here," while Russell Bowlby concluded: "It's a show that we really cannot afford to miss."

Richard Conway of Active Grounds Maintenance said he was "gobsmacked" at the response; Groundsman Industries' Dave Meharg exclaimed "it is the best show we've had in eight years"; and Chris Faulkner of Kersten said he was "very pleased" with IOG SALTEX compared to the three other trade shows he's exhibited at this year.

Mark Hopkins, sales director at Mercedes-Unimog, said the show had again proved its importance in enabling the company to strengthen relationships between new and existing customers.

And, Irvine Weston of Cleveland SiteSafe was adamant: "I am really delighted with the show. We were extremely busy, but then IOG SALTEX is the best showcase for the industry and unfailingly the most successful for us – and we have been going there for 18 years."

Business was also brisk in the ever-expanding 'play' sectors of the exhibition, where companies worked hard to capture the attention of buyers, many of whom are now in the midst of a Big Lottery funding programme.

Phil Holden, managing director of Wicksteed Leisure, said: "The show was superb. We unveiled a lot of new products, including our nursery multi-play range, and have taken a lot of orders. We've also had a record number of sales enquiries and are very, very pleased."

The stand awards organised by show organiser the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG) always attract much interest. Gold certificates were presented by IOG national chairman Alex Millar to Autoguide Equipment, Dingley Dell Enterprises, Glendale, Hand Made Places, Maxtrack and Wicksteed Leisure.

Merrist Wood Campus of Guildford College won the UK Landscape Skills final after three tightly-contested days of competition. Each of the two-man teams from Moulton, Oatridge, Reaseheath, Warwickshire, Writtle and Guildford Colleges, had to complete the same 7m x 7m landscape project under the scrutiny of a constant stream of IOG SALTEX visitors who stopped to watch, many of whom were themselves professional landscapers. The UK Landscape Skills competition is project managed by BALI on behalf of UK Skills.

Commenting on the success of this year's final, BALI chief executive Sandra Loton-Jones said: "We are extremely grateful for the support given to UK Landscape Skills by IOG SALTEX. The success of this year's final, which involved more teams than in 2005, and the interest it generated among visitors to IOG SALTEX, demonstrates the increasing importance of landscaping in the open space arena.

"Our industry must continue to engage with young people who are considering or have chosen landscaping as a profession by actively promoting skills training; I believe the UK Landscape Skills competition achieves that objective very successfully." John Hayes of Celtic FC won the IOG Professional Football Groundsman of the Year' award for 2006, following his success last year as the IOG Scottish Football Groundsman of the Year.

Adjudged using criteria that includes such factors as available resources, presentation and housekeeping standards, technical knowledge and scope of operations, the coveted award is based on the competition open to all groundsman within the FA Premier, Championship and Nationwide Leagues.

In addition to improved traffic flow and the increasingly popular free water taxi service from Windsor town centre, visitor satisfaction levels were also high, with open space professionals from all disciplines benefiting from the event, and David Green, groundsman at West Bridgeford Sports Club, Nottingham, encapsulated the overall view of visitors.

He said: "What I really like about IOG SALTEX is the great range of equipment you see there. I went there this year to source ground care equipment, spreaders and aerators, and it did the job for me. The show allows you to discover new things you might not see normally, and there is so much choice."

Geoff Webb, chief executive of show organisers the Institute of Groundsmanship, reflected: "The wisdom of ensuring that IOG SALTEX

continually evolves to reflect the needs of both exhibitors and visitors has been proven once again, with the comprehensiveness of the products and features at this year's show appealing to everyone across the open space sector.

"There is no doubt that the industry demands an annual showcase – and that is why IOG SALTEX will continue to take place every year. But, importantly, as organisers we have to ensure we continue to communicate and work closely with manufacturers, suppliers and users to deliver an event that open space professionals want."

- IOG SALTEX 2007 will be held at Windsor Racecourse on 4-6 September.

IOG SALTEX is Europe's flagship event for the open space management industry, and next year's show 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.

Log onto [www.iogsaltex.co.uk](http://www.iogsaltex.co.uk) or call 020 8232 1600 for more information.