



# Managing Brexit uncertainty and the demand on warehouses

Doubts, indecision and fear around a potential no-deal Brexit in October have created a chaotic situation for organisations across the UK.

Many businesses had already begun stockpiling goods including food, clothing and medicine in the run-up March 29, the original date pencilled in for the UK to leave the European Union. But as they seek to continue storing goods, they face an availability battle as most warehouses have already had space booked to deal with the busy Christmas period.

Meanwhile, many businesses have delayed or abandoned investment plans due to uncertainty or the need to prepare for different Brexit scenarios.

But the growing flow of goods into Britain is the pressing issue. The latest numbers from TIMOCOM's transport barometer – which measures transport demand through its freight exchange – found that truck transports towards Great Britain more than doubled in the first quarter of 2019 compared to the previous year<sup>1</sup>. With many warehouses already operating at capacity, new answers will need to be found in order to meet the stream of goods that shows no signs of slowing.



## Space invaders

Businesses in the UK that depend on imports from the EU are keen to increase their UK stock in preparation for a hard Brexit, which would involve the UK not only leaving the EU but also the single market and customs union.

As well as creating huge bottlenecks that could affect transport routes, the biggest issue is the dwindling capacity that UK warehouse owners are able to offer.

Even before the March 29 deadline, three-quarters of UK warehouse owners said they had reached capacity. Meanwhile, storage costs rocketed by up to 25% following the surge in Brexit-related inquiries<sup>2</sup>.

In January, The UK Warehousing Association (UKWA) told The Guardian there was a shortage of space close to major cities for stockpiling goods in case of holdups at ports after a no-deal exit from the EU. A survey of UKWA members also found that 85% had received Brexit-related inquiries, but about 75% were unable to take on more business from new customers.

From Bentley to Bampton, many companies have announced stockpiling plans and while some products can be stored easily for long periods others cannot.

For example, pharmaceuticals storage is understood to be at capacity while frozen and chilled food warehouse are also fully booked.

So what can be done?

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.logisticsit.com/articles/2019/04/30/timocom-worry-about-a-chaotic-brexit-causes-explosion-in-eu-exports-to-the-uk/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jan/21/uk-warehouse-space-nears-capacity-firms-stockpile-for-brexit>

## Beating Brexit

The current situation may be chaotic, but for warehouses the problem is really a simple one: more imports means more stock to manage.

Managing more stock puts pressure on people, space and time. But above all it puts pressure on processes. The question comes down to whether your processes are robust enough to deal with these uncertain times and ensure that you can work at maximum capacity while retaining the ability to stay flexible to short-term changes.

If you're thinking that this will be difficult to do with paper-based processes or outdated technology, you're right. Not only will older systems be unable to cope with modern demands, even maintaining them can become a drain on resources. The complexity and level of management required will quickly overwhelm those who do not take advantage of the latest technology to help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operation.

But if you're going to introduce new technology, smart spending will be vital. The winners during this crucial period will be those who maintain productivity and cost effectiveness while implementing systems that are robust enough to support both their current operation and additional needs.

The good news is that helpful technology is more accessible than ever, and it can have an almost instant impact in terms of replacing paper-based processes and improving visibility over stock.

This usually involves staff using reliable and rugged mobile devices to send and receive data, while a management system oversees that data and identifies how processes can be enhanced and flexibility can be improved.

A system that offers a real-time view of inventory will offer managers better visibility of their operation. But implementing a management system on top of a rollout of new technology can be a complex process.

However, with the support of a logistics expert it can be an easy transition that will ensure you are futureproofed. A good partner will look at the situation as a whole and design a solution that can be phased-in according to each unique site.

A trusted logistics expert that understands your business challenges can help you refine and establish your operational and strategic objectives and make the right technology choices. They can also help with deployment and any training that may be needed to work with specialist devices.

## About TouchStar

Based in the UK and with over three decades of experience within the development of mobile computers for warehouse environments, TouchStar has the knowledge to confidently offer mobile computing solutions to successfully addresses key business issues.

TouchStar's handheld, wearable, and vehicle-mounted mobile computers are purpose-built to provide enterprise-level support to meet new challenges. From labour-intensive tasks to fully automated environments, TouchStar's rugged mobile computers help reduce errors and significantly increase productivity and availability.

TouchStar offers extremely competitive prices on all its devices helping minimise procurement costs. TouchStar's experts are just a phone call away to help you choose the right products for your needs.

**For more information visit TouchStar's website at [www.rugged-mobile-computers.co.uk](http://www.rugged-mobile-computers.co.uk) or talk to our experts today +44 (0) 161 874 5050.**

