8 December 2020

Unaudited results for the half year and second quarter ended 31 October 2020

	Second quarter			First half		
	2020	2019	Growth[1]	2020	2019	Growth[1]
	£m	£m	%	£m	£m	%
Underlying results[2,3]						
Rental revenue	1,216	1,282	-1%	2,297	2,447	-4%
EBITDA	663	700	-1%	1,211	1,327	-7%
Profit before taxation	330	371	-7%	538	690	-21%
Earnings per share	54.3p	60.5p	-6%	89.0p	111.8p	-19%
Statutory results						
Revenue	1,351	1,403	-	2,554	2,681	-3%
Operating profit	365	413	-8%	614	771	-19%
Profit before taxation	314	356	-8%	506	660	-22%
Earnings per share	51.6p	57.9p	-7%	83.6p	107.0p	-20%

Half-year highlights[3]

- Strong market outperformance during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Revenue down 3%[1]; rental revenue down 4%[1]
- Operating profit of £614m (2019: £771m)
- Pre-tax profit[2] of £538m (2019: £690m)
- Earnings per share[2] of 89.0p (2019: 111.8p)
- Record free cash flow of £822m (2019: £228m)
- Net debt to EBITDA leverage[1,3] of 1.7 times (2019: 1.9 times)
- Interim dividend maintained at 7.15p per share (2019: 7.15p per share)
- Expect full-year results ahead of our previous expectations

1 Calculated at constant exchange rates applying current period exchange rates.
2 Underlying results are stated before intangible amortisation.
3 Throughout this announcement we refer to a number of alternative performance measures which provide additional useful information. The directors have adopted these to provide additional information on the underlying trends, performance and position of the Group. The alternative performance measures are not defined by IFRS and therefore may not be directly comparable with other companies' alternative performance measures, but are defined in the Glossary on page 32.

Ashtead's chief executive, Brendan Horgan, commented:

"I am delighted to report a strong quarter of market outperformance across the business contributing to rental revenue down only 4% in the half year at constant exchange rates. Our dedicated team members throughout North America and the United Kingdom have made this possible, once again delivering for all our stakeholders. I am extraordinarily proud of, and grateful for, their collective response and execution, all while keeping our leading value of safety at the forefront of what we do.

This performance illustrates the successful execution of our long-term strategy, which we embarked upon after the last recession, to broaden and diversify our end markets and strengthen our balance sheet. This positioned us to capitalise on our ever increasing scale, while remaining agile, particularly during these unprecedented times. The actions we took to optimise cash flow, reducing capital expenditure and operating costs, resulted in record free cash flow for the first half of £822m (2019: £228m) contributing to reduced leverage of 1.7 times compared to 1.9 times at year end, in the lower half of our target range.

Looking forward, the strength of our business model and balance sheet positions the Group well in markets that are likely to remain uncertain. Based on our half year performance and assuming no further significant adverse impact on our business resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, we now expect full year results ahead of our previous expectations. The benefit we derive from the diversity of our products, services and end markets, coupled with ongoing structural change, enables the Board to look to the future with confidence."

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Brendan Horgan and Michael Pratt will hold a conference call for equity analysts to discuss the results and outlook at 10am on Tuesday, 8 December 2020. The call will be webcast live via the Company's website at www.ashtead-group.com and a replay will be available via the website shortly after the call concludes. A copy of this announcement and the slide presentation used for the call are available for download on the Company's website. The usual conference call for bondholders will begin at 3.30pm (10.30am EST).

Analysts and bondholders have already been invited to participate in the analyst call and conference call for bondholders but any eligible person not having received details should contact the Company's PR advisers, Maitland/AMO (Audrey Da Costa) at +44 (0)20 7379 5151.

Forward looking statements

This announcement contains forward looking statements. These have been made by the directors in good faith using information available up to the date on which they approved this report. The directors can give no assurance that these expectations will prove to be correct. Due to the inherent uncertainties, including both business and economic risk factors underlying such forward looking statements, actual results may differ materially from those expressed or implied by these forward looking statements. Except as required by law or regulation, the directors undertake no obligation to update any forward looking statements whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

Overview and markets

Our first half has been dominated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our response to these unprecedented times has been impressive. Our robust model has enabled us to continue to serve all our customers in all our geographies. Throughout this period our focus has been on our people, our customers, our communities and our investors, in particular:

- ensuring the health and safety of our team members and customers;
- continuing to serve the needs of our customers and communities, including supporting government and private sector responses to the pandemic; and
- taking steps to optimise cash flow, reduce operating costs and strengthen further our liquidity position during a period of suppressed activity.

While trading volumes were lower than last year as a result of the pandemic, this has been mitigated, in part, by emergency response efforts throughout our business but particularly within our specialty businesses. Sunbelt Rentals is designated as an essential business in the US, UK and Canada and has supported government and private sector responses to the pandemic. This includes providing vital equipment and services to first responders, hospitals, alternative care facilities, testing sites, food services and telecommunications and utility companies, while continuing to service ongoing construction sites and increased facility maintenance and cleaning. In addition, we have responded to other emergencies across the US including wild fires in the west and an active storm season impacting a number of states.

As a result of these market dynamics, first half rental only revenue in the US was only 6% lower than last year. Within this overall performance, our general tool business was 8% lower than last year (second quarter 7% lower than prior year), while the specialty businesses demonstrated the benefit of a broader range of products and end markets with rental only revenue 12% higher than last year, including a storm impacted second quarter that was 18% higher than last year. This contributed to Group rental revenue in the first half 4% lower than the prior year at constant exchange rates. The degree of impact on volume has varied significantly across our geographical markets and is correlated to the severity of infection rates and associated market level restrictions. Activity levels have increased consistently through the period such that fleet on rent is now broadly in line with prior year in the US and Canada and higher in the UK.

The Group's skilled workforce is instrumental to our long-term success and we made every effort to preserve our committed workforce for when markets recovered. Therefore, we have not made any team members redundant as a result of the impact of COVID-19 and have not sought assistance from any government support programmes such as the UK's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or similar schemes in Canada.

Our performance, in a challenging environment, reflects the benefit of our long-term strategy which is focused on broadening and diversifying our end markets, while at the same time increasing our scale and market share. Our business model allows us to operate successfully in wide ranging market conditions as we allocate capital strategically, based on a consistently applied policy which takes account of the macroeconomic backdrop and our leverage.

Looking forward, we believe that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to give rise to market uncertainties over the coming months. However, with strong positions in all our markets, supported by good quality fleets and a strong financial position, we believe that we are well positioned to respond to this market uncertainty and continue to support our customers and team members as well as taking advantage of opportunities to invest for the longer-term strength of the business.

First half trading results

	Revenue 2020	Revenue 2019	EBITDA 2020	EBITDA 2019	Profit[1] 2020	Profit[1] 2019
US in $m	2,746.9	2,887.5	1,373.7	1,502.0	781.6	947.0
Canada in C$m	220.2	200.3	92.9	85.0	33.2	40.4
US in £m	2,153.1	2,304.8	1,076.7	1,198.9	612.6	755.9
UK	272.6	255.9	86.0	85.8	20.0	30.0
Canada in £m	128.3	120.6	54.1	51.2	19.4	24.3
Group central costs	-	-	(6.0)	(8.8)	(6.4)	(9.2)
	2,554.0	2,681.3	1,210.8	1,327.1	645.6	801.0
Net financing costs					(107.4)	(111.1)
Profit before amortisation and tax					**538.2**	**689.9**
Amortisation					(32.0)	(29.7)
Profit before taxation					506.2	660.2
Taxation charge					(131.7)	(166.3)
Profit attributable to equity holders of the Company					374.5	493.9
Margins						
US			*50.0%*	*52.0%*	*28.5%*	*32.8%*
UK			*31.5%*	*33.5%*	*7.3%*	*11.7%*
Canada			*42.2%*	*42.4%*	*15.1%*	*20.2%*
Group			*47.4%*	*49.5%*	*25.3%*	*29.9%*

[1] Segment result presented is operating profit before amortisation.

Group revenue decreased 5% (3% at constant exchange rates) to £2,554m in the first half (2019: £2,681m). However, the sudden fall in activity levels in March and April had a significant impact on profit in the first half as a large proportion of our costs are fixed in the short term. This profit impact reflects, in part, our decision to not make team members redundant as a result of COVID-19 and ensure we had a committed workforce ready to take advantage of improving market conditions, when the recovery came. We used the opportunity presented by lower activity levels both to ensure our fleet was well maintained and serviced in preparation for activity levels improving and to identify market opportunities to drive revenue. As a result, underlying profit before tax for the first half was £538m (2019: £690m).

Although COVID-19 has influenced the Group's short-term planning and actions, our strategy remains unchanged with long-term growth being driven by organic investment (same-store and greenfield) supplemented by bolt-on acquisitions. In the US and UK, we experienced 6% and 2% rental only revenue declines respectively, while in Canada, rental only revenue increased 17% with the benefit of the William F White ('WFW') acquisition.

In the US a moderate rental only revenue decline represents a strong market outperformance, demonstrating the benefit of our strategy of growing our specialty business and broadening our end markets. In the half year, our specialty business grew 12% while the general tool business declined 8%. We estimate that hurricane response efforts contributed $35-40m of revenue in the second quarter. US total revenue, including new and used equipment, merchandise and consumable sales, decreased 5% to $2,747m (2019: $2,887m).

