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John M. Neill CBE Appointed Chairman of Unipart Group

The board of Unipart Group, one of Europe's leading private logistics, manufacturing and consultancy companies has appointed John M. Neill CBE as Chairman, succeeding Lord Sheppard of Didgemere, who has retired from the role after serving as non-executive Chairman for 16 years.

John M. Neill was previously Deputy Chairman of the board and will continue in his role as Unipart Group Chief Executive. Mr. Neill is also non-executive Director of Rolls-Royce plc. He was formerly a Director of the Bank of England and a non-executive Director of the Royal Mail and Charter International plc.

Announcing the appointment, Lord Sheppard said that the appointment of Mr. Neill as Chairman and CEO is wholly consistent with Unipart's long term approach for its companies to be led by a strong philosophy and set of values that have guided the Group's growth since its management buyout in 1987.

Lord Sheppard said: "I have watched Unipart grow under the stewardship of John Neill from a company with one client in one sector to a leading logistics, manufacturing and consultancy group with a strong international business, a growing set of blue chip clients in a wide range of sectors, and an established reputation for being at the forefront of engaging all of its stakeholders in long term relationships.

"The development of The Unipart Way, with its focus on developing high levels of employee engagement, is now being successfully implemented through our consultancy business in a range of private and public sector clients. It has been at the heart of Unipart's growth and remains a key differentiator for the Group. It was the strong view of the board that John Neill, who has led the successful growth of Unipart as CEO and championed the development of The Unipart Way, should now lead the board as Chairman."

John Neill joined Unipart from General Motors in 1974 and set out to establish a more independent and broadly based role for what was then British Leyland's Parts Division. In 1987 he led the successful management buyout of the company and began the process of changing not only the culture of the company but also the whole philosophy by which the business is run.

During his tenure as CEO, Neill created a strong leadership team that enabled the Group to develop in three major areas: logistics, manufacturing and consultancy. The Group has a wide range of blue chip clients including Vodafone, Jaguar Land Rover, ASOS, BMW Mini, First Group and many others.

Commenting on his appointment, John Neill paid tribute to Lord Sheppard who was appointed Chairman of Unipart in 1996 following 21 years as Chief Executive and then Chairman of Grand Metropolitan. He had previously spent nearly 18 years in the motor industry in finance, sales, marketing and line management with Ford, Rootes and British Leyland.

John Neill said: "I am pleased to be able to accept this appointment as Chairman and deeply indebted to Lord Sheppard who has been a champion for Unipart for many years. Those who have come to know Allen personally, as I have, will recognise him as a demanding champion of responsible business. We owe a deep sense of gratitude to Lord Sheppard for his courage in the face of adversity, wise counsel and values-based leadership. I'm therefore delighted to announce that he has agreed to accept the appointment as Honorary President which means that both I and the board can continue to benefit from his advice and guidance from time to time.

John Neill commented further:

"We will redouble our efforts to manage in line with the principles of the Unipart Way with particular emphasis on those which require us to manage with a long-term view, and "strive to develop our people and promote from within. We are also required where appropriate to recruit exceptional people into our company and we shall therefore seek to strengthen the board with non-executives with the appropriate skills to support our growth agenda.

Lord Sheppard said: "I have no doubt that John Neill is exactly the right person to succeed me as Chairman and I wish him and all of his colleagues in the company continuing success in the future"

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Editors' Notes:

About The Unipart Group

The Unipart Group employs around 10,000 personnel worldwide and has an annual turnover of more than £1billion. It is a leading full service logistics provider and consultant in operational excellence.

Operating across a range of market sectors, including automotive, leisure, marine, manufacturing, mobile telecoms, rail, retail and technology, Unipart offers a breadth of services from third party logistics to expert consultancy.

All Unipart sites operate according to the Group's proprietary version of Lean known as The Unipart Way. This is a philosophy of working underpinned by tools and techniques that inspires efficiency, flexibility and outstanding customer service in any process.

Unipart also offers expert consultancy in implementing Lean principles and in supply chain management across a variety of industry sectors.

The Group's clients include Sainsbury's, ASOS.com, Homebase, Vodafone, BMW, Three, Sky, Aston Martin, Jaguar Land Rover.