



Here is our latest update - as promised - covering stock and space. To be honest, it would be easy to keep this one very short – we have too much of the first and not enough of the second. However, as you’ll appreciate, the situation is a little more complex than that and so I thought it might help to provide a summary of some of the things we are doing and/or proposing to do as a result of the current pressures in regards to stock and space.

Stock first.

As I say, we do seem to have an awful lot of it. We know that this is a direct result of your supplies, ordered long before lockdown hit us in late March, continuing to roll in; whilst many of your trade orders, some of them very large, are being put on ice, particularly by the high street. We understand that, for you, this is painful. We do, in this instance more than you could possibly imagine, share your pain; not least because we have a pretty ‘constipated’ warehouse. We are doing all we can to ameliorate this situation, including using a lot of overspill storage – more on this topic under the heading of space.

We are also keen to work really hard with/for you to ensure that we are not holding on to stock you do not need/want. Even that has been impacted by the current situation, because our normal stock disposal channels are currently closed. However, we are hoping to see a relaxing of that situation in the near future; so now would be a really good time for you to review your stockholding and do a little spring cleaning. For those of you that have already migrated to our new WMS system, this process is both easier and more accurate than it used to be. For those of you who have not yet achieved this migration, now might be a good time to discuss it with us. Obviously, our Client Services teams, and the alerts on our system, are constantly geared up to help you to manage your inventory. However, if you would like us to set-up a more in-depth review, whilst activity is low and stock-holding is high, now would be a sensible time to do that. Just give your account team a call and they will be happy to get the ball rolling for you.

As ever, we uphold our pledge to avoid refusing deliveries – even when they are unadvised or delivered out-of-hours. Having said that, we would really appreciate it if you could try to make sure that we are given plenty of warning if there are any exceptional stock deliveries currently wending their way towards us.

Space next.

I am sure you won’t be surprised to hear that we have had to put our plans for an additional building and/or mezzanine floor development on hold for the time being. It is a disappointment of course; but it feels like the prudent decision in such uncertain times. As a result, we have been doing a lot of work to identify additional overspill storage capacity in the local area, with some, albeit limited success. As highlighted by UKWA report (COVID-19 Impacts on the UK Warehousing Sector April 2020), there is only about 11% storage capacity available nationwide, which is a frighteningly small amount. Indeed, they tell us it equates to only about three weeks capacity, which is nothing. However, we are pleased to report that we have been able to

access additional overspill within easy reach of our Bedford site – so we should be well able to cope. One word of warning in this respect – because of the national shortage of storage space, the cost of short-term storage has rocketed. In researching our local options, we have not been able to find any that are as inexpensive (sorry, that should read such outstanding value!) as our own storage costs to you. Therefore, if you do need us to hold large stock reserves, in the short-term at least, this will need to be at a premium rate; so please be sure to check with us if you are thinking of building up large buffer stocks in the autumn.

We are optimistic about activity volumes once we get through the summer period; confident that we will see a resumption of trade orders going out; and that it will become easier to manage the flow of product through our warehouse. Be assured we will do whatever we can to help you to maximise your order fulfilment (web and trade), whilst minimising your stockholding.

Finally, far be it from me to want to raise any additional spectres at this time; but, being in the logistics business, we cannot afford not to plan ahead. We are already deep in the process of planning for life after lockdown, keenly aware that, pretty much as soon as we are out from under Covid-19, we may well find ourselves staring Brexit in the face once more. That will almost certainly lend an increased urgency to our post-pandemic space planning process. Please feel free to share your plans and views with us. The clearer our view of your future vision and objectives, the better placed we will be to support you.

Meanwhile, as ever, best wishes and stay safe.

Fiona