The UK business generated rental only revenue of £172m, down 2% on the prior year on a comparable basis (2019: £175m). This was a strong performance as the breadth of our product offering and commitment of our team members enabled us to provide essential support to the Department of Health in its COVID-19 response efforts. Total revenue increased 7% to £273m (2019: £256m) reflecting, in part, a higher level of ancillary and sales revenue associated with the work for the Department of Health, which accounted for almost 20% of UK revenue.

Canada's rental only revenue increased 17% on a reported basis. Excluding the impact of the acquisition of William F. White ('WFW'), rental only revenue of the legacy business decreased 8%. Total Canadian revenue was C$220m (2019: C$200m).

In all our markets we took action to reduce operating costs and eliminate discretionary expenditure. However, we believe there continues to be good opportunities to grow the business and we remain focused on disciplined investment to position the Group for the next phase of growth. We took early decisions not to make any team members redundant as a result of COVID-19 or seek assistance from any government support programmes but to continue investment in the business, including our technology platform and the condition of our rental fleet. As a result, in the US, 73% of the revenue decline dropped through to EBITDA. This contributed to a reported EBITDA margin of 50% (2019: 52%) and a 17% decrease in operating profit to $782m (2019: $947m) at a margin of 28% (2019: 33%). Excluding the impact of used equipment sales, the EBITDA margin would have been only 1% lower than last year.

Last year we launched Project Unify in the UK with the objective of improving operational efficiency and returns. This has resulted in significant investment in the operational infrastructure of the business which, when combined with the impact of COVID-19 on activity levels, contributed to an EBITDA margin of 32% (2019: 34%). Operating profit of £20m (2019: £30m) at a margin of 7% (2019: 12%) reflected these factors and a property impairment charge of c. £10m as we reshape the business to drive operational improvement.

Canada is in a growth phase as we invest to expand its network and develop the business. The most recent acquisition was WFW, which serves the film and TV production industries, and, while the prospects for this business remain bright, it was a significant drag on Canadian performance in the first half as production activity in Canada ceased in March and only restarted in September. While WFW contributed virtually no revenue in the first quarter, we retained all the team members and infrastructure of the business. This decision was vindicated with a strong bounce back in activity in September and October such that October saw near record revenue for the business. These factors contributed to a loss for the WFW business of C$2m in the half year which impacted Canadian margins adversely. The legacy Canadian business, excluding WFW, increased its EBITDA margin to 45% (2019: 42%) and generated an operating profit of C$35m (2019: C$40m) at a 20% margin (2019: 20%). This performance reflects a strong focus on operational efficiency.

Overall, Group underlying operating profit decreased to £646m (2019: £801m), down 18% at constant exchange rates. After net financing costs of £107m (2019: £111m), Group profit before amortisation of intangibles and taxation was £538m (2019: £690m). After a tax charge of 26% (2019: 25%) of the underlying pre-tax profit, underlying earnings per share decreased to 89.0p (2019: 111.8p). The underlying cash tax charge was 36%.

Statutory profit before tax was £506m (2019: £660m). This is after amortisation of £32m (2019: £30m). Included within the total tax charge is a tax credit of £8m (2019: £7m) which relates to the amortisation of intangibles. As a result, basic earnings per share were 83.6p (2019: 107.0p).

Capital expenditure

Capital expenditure for the first half was £343m gross and £192m net of disposal proceeds (2019: £1,010m gross and £866m net). This is ahead of where we had planned to be at this stage of the year with additional expenditure in the North American specialty businesses to meet demand and in the UK to support the COVID-19 response efforts for the Department of Health. As a result, we have raised our gross capital expenditure guidance for the full year to be in the range of £650m to £700m. Second hand markets remain healthy and the Group disposed of fleet, including old oil and gas fleet, as planned. As a result, the Group's rental fleet at 31 October 2020 at cost was £9.1bn and our average fleet age is now 39 months (2019: 33 months).

Return on Investment

The Group's return on investment metrics have been affected adversely by the decline in activity levels and their impact on profits from mid-March onwards as a result of COVID-19. This has led to return on investment (excluding goodwill and intangible assets) in the US for the 12 months to 31 October 2020 of 18% (2019: 23%). In the UK, return on investment (excluding goodwill and intangible assets) was 4% (2019: 7%). As a result of the actions taken through Project Unify and the strategic plans for the business, we expect returns in the UK to improve post COVID-19. In Canada, return on investment (excluding goodwill and intangible assets) was 7% (2019: 11%). We have made a significant investment in Canada including the acquisition of William F. White last year and, as we develop the potential of the market, we expect returns to improve. For the Group as a whole, return on investment (including goodwill and intangible assets) was 13% (2019: 17%). Return on investment excludes the impact of IFRS 16.

Cash flow and net debt

The Group generated free cash flow of £822m (2019: £228m) during the period, a record for the business, which was used to reduce debt. Net debt at 31 October 2020 was £4,700m (2019: £5,237m). Excluding the effect of IFRS 16, net debt at 31 October 2020 was £3,571m, while the ratio of net debt to EBITDA was 1.7 times (2019: 1.9 times) on a constant currency basis. The Group's target range for net debt to EBITDA is 1.5 to 2.0 times excluding the impact of IFRS 16 (1.9 to 2.4 times post IFRS 16). Including the effect of IFRS 16, the ratio of net debt to EBITDA was 2.1 times (2019: 2.3 times) on a constant currency basis. The Group's borrowing facilities are committed for an average of five years at a weighted average cost of 4%.

At 31 October 2020, availability under the senior secured debt facility was $3,089m with an additional $1,747m of suppressed availability – substantially above the $460m level at which the Group's entire debt package is covenant free.

Dividend

In line with our policy of providing a progressive dividend, having regard to both underlying profit and cash generation and to sustainability through the economic cycle, the Board has maintained the interim dividend at 7.15p per share (2019: 7.15p per share). This will be paid on 3 February 2021 to shareholders on the register on 15 January 2021.

Capital allocation

The Group remains disciplined in its approach to allocation of capital with the overriding objective being to enhance shareholder value. Our capital allocation framework remains unchanged and prioritises:

- organic fleet growth;
    - same-stores;
    - greenfields;
- bolt-on acquisitions; and
- a progressive dividend with consideration to both profitability and cash generation that is sustainable through the cycle.

Additionally, we consider further returns to shareholders. In this regard, we assess continuously our medium term plans which take account of investment in the business, growth prospects, cash generation, net debt and leverage. Therefore the amount allocated to buybacks is simply driven by that which is available after organic growth, bolt-on M&A and dividends, whilst allowing us to operate within our 1.5 to 2.0 times target range for net debt to EBITDA pre IFRS 16.

The Group paused its share buyback programme in March as we took action to optimise our cash flow and strengthen further our liquidity position due to the uncertainty arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. We have resumed greenfield openings and, within the context of our balanced capital allocation policy, leverage range and the macroeconomic backdrop, we continue to assess bolt-on opportunities and the appropriate time to resume the buyback programme.

Current trading and outlook

Looking forward, the strength of our business model and balance sheet positions the Group well in markets that are likely to remain uncertain. Based on our half year performance and assuming no further significant adverse impact on our business resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, we now expect full year results ahead of our previous expectations, based on our updated guidance below. The benefit we derive from the diversity of our products, services and end markets, coupled with ongoing structural change, enables the Board to look to the future with confidence.

	Previous guidance	Current guidance
Rental revenue[1]		
- US	-5% to -9%	-4% to -7%
- Canada	Broadly flat	+15% to +20%
- UK	Broadly flat	+15% to +20%
- Group	-5% to -9%	-3% to -7%
Capital expenditure (gross) [2]	£485m - £540m	£650m - £700m
Free cash flow[2]	Greater than £1bn	Greater than £1.2bn

1 Represents change in year-over-year rental revenue at constant exchange rates
2 Stated at £1=$1.30 and £1=C$1.75

Directors' responsibility statement

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge:

a) the condensed consolidated interim financial statements have been prepared in accordance with IAS 34 'Interim Financial Reporting'; and

b) the interim management report includes a fair review of the information required by Disclosure and Transparency Rule 4.2.7R (indication of important events during the first six months and description of principal risks and uncertainties for the remaining six months of the year) and Disclosure and Transparency Rules 4.2.8R (disclosure of related parties' transactions and changes therein).

