

Foodservice equipment merger gives CMA cause for concern

Ali Holding S.r.l. (Ali Group) and Welbilt, Inc. (Welbilt) provide a range of equipment to commercial kitchens across the UK, including much of the equipment typically found in pub and restaurant kitchens.

In particular, the businesses are 2 of the main suppliers of ice machines in the UK and compete closely with each other currently. At an early stage of the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) investigation, the businesses accepted that their planned merger would raise competition concerns in the supply of ice machines in the UK. As a result, they asked the CMA to use the 'fast track' procedure so that remedies to address these concerns could be considered as early as possible.

The CMA's formal investigation has now confirmed these concerns and found that the removal of Welbilt as an independent competitor could lead to higher prices or a lower quality service for the hospitality sector and, ultimately, customers.

The merging businesses' request for the use of the 'fast track' procedure has allowed the CMA to conclude its Phase 1 investigation within 10 working days of launching its investigation, well ahead of the 40 working day deadline for initial merger decisions.

The CMA will now consider whether the remedy proposed by Ali Group and Welbilt – which involves the sale of Welbilt's global ice machine business to an independent third party approved by the CMA – will fully restore the loss of competition in the supply of ice machines in the UK that the deal would otherwise have brought about.

Colin Raftery, CMA Senior Director of Mergers, said:

Protecting competition in the supply chain is key to ensuring that pubs and restaurants don't face unnecessary costs, helping in turn to get the best service and price possible for customers.

Following a swift investigation, we'll now carefully consider whether Ali Group and Welbilt's proposals will address our concerns.

The deal is subject to review by a number of competition authorities and the CMA has engaged closely with other agencies, including in relation to the proposed remedy, throughout its investigation.

For more information, visit the [Ali Group/Welbilt investigation page](#).

1. More information on the CMA's fast track procedure can be found in

section 7 of [Mergers: Guidance on the CMA's jurisdiction and procedure](#).

2. The CMA is, in most cases, required to issue a Phase 1 decision within 40 working days. Merging parties are required to formally offer proposed remedies (undertakings in lieu (UILs)) within 5 working days after receiving the CMA's Phase 1 decision and the CMA then decides, within 10 working days after the Phase 1 decision, whether to provisionally accept the UILs offered. The CMA then has 50 working days (subject to an extension of up to 40 working days) to consider whether to finally accept these remedies.
3. Ali Group is an Italian corporation with headquarters in Milan, Italy, and manufacturing, sales and service subsidiaries throughout Europe, North America, South America, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific.
4. Welbilt is an international company that is publicly listed on the New York Stock Exchange. It is active primarily in the design, manufacture, and supply of commercial foodservice equipment globally, including in the UK, and has global manufacturing facilities.
5. All media enquiries should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk, or by phone on 020 3738 6460.

[Up to 1000 farmers able to boost their businesses and add extra value to produce](#)

Press release

New £30 million funding grants to help farmers boost their businesses and add extra value to their produce.



£30 million funding will enable farmers in England to purchase equipment to process, diversify and add value to their produce.

[Funding grants](#) of up to £300,000 will be made available to farmers to help

them boost their businesses and add extra value to their produce, Environment Secretary, George Eustice has announced today.

£30million from the [Farming Investment Fund](#) (FIF) will enable farmers in England to purchase equipment to process, diversify and add value to their products after they have been harvested or reared. This could include premises and equipment for the preparation or processing of agricultural produce, for example turning milk into cheese or yoghurt, processing meat into sausages, and potatoes into crisps or chips; or equipment such as vending machines and display facilities for selling food direct to customers.

The funding will be offered in sums between £25,000 and £300,000.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice, said:

We want to support the choices that farmers make for their businesses. We are spending around £600 million on farm-based innovation over the next three years, and the money announced today will support farmers across England with their investment plans, to improve their profitability and productivity.

It is also being announced today that the first round of new Slurry Infrastructure grants, worth £13 million, will open later this autumn. These new grants will help livestock farmers in England to upgrade their slurry storage and nutrient management systems and, in so doing, help reducing water and air pollution from slurry. [Guidance for applicants](#) is now available on GOV.UK.

Eligible capital items include:

- equipment for preparing or processing edible agricultural products for added value sales
- equipment for 'second stage' processing of grain – for example, colour sorting, blending
- equipment for processing non-edible agricultural products into new products (for example, flax, hemp, wool, hides, and skins)
- equipment for retailing eligible agricultural products (for example, vending machines or display facilities)
- premises for the preparation or processing of added value agricultural products, including associated integral storage areas.

