

With an ever-increasing and variable workload and a focus on quality consolidation, we find out how one Gloucestershire firm is making the most of a new heavy set of 12.3-metre rolls.

## Heavy rolls bring variety of benefits

Selling out more than £30,000 on a set of rolls might seem like something of an extravagance, but it is an investment which has made sense for one Gloucestershire business where consolidation is key in ensuring effective crop emergence.

Farming more than 1,620 hectares (4,000 acres) of arable ground, the Cotswold Farming Partnership has a fair bit of ground to cover in autumn once all the crops are drilled. Until recently the responsibility for putting the finishing touches to cereal seedbeds has been down to an eight-metre set of Twelve rolls, often pulled in tandem with a 7.6m Simba Double-D press. But in the last couple of years that workload has increased dramatically.

Farm manager Martin Parkinson says: "We are now farming almost 1,000 acres more than we were two years ago.

"Getting the ground properly consolidated is so crucial for a whole range of reasons, from slug control and seed-to-soil contact to ensuring pre-em herbicide efficacy.

### Tramline system

"With the old rolls we had been getting behind with our timing and sometimes missed the window altogether. We have now gone to a 36m tramline system, so I wanted something which would fit with that as well as increasing our output. An 18m set would have been brilliant but with our steep ground you would have needed 300hp to pull them. Gone are the days of an old yard tractor doing a bit of rolling."

Farm manager  
Martin Parkinson.



He decided 12m was the best compromise and started looking at his options. Various different colours were considered, but when it came down to it three key features made him settle on a set of He-Va King-Rollers.

"With 620mm rings and a heavy box section frame they are about the heaviest you can find, kilogram per metre. That is important given the amount of stones we have to push in on our Cotswold brash.

"But it is the way which weight is distributed which is the clever thing – there is always an even load across the full width."

He-Va's Special Active Transfer system uses hydraulics to ensure each of the King Roller's five gangs adapt to contours. The entire hydraulic circuit is linked to two gas accumulators and a pressure gauge. This allows the operator to set the amount of weight transferred onto the outer wings to maintain an even pressure across the full working width, says the manufacturer.

The accumulators act as an oil buffer when the rolls are travelling across uneven ground, taking up and releasing oil as the rams extend and retract.

### Central pivot point

In addition, each of the five sections is mounted on a central pivot point, allowing each gang to oscillate over minor lumps and bumps while maintaining pressure across the full working width.

Ensuring seedbeds are as slug-hostile as possible is the primary driver for making rolling a priority in autumn and to this end Mr Parkinson was particularly keen

## Our workrates are up by 50 per cent having gone from 8m to 12m

MARTIN PARKINSON

on the MicroPro granule applicator which Opico offers as an integrated package with the King Rollers.

"I like the fact the seeder/pelletter is factory-fitted and so the brackets are purpose-made for the rolls. More importantly it is incredibly accurate," says Mr Parkinson.

"The other thing I was keen on was the ability to apply slug pellets at variable rates. The applicator has the ability to use a GPS feed to adjust what has applied according to a soil map, so I am hoping we will be able to reduce our overall usage.

"With a metaldehyde ban a very real possibility, we need to be conscious of that and do whatever we can to limit our environmental impact. That is particularly important to us with Adam Henson's Farm Park at our core and BBC Countryfile here filming regularly."

While variable rate applications might be a current reality, Mr Parkinson would like to see GPS auto shut-off and section control added to the package, something which is not currently in the He-Va control box's repertoire.

Slugs might be the prime driver for the switch to the rolls, but the

The new rolls fit well with the business' 36-metre tramline system.



rollers' part in aiding weed control should not be underestimated,

says Mr Parkinson. Sharp-edged breaker rings help to ensure there is an even, clod-free surface finish to make best use of pre-emergence herbicide efficacy. Equally importantly, all barley following wheat get a dose of Avadex from the MicroPro as the seed is rolled in.

"It makes good sense to do two jobs at once and if we are applying Avadex immediately after drilling it means we are getting the best possible timing.

"We are still travelling at the same speed, 7-8kph, but we are now covering 6ha/hour, so we are getting over the ground in a better time and we are doing a better job because of their weight distribution."

### Unusual roles

Aside from handling the main-stream arable tasks, the rollers have also been put to work in some other more unusual roles. Martin Parkinson and Volume making barleys grown for Adam Henson-branded Butcombe beer can lack vigour and are often thin in spring and so the rolls are run over these crops as early as conditions allow to prompt tillering.