By order of the Board

Eric Watkins
Company secretary

7 December 2020

CONSOLIDATED INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2020

	2020			2019		
	Before amortisation	Amortisation	Total	Before amortisation	Amortisation	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Second quarter - unaudited						
Revenue						
Rental revenue	1,216.2	-	1,216.2	1,282.4	-	1,282.4
Sale of new equipment, merchandise and consumables	59.8	-	59.8	49.4	-	49.4
Sale of used rental equipment	74.8	-	74.8	71.3	-	71.3
	1,350.8	-	1,350.8	1,403.1	-	1,403.1
Operating costs						
Staff costs	(284.0)	-	(284.0)	(305.5)	-	(305.5)
Used rental equipment sold	(62.0)	-	(62.0)	(60.3)	-	(60.3)
Other operating costs	(341.9)	-	(341.9)	(336.8)	-	(336.8)
	(687.9)	-	(687.9)	(702.6)	-	(702.6)
EBITDA*	662.9	-	662.9	700.5	-	700.5
Depreciation	(282.1)	-	(282.1)	(272.1)	-	(272.1)
Amortisation of intangibles	-	(16.1)	(16.1)	-	(15.4)	(15.4)
Operating profit	380.8	(16.1)	364.7	428.4	(15.4)	413.0
Interest expense	(50.9)	-	(50.9)	(57.5)	-	(57.5)
Profit on ordinary activities before taxation	329.9	(16.1)	313.8	370.9	(15.4)	355.5
Taxation	(86.7)	3.9	(82.8)	(93.5)	3.7	(89.8)
Profit attributable to equity holders of the Company	243.2	(12.2)	231.0	277.4	(11.7)	265.7
Basic earnings per share	54.3p	(2.7p)	51.6p	60.5p	(2.6p)	57.9p
Diluted earnings per share	54.2p	(2.8p)	51.4p	60.2p	(2.5p)	57.7p

***** EBITDA is presented here as an alternative performance measure as it is commonly used by investors and lenders.

All revenue and profit is generated from continuing operations.

Details of principal risks and uncertainties are given in the Review of Second Quarter, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow accompanying these condensed consolidated interim financial statements.

CONSOLIDATED INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE SIX MONTHS ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2020

	2020			2019		
	Before amortisation	Amortisation	Total	Before amortisation	Amortisation	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
First half - unaudited						
Revenue						
Rental revenue	2,297.3	-	2,297.3	2,446.9	-	2,446.9
Sale of new equipment, merchandise and consumables	111.4	-	111.4	96.0	-	96.0
Sale of used rental equipment	145.3	-	145.3	138.4	-	138.4
	2,554.0	-	2,554.0	2,681.3	-	2,681.3
Operating costs						
Staff costs	(571.9)	-	(571.9)	(590.9)	-	(590.9)
Used rental equipment sold	(135.7)	-	(135.7)	(118.9)	-	(118.9)
Other operating costs	(635.6)	-	(635.6)	(644.4)	-	(644.4)
	(1,343.2)	-	(1,343.2)	(1,354.2)	-	(1,354.2)
EBITDA*	1,210.8	-	1,210.8	1,327.1	-	1,327.1
Depreciation	(565.2)	-	(565.2)	(526.1)	-	(526.1)
Amortisation of intangibles	-	(32.0)	(32.0)	-	(29.7)	(29.7)
Operating profit	645.6	(32.0)	613.6	801.0	(29.7)	771.3
Interest expense	(107.4)	-	(107.4)	(111.1)	-	(111.1)
Profit on ordinary activities before taxation	538.2	(32.0)	506.2	689.9	(29.7)	660.2
Taxation	(139.5)	7.8	(131.7)	(173.5)	7.2	(166.3)
Profit attributable to equity holders of the Company	398.7	(24.2)	374.5	516.4	(22.5)	493.9
Basic earnings per share	89.0p	(5.4p)	83.6p	111.8p	(4.8p)	107.0p
Diluted earnings per share	88.8p	(5.4p)	83.4p	111.4p	(4.8p)	106.6p

***** EBITDA is presented here as an alternative performance measure as it is commonly used by investors and lenders.

All revenue and profit is generated from continuing operations.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

	Unaudited			
	Three months to 31 October		Six months to 31 October	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Profit attributable to equity holders of the Company for the period	231.0	265.7	374.5	493.9
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:				
Foreign currency translation differences	36.9	(146.4)	(66.8)	9.9
Total comprehensive income for the period	267.9	119.3	307.7	503.8

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET AT 31 OCTOBER 2020

	Unaudited 31 October 2020 £m	Unaudited 31 October 2019 £m	Audited 30 April 2020 £m
Current assets			
Inventories	79.2	88.7	83.3
Trade and other receivables	900.3	978.8	821.6
Current tax asset	8.3	4.2	32.8
Cash and cash equivalents	14.1	19.4	241.4
	1,001.9	1,091.1	1,179.1
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment			
- rental equipment	5,504.5	5,891.0	5,890.1
- other assets	665.1	658.5	708.7
	6,169.6	6,549.5	6,598.8
Right-of-use assets	1,082.8	991.2	1,088.3
Goodwill	1,313.3	1,224.6	1,340.3
Other intangible assets	291.2	291.9	326.1
	8,856.9	9,057.2	9,353.5
Total assets	9,858.8	10,148.3	10,532.6
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	708.0	748.7	574.7
Current tax liability	32.3	6.1	2.3
Lease liabilities	120.2	100.1	106.0
Provisions	37.9	42.9	53.7
	898.4	897.8	736.7
Non-current liabilities			
Lease liabilities	1,013.3	899.2	1,006.2
Long-term borrowings	3,580.5	4,256.8	4,492.2
Provisions	48.9	36.9	38.9
Deferred tax liabilities	1,185.2	1,161.6	1,274.3
Net defined benefit pension plan liability	10.4	1.1	12.1
	5,838.3	6,355.6	6,823.7
Total liabilities	6,736.7	7,253.4	7,560.4
Equity			
Share capital	45.1	49.9	45.4
Share premium account	3.6	3.6	3.6
Capital redemption reserve	11.1	6.3	10.8
Own shares held by the Company	(51.2)	(872.8)	(115.9)
Own shares held by the ESOT	(28.9)	(27.7)	(27.7)
Cumulative foreign exchange translation differences	238.9	244.6	305.7
Retained reserves	2,903.5	3,491.0	2,750.3
Equity attributable to equity holders of the Company	3,122.1	2,894.9	2,972.2
Total liabilities and equity	9,858.8	10,148.3	10,532.6

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY
FOR THE SIX MONTHS ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2020

	Share capital £m	Share premium account £m	Capital redemption reserve £m	Own shares held by the Company £m	Own shares held through the ESOT £m	Cumulative foreign exchange translation differences £m	Retained reserves £m	Total £m
Unaudited								
At 1 May 2019	49.9	3.6	6.3	(622.6)	(24.6)	234.7	3,153.2	2,800.5
Effect of adoption of IFRS 16	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.1	8.1
At 1 May 2019 (restated)	49.9	3.6	6.3	(622.6)	(24.6)	234.7	3,161.3	2,808.6
Profit for the period	-	-	-	-	-	-	493.9	493.9
Other comprehensive income:								
Foreign currency translation differences	-	-	-	-	-	9.9	-	9.9
Total comprehensive income for the period	-	-	-	-	-	9.9	493.9	503.8
Dividends paid	-	-	-	-	-	-	(154.4)	(154.4)
Own shares purchased by the ESOT	-	-	-	-	(17.5)	-	-	(17.5)
Own shares purchased by the Company	-	-	-	(250.2)	-	-	-	(250.2)
Share-based payments	-	-	-	-	14.4	-	(10.0)	4.4
Tax on share-based payments	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	0.2
At 31 October 2019	49.9	3.6	6.3	(872.8)	(27.7)	244.6	3,491.0	2,894.9
Profit for the period	-	-	-	-	-	-	245.8	245.8
Other comprehensive income:								
Foreign currency translation differences	-	-	-	-	-	61.1	-	61.1
Remeasurement of the defined benefit pension plan	-	-	-	-	-	-	(10.8)	(10.8)
Tax on defined benefit pension plan	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.1	2.1
Total comprehensive income for the period	-	-	-	-	-	61.1	237.1	298.2
Dividends paid	-	-	-	-	-	-	(32.3)	(32.3)
Own shares purchased by the ESOT	-	-	-	-	(0.1)	-	-	(0.1)
Own shares purchased by the Company	-	-	-	(194.4)	-	-	-	(194.4)
Share-based payments	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	3.9	4.0
Tax on share-based payments	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.9	1.9
Cancellation of shares	(4.5)	-	4.5	951.3	-	-	(951.3)	-
At 30 April 2020	45.4	3.6	10.8	(115.9)	(27.7)	305.7	2,750.3	2,972.2
Profit for the period	-	-	-	-	-	-	374.5	374.5
Other comprehensive income:								
Foreign currency translation differences	-	-	-	-	-	(66.8)	-	(66.8)
Total comprehensive income for the period	-	-	-	-	-	(66.8)	374.5	307.7
Dividends paid	-	-	-	-	-	-	(150.1)	(150.1)
Own shares purchased by the ESOT	-	-	-	-	(12.5)	-	-	(12.5)
Share-based payments	-	-	-	-	11.3	-	(6.7)	4.6
Tax on share-based payments	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	0.2
Cancellation of shares	(0.3)	-	0.3	64.7	-	-	(64.7)	-
At 31 October 2020	45.1	3.6	11.1	(51.2)	(28.9)	238.9	2,903.5	3,122.1

CONSOLIDATED CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE SIX MONTHS ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2020

