



Kelston Sparkes' biggest operation is a quarry in Somerset, where it moves 90% of the materials for the owner

Back to growth

In line with the improving economic situation in the UK, there is now an increased level of demand from leading European cement and aggregate companies, who own sites and sell aggregates in the country, for local companies to load and haul their materials.

This is good news for national contractors such as the Kelston Sparkes Group. It has purchased seven new Hitachi medium and large excavators as part of a £1.5million machinery replacement and expansion programme primarily for its quarrying operations.

The Bristol-based company has purchased two ZX210LC-5s,

two ZX470LCH-5s, a ZX520LCH-5 and a ZX670LCR-5 in 2014. In addition, over the past 12 months it has also added a ZX290LC-5 excavator and a ZW310 wheel loader to its fleet of Hitachi construction machinery.

"Our replacement cycle for excavators was 6,000 hours before the economic crisis," says Alan Sparkes, whose father Kelston established the company in 1952. "We're getting back to this level, as the future is looking positive in this region."

Alan co-owns the company with his brother-in-law, Robert Stark. Quarrying now accounts for more than half of Kelston

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Alan Sparkes, co-owner,
Kelston Sparkes



Sparkes' £20million turnover and it moves an estimated eight million tonnes plus of materials per year.

The biggest current operation is in the Mendip Hills, Somerset, where the quarry owner relies on Kelston Sparkes for 90% of the movement of its materials (3.5million tonnes per annum). It has between 30 and 36 machines on the site at any one time, all supplied with operators.

“Our strategy has been to stick to what we do best, i.e. bulk earthmoving,” adds Alan. “We’ve never had so much long-term work thanks to the excellent working relationships we have with our customers.”

Kelston Sparkes also enjoys strong partnerships with its suppliers – and Hitachi is no exception. It bought its first model (a UH09) in 1977 and Hitachi has featured on Kelston Sparkes' list of leading excavator manufacturers ever since.

“Hitachi has always been at the top of the market in terms of performance and reliability,” Alan continues. “It is the number one manufacturer, especially for machines over 50 tonnes – and no one else comes close. We are very confident about the new Zaxis-5 range of excavators and they are already proving to be fantastic products.”

The most important criterion that Kelston Sparkes considers when buying a new machine is after-sales support. The workshop manager is influential in purchase decisions and the back-up he gets is vital to the company's entire operation.

“Reliability is the number one reason for buying Hitachi excavators,” adds Robert. “Our customers have no patience for downtime – they need an immediate response from us and our suppliers. It's not just about technical support and genuine parts though, it's about the whole Hitachi Support Chain package, including Global e-Service and Hitachi Extended Life Program [HELP].

“The information from Global e-Service is very useful for analysing fuel consumption and actual machine usage. It is company policy to take out HELP for a minimum of three years/6,000 hours. We focus on the total cost of ownership of each machine, with a full record of everything from the running costs to the resale value of each model.”

Please note all modifications were made by dealer to comply with site safety regulations.



To see a movie of Carrières de Cusy's limestone quarry in France, please visit www.youtube.com/user/HitachiConstruction. To receive a digital version of *Ground Control* with new movies, please register online at www.igroundcontrol.com/subscribe/en