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Habitat Selects Unipart as New UK Logistics Partner

Habitat UK, the design home furnishing retailer, has awarded a £5m logistics contract to the logistics arm of Unipart Group.

Under the new contract, which covers warehousing and distribution for all 38 UK stores, Unipart Logistics – whose retail clients include Halfords, Homebase, Jessops and ASOS – will run Habitat's existing 165,000 sq ft facility at Wallingford, Oxfordshire.

Unipart Logistics has been working with Habitat since the retailer commenced a review of its stores' operations during the first half of 2007. The discussions around the new contract have centred on Habitat's desire to create a best practice supply chain platform for all its operations and it has seen the UK operation as the initial change point.

Habitat required a different logistics approach for its operation and people. The proximity of Unipart Logistics' flagship Teaching Distribution Centre at Cowley, Oxford, has allowed Unipart to offer its new client state-of-the-art training facilities to support Habitat's supply chain operations.

Under the new contract, around 95 team members at Habitat Wallingford will transfer to Unipart. The opportunities for personal development will be significant for all members of staff due to the proximity to Unipart's corporate university, The Unipart U, at Cowley. Unipart currently has around 2,000 people at the Cowley site.

All Unipart sites operate according to the Group's proprietary version of operational excellence and customer intimacy, known as The Unipart Way. This is a philosophy of working underpinned by tools and techniques that inspire efficiency, flexibility and outstanding customer service into any working process and has propelled Unipart to the forefront of the third party logistics sector.

Commenting on the contract award, Francois Rognoni, Head of Supply Chain at Habitat UK said:

"Unipart Logistics has a strong track record of innovation in the supply chain and, working with my team based from Wallingford, we see the strong process improvement and cultural change programmes having a marked impact on our store service proposition as well as creating further opportunities for our people at the distribution centre to further their careers as part of a larger group.

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“Working with Unipart Logistics gives us the opportunity of working with a partner with a strong reputation and proven record in continuous improvement. We are looking forward to how the implementation of The Unipart Way in Wallingford will bring many benefits in the form of a more efficient, flexible and better quality service to our UK stores.”

Ian Smith, Managing Director of Unipart Consumer Logistics commented:

“This contract win pays testament to our growing expertise in retail logistics as we make consistently strong inroads into the sector. We are proud to add Habitat to the list of blue-chip retailers we work with.

“The agreement we have reached creates a strong relationship with Habitat and is evidence of the outstanding hard work and achievement demonstrated by the Unipart Logistics team in creating a truly innovative commercial and operational model that will allow Habitat to take advantage of all elements of The Unipart Way in supporting the development of their stores’ services in the UK.”

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Notes to editors:

The Unipart Group employs more than 9000 personnel worldwide and has an annual turnover of more than £1billion.

Unipart Logistics provides retail logistics for Halfords, ASOS.com and Homebase technology logistics for Vodafone UK, 3 and BSkyB, and aerospace logistics for Airbus, as well as managing worldwide logistics for all Jaguar aftermarket parts.

Unipart also offers expert consultancy in implementing Lean principles across a variety of industry sectors as well as supply chain specific expertise.

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