**GENERAL RETAIL NEWS**

**Foyles** the independent bookshop chain, is to open a 4,300 sq ft unit in Birmingham’s new £150 million Grand Central retail scheme in September this year.

**Tommy Hilfiger** the designer brand, has opened an innovative digital showroom at its headquarters in Amsterdam which they believe will revolutionise their sales approach by allowing customers to interactively research the products they are interested in.

**Magma** the lifestyle brand, has upsized its London Seven Dials offering to a new 1,878 sq ft store.

**New Balance** the US sportswear business, will open a new flagship store on London’s Oxford Street having agreed a 10-year lease on the 14,000 sq ft building at 287-291 on Oxford Street.

**Argos** the electronics retailer, has agreed with Sainsbury’s to open ten new digital Argos stores within supermarket stores. The service will offer a range of over 20,000 non-grocery products which can be bought instantly in-store via tablets, or reserved online for collection.

**Uniqlo** the fashion brand, is set to expand into Canada by opening two stores in Toronto in the autumn of 2016. The flagship stores in the Yorkdale shopping centre and the Toronto Eaton Centre will measure 24,000 sq ft and 28,000 sq ft respectively.

**Bijou Brigitte** German jewellery brand, is to expand further internationally by launching in Saudi Arabia. The retailer has 1,100 stores across Europe and the USA.

**Franco Manca** the Italian sourdough pizza chain, has agreed to open its eleventh store at the new Broadgate Circle development. The 1,500 sq ft unit has been let on a ten year lease.

**Camino** the Spanish bar and restaurant concept, is opening a fourth location off Southwark Street in late Spring.

**Waitrose** the supermarket chain, is to open 14 stores this year, including seven supermarkets and seven Little Waitrose convenience stores. The moves will add almost 230,000 sq ft of retail accommodation to the estate.

**Levi Strauss** the jeans retailer, has opened a five-month pop-up in Shoreditch, London, for its Line 8 young fashion collection. The temporary store on Charlotte Road will run until June.

**John Lewis** the department store, has started work on its 90,000 sq ft flexible format store in Chelmsford, which is set to open in autumn 2016. The format is designed to sit between John Lewis’ full size stores and its ‘at home’ branches.

**APC** the French fashion brand, has opened a new 1,951 sq ft London flagship at 48 Lexington Street.

**The Entertainer** the multi-channel toy retailer, has announced plans to open its 100th store this spring. The new store in Aylesbury will launch on 14 March as part of plans to open 14 additional stores across the UK in 2015.

**Tesco** the supermarket giant, has announced it will close 43 loss-making stores, as well as dropping plans for 49 new developments.

**DEAL OF THE WEEK**

Unit 2C, England’s Lane, Belsize Park
The Knight Frank retail agency team agreed the a surrender with the previous tenant and a new 10 year lease with the landlord on an A2 unit.

**TWEET OF THE WEEK**

Congrats to #Apple on its $18bn net #profit in its first quarter - the biggest quarter profit in #history http://bbc.in/1y48t3M @tim_cook
**RETAILER OPTIMISM**

**BHS** will be put up for sale by Sir Phillip Green. Christo Weise the South African Billionaire, Apollo Global Management the private equity firm and restructuring concern Hilco have been reportedly to be interested parties. The vast majority of BHS’s 185 stores have planning permission to sell food, making them an attractive proposition for food retailers.

**Card Factory** the greetings card manufacturers and retailer, is considering placing a bid to purchase Paperchase who are considered to be one of the company’s main rivals. Primary Capital, owners of Paperchase reportedly wanted to await the release of Christmas trading results before approaching potential purchasers. Like-for-like sales were up 3.1% in the five weeks to December 27th and total sales were up 6.5% to £28.4 million.

**H&M** the fashion retailer, has reported that its pre-tax profits rose to 6,222 million Swedish kronor in its fourth quarter from with 5,549 million kronor in the same period in the previous year. In the three months to end November, sales excluding VAT amounted to 42,644 million kronor, which was an increase of 17%. Over the year H&M opened a net 379 new stores in the full year to take the total to 3,511 in 55 markets and the retailer plans to open around 400 new stores in the 2015 financial year.

**Apple** the technology giant, has reported the largest quarterly profit in history of $18 billion. This figure smashed the previous record set by ExxonMobil in 2012 when they made $15.9 billion. The company sold 74.5 million iPhones in the three months to December 27th.

**MARKET SENTIMENT**

Consumer confidence jumped by five points in January to 1, after it slipped during December, according to GFK’s Consumer Confidence Index. The most improved measure that contributed to the rise in consumer confidence was the Major Purchase Index which rose from minus one to five points. Last month was the first time in eight months that the index moved outside the range of minus three to plus one. This statistic will likely become a feature of election campaigns this year alongside the growth in GDP that the UK is currently experiencing.

The UK’s top retailers reportedly believe that the UK is through the worst of it’s economic turmoil and that 2015 will see both improved sales and improvements in consumer confidence. Retail Weeks survey of sentiments suggests that only 16% of retailers expect a ‘flat’ year of sales in 2015 compared to 60% last year. Meanwhile 72% of respondents believe the situation will be slightly better this year. 67% of respondents will prioritise creating an omnichannel strategy as their main priority for the year.

A recent survey conducted by CBI found that 50% of shops reported and increase in sales with only 10% of retailers reporting a fall in sales. This sent the index to +39%, compared with an expected balance of 35%. Clothes, furniture and food retailers recorded the biggest rises in sales. It was a particularly strong month for clothing, with the index reaching a 23-month high. Harsh weather this winter also encouraged a rush to buy warmer clothing.

**KEY CONTACTS**

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