



## **BITA leads way through economic storm at 2009 AGM**

**BITA, the British Industrial Truck Association, used its 2009 AGM on April 24 to reveal the latest predictions for the UK forklift market. While BITA's third Economic Forecast report inevitably painted a downbeat picture of the current market situation, it offered small crumbs of comfort in the apparent resilience of specific sectors such as the service industries. By way of a more uplifting counterpoint, independent business adviser Cathy Bennett shared seven tips for 'surviving and thriving' in the recession.**

As indicated by BITA's own members' sales statistics, issued in March, the Economic Forecast predicts an extended and significant downturn for the lift truck industry.

Its key points were:

- current lift-truck industry fortunes are directly linked to the retail and manufacturing industries – until they recover, the lift truck industry will not bounce back
- a deep decline is expected, with unprecedented falls in shipments and orders for 2009 across all classes of industrial truck
- only moderate growth is expected for 2010, but a stronger rebound could occur in 2011, as the economic recovery gathers pace
- compared with last year, counterbalance shipments are expected to drop by a total of 47.4%, warehouse shipments by 49.5% for Class Two, and 42.6% for Class Three

The report is authored by Oxford Economics, whose high-quality quantitative analysis and practical, evidence-based advice already helps businesses, governments and international organisations make confident decisions about tactics, strategy and policy.

James Clark, secretary general of BITA, said: "When we invested in this economic forecasting service for members, we knew it would be an invaluable tool for helping the industry predict, plan towards and prepare themselves for the future. I believe the current economic situation now validates our investment, since while we know we are in the grip of a recession, it's essential now to establish a clear path through the downturn and, ultimately, out of it with success."

**BITA's role in protecting the industry**

At the AGM, BITA President Richard Close (CEO of Briggs Equipment) reinforced the highly influential role of BITA's technical policy committee (TPC), chaired by Derek Rice of Electrofit-Zapi, in safeguarding the industry against inappropriate EU directives. For example, a recent proposal concerning the height of control pedals developed for road-going haulage trucks, could have been applied to lift trucks even though it was inappropriate for them. BITA's TPC intervened and ensured this did not enter legislation.

Richard said: "I would go so far as to say that the lift-truck industry could not function without BITA's TPC acting to soften inappropriate and unworkable rules."

The TPC meets twice a year and is engaged with a number of key international standard-setting bodies including the BSI, the British Standards Institution, CEN, the European Committee for Standardization, ISO, the International Standards Organisation, and IEC, the International Electrotechnical Commission.

**Sensible, independent advice for surviving and thriving**

Independent business guru, Cathy Bennett, outlined her tips for survival in the recession, giving a motivational presentation for getting through the current economic downturn. Her strategy offered seven tips for surviving the slump, and included adding value to the customer - a view which firmly echoes President Richard Close's ethos for the industry.

Cathy said: "Survival and success for the BITA members were my key messages. Above all a positive mindset is the key to surviving, and thriving. I believe in consistently applying the basics, sticking to what you are good at and then making sure you deliver what you promise, and I reiterated that to BITA members. In terms of success, it is vital to prepare for the industry's recovery, by creating innovative solutions for your customers which set you ahead of the competition."

Cathy Bennett can be contacted at [cathy@cathybennett.co.uk](mailto:cathy@cathybennett.co.uk). To find out more, visit her website: [www.cathybennett.co.uk](http://www.cathybennett.co.uk).

**BITA board**

The BITA board's current membership currently consists of:

Richard Close (Briggs):	President, Development & Member Services
Tim Waples (Doosan):	Vice President, Communications and IMHE Director
Bob Hine:	Technical Consultant
Bill Goodwin (Jungheinrich):	CFTS Director
Andrew Daly (Linde):	TSG Chairman
Tony Wheeler (REMA):	Component Suppliers Group (CSG) Chairman

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Derek Rice (Electrofit Zapi):	TPC Chairman
David Rowell (Hyster):	FEM/BMHF Representative
Simon Emery (Crown):	IMHE Director and CFTS Director
Steve Hodkinson (Toyota Material Handling):	Finance Director, BITA and CFTS Director
James Clark:	Secretary-General and IMHE Director

At the BITA Ball following the AGM, guests raised just under £2,500 to be divided between charities the RNLI, Help for Heroes and the County Air Ambulance Trust.

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*Issued on behalf of BITA.*

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#### **Notes for Editors**

- The British Industrial Truck Association, BITA, is a substantial and dynamic trade association representing a membership of 82 fork-lift truck manufacturers, suppliers, service providers and media operating in the UK.
- BITA is the voice of the industry in matters technical and legislative at the highest levels in Europe and internationally. It enjoys a close working relationship with bodies such as the UK Health and Safety Executive, the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) and the International Standards Organisation (ISO).
- As a member of the British Materials Handling Foundation (BMHF) BITA is allied with the Fédération Européenne de la Manutention (FEM), the European manufacturers' association of materials handling, lifting and storage equipment.
- BITA produces a wide range of specialist publications, encompassing best practice and health and safety assurance, as well as technical guidance notes and unique market insight. Its specialist committees include the Truck Suppliers Group (TSG), Technical Policy Committee (TPC), and the Component & Services Group (CSG) among many others.
- BITA members, including many international brands, manufacture and distribute over 90% of all new forklifts procured each year in the UK. They employ 7,000 people directly, and enjoy a combined annual turnover of £1.3bn. BITA members play an increasingly important role in the UK's overall economic health, supply chain effectiveness and environmental performance.