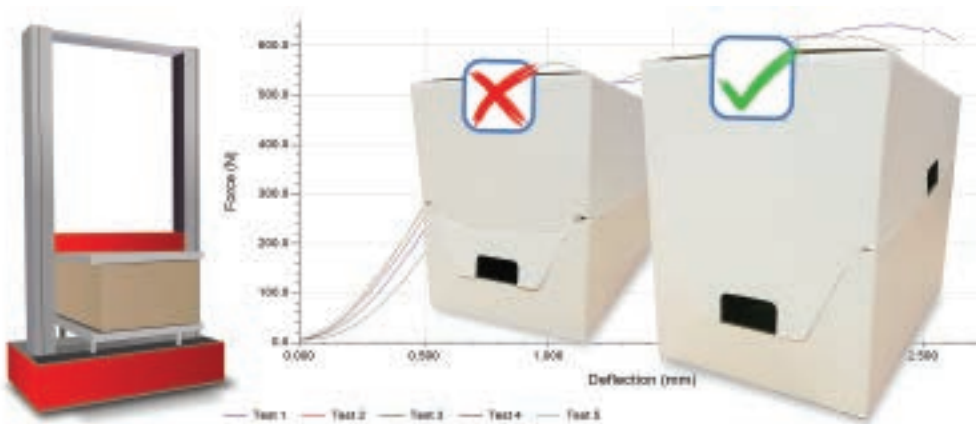


New Packaging Performance Programme



As part of our continuing drive to add value for our customers, we are launching a new packaging performance programme. The programme will be operated by i2i europe, our creative design company, and will control and enhance both production and design performance throughout the Group. To facilitate this initiative, we have moved our testing laboratory from its Manchester site to i2i's base in Hednesford.

The production side of the new performance programme involves testing the different boards manufactured within the Group to compile a matrix of data on materials and conversion processes. This will offer customers better information on suitable board grades for their projects, helping to prevent over-specing (thereby saving customers' money as well as natural resources), or under-specing (which could lead to packaging failing). The programme will also support a move away from kraft papers (made from virgin fibre) to test liners, which are made from recycled paper.

At the same time, the information gathered will allow us to rationalise the range of boards we produce, which will improve speed to market and reduce waste from running unnecessary grades.

Our structural designers regularly come up with innovative ideas to solve customers' specific problems. For the design performance part of this programme, i2i europe will be able to test new ideas and designs and tell customers with scientific certainty – and in advance of mass production – whether their packaging is fit for purpose.

We are also offering independent testing services to anyone who needs analysis of packaging produced by other manufacturers.

We invested in new testing equipment early in 2020, and our testing laboratory is able to undertake edge testing of corrugated board, as well as to test its compression strength (how much load the board can withstand before it collapses), its weight and its burst strength (how much pressure it can tolerate before it fails).

The lab will continue to support production at both sites, enabling us to check packaging performance and raw materials, and to test the sheet board manufactured on our in-house corrugator, to ensure it meets required standards and specifications.

Edd Perry, Group Creative and Innovation Manager, comments:

New Packaging Performance Programme

**Design Focus
Dealing with Coronavirus**

**What's New
What have old fridges got to do with it?**

More than Just Boxes!

**An Audience with...
Andrea Peikert**

Coronavirus Testing

**Industry Insight
Beige Gold**

"Adding value to our customers is one of our top priorities. The introduction of our packaging performance programme means that, if customers are specifying too high a board grade, we will be able to tell them that they can economise safely, while still providing good protection. This could save them a considerable amount of money. Anything that reduces the use of unnecessary raw materials and prevents waste is also better for our planet and in line with our Group sustainability goals.

"At the same time, we can provide peace of mind to our customers by testing our new designs for their packaging, and demonstrate that it will perform as required, before they commit to bulk production.

"In addition, i2i's testing programme will improve the Group's profitability, and reduce our environmental impact. We currently manufacture nearly 300 different board grades in-house. By the systematic analysis of the capabilities of these board grades, we hope to streamline our offering and reduce waste."

Design Focus

In this column, we introduce some of the innovative ideas which our in-house graphic and structural designers have developed to solve specific problems for our customers.



Dealing with Coronavirus

Customer Profile

Delphis Eco is the UK's leading manufacturer of eco-friendly cleaning products. Their products are environmentally friendly, biodegradable, sustainable and plant-based, and include everything from hand soaps to degreasers. They are used to clean palaces, schools, hospitals, restaurants and everything in between.

The Problem

Delphis Eco has been working with Iceland Stores since the first Coronavirus lockdown in March 2020, providing their sanitiser products for customer use at the entrance to Iceland's stores.

The initial solution was very basic and comprised various store items readily to hand, including store trolleys. Although this answered an urgent need at the start of the pandemic, Iceland was looking for a more effective, professional, neater alternative to replace it.

