

# B2C still up by one third against 2019, as APN reveals Q1 results



The Association of  
Pallet Networks

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## **Association of Pallet Network (APN) figures show continued strong growth for the networks, but with defined shifts in the post-COVID marketplace**

### **Key points include:**

- **6.3%** volume growth for Q1 2023 against 2019 figures
- **Seven million** pallets delivered
- B2C up **32%** compared with Q1 2019
- Economy services up by **21%**
- Quarter pallets **11%** up against pre-pandemic numbers
- **60%** of pallets on Next Day delivery with **16%** having an agreed time window

The pallet network sector has enjoyed a strong and encouraging start to the year, but trends suggest significant and lasting shifts in customer preference since 2019, says APN chairman Paul Sanders.

Most significantly, home deliveries have become a significant and growing part of network portfolios, with 32% growth since Q1 2019.

This in turn has driven the growth in the use of quarter pallets, which is up 11%.

“The home delivery market was characterised by strong growth pre-pandemic, and then fuelled immensely by lockdown and home working. However, we can now see that this is a continuing trend, and is changing the profile of network deliveries, both in location and pallet size,” says Sanders.

Overall growth is at 6.3% against 2019 with seven million pallets delivered in Q1.

“The past three years were characterised by surges in volume, first from lockdown and then from pent up demand,” says Sanders. “However, we can now see that there is still real and significant growth in the sector, despite the uncertainties of the economic outlook.”

However, inflationary factors, including higher energy and finance costs is also visible in the figures.

The use of economy services has grown by **21%**: “Business is conscious of spending in these difficult economic times,” says Sanders. “Our members’ economy services offer excellent value to help customers lower transport costs.”

However, Next Day services still account for more than **60%** of all pallets delivered, with **16%** of next day consignments having a timed delivery window.

“Networks offer a wide range of delivery options, and it is a healthy sign that customers are differentiating between the freight which must be delivered as rapidly as possible and that which can have a more flexible delivery date. This keeps costs manageable for the customer and facilitates better and more environmentally friendly trailer utilisation by members,” says Sanders.

Service levels are now at **97%** after coming under increasing pressure from service restrictions during Covid disruption.

### **World Health and Safety Day**

APN took part in the recent World Health and Safety at Work Day, providing excellent safety resources for drivers and depot employees. It covered, among other things:

- Safe use of restraints and curtains
- Load bed safety
- What to do in an emergency
- The importance of keeping emergency contact information up to date
- PPE requirements.

“Safety is a core pillars at APN, and we are proud of our continued approach to best practice sharing. We reduced accidents by 5.3% this year, despite levels being very low already,” said Sanders. “Pallet networks have an impressive safety record, with just **0.52 accidents per 100,000 pallets** delivered.”

APN has worked closely with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Drivers and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) on pallet weight safety. APN data suggests that pallet weights continue to decline, averaging **362kg** in Q1 2023.

The APN is leading an Industry Collaboration Group along with the Road Haulage Association (RHA), HSE, and DVSA to develop best practices in load security and the challenges faced by the industry.

As APN enjoys its 17<sup>th</sup> year of operation, Sanders reflects that its members are optimistic about the year ahead. “We have had a very good start to 2023,” he says.

ENDS

### **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. These in turn represent 800 hauliers, more than 24,000 vehicles and over 13 million sq ft of warehouse space collectively.

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