You can apply for a grant if you are:

- a grower or other producer of agricultural products (by which we mean you carry on an agricultural or horticultural activity, including rearing livestock)
- a business processing agricultural or horticultural products which is at least 50% owned by agricultural or horticultural producers.

[Check if you can apply for a Farming Transformation Fund Adding Value Grant.](#)

50 top online government services to be easier and faster to use than ever before

- 50 of the most frequently used digital government services to be upgraded by 2025
- More than 6,500 senior civil servants will be upskilled through digital bootcamps, ensuring they have the skills to focus on the public's priorities
- Over £1 billion will be saved by updating old tech and streamlining processes

Key online government services will become easier than ever before for people to use thanks to upgrades and investment in the Civil Service workforce over the next three years.

The plans, launched today by Cabinet Office Minister Heather Wheeler, are part of the government's new digital and data strategy. It will see more than £1 billion savings generated by 2025, by eliminating unnecessary costs of paper based services.

As part of this, an estimated £101 million will be saved every year through better procurement, reducing attrition rates of talented staff and less reliance on costly consultants.

The new strategy will deliver significant improvements in digital systems, with the aim of having public services as easy to access as booking a holiday and shopping online.

By 2025, at least 50 of the most frequently used government services will be significantly improved, including by making services easily accessible on mobile devices, a single login available across government services, and bringing in intelligent data sharing making it easier and faster to register to vote and claim legal aid.

The strategy also sets out plans to upskill Civil servants through specialist training workshops, including assessed courses on sourcing good quality data and understanding the technologies that underpin digital services, with a target to equip more than 6,500 senior civil servants with essential digital skills by 2025. Digital standards will be embedded in performance reviews to ensure the way users interact with government services is at the forefront of decision-making.

Minister Heather Wheeler, Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Cabinet Office, said:

When people order their groceries, book a holiday or check their bank accounts, they expect and receive a seamless and easy experience. The same should be true of government services.

This new strategy will put us in lockstep with the private sector, transforming the delivery of key services that people rely on so that they are simpler and faster to use while also cutting costs.”.

The savings of more than £1 billion will also come from better service delivery and the replacement of outdated IT systems, with the adoption of a ‘build once, use many times’ policy helping to reduce duplication of spend across government. The Central Digital and Data Office will work across government to ensure taxpayers’ money is efficiently spent, wielding departments’ collective buying power.

Cyber defences will also be bolstered across government through cyber training and annual testing, aligning with the Government Cyber Security Strategy to protect vital public services and sensitive data from malicious attacks.

To monitor progress, specific department-level digital and data targets will be drawn up and overseen by a forum of permanent secretaries.

Paul Willmott, Chair of the Central Digital and Data Office in the Cabinet Office, said:

This strategy represents a new era of cross-governmental collaboration on digital transformation and puts the public’s experience at the heart of online services.

Investing in the Civil Service workforce through high-quality training will enable government to improve its decision-making, while driving up digital standards and adoption across the board.

Notes to editors

- You can read the strategy [here](#).
- The strategy sets out a clear roadmap for delivery of Government’s plans on digital and data over the next three years
- The strategy focuses on six key missions, which are priority areas for digital transformation. They are:
 - Transformed Public Services that Achieve the Right Outcomes
 - One Login for Government
 - Better Data to Power Decision Making
 - Efficient, Secure and Sustainable Technology
 - Digital Skills at Scale

[Charities encouraged to have their say on changes to the Annual Return](#)

The Charity Commission has [launched a formal consultation](#) on proposed changes to the Annual Return, designed to ensure the regulator is collecting the right information in the years ahead.

The Annual Return is an online form that all charities with yearly incomes of £10,000 or more must complete within 10 months of the end of their financial reporting period.

The return has not changed significantly since 2018, but after a comprehensive review, the Commission is proposing to update the question set which charities will need to complete from 2023 onwards.

Important milestone in regulator's data strategy

The updates to the Annual Return are a key step in the Commission's ambitions to become a more data-driven regulator. The wider strategy aims to ensure the nature and volume of data it gathers on charities serves three purposes: enabling the Commission to better identify risks and problems in the sector, helping the public make informed and confident choices about charities, and allowing policy-makers, researchers, the sector, and the public to gain a richer understanding of the sector in England and Wales.

Proposed changes

The proposed changes mean that charities will answer a greater number of questions, but in many cases the questions have been simplified and clarified. Overall, the Commission has aimed to ensure the time burden on charities in completing the return remains reasonable and proportionate.