		Unaudited		
		2020		2019
		£m		£m
Cash flows from operating activities				
Cash generated from operations before changes in rental equipment		1,186.0		1,228.3
Payments for rental property, plant and equipment		(235.5)		(815.4)
Proceeds from disposal of rental property, plant and equipment		149.2		107.0
Cash generated from operations		1,099.7		519.9
Financing costs paid (net)		(105.2)		(108.2)
Tax paid (net)		(137.1)		(65.2)
Net cash generated from operating activities		857.4		346.5
Cash flows from investing activities				
Acquisition of businesses		(14.1)		(245.8)
Payments for non-rental property, plant and equipment		(40.8)		(122.1)
Proceeds from disposal of non-rental property, plant and equipment		5.8		3.7
Net cash used in investing activities		(49.1)		(364.2)
Cash flows from financing activities				
Drawdown of loans		203.3		687.4
Redemption of loans		(1,050.8)		(211.6)
Repayment of principal under lease liabilities		(23.4)		(30.2)
Dividends paid		(150.1)		(154.4)
Purchase of own shares by the ESOT		(12.5)		(17.5)
Purchase of own shares by the Company		-		(249.4)
Net cash (used in)/generated from financing activities		(1,033.5)		24.3
(Decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents		(225.2)		6.6
Opening cash and cash equivalents		241.4		12.8
Effect of exchange rate difference		(2.1)		-
Closing cash and cash equivalents		14.1		19.4
Reconciliation of net cash flows to net debt				
Decrease/(increase) in cash and cash equivalents in the period		225.2		(6.6)
(Decrease)/increase in debt through cash flow		(870.9)		445.6
Change in net debt from cash flows		(645.7)		439.0
Exchange differences		(88.0)		29.6
Non-cash movements:				
- deferred costs of debt raising		4.4		2.9
- new lease liabilities		66.2		137.5
(Decrease)/increase in net debt in the period		(663.1)		609.0
Net debt at 1 May (as previously stated)	5,363.0		3,744.9	
Effect of adoption of IFRS 16	-		882.8	
Net debt at 1 May (restated)		5,363.0		4,627.7
Net debt at 31 October		4,699.9		5,236.7

NOTES TO THE CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. General information

Ashtead Group plc ('the Company') is a company incorporated and domiciled in England and Wales and listed on the London Stock Exchange. The condensed consolidated financial statements as at, and for the six months ended, 31 October 2020 comprise the Company and its subsidiaries ('the Group').

The condensed consolidated interim financial statements for the six months ended 31 October 2020 were approved by the directors on 7 December 2020.

The condensed consolidated interim financial statements do not constitute statutory accounts as defined in Section 434 of the Companies Act 2006. The statutory accounts for the year ended 30 April 2020 were approved by the directors on 15 June 2020 and have been mailed to shareholders and filed with the Registrar of Companies. The auditor's report on those accounts was unqualified, did not include a reference to any matter by way of emphasis and did not contain a statement under Section 498(2) or (3) of the Companies Act 2006.

2. Basis of preparation

The condensed consolidated interim financial statements for the six months ended 31 October 2020 have been prepared in accordance with relevant International Financial Reporting Standards ('IFRS') as adopted by the European Union, including IAS 34, and the accounting policies set out in the Group's Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 30 April 2020.

The directors have adopted various alternative performance measures to provide additional useful information on the underlying trends, performance and position of the Group. The alternative performance measures are not defined by IFRS and therefore may not be directly comparable with other companies' alternative performance measures, but are defined within the Glossary of Terms on page 32.

The condensed consolidated interim financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis. The Group's internal budgets and forecasts of future performance, which reflect the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, available financing facilities and facility headroom (see note 13), provide a reasonable expectation that the Group has adequate resources to continue in operation for the foreseeable future and consequently the going concern basis continues to be appropriate in preparing the financial statements.

While the full economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic remains uncertain, we modelled a range of scenarios which considered different possible outcomes based on the timing, severity and duration of the downturn and subsequent recovery. This scenario planning considered the potential impact of COVID-19 and, more generally weakening markets on revenue, margins, cash flows, overall debt levels and leverage. Under all these scenarios, the Group continued to generate free cash flow and reduce debt. The Group is performing better than its best case scenario with a lower decline in revenue and margins, stronger cash flow and a greater reduction in debt and leverage.

NOTES TO THE CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2. Basis of preparation (continued)

In preparing the financial statements, the exchange rates used in respect of the US dollar ($) and Canadian dollar (C$) are:

	US dollar		Canadian dollar	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
Average for the three months ended 31 October	1.30	1.24	1.72	1.64
Average for the six months ended 31 October	1.28	1.25	1.72	1.66
At 30 April	1.26	1.30	1.75	1.75
At 31 October	1.29	1.29	1.72	1.70

3. Segmental analysis

Three months to 31 October 2020

	US	UK	Canada	Corporate items	Group
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Revenue					
Rental revenue	1,032.5	117.4	66.3	-	1,216.2
Sale of new equipment, merchandise and consumables	29.1	24.0	6.7	-	59.8
Sale of used rental equipment	64.5	7.9	2.4	-	74.8
	1,126.1	149.3	75.4	-	1,350.8
Operating profit before amortisation	353.4	11.7	19.4	(3.7)	380.8
Amortisation					(16.1)
Net financing costs					(50.9)
Profit before taxation					313.8
Taxation					(82.8)
Profit attributable to equity shareholders					231.0

Three months to 31 October 2019

	US	UK	Canada	Corporate items	Group
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Revenue					
Rental revenue	1,118.9	108.4	55.1	-	1,282.4
Sale of new equipment, merchandise and consumables	35.3	8.7	5.4	-	49.4
Sale of used rental equipment	60.2	7.4	3.7	-	71.3
	1,214.4	124.5	64.2	-	1,403.1
Operating profit before amortisation	403.2	14.6	14.8	(4.2)	428.4
Amortisation					(15.4)
Net financing costs					(57.5)
Profit before taxation					355.5
Taxation					(89.8)
Profit attributable to equity shareholders					265.7

NOTES TO THE CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

3. Segmental analysis (continued)

Six months to 31 October 2020

	US £m	UK £m	Canada £m	Corporate items £m	Group £m
Revenue					
Rental revenue	1,971.5	216.2	109.6	-	2,297.3
Sale of new equipment, merchandise and consumables	58.3	40.3	12.8	-	111.4
Sale of used rental equipment	123.3	16.1	5.9	-	145.3
	2,153.1	272.6	128.3	-	2,554.0
Operating profit before amortisation	612.6	20.0	19.4	(6.4)	645.6
Amortisation					(32.0)
Net financing costs					(107.4)
Profit before taxation					506.2
Taxation					(131.7)
Profit attributable to equity shareholders					374.5

Six months to 31 October 2019

	US £m	UK £m	Canada £m	Corporate items £m	Group £m
Revenue					
Rental revenue	2,128.7	217.8	100.4	-	2,446.9
Sale of new equipment, merchandise and consumables	67.4	17.1	11.5	-	96.0
Sale of used rental equipment	108.7	21.0	8.7	-	138.4
	2,304.8	255.9	120.6	-	2,681.3
Operating profit before amortisation	755.9	30.0	24.3	(9.2)	801.0
Amortisation					(29.7)
Net financing costs					(111.1)
Profit before taxation					660.2
Taxation					(166.3)
Profit attributable to equity shareholders					493.9

	US £m	UK £m	Canada £m	Corporate items £m	Group £m
At 31 October 2020					
Segment assets	8,208.4	839.0	782.3	6.7	9,836.4
Cash					14.1
Taxation assets					8.3
Total assets					9,858.8
At 30 April 2020					
Segment assets	8,639.5	835.2	776.4	7.3	10,258.4
Cash					241.4
Taxation assets					32.8
Total assets					10,532.6

4. Operating costs and other income

	2020			2019		
	Before amortisation	Amortisation	Total	Before amortisation	Amortisation	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Three months to 31 October						
Staff costs:						
Salaries	260.1	-	260.1	280.4	-	280.4
Social security costs	19.5	-	19.5	19.9	-	19.9
Other pension costs	4.4	-	4.4	5.2	-	5.2
	284.0	-	284.0	305.5	-	305.5
Used rental equipment sold	62.0	-	62.0	60.3	-	60.3
Other operating costs:						
Vehicle costs	76.7	-	76.7	84.4	-	84.4
Spares, consumables & external repairs	68.7	-	68.7	71.7	-	71.7
Facility costs	13.6	-	13.6	12.2	-	12.2
Other external charges	182.9	-	182.9	168.5	-	168.5
	341.9	-	341.9	336.8	-	336.8
Depreciation and amortisation:						
Depreciation of tangible assets	250.3	-	250.3	249.3	-	249.3
Depreciation of right-of-use assets	31.8	-	31.8	22.8	-	22.8
Amortisation of intangibles	-	16.1	16.1	-	15.4	15.4
	282.1	16.1	298.2	272.1	15.4	287.5
	970.0	16.1	986.1	974.7	15.4	990.1

	2020			2019		
	Before amortisation	Amortisation	Total	Before amortisation	Amortisation	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Six months to 31 October						
Staff costs:						
Salaries	523.6	-	523.6	540.7	-	540.7
Social security costs	38.5	-	38.5	39.9	-	39.9
Other pension costs	9.8	-	9.8	10.3	-	10.3
	571.9	-	571.9	590.9	-	590.9
Used rental equipment sold	135.7	-	135.7	118.9	-	118.9
Other operating costs:						
Vehicle costs	135.9	-	135.9	159.9	-	159.9
Spares, consumables & external repairs	138.5	-	138.5	137.0	-	137.0
Facility costs	25.1	-	25.1	24.3	-	24.3
Other external charges	336.1	-	336.1	323.2	-	323.2
	635.6	-	635.6	644.4	-	644.4
Depreciation and amortisation:						
Depreciation of tangible assets	509.0	-	509.0	482.2	-	482.2
Depreciation of right-of-use assets	56.2	-	56.2	43.9	-	43.9
Amortisation of intangibles	-	32.0	32.0	-	29.7	29.7
	565.2	32.0	597.2	526.1	29.7	555.8
	1,908.4	32.0	1,940.4	1,880.3	29.7	1,910.0

NOTES TO THE CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

5. Amortisation

Amortisation relates to the write-off of intangible assets over their estimated useful economic life. The Group believes this item should be disclosed separately within the consolidated income statement to assist in the understanding of the financial performance of the Group. Underlying profit and earnings per share are stated before amortisation of intangibles.