- The units had to be sufficiently robust to last for 6 - 12 months.
- They also had to be capable of being wiped down to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Any solution had to be in line with Delphis Eco's driving philosophy of protecting the planet and minimising environmental impact. Their chosen manufacturer had to share Delphis Eco's sustainability goals.

The Solution

- We designed a sturdy unit made from environmentally friendly corrugated

cardboard, with extra strength fluting to improve longevity.

- We share Delphis Eco's approach to the environment, prioritising sustainable raw materials. We strive to minimise carbon footprint, waste reclamation and land fill, and to maximise efficiency in our use of energy. We design packaging to minimise its impact on the environment at every stage of the supply chain. Everything we make is 100% recyclable.
- Plastic insert trays were included on the top of the unit to hold the Delphis hand sanitiser and help make the units easy to clean following drips or spills, and to preserve hygiene standards.

The sanitiser units were rolled out to all Iceland stores in January 2021. The company has been delighted with the way they stand out and how they have performed so far.

The Benefits

- Fully recyclable
- Lightweight for easy manoeuvrability
- Smart-looking
- Easy to use
- Easy to clean

We provided additional assistance by delivering direct to store in some cases to suit Iceland's needs.

Read our other [case studies](#) to find out how we have used our expertise to solve specific packaging problems for our customers.



FROM THIS
TO THIS



More than Just Boxes!

Weedon PSC is the manufacturer behind the latest trend sweeping through the party scene. Launching in April, Build a Booth is leading a selfie booth revolution, renting out portable photo booths with a tablet inside to take souvenir pictures of special events. The idea is expected to prove very popular at weddings and birthday parties.

We worked on Build a Booth's original concept and designed a unit which would be robust enough for repeated use at parties, and the booths are being produced at our factory in Hedgesford.



What's New

What have old fridges got to do with it?



In an exciting first for the Point of Sale (POS) industry, we are starting to use recycled fridge components in our display units.

We are working with Alpas, our regular supplier of POS accessories, on an eco-friendly development which involves the use of plastic clips for our POS displays which have been manufactured from recycled materials. Alpas has recently partnered with AO, the online electricals store, to use plastic reclaimed through its Recycled Fridge Programme for the manufacture of Alpas's new 'Easi-clips'.

Alpas is trialling the technology for the clips using our tooling, so we are currently the only POS manufacturer in the UK using these recycled clips.

The new clips have been tested against the existing clips and show absolutely no loss of performance or integrity – but, by reusing materials which would otherwise have gone to waste, they offer considerable environmental benefits.

An Audience with...



Andrea Peikert
Project Manager, Weedon PSC

requirement can be achievable. Having our own corrugator separates us from other packaging companies as, if there is an urgent job, we have the capability of being flexible in lead times.

Q) What innovations do you see making a real difference to our customers?

A) I would say that our design team and studio can create magical things. Sometimes the pressure on them can be very high, with tight lead times.

Q) What do you see as the next 'big thing' or hot topic in the packaging and POS industry?

A) Living in the 21st century, people realise that we need to use less plastic in our lives. Replacing plastic with paper is a real challenge. Another big thing is that, because of the pandemic and people being in lockdown for a long time, many have started to order online and there is high demand to make eCommerce boxes.

Q) What makes a 'good day' for you?

A) A good day is when I can leave my work desk nice and tidy, knowing that everything has been done on my to-do-list, that I have achieved everything that my customers expected from me, and I have had time to help others.

Q) What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

A) I have a cheeky little Yorkshire terrier called Boo Boo and I love spending time with him. I like travelling and discovering new places – of course with my husband and doggie. Before COVID-19 we were travelling across Europe by car every year, stopping in different countries to do small expeditions and to visit our friends and family in Hungary. I look forward to doing that again soon.

Q) You were born in Hungary, Andrea. When did you come to the UK?

A) My husband and I moved here with our two young children in 2005 to make a new life for ourselves. I always loved the idea of living in the UK, and learned English at school. I had the privilege to start working for the Weedon Group just after my birthday in 2019, so I have been 18 months with the Weedon family in Hednesford. I am a customer service project manager and work with lovely customers like SC Johnson, Vale Mill, Flexi-Hex etc. I am dealing with both Point of Sale (POS) and packaging.

Q) What do you enjoy most about your role and what do you find most challenging?

A) It is always nice to work with our customers, building up a great relationship and dealing with new enquires, especially if it is POS as almost every job is different. Because of the board situation in these days, the big challenge is to keep everything within the lead time and, as always, we need to be both competitive and efficient at the same time.

Q) What do you think makes the Weedon Group unique in the marketplace today?

A) As an independent, family-run business, the Weedon Group looks after their customers with great attention and care. Every special

Coronavirus Testing



The COVID testing station in the Weedon PSC factory

As part of our continuing commitment to Coronavirus safety, we have set up a COVID testing facility in our factory at Hednesford. The unit is offering lateral flow tests free to all factory and office staff, including agency workers, who would like one. The test, which is completely voluntary, can be taken on a weekly basis and will help to minimise the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace. We are testing about 100 staff a week now, and the unit is open for 7 hours a day, 2 or 3 days a week, as together we seek to reduce the spread of the disease.

continued...