The final questionnaire will also include an interactive glossary to help charities in completing the form. This remains under development and will be informed by responses to the consultation.

Among the planned additions are questions designed to:

- Better capture and understand charities' reliance on certain types of income, and on single sources of funding. For example, charities will be asked whether 70% or more of their funding relies on one income stream, and whether 25% or more of their income comes from certain types of income sources, such as corporate donors.
- Gain more information on roles and responsibilities, governance,

controls and different organisational structures in charities, as the regulator's case work indicates that this information can, in certain circumstances, correlate with risk.

- Help create a more accurate picture of the geographical areas in which charities operate in England and Wales, by asking for information about the premises from which charities operate. Amongst other things, this data will help policy makers and grant-givers identify geographic areas which are comparatively under-served by charitable work. This will allow funders to make decisions that help 'level-up' such 'charity deserts'.
- Better capture staffing numbers and payroll costs in the sector, allowing the public and others to consider charities' use of resources and their capability to deliver certain types of activity.

The Commission is keen to hear from a wide range of charities as part of the consultation, so that it can make any necessary adjustments before the new return is launched in 2023. Alongside the formal consultation, the Commission has been undertaking user-testing of the question set with charities, to ensure the questions as drafted are clear and easy to understand. A further round of this user-testing is planned for July. This will involve 4,000 randomly chosen charities being asked to provide feedback on the language of the question set as drafted.

Helen Stephenson, chief executive of the Charity Commission, said:

The annual return is a crucial tool that helps charities account for their work to us as regulator, and to the public and funders. It's important we get the questions right, but also that we keep the burden on charities completing the return proportionate. So I encourage charities to look at the proposed changes and have their say as part of our consultation.

Looking ahead, the new information we hope to gather through the annual return will benefit the sector, as well as the Commission as regulator, by allowing us to make more detailed, richer information about the sector available, which in turn can inform the public and funders in making better informed decisions about which charities to support.

New, flexible approach with three-year set of questions

As part of the proposed changes, the Commission is developing a more flexible approach to the use of proposed AR questions, allowing it to tweak each AR during the period in question, depending on prevailing circumstances.

The proposal is for the majority of questions set out in the consultation to appear each year. This stability will allow for longitudinal data that helps the Commission and others compare trends year-on-year. A small number of questions may not be appropriate to include in a given year, for example because the risk in question is time-limited, or because there are other ways for the Commission to gather the relevant information.

The Commission will publish in advance details of which questions have been selected for inclusion in the AR and the rationale for including them.

How to take part in the consultation

Charities can respond to questions [via an online survey](#), and provide additional information or responses via a dedicated mailbox.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks, ending 1 September 2022.

Ends

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The Commission has made available a dedicated mailbox for those who may wish to provide additional information to the consultation (ARconsultation@charitycommission.gov.uk).
3. A [Welsh language version of the consultation](#) is available.

[Her Majesty The Queen receives Platinum Jubilee gift from Cabinet Ministers](#)

Press release

Her Majesty The Queen has received a bespoke gift from Cabinet ministers to mark her remarkable 70 years of service.



To mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, a hand-painted enamel-on-copper

musical box, commissioned from Halcyon Days has been gifted.

As has been a tradition for previous Jubilees, Her Majesty The Queen has received a bespoke gift from Cabinet ministers to mark her remarkable 70 years of service.

Over the last seven decades, the Queen has been served by fourteen individuals from Winston Churchill to current Prime Minister Boris Johnson. James Callaghan's Cabinet marked the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 by presenting her with a silver coffee pot. Then in 2002, for the Queen's Golden Jubilee, Her Majesty received a silver gilt plate from her Cabinet ministers, which was engraved with their signatures.

To mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, a hand-painted enamel-on-copper musical box, commissioned from Halcyon Days has been gifted.

100% hand made in England, finished with a platinum mount, when opened the musical movement plays Handel's 'Hallelujah'. A symbol of praise, this gift honours her exemplary service and phenomenal achievements.

The box uniquely pictures No 10 Downing Street on the top and a miniature portrait of all fourteen of Her Majesty's Prime Ministers since 1952 around the sides. These portraits are surrounded by the same yellow shade found on the staircase walls at No10, which famously feature pictures of all the British Prime Ministers.

On the inside lid, an inscription including the names of the Cabinet can be found as a token gesture to illustrate their unwavering admiration and respect for her dedication and service to her people and her beloved Commonwealth.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee marks a symbolic moment in our nation's history, and this bespoke musical box gifted by members of the Cabinet serves to commemorate the celebrations that will remain etched in our memories.

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