	Three months to 31 October		Six months to 31 October	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Amortisation of intangibles	16.1	15.4	32.0	29.7
Taxation	(3.9)	(3.7)	(7.8)	(7.2)
	12.2	11.7	24.2	22.5

6. Interest expense

	Three months to 31 October		Six months to 31 October	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Interest expense:				
Bank interest payable	9.8	22.1	23.7	42.1
Interest payable on second priority senior secured notes	25.3	22.4	51.7	44.2
Interest payable on lease liabilities	13.3	11.3	27.0	21.5
Non-cash unwind of discount on provisions	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.4
Amortisation of deferred debt raising costs	2.2	1.5	4.4	2.9
	50.9	57.5	107.4	111.1

7. Taxation

The tax charge for the period has been computed using a tax rate of 25% in the US (2019: 25%), 19% in the UK (2019: 19%) and 27% in Canada (2019: 27%). The blended rate for the Group as a whole is 26% (2019: 25%).

NOTES TO THE CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

7. Taxation (continued)

The tax charge of £140m (2019: £174m) on the underlying profit before taxation of £538m (2019: £690m) can be explained as follows:

	Six months to 31 October 2020	Six months to 31 October 2019
	£m	£m
Current tax		
- current tax on income for the period	193.0	84.1
- adjustments to prior year	2.8	(2.1)
	195.8	82.0
Deferred tax		
- origination and reversal of temporary differences	(56.0)	89.8
- adjustments to prior year	(0.3)	1.7
	(56.3)	91.5
Tax on underlying activities	139.5	173.5
Comprising:		
- UK	10.2	12.3
- US	126.4	157.5
- Canada	2.9	3.7
	139.5	173.5

In addition, the tax credit of £8m (2019: £7m) on amortisation of £32m (2019: £30m) consists of a current tax credit of £3m (2019: £4m) relating to the US and a deferred tax credit of £2m (2019: £1m) relating to the US, £1m (2019: £1m) relating to the UK and £2m (2019: £1m) relating to Canada.

8. Earnings per share

Basic and diluted earnings per share for the three and six months ended 31 October 2020 have been calculated based on the profit for the relevant period and the weighted average number of ordinary shares in issue during that period (excluding shares held by the Company and the ESOT over which dividends have been waived). Diluted earnings per share is computed using the result for the relevant period and the diluted number of shares (ignoring any potential issue of ordinary shares which would be anti-dilutive). These are calculated as follows:

	Three months to 31 October		Six months to 31 October	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
Profit for the financial period (£m)	231.0	265.7	374.5	493.9
Weighted average number of shares (m) - basic	447.9	458.8	447.9	461.8
- diluted	449.1	460.4	449.1	463.5
Basic earnings per share	51.6p	57.9p	83.6p	107.0p
Diluted earnings per share	51.4p	57.7p	83.4p	106.6p

8. Earnings per share (continued)

Underlying earnings per share (defined in any period as the earnings before amortisation of intangibles and exceptional items for that period divided by the weighted average number of shares in issue in that period) may be reconciled to the basic earnings per share as follows:

	Three months to 31 October		Six months to 31 October	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
Basic earnings per share	51.6p	57.9p	83.6p	107.0p
Amortisation of intangibles	3.6p	3.4p	7.2p	6.4p
Tax on amortisation	(0.9p)	(0.8p)	(1.8p)	(1.6p)
Underlying earnings per share	54.3p	60.5p	89.0p	111.8p

9. Dividends

During the period, a final dividend in respect of the year ended 30 April 2020 of 33.5p (2019: 33.5p) per share was paid to shareholders costing £150m (2019: £154m). In addition, the directors are proposing an interim dividend in respect of the year ending 30 April 2021 of 7.15p (2020: 7.15p) per share to be paid on 3 February 2021 to shareholders who are on the register of members on 15 January 2021.

10. Property, plant and equipment

	2020		2019	
Net book value	Rental equipment £m	Total £m	Rental equipment £m	Total £m
At 1 May	5,890.1	6,598.8	5,413.3	5,987.0
Effect of adoption of IFRS 16	-	-	-	(4.8)
Exchange differences	(118.0)	(131.4)	51.9	57.0
Reclassifications	(0.6)	-	(1.2)	-
Additions	302.4	343.2	891.8	1,010.4
Acquisitions	2.3	2.3	73.9	99.2
Disposals	(127.9)	(134.3)	(112.8)	(117.1)
Depreciation	(443.8)	(509.0)	(425.9)	(482.2)
At 31 October	5,504.5	6,169.6	5,891.0	6,549.5

11. Right-of-use assets

	2020			2019		
Net book value	Property leases £m	Other leases £m	Total £m	Property leases £m	Other leases £m	Total £m
At 1 May	1,083.7	4.6	1,088.3	-	-	-
Effect of adoption of IFRS 16	-	-	-	889.5	4.8	894.3
Exchange differences	(20.7)	-	(20.7)	8.3	-	8.3
Additions	43.8	0.5	44.3	111.0	0.8	111.8
Remeasurement	30.2	-	30.2	22.2	-	22.2
Disposals	(2.9)	(0.2)	(3.1)	(1.0)	(0.5)	(1.5)
Depreciation	(55.6)	(0.6)	(56.2)	(43.3)	(0.6)	(43.9)
At 31 October 2020	1,078.5	4.3	1,082.8	986.7	4.5	991.2

Included within depreciation is an impairment charge of £9m (2019: £nil).

NOTES TO THE CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED INTERIM FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

12. Lease liability

	31 October 2020 £m	30 April 2020 £m
Current	120.2	106.0
Non-current	1,013.3	1,006.2
	1,133.5	1,112.2

13. Borrowings

	31 October 2020 £m	30 April 2020 £m
Non-current		
First priority senior secured bank debt	1,286.7	2,141.9
4.125% senior notes, due 2025	459.5	470.8
5.250% senior notes, due 2026	458.4	469.6
4.375% senior notes, due 2027	458.9	470.2
4.000% senior notes, due 2028	458.6	469.9
4.250% senior notes, due 2029	458.4	469.8
	3,580.5	4,492.2

The senior secured bank debt is secured by way of fixed and floating charges over substantially all the Group's property, plant and equipment, inventory and trade receivables. The senior notes are guaranteed by Ashtead Group plc and all its principal subsidiary undertakings.

Under the terms of our asset-based senior credit facility, $4.1bn is committed until December 2023 and $500m is committed until April 2021.

The $600m 4.125% senior notes mature in August 2025, the $600m 5.25% senior notes mature in August 2026, the $600m 4.375% senior notes mature in August 2027, the $600m 4.000% senior notes mature in May 2028 and the $600m 4.250% senior notes mature in November 2029. Our debt facilities therefore remain committed for the long term, with an average maturity of five years. The weighted average interest cost of these facilities (including non-cash amortisation of deferred debt raising costs) is 4%. The terms of the senior notes are such that financial performance covenants are only measured at the time new debt is raised.

There is one financial performance covenant under the first priority senior credit facility. That is the fixed charge ratio (comprising LTM EBITDA before exceptional items less LTM net capital expenditure paid in cash over the sum of scheduled debt repayments plus cash interest, cash tax payments and dividends paid in the last twelve months) which, must be equal to, or greater than, 1.0. This covenant does not apply when availability exceeds $460m. The covenant ratio is calculated each quarter. At 31 October 2020, the fixed charge ratio exceeded the covenant requirement.

At 31 October 2020, availability under the senior secured bank facility was $3,089m ($2,363m including cash on the balance sheet at 30 April 2020), with an additional $1,747m of suppressed availability, meaning that the covenant did not apply at 31 October 2020 and is unlikely to apply in forthcoming quarters.

13. Borrowings (continued)

Fair value of financial instruments

At 31 October 2020, the Group had no derivative financial instruments.

With the exception of the Group's senior notes detailed in the table below, the carrying value of non-derivative financial assets and liabilities is considered to equate materially to their fair value.

	At 31 October 2020		At 30 April 2020	
	Book Value	Fair value	Book value	Fair value
	£m	£m	£m	£m
4.125% senior notes	463.9	476.7	475.7	461.4
5.250% senior notes	463.9	490.6	475.7	479.3
4.375% senior notes	463.9	482.5	475.7	463.8
4.000% senior notes	463.9	481.3	475.7	453.1
4.250% senior notes	463.9	488.3	475.7	453.1
	2,319.5	2,419.4	2,378.5	2,310.7
Deferred costs of raising finance	(25.7)	-	(28.2)	-
	2,293.8	2,419.4	2,350.3	2,310.7

The fair value of the senior notes has been calculated using quoted market prices at 31 October 2020.

