

Wood handling revolution

A South Lincolnshire contractor has found a faster, safer way to manage woodland with a Sennebogen 718 E tool carrier. Matt Bailey puts on his lumberjack shirt and heads into the woods to check it out.

Out in the South Lincolnshire countryside something is moving in the hedgerows. Whether it's unstable, dangerous, diseased Ash trees or encroaching growth along roads and railways there is now a more efficient way of dealing with the under (and over) growth. Sennebogen's 718 E harvester – available from Molson in the UK – makes quick work of troublesome trees and offers an efficient method of harvesting wood for woodland and roadside management with the added bonus that the waste product can be turned to wood chip and supplied to biofuel power generation plants.

South Lincolnshire-based KWR Plant Hire has been putting its 718 E to good use kind of doing the work more often undertaken by teams of tree surgeons. KWR is named after owner/operator Kevin William Russell who set the company up more than 20 years ago. It is usually Kevin at the controls of the 718 E.

“Originally we catered mostly for the construction industry,” he says. “As the building trade went through difficulties, we evolved and moved over to the agricultural and forestry sector. We mostly work with farm estates,

highways and the Forestry Commission now.

“Our services focus on providing informed landscape, restoration and environmental management services to restore woodland to its natural growth by removing overgrown regeneration, leaving a healthier woodland area, working co-operatively with clients, neighbouring landowners and statutory authorities to achieve the best result. We carry out full and partial site clearances with the removal of trees and management of vegetation on roads, motorways and highways. We also tackle storm damage and Ash dieback,”

The Sennebogen 718 E gives KWR the ability to clear the largest spaces efficiently and effectively utilising attachments like flails, mulchers, tree shears and saw grabs. “This results in a fast, efficient and most importantly safe service,” says Kevin. And it also results in the production of wood chip, an increasingly valuable commodity used by biomass power generation schemes around the country.

The harvester

The 718 E is a 21 ton wheeled excavator, equipped with a telescopic boom and a range of attachments from specialist forestry attachment manufacturer Vosch including a grab saw attachment, a hedge cutter, a mulcher and a stump grinder. The machine has a maximum reach of up to 13 m and, thanks to its powerful hydraulics, can safely operate the numerous attachments necessary

for tree surgery. A load capacity of up to 1.7 tons and the hydraulic grab saw mean that Kevin's machine can grab, cut, move and stack tree sections and branches with astonishing speed, taking down a tree in a matter of minutes that would otherwise take a team of tree surgeons much longer to deal with.

Kevin is at home in the machine's comfortable Maxcab which makes use of the hydraulics to give a view height of 5.5 m. The cab is also equipped with a tilting mechanism to optimize the driver's view.

"The Sennebogen really is a complete tool carrier solution," says Kevin. "Its optimised hydraulics and bigger cooling pack allow higher hydraulic flow rates than an excavator of similar weight. This allows me to run a selection of Vosch attachments including the grab saw, stump grinder, hedge cutter and mulcher. And the wheels make it ideal for roadside – and rail trackside – operations. I can move much quicker from tree to tree compared to a tracked machine."

You can expect to see Kevin out and about clearing up after any autumnal storms that we may have this year which is good news because the Sennebogen 718 E is intrinsically safer, quicker and causes less disruption on the roads than the traditional methods.

"We can take a tree down in ten minutes that it would take a team of tree surgeons half a day to tackle," says Kevin. "And I can do it without the health and safety risks. And if we combine the

Sennebogen with a chipper on the job we also produce a saleable commodity from the waste.”

Long reach

Kevin says the main reason he chose the Sennebogen was for its long reach, an essential feature when he is having to trim down tall hedgerows and trees. “Its long reach and the visibility from the cab were the main things,” he confirms. “The 718 E opens up whole new markets for us. We mainly work along roadsides but I can go to pretty much any farm and they will need their hedges cutting back and I can sell the wood chip at the end of the job.

“I have been very impressed with how it has coped with every job so far,” adds Kevin. “It has an awesome cab too. I’m used to working in small diggers and this is like a Rolls Royce in comparison!”

I am really impressed with it. We’re only just starting to use its full potential and we keep finding new jobs that it can tackle all the time – new potential for income. And it’s so quick. In the time it has taken us to do 12 trees this morning a team of tree surgeons on ropes up in the trees might have managed three.”

Written by Matt Bailey for UKPO magazine.