



BLUEWATER NEWS

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For immediate release

SALES AT BLUEWATER INCREASE AGAIN AS CONSUMER CONFIDENCE CONTINUES TO GROW

Sales in November at Bluewater, Europe's leading retail and leisure destination, outperformed the UK for the second consecutive month. Bluewater experienced a 5.0% increase in sales in November compared to the same time last year, versus the BRC-KPMG's figures for the UK, which were up by 4.1% versus November 2008.

November proved to be a month of two halves, with retailers experiencing a very strong latter half, with the final four days in particular delivering a record-breaking finish.

Whilst every retail category at Bluewater performed well, jewellery sales were up by 15%, and travel by 102%, led by the opening of Kuoni in the Guildhall. Reflecting the January 1 2010 VAT increase, sales of 'big ticket' electrical items, such as televisions and audio, were also up by 15%.

Commenting on the results, Andrew Parkinson, Bluewater's general manager, said: "The second consecutive month of growth at Bluewater suggests that consumer confidence is returning. Whilst guests are spending more, however, they are spending smartly: avoiding the VAT increase by buying more expensive items now, for example. They are also utilising retailer offers, such as the popular three for two-type promotions."

The positive news from Bluewater follows the announcement from John Lewis that Bluewater is the best-performing branch in its portfolio for the trading half year-to-date.

David Barford, Director of Selling Operations at John Lewis, said: "We are delighted with the performance of our Bluewater branch, which keeps breaking sales records. Last week, for example, was Bluewater's best ever, with a 22.5% increase in sales versus the same week last year.

"Driving Bluewater's success is the £22 million refurbishment and the creation of the John Lewis Foodhall from Waitrose, which has exceeded expectations and attracted new customers."

Underlining Bluewater's role as a day-out destination was a 5.0% increase in restaurant sales and an 