14. Share capital

Ordinary shares of 10p each:

	31 October 2020	30 April 2020	31 October 2020	30 April 2020
	Number	Number	£m	£m
Issued and fully paid	451,354,833	454,194,833	45.1	45.4

In September 2020, 2.9m shares held in treasury were cancelled. At 31 October 2020 after the cancellation of these shares, 2.0m (April 2020: 4.9m) shares were held by the Company and a further 1.4m (April 2020: 1.5m) shares were held by the Company's Employee Share Ownership Trust.

15. Notes to the cash flow statement

a) Cash flow from operating activities

	Six months to 31 October 2020 £m	2019 £m
Operating profit before amortisation	645.6	801.0
Depreciation	565.2	526.1
EBITDA	1,210.8	1,327.1
Profit on disposal of rental equipment	(9.5)	(19.5)
Profit on disposal of other property, plant and equipment	(0.2)	(0.4)
Decrease/(increase) in inventories	2.5	(7.5)
Increase in trade and other receivables	(106.5)	(86.8)
Increase in trade and other payables	84.0	10.9
Exchange differences	0.3	0.1
Other non-cash movements	4.6	4.4
Cash generated from operations before changes in rental equipment	1,186.0	1,228.3

b) Analysis of net debt

Net debt consists of total borrowings and lease liabilities less cash and cash equivalents. Borrowings exclude accrued interest. Foreign currency denominated balances are translated to pounds sterling at rates of exchange ruling at the balance sheet date.

			Non-cash movements			
	1 May 2020 £m	Cash flow £m	Exchange movement £m	New lease liabilities £m	Other movements £m	31 October 2020 £m
Long-term borrowings	4,492.2	(847.5)	(68.6)	-	4.4	3,580.5
Lease liabilities	1,112.2	(23.4)	(21.5)	66.2	-	1,133.5
Total liabilities from financing activities	5,604.4	(870.9)	(90.1)	66.2	4.4	4,714.0
Cash and cash equivalents	(241.4)	225.2	2.1	-	-	(14.1)
Net debt	5,363.0	(645.7)	(88.0)	66.2	4.4	4,699.9

15. Notes to the cash flow statement (continued)

b) Analysis of net debt (continued)

				Non-cash movements			
	1 May 2019 £m	Adoption of IFRS 16 £m	Cash flow £m	Exchange movement £m	New lease liabilities £m	Other movements £m	31 October 2019 £m
Short-term borrowings	2.3	(2.3)	-	-	-	-	-
Long-term borrowings	3,755.4	(2.7)	475.8	25.4	-	2.9	4,256.8
Lease liabilities	-	887.8	(30.2)	4.2	137.5	-	999.3
Total liabilities from financing activities	3,757.7	882.8	445.6	29.6	137.5	2.9	5,256.1
Cash and cash equivalents	(12.8)	-	(6.6)	-	-	-	(19.4)
Net debt	3,744.9	882.8	439.0	29.6	137.5	2.9	5,236.7

Details of the Group's cash and debt are given in notes 12 and 13 and the Review of Second Quarter, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow accompanying these condensed consolidated interim financial statements.

c) Acquisitions

	Six months to 31 October	
	2020 £m	2019 £m
Cash consideration paid:		
- acquisitions in the period	-	228.5
- contingent consideration	14.1	17.3
	14.1	245.8

During the period, contingent consideration of £14m (2019: £17m) was paid relating to prior year acquisitions.

16. Contingent liabilities

Following its state aid investigation, in April 2019 the European Commission announced its decision that the Group Financing Exemption in the UK controlled foreign company ('CFC') legislation constitutes state aid in some circumstances. In common with the UK Government and other UK-based international companies, the Group does not agree with the decision and has therefore lodged a formal appeal with the General Court of the European Union. If the decision reached by the European Commission is not successfully appealed, we have estimated the Group's maximum potential liability to be £36m as at 31 October 2020. Based on the current status of proceedings, we have concluded that no provision is required in relation to this matter.

REVIEW OF SECOND QUARTER, BALANCE SHEET AND CASH FLOW

Second quarter

	Revenue		EBITDA		Profit[1]	
	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019
US in \$m	1,462.8	1,506.6	752.6	786.0	457.5	500.4
Canada in C\$m	129.8	105.5	63.2	47.4	33.3	24.4
US in £m	1,126.1	1,214.4	580.0	633.6	353.4	403.2
UK	149.3	124.5	49.7	42.2	11.7	14.6
Canada in £m	75.4	64.2	36.7	28.8	19.4	14.8
Group central costs	-	-	(3.5)	(4.1)	(3.7)	(4.2)
	1,350.8	1,403.1	662.9	700.5	380.8	428.4
Net financing costs					(50.9)	(57.5)
Profit before amortisation and tax					**329.9**	**370.9**
Amortisation					(16.1)	(15.4)
Profit before taxation					313.8	355.5
Margins as reported						
US			*51.5%*	*52.2%*	*31.3%*	*33.2%*
UK			*33.3%*	*33.9%*	*7.9%*	*11.8%*
Canada			*48.7%*	*44.9%*	*25.6%*	*23.1%*
Group			*49.1%*	*49.9%*	*28.2%*	*30.5%*

[1] Segment result presented is operating profit before amortisation.

Group revenue decreased 4% (flat at constant currency) to £1,351m in the second quarter (2019: £1,403m). This performance demonstrates the resilience of the business in challenging, COVID-19 impacted markets. The combination of the impact of flat revenue and our decision to not make team members redundant as a result of COVID-19 and instead, ensure we were well prepared for activity levels improving, resulted in a decline in underlying profit before tax for the quarter to £330m (2019: £371m).

US rental only revenue in the quarter was 4% lower than a year ago. This consisted of our general tool business which was 7% lower than last year while the specialty business (excluding oil and gas) was 18% higher than a year ago.

The UK generated rental only revenue in the quarter was £92m (2019: £88m), 5% higher than the prior year on a comparable basis. Total revenue increased 20% to £149m (2019: £125m) reflecting the higher level of ancillary and sales revenue associated with the services provided to the Department of Health.

Canada's rental only revenue increased 34% to C\$98m (2019: C\$73m) on a reported basis. Excluding the impact of the acquisition of William F. White, rental only revenue decreased by 6%. Total revenue was C\$130m (2019: C\$106m).

Group operating profit decreased 11% to £381m (2019: £428m). After net financing costs of £51m (2019: £57m), Group profit before amortisation of intangibles and taxation was £330m (2019: £371m). After amortisation of £16m, the statutory profit before taxation was £314m (2019: £356m).

Balance sheet

Fixed assets

Capital expenditure in the first half totalled £343m (2019: £1,010m) with £302m invested in the rental fleet (2019: £892m). Expenditure on rental equipment was 88% of total capital expenditure with the balance relating to the delivery vehicle fleet, property improvements and IT equipment. Capital expenditure by division was:

	2020	2019
US in $m	304.8	1,049.4
Canada in C$m	24.0	83.4
US in £m	238.9	811.1
UK	49.5	31.7
Canada in £m	14.0	49.0
Total rental equipment	302.4	891.8
Delivery vehicles, property improvements & IT equipment	40.8	118.6
Total additions	343.2	1,010.4

As a result of the impact of COVID-19 on market activity, all capital expenditure in 2020 has been classified as replacement capital expenditure.

The average age of the Group's serialised rental equipment, which constitutes the substantial majority of our fleet, at 31 October 2020 was 39 months (2019: 33 months) on a net book value basis. The US fleet had an average age of 39 months (2019: 33 months), the UK fleet had an average age of 43 months (2019: 40 months) and the Canadian fleet had an average age of 36 months (2019: 30 months).

	Rental fleet at original cost				LTM
				LTM rental	dollar
	31 October 2020	30 April 2020	LTM average	revenue	utilisation
US in $m	9,943	10,102	10,030	4,894	49%
Canada in C$m	917	921	883	382	43%
US in £m	7,688	8,010	7,850	3,831	49%
UK	879	874	877	406	46%
Canada in £m	532	526	513	222	43%
	9,099	9,410	9,240	4,459	

Dollar utilisation was 49% in the US (2019: 54%), 46% for the UK (2019: 46%) and 43% for Canada (2019: 47%). US dollar utilisation reflects lower physical utilisation last year and, more recently, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic had a similar impact on the UK and Canada.

Trade receivables

Receivable days at 31 October 2020 were 45 days (2019: 49 days). The bad debt charge for the last twelve months ended 31 October 2020 as a percentage of total turnover was 1.2% (2019: 0.5%). This increase over the prior year reflects an additional charge taken in the fourth quarter of last year for potentially irrecoverable receivables as a result of the impact of COVID-19. Trade receivables at 31 October 2020 of £745m (2019: £828m) are stated net of allowances for bad debts and credit notes of £99m (2019: £62m) with the increased allowance representing 12% (2019: 7%) of gross receivables as a result of COVID-19.

Trade and other payables

Group payable days were 55 days in 2020 (2019: 58 days) with capital expenditure related payables totalling £173m (2019: £297m). Payment periods for purchases other than rental equipment vary between seven and 60 days and for rental equipment between 30 and 120 days.

