

# T144 Direct helps contractor keep working after paralysing car accident

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**Mathew Evans moved from school to college knowing he wanted a life in farming. However, the family farm was too small to support his parents, himself and any future family, so after completing his studies Mathew went to work for a contractor. Then, with some experience under his belt, he purchased a tractor and started working for himself. When Mathew required a new machine in 2008, he looked around, talked to folk and with not a little Finnish “sisu” purchased his first Valtra.**

“I wanted a good tractor, but I also wanted something that was different. With Valtra I got that: reliability, power and economy – they sip diesel. It was different in many ways and it did the business,” Mathew explains.

Mathew’s first Valtra was a T120 from dealers John Bownes Ltd of Winsford, and with it his business expanded. He employed a driver, Gethin, and the number of tractors increased to three.

“There were two of us full time, and I also employed temporary drivers during busy periods,” Mathew adds.

Mathew’s work mostly revolved around the area’s livestock farms.

“We’ve few arable farms here in this part of Denbighshire, and any cereals mostly go either for whole crop forage or the grain is used for feed on the farm where it’s grown.”

Silage from mowing to baling is a common task for Mathew, and either Gethin or Mathew may be found working with a fellow contractor handling buck-raking at a clamp.

“Once the autumn season comes round, I spend a lot of time hedge cutting.”

Mathews tractors may also be found ploughing out old grassland, preparing for a new sward.

## T144 Direct to the rescue

In August 2014 Mathew was involved in a serious car accident that left him paralysed pretty much from the shoulders down. For most, an accident of this magnitude would have spelled the end, but not for Mathew Evans.

"I spent a considerable part of my recovery period planning how I could return to work. With the help of a lot of folk – not least Laura Heath at John Bownes and Andrew Stubbs, a farmer, contractor and engineer who also runs Valtras, and the staff at Access To Work, who helped with finance – I planned a tractor with a lift that could transfer me from my wheelchair at ground level and place me into the tractor cab in a position where I could slide from the lift onto the passenger seat and then on to the driver's seat."

Mathew ordered a new tractor, a 170hp T144 Direct, and with the help of Andrew Stubbs, whom he'd met at a Valtra event, a lift was added. Andrew sourced an electrically powered hydraulic lift normally used to drive a lorry tail lift, more than adequate to lift Mathew into the tractor. The lift has its own hydraulic reservoir and can complete 25 cycles before the battery goes flat.

"The hardest part of the project was the linkage that holds the seat," comments Andrew. "The seat must be capable of being positioned beside Mathew's wheelchair, supporting him during the lift and then folding into the cab to allow him to slide onto the passenger seat and then onto the driver's seat."

Today, with the Valtra tractor in almost constant use, a casual observer could easily be fooled into thinking there's nothing difficult in the design, but that would be a false impression occasioned by the neatness of the installation.

Valtra Direct tractors can be driven quite comfortably without the use of pedals, but should the clutch or brakes be required, all have hand operated levers attached. Now, once the implement is attached, Mathew can operate just as efficiently as any able bodied driver, although frustration does occasionally show through if help is required to fix an implement problem.

The addition of the T144 to Mathew's fleet now brings the number of Valtras to four: The new T144 Direct, a two year old 99 hp N92 with 2,500 hours, a 155/170 hp T153 also approaching 2,500 hours and a much used but no less reliable 138 hp 8450.

"All the tractors are reliable and inexpensive to run, and the support we get from our dealer, John Bownes of Winsford, is second to none. In truth my initial idea of buying a different tractor just to be different has proven to be the right one. The tractors are excellent, and the support from the company and their dealers first class," Mathew confirms.

Source: Valtra EME , AGCO Deutschland GmbH