

concession

NEWS

UPDATE

EDINBURGH WOOLEN MILL – SOWING THE SEEDS OF RETAIL GROWTH



As recent headlines have caused concern in global economic markets, we focus on a retailer that is not only investing in their new store openings, they are also providing landlords with long term income security. Edinburgh Woollen Mill, one of the UK's largest and most loved retailers have become a key garden centre concession operator.

Edinburgh Woollen Mill offer a range of fashion and textile brands that appeal to consumers across all ages. A family run business, whose stable has grown despite the recession and recent turmoil on the High Street have identified garden centres as a key route for their expansion and growth.

As a result of their diverse retail offer they are able to provide a retail format that accommodates tailored ranges for a specific demographic, and can draw on everything from fashion to golf attire, home textiles to children's wear.

The history of this retail giant started in 1970, when EWM opened their first retail store in Edinburgh. They ventured in to England shortly after and in 1972 opened their first store south of the border. In 1998 they opened their first garden centre concession.

Over time, they have added to their portfolio and now operate 265 stand alone stores throughout the UK and Ireland, 88 tourist/speciality shops and 27 destination sites.



Their expansion into garden centres has also gathered momentum in recent times and they have invested in over 30 new sites since 2009, taking their total number of standalone stores within garden centres to 58.

EWM currently operate 29 stores within The Garden Centre Group and 29 stores within other leading groups and independents, including Dobbies, Garden and Leisure, Notcutts, Stephen H. Smith, Bents, Woodcote Green, Stewarts Gardenlands, Highfield Garden World and Baytree Nurseries to name a few.

This continued growth of the EWM brand has resulted in a recent series of acquisitions which has seen the company save famous faces of the High Street and improve their entire retail proposition.

This growth started in January 2008 when the group acquired Ponden Mill and Rosebys, textile and homeware retailers. EWM now operate 127 of these homeware stores under the 'Ponden Home' brand with a presence in the high street, mill stores, concessions and out of town retail.

Most recently they have been involved in high profile acquisitions of Peacocks and Jane Norman, proving their financial stability and confidence in British retail as they look to safeguard some of the UK's most recognisable brands and retain and increase employment within the retail sector.

As part of the Peacocks acquisition 338 stores were saved, 49 concessions, 3 warehouse facilities and the Head Office in Cardiff, this secured the jobs of over 3000 employees. This lifeline came shortly after EWM saved 33 Jane Norman stores, retaining 400 members of staff.



As a result of this recent growth the EWM proposition is not only impressive, it also offers prospective landlords the opportunity to find a bespoke clothing or homeware solution for their garden centre. The areas that these brands require varies and they can tailor a solution to each individual opportunity.

Steve Simpson, Commercial Director of Edinburgh Woollen Mill, said of their expansion in to garden centres: *"We have found that garden centres have made an ideal retail partner for our offer. We are keen to drive footfall to the sites through the recognition of our brands, market leading coach party database and exceptional customer service. Our customers are looking for a day out experience so being able to provide a range that can be browsed alongside the catering offer garden centres have is ideal."*

The growth within their garden centre portfolio is a key focus for the group's management going forward. Each site receives an impressive shop fit, increased marketing activity (to publicise the site as a whole), specialist, expert staff that provide exceptional customer service and a retail offer perfectly suited to the hosts demographics and space available. They can also arrange to open a new store within 4 weeks from the initial visit.

Commenting on their garden centre operation Keith McIntyre, First Franchise MD said: *"The Edinburgh Woollen Mill garden centre offer is a perfect fit for garden centres. As a*

result of their growth in recent years they have proved to be a market leading retail institution and their interest within the sector is very exciting. Each EWM store that opens within garden centres shows how garden centres are emerging as a leading development route for established retail.”

For more information on concession operations within garden centres, **Contact Us** now **01737 735041**, info@firstfranchise.com

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Head Office: Castle Court, 41 London Road, Reigate, Surrey RH2 9RJ.

Telephone: 01737 735041 | Email: info@firstfranchise.com | www.firstfranchise.com | www.promotionalspace.com

