

UK pallet network exceeds 31 million pallets in 2021



The Association of
Pallet Networks

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Key points include:

- APN releases 2021 figures for the pallet network sector
- Double digit growth in pallet volumes against both 2020 and 2019
- More than five million pallets delivered to residences
- Trailer utilisation and FLT productivity both increased.

Birmingham, UK: UK pallet network volumes in 2021 exceeded 30 million for the first time, with networks delivering 13.2% growth over 2020, and 16.8% growth when measured against 2019, according to the 2021 Annual Report from the Association of Pallet Networks.

In total the eight UK pallet networks which comprise the Association of Pallet Network (APN) membership delivered 31.5 million pallets.

The sectoral growth is in defiance of the groupage levels for the UK generally which declined significantly throughout 2020 and early 2021, according to Department for Transport figures.

Premium delivery pallets (destined for next-day / timed deliveries) numbered 19.9 million, 13.4% greater than both 2020 and 2019. Premium pallets therefore accounted for almost two-thirds of all pallets delivered.

APN chairman Paul Sanders says: “The strong performance of the premium pallet services demonstrates that freight owners and their customers value this priority service.”

Economy pallets numbered 11.6 million, a 12.8% increase against 2020, and 24.0% from 2019.

The growth in the home delivery market for palletised freight has continued since its dramatic rise during the first COVID 19 lockdowns. In 2021 17.4% of all pallets delivered by APN members were delivered to residential addresses, only a slight reduction from 2020 levels of 17.9%. In 2021, home delivery pallets exceeded five million for the first time.

“The pallet network was devised as a B2B model but, as in so many things, it has shown great resilience and adaptability in servicing the B2C marketplace,” says Sanders.

Despite the increase in pallet volumes, the safety-incident rate at Hubs decreased for the fourth year running, at 0.49 per 100,000 pallets. The most common cause, responsible for almost one-quarter, of accidents, was improper use of straps, nets and curtains.

Despite extremely high volumes and a significant skills shortage for drivers and warehouse staff throughout the logistics industry, the pallet networks still saw pleasing gains in productivity and efficiency. 2021 saw 9.5% more FLT hours used than 2020, but with a 3.6% increase in productivity.

Outbound trailer utilisation was also higher, year on year, at 75%. Pallet networks consistently return better trailer utilisation figures than Department for Transport figures for the entire industry, saving an estimated 150,000 truck journeys per year.

In total, APN members delivered 11.6 million tonnes of freight, with an average pallet weight of 374kg.

For more details on the pallet network sector performance in 2021, please see our attached report.

Notes to Editors

The **Association of Pallet Networks** has a membership of eight pallet networks in the UK: Fortec, Pall-Ex, Pallet-Track, Palletforce, Palletline, Palletways, THE Pallet Network and United Pallet Network. This in turn represents a total of 750 hauliers, almost 30,000 vehicles and over 13 million sq ft of warehouse space.

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