But the bigger share of the spring workload comes in establishing new grass leys. Until recently the Cotswold brash has been ploughed, power-harrowed, pressed and rolled ahead of the farm's Horsch Sprinter drill running on the surface before a final pass from the 8m rolls.

Now the roller and applicator package follow the power-harrow, spreading seed on the surface be-

fore a second pass to really ensure seed-to-soil contact.

"We have effectively knocked out two passes; one from the press and another from the drill," says Mr Parkinson.

"And it is a similar story establishing ecological focus area grass mixes in summer. We just go for a couple of passes with the Horsch Joker at 5-8cm and then go in for two swipes with the rolls – one to seed, the second to consolidate."

At more than £30,000, the whole package was a significant expenditure, but one Mr Parkinson feels is easy to justify.

"Our workrates are up by 50 per

### Cotswold Farming Partnership

- **Total area:** 1,620ha (4,000 acres)
  - **Cropping:** Winter wheat, oilseed rape, winter barley, spring barley and peas
  - **Soils/elevation:** 150mm (6in) deep Cotswold brash/305m (10,000ft) above sea level
- Machinery**
- **Tractors:** John Deere 7280-R, John Deere 6210-R and John Deere 8360-RT (hired for cultivations), Mercedes Unimog U400 (hired from parent company when required)
  - **Combines:** New Holland CR9090 with 10.6m (35ft) header, as required
- New Holland CR9070 with 9m (30ft) header**
- **Sprayer:** 8,000-litre Horsch Leeb SP with 36m booms
  - **Loader:** Each farm retains its own loader
  - **Drills:** 6m Horsch Sprinter drill, 6m Horsch Focus drill
  - **Cultivator:** 4.4m Horsch Terrano MT cultivator
  - **Spreader:** 4,200-litre Amazone ZA-M
- **Staff:** Martin Parkinson plus three other full-time staff pulled in from partnership businesses as required



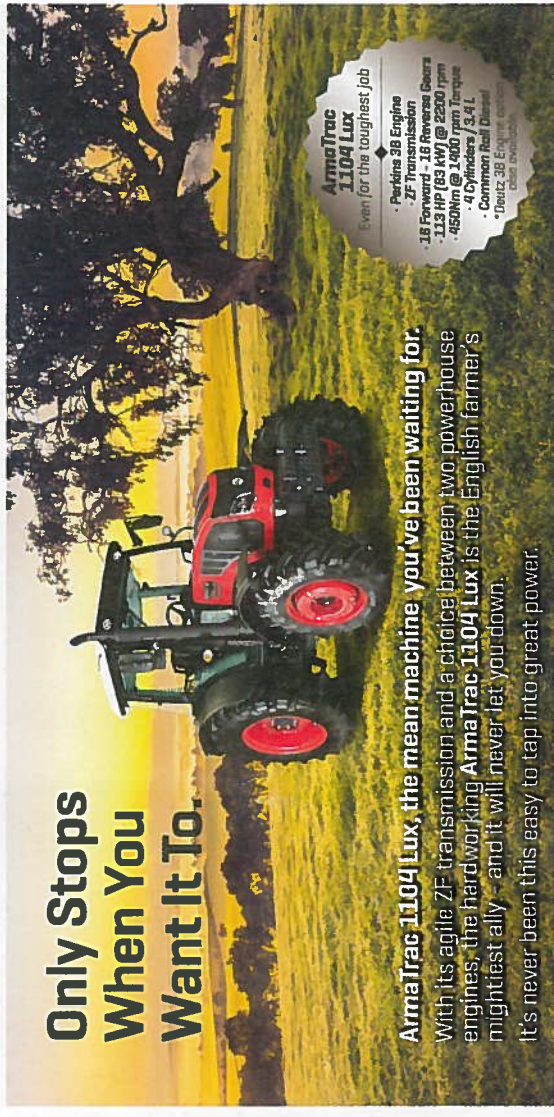
This field of Maris Otter had a granular herbicide applied in one bout around the headland with the 12.3m King Rollers. The line is clear.

cent having gone from 8m to 12m which means we are not as open to getting caught out when it comes in wet. In addition, by timing metaldehyde applications right we are catching the adult slugs before they have had a chance to breed.

"And having that extra capacity has the added benefit the guy on the rolls also has the time to run seed out to the drill – a big bonus in it does not take up an extra man."

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