Cash flow and net debt

	Six months to 31 October 2020 £m	Six months to 31 October 2019 £m	LTM 31 October 2020 £m	Year to 30 April 2020 £m
EBITDA before exceptional items	1,210.8	1,327.1	2,259.5	2,375.8
Cash inflow from operations before exceptional items and changes in rental equipment	1,186.0	1,228.3	2,388.1	2,430.4
*Cash conversion ratio**	*98.0%*	*92.6%*	*105.7%*	*102.3%*
Replacement rental capital expenditure	(235.5)	(290.1)	(595.6)	(650.2)
Payments for non-rental capital expenditure	(40.8)	(122.1)	(126.9)	(208.2)
Rental equipment disposal proceeds	149.2	107.0	288.8	246.6
Other property, plant and equipment disposal proceeds	5.8	3.7	14.1	12.0
Tax (net)	(137.1)	(65.2)	(185.1)	(113.2)
Financing costs	(105.2)	(108.2)	(193.9)	(196.9)
Cash inflow before growth capex and payment of exceptional costs	**822.4**	**753.4**	**1,589.5**	**1,520.5**
Growth rental capital expenditure	-	(525.3)	(190.7)	(716.0)
Exceptional costs	-	-	(12.4)	(12.4)
Free cash flow	**822.4**	**228.1**	**1,386.4**	**792.1**
Business acquisitions	(14.1)	(245.8)	(221.4)	(453.1)
Total cash generated/(absorbed)	**808.3**	**(17.7)**	**1,165.0**	**339.0**
Dividends	(150.1)	(154.4)	(182.4)	(186.7)
Purchase of own shares by the Company	-	(249.4)	(199.2)	(448.6)
Purchase of own shares by the ESOT	(12.5)	(17.5)	(12.6)	(17.6)
Decrease/(increase) in net debt due to cash flow	**645.7**	**(439.0)**	**770.8**	**(313.9)**

* Cash inflow from operations before exceptional items and changes in rental equipment as a percentage of EBITDA before exceptional items.

Cash inflow from operations before payment of exceptional costs and the net investment in the rental fleet was £1,186m (2019: £1,228m). The first half cash conversion ratio was 98% (2019: 93%).

Total payments for capital expenditure (rental equipment and other PPE) in the first half were £276m (2019: £938m). Disposal proceeds received totalled £155m (2019: £111m), giving net payments for capital expenditure of £121m in the period (2019: £827m). Financing costs paid totalled £105m (2019: £108m) while tax payments were £137m (2019: £65m). Financing costs paid typically differ from the charge in the income statement due to the timing of interest payments in the year and non-cash interest charges. The increased tax payments reflect the impact of lower levels of capital expenditure this year which, in the US, are deductible in full as incurred.

Accordingly, in the first half the Group generated free cash flow of £822m (2019: £228m) and, after acquisition expenditure of £14m (2019: £246m) related to deferred consideration on prior year acquisitions, a net cash inflow of £808m (2019: outflow of £18m), before returns to shareholders.

Net debt

	31 October 2020 £m	31 October 2019 £m	30 April 2020 £m
First priority senior secured bank debt	1,286.7	2,500.3	2,141.9
5.625% senior notes, due 2024	-	382.5	-
4.125% senior notes, due 2025	459.5	458.5	470.8
5.250% senior notes, due 2026	458.4	457.4	469.6
4.375% senior notes, due 2027	458.9	458.1	470.2
4.000% senior notes, due 2028	458.6	-	469.9
4.250% senior notes, due 2029	458.4	-	469.8
Total external borrowings	3,580.5	4,256.8	4,492.2
Lease liabilities	1,133.5	999.3	1,112.2
	4,714.0	5,256.1	5,604.4
Cash and cash equivalents	(14.1)	(19.4)	(241.4)
Total net debt	4,699.9	5,236.7	5,363.0

Net debt at 31 October 2020 was £4,700m with the decrease since 30 April 2020 reflecting the net cash inflow set out above and a benefit from stronger sterling (£88m). The Group's EBITDA for the twelve months ended 31 October 2020 was £2,260m. Excluding the impact of IFRS 16, the ratio of net debt to EBITDA was 1.7 times (2019: 1.9 times) on a constant currency and a reported basis as at 31 October 2020. Including the impact of IFRS 16, the ratio of net debt to EBITDA was 2.1 times at 31 October 2020.

Principal risks and uncertainties

Risks and uncertainties in achieving the Group's objectives for the remainder of the financial year, together with assumptions, estimates, judgements and critical accounting policies used in preparing financial information remain unchanged from those detailed in the 2020 Annual Report and Accounts on pages 36 to 39.

The principal risks and uncertainties facing the Group are:

- economic conditions - in the longer term, there is a link between demand for our services and levels of economic activity. The construction industry, which affects our business, is cyclical and typically lags the general economic cycle by between 12 and 24 months.

  The economic uncertainties resulting from the impact of COVID-19 or other pandemics are considered as part of this risk, together with trade/tariff escalation and the impact of Brexit on the UK economy.

- competition - the already competitive market could become even more competitive and we could suffer increased competition from large national competitors or small companies operating at a local level resulting in reduced market share and lower revenue.

- financing - debt facilities are only ever committed for a finite period of time and we need to plan to renew our facilities before they mature and guard against default. Our loan agreements also contain conditions (known as covenants) with which we must comply.

- cyber security - a cyber-attack or serious uncured failure in our systems could result in us being unable to deliver service to our customers and / or the loss of data. In particular, we are heavily dependent on technology for the smooth running of our business given the large number of both units of equipment we rent and our customers. As a result, we could suffer reputational loss, revenue loss and financial penalties.

This is the most significant factor in our business continuity planning.

- Health and safety - we need to comply with laws and regulations governing occupational health and safety matters. Furthermore, accidents could happen which might result in injury to an individual, claims against the Group and damage to our reputation.

- People - retaining and attracting good people is key to delivering superior performance and customer service.

  Excessive staff turnover is likely to impact on our ability to maintain the appropriate quality of service to our customers and would ultimately impact our financial performance adversely.

  At a leadership level, succession planning is required to ensure the Group can continue to inspire the right culture, leadership and behaviours and meet its strategic objectives.

- Environmental - we need to comply with environmental laws. These laws regulate such issues as wastewater, stormwater, solid and hazardous wastes and materials, and air quality. Breaches potentially create hazards to our employees, damage to our reputation and expose the Group to, amongst other things, the cost of investigating and remediating contamination and also fines and penalties for non-compliance.

- Laws and regulations - failure to comply with the frequently changing regulatory environment could result in reputational damage or financial penalty.

Further details, including actions taken to mitigate these risks, are provided within the 2020 Annual Report and Accounts.

Our business is subject to significant fluctuations in performance from quarter to quarter as a result of seasonal effects. Commercial construction activity tends to increase in the summer and during extended periods of mild weather and to decrease in the winter and during extended periods of inclement weather. Furthermore, due to the incidence of public holidays in the US, Canada and the UK, there are more billing days in the first half of our financial year than the second half leading to our revenue normally being higher in the first half. On a quarterly basis, the second quarter is typically our strongest quarter, followed by the first and then the third and fourth quarters.

In addition, the current trading and outlook section of the interim statement provides commentary on market and economic conditions for the remainder of the year.

Fluctuations in the value of the US dollar with respect to the pound sterling have had, and may continue to have, a significant impact on our financial condition and results of operations as reported in pounds due to the majority of our assets, liabilities, revenues and costs being denominated in US dollars. The Group has arranged its financing such that, at 31 October 2020, 96% of its debt (including lease liabilities) was denominated in US (and Canadian) dollars so that there is a natural partial offset between its dollar-denominated net assets and earnings and its dollar-denominated debt and interest expense. At 31 October 2020, dollar-denominated debt represented approximately 63% of the value of dollar-denominated net assets (other than debt). Based on the current currency mix of our profits and on dollar debt levels, interest and exchange rates at 31 October 2020, a 1% change in the US dollar exchange rate would impact underlying pre-tax profit by approximately £9m.

OPERATING STATISTICS

	Number of rental stores			Staff numbers		
	31 October		30 April	31 October		30 April
	2020	2019	2020	2020	2019	2020
Sunbelt US	840	815	837	13,233	14,031	14,048
Sunbelt UK	193	190	193	3,600	3,728	3,712
Sunbelt Canada	75	69	75	1,420	1,050	1,506
Corporate office	-	-	-	17	17	18
Group	1,108	1,074	1,105	18,270	18,826	19,284

INDEPENDENT REVIEW REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF ASHTEAD GROUP PLC

We have been engaged by the Company to review the condensed consolidated interim financial statements for the six months ended 31 October 2020 which comprise the consolidated income statement, the consolidated statement of comprehensive income, the consolidated balance sheet, the consolidated statement of changes in equity, the consolidated cash flow statement and related notes 1 to 16. We have read the other information contained in the half-yearly financial report and considered whether it contains any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the information in the condensed consolidated interim financial statements.

Directors' responsibilities
The half-yearly financial report is the responsibility of, and has been approved by, the directors. The directors are responsible for preparing the half-yearly financial report in accordance with the Disclosure Guidance and Transparency Rules of the United Kingdom's Financial Conduct Authority.