...continued

To request a test, please contact Julie West, our POS Manager, who is running the unit. You will then be given a time slot to attend.

At your appointment, you will be directed through a one-way system to a registration booth, where your temperature will be taken and your details registered with the NHS website. You will then go through to the testing station, where you will be instructed how to complete the test, with staff on hand to help. You should receive a text from the NHS within 30 minutes to confirm your results. The station is thoroughly cleaned down between each test.

Julie said:

“Despite the extensive precautions taken within the Weedon Group to limit the spread of Coronavirus, we cannot afford to be complacent. One in three people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and are spreading it without knowing. Regular testing of staff without symptoms identifies and isolates cases and breaks the chain of infection, which helps protect us all.

“By setting up a testing unit on site, we can identify any cases and their close contacts early, and prevent large outbreaks. Our staff have embraced the idea of testing, and I have received numerous comments about how pleased everyone is at being able to take the test on site. It’s giving people the confidence that we are doing all we can to keep COVID out of our doors.”

REMEMBER: Rapid testing is for people without symptoms. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should book a test on gov.uk or by calling 119. Regular testing is a complement and not an alternative to COVID security. It is critical that we all still maintain hygiene and social distancing.

Industry Insight

Beige Gold

For many weeks now, the packaging press – and even major news outlets such as the BBC, The Telegraph and The Daily Mail – has been carrying articles with disturbing headlines about a national shortage of cardboard.

The first few months of 2021 have seen many companies struggling to find corrugated packaging. Even when they can source their boxes, businesses may be faced with unworkable lead times and significant price increases. Some large retailers have had to switch to alternative packaging materials, and delivery firms have warned of damaged parcels, increased costs and delays to home deliveries. Cardboard packaging has become so scarce it is now being referred to as ‘beige gold’.

For some businesses, shortages and delays will mean upsetting customers. For others, faced with the accumulated difficulties of the pandemic, being unable to get their products to market on time will summon their final death knell.

So why the shortage?

Changing shopping habits

According to the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI), packaging companies have been hit with a cardboard shortage primarily due to a combination of lockdown and Brexit. The previously steady growth of online retail at the expense of bricks and mortar shopping has soared with the coronavirus lockdown. Royal Mail, for example, estimates that there were around 200 million extra parcels sent through their own and other courier networks in 2020. The CPI says demand for cardboard boxes from online retailers is five years ahead of where it had expected it to be before the pandemic.

Business changes

The pandemic has affected demand in other ways too. Businesses which could no longer open their doors to customers turned to the Internet. Food box subscription services and takeaways all require packaging which is not needed for in-house service. Even the increase in home baking and egg consumption as a result of lockdown played a part.

Paper supply

Some of Europe’s largest paper mills suffered significant downtime due to staffing issues created by COVID-19. The knock-on effect was

paper stocks running at very low levels at exactly the same time that UK corrugated demand began to rise. All this played havoc with normal lead times from sheet board suppliers. Inevitably the imbalance between demand and supply has also led to paper price increases – 40% since the New Year, with more expected. Manufacturers have no choice but to pass at least some of this on to customers.

Brexit played a part too, with problems transporting material to make corrugated boxes across the Channel, as a result of the “chaos” at the ports caused by pre-deadline stockpiling and the usual fourth quarter rush, combined with the increased paperwork.

Recycling

One of the many attractions of corrugated cardboard as a packaging material is its recyclability. It contains up to 80% recycled material and can be recycled up to seven times before the paper fibres are depleted. But during lockdown there have been delays in getting waste corrugated cardboard back into the recycling chain. Offices, bars and restaurants, usually among the largest – and quickest – sources of recycling waste, have been closed for long periods. Collections of household recycling have been hampered by staff shortages, the Christmas break and an increase in waste overall. Recycling plants themselves have been hit by COVID cases and social distancing rules. On top of all this, packaging has been stockpiled in warehouses because of Brexit.

Taking all these factors together, a shortage of cardboard was inevitable.

The future

The CPI says Brexit delays are expected to drop away as new arrangements settle down, while mill maintenance schedules will return to normal as lockdowns end.

But consumer buying behaviour, specifically the increase in online retail, might well have changed forever, and the packaging industry will have to adapt to increased demand. Clearly, packaging manufacturers will have to do things differently.

Although the shortage of cardboard is a challenge, it has also provided an opportunity. Rethinking packaging design and good planning can minimise the use of materials, which can only be beneficial to the sustainability of both the packaging industry and our planet.

Weedon

Group

Weedon Group Ltd, Anglesey House, Anglesey Business Park, Littleworth Road, Hednesford, Staffordshire WS12 1NR
Telephone: 01543 423838 Email: contact@weedongroup.com Web: www.weedongroup.com

Weedon

Packaging Solutions Centre

iziurope

Creative Solutions

Weedon

Corrugated Products