As disclosed in note 2, the annual financial statements of the Group are prepared in accordance with IFRS as adopted by the European Union. The condensed consolidated interim financial statements included in this half-yearly financial report have been prepared in accordance with International Accounting Standard 34, "Interim Financial Reporting", as adopted by the European Union.

Our responsibility
Our responsibility is to express to the Company a conclusion on the condensed consolidated interim financial statements in the half-yearly financial report based on our review.

Scope of review
We conducted our review in accordance with International Standard on Review Engagements (UK and Ireland) 2410, "Review of Interim Financial Information Performed by the Independent Auditor of the Entity" issued by the Financial Reporting Council for use in the United Kingdom. A review of interim financial information consists of making inquiries, primarily of persons responsible for financial and accounting matters, and applying analytical and other review procedures. A review is substantially less in scope than an audit conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) and consequently does not enable us to obtain assurance that we would become aware of all significant matters that might be identified in an audit. Accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion.

Conclusion
Based on our review, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the condensed consolidated interim financial statements for the six months ended 31 October 2020 are not prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with International Accounting Standard 34 as adopted by the European Union and the Disclosure Guidance and Transparency Rules of the United Kingdom's Financial Conduct Authority.

Use of our report
This report is made solely to the company in accordance with International Standard on Review Engagements (UK and Ireland) 2410 "Review of Interim Financial Information Performed by the Independent Auditor of the Entity" issued by the Financial Reporting Council. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company those matters we are required to state to it in an independent review report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company, for our review work, for this report, or for the conclusions we have formed

Deloitte LLP
Statutory Auditor
London, United Kingdom
7 December 2020

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The glossary of terms below sets out definitions of terms used throughout this announcement. Included are a number of alternative performance measures ('APMs') which the directors have adopted in order to provide additional useful information on the underlying trends, performance and position of the Group. The directors use these measures, which are common across the industry, for planning and reporting purposes. These measures are also used in discussions with the investment analyst community and credit rating agencies. The APMs are not defined by IFRS and therefore may not be directly comparable with other companies' APMs and should not be considered superior to or a substitute for IFRS measures.

<table>
<tr><th>Term</th><th>Closest equivalent statutory measure</th><th>Definition and purpose</th></tr>
<tr><td>Constant currency growth</td><td>None</td><td>Calculated by applying the current period exchange rate to the comparative period result. The relevant foreign currency exchange rates are provided within Note 2, Accounting policies, to the financial statements. This measure is used as a means of eliminating the effects of foreign exchange rate movements on the period-on-period changes in reported results.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>2020
£m</th><th>2019
£m</th><th>%</th></tr>
<tr><td>Rental revenue</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>As reported</td><td>2,297</td><td>2,447</td><td>-6%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Retranslation effect</td><td>-</td><td>(42)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>At constant currency</td><td>2,297</td><td>2,405</td><td>-4%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Underlying profit before tax</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>As reported</td><td>538</td><td>690</td><td>-22%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Retranslation effect</td><td>-</td><td>(12)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>At constant currency</td><td>538</td><td>678</td><td>-21%</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Drop through</td><td>None</td><td>Calculated as the change in rental revenue which converts into EBITDA (excluding gains from sale of new equipment, merchandise and consumables and from sale of used equipment).

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>2020</th><th>2019</th><th>Change</th></tr>
<tr><td>Sunbelt US ($m)</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Rental revenue</td><td>2,515</td><td>2,667</td><td>(152)</td></tr>
<tr><td>EBITDA exc. gains</td><td>1,335</td><td>1,446</td><td>(111)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Drop through</td><td></td><td></td><td>73%</td></tr>
</table>
This measure is utilised by the Group to demonstrate the change in profitability generated by the Group as a result of the change in rental revenue in the period.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Leverage</td><td>None</td><td>Leverage calculated at constant exchange rates uses the current period exchange rate and is determined as net debt divided by underlying EBITDA.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th colspan="2">Excluding IFRS 16</th><th colspan="2">Including IFRS 16</th></tr>
<tr><th></th><th>2020</th><th>2019</th><th>2020</th><th>2019</th></tr>
<tr><td>Net debt (at constant currency)</td><td>3,571</td><td>4,239</td><td>4,700</td><td>5,226</td></tr>
<tr><td>EBITDA (at constant currency)</td><td>2,125</td><td>2,248</td><td>2,225</td><td>2,279</td></tr>
<tr><td>Leverage</td><td>1.7</td><td>1.9</td><td>2.1</td><td>2.3</td></tr>
</table>
This measure is used to provide an indication of the strength of the Group's balance sheet and is widely used by investors and credit rating agencies. It also forms part of the remuneration targets of the Group and has been identified as one of the Group's key performance indicators.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Return on Investment ('RoI')</td><td>None</td><td>Last 12-month ('LTM') underlying operating profit divided by the last 12-month average of the sum of net tangible and intangible fixed assets, plus net working capital but excluding net debt and tax. RoI is calculated excluding the impact of IFRS 16.

RoI is used by management to help inform capital allocation decisions within the business and has been identified as one of the Group's key performance indicators. It also forms part of the remuneration targets of the Group.</td></tr>
</table>

Term	Closest equivalent statutory measure	Definition and purpose
		A reconciliation of Group RoI is provided below: | | 2020 | 2019 | Underlying operating profit (£m): 1,111 | 1,356 Average net assets (£m): 8,352 | 7,900 Return on investment (%): 13% | 17% RoI for the businesses is calculated in the same way, but excludes goodwill and intangible assets: | | US ($m) \| Canada (C$m) | UK (£m) | Underlying operating profit: 1,373 | 45 | 25 Average net assets, excluding goodwill and intangibles: 7,450 | 621 | 616 Return on investment: 18% | 7% | 4%

	2020	2019
Underlying operating profit (£m)	1,111	1,356
Average net assets (£m)	8,352	7,900
Return on investment (%)	13%	17%

	US ($m)	Canada (C$m)	UK (£m)
Underlying operating profit	1,373	45	25
Average net assets, excluding goodwill and intangibles	7,450	621	616
Return on investment	18%	7%	4%

Other terms used within this announcement include:

- **Availability:** represents the headroom on a given date under the terms of our $4.6bn asset-backed senior bank facility, taking account of current borrowings.

- **Capital expenditure:** represents additions to rental equipment and other tangible assets (excluding assets acquired through a business combination).

- **Cash conversion ratio:** represents cash flow from operations before exceptional items and changes in rental equipment as a percentage of underlying EBITDA. Details are provided within the Review of Second Quarter, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow section.

- **Dollar utilisation:** dollar utilisation is trailing 12-month rental revenue divided by average fleet size at original (or 'first') cost measured over a 12-month period. Details are shown within the Review of Second Quarter, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow section.

- **EBITDA and EBITDA margin:** EBITDA is earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation. A reconciliation of EBITDA to profit before tax is shown on the income statement. EBITDA margin is calculated as EBITDA before exceptional items divided by revenue. Progression in EBITDA margin is an important indicator of the Group's performance and this has been identified as one of the Group's key performance indicators.

- **Exceptional items:** those items of income or expense which the directors believe should be disclosed separately by virtue of their significant size or nature to enable a better understanding of the Group's financial performance. Excluding these items provides readers with helpful additional information on the performance of the business across periods and against peer companies. It is also consistent with how business performance is reported to the Board and the remuneration targets set by the Company.

- **Fleet age:** net book value weighted age of serialised rental assets. Serialised rental assets constitute the substantial majority of our fleet.

- **Fleet on rent:** quantity measured at original cost of our rental fleet on rent. Fleet on rent has been identified as one of the Group's key performance indicators.

- **Free cash flow:** cash generated from operating activities less non-rental net property, plant and equipment expenditure. Non-rental net property, plant and equipment expenditure comprises payments for non-rental capital expenditure less disposal proceeds received in relation to non-rental asset disposals. This measure shows the cash retained by the Group prior to discretionary expenditure on acquisitions and returns to shareholders. A reconciliation of free cash flow is shown in the Review of Balance Sheet and Cash Flow section.

- **Net debt:** net debt is total borrowings (bank, bonds) and lease liabilities less cash balances, as reported. This measure is used to provide an indication of the Group's overall level of indebtedness and is widely used by investors and credit rating agencies. An analysis of net debt is provided in note 15.

- **Operating profit and operating profit margin:** Operating profit is earnings before interest and tax. A reconciliation of operating profit to profit before tax is shown on the income statement. Operating profit margin is calculated as operating profit before exceptional items and the amortisation of intangibles divided by revenue. Progression in operating profit margin is an important indicator of the Group's performance.

- **Organic:** organic measures comprise all locations, excluding locations arising from a bolt-on acquisition completed after the start of the comparative financial period

- **Same store:** same-stores are those locations which were open at the start of the comparative financial period.

- **Suppressed availability:** represents the amount on a given date that the asset base exceeds the facility size under the terms of our $4.6bn asset-backed senior bank facility.

- **Underlying:** underlying results are results stated before exceptional items and the amortisation of acquired intangibles. A reconciliation is shown on the income statement.

- **Yield:** is the return we generate from our equipment. The change in yield is a combination of the rental rate charged, rental period and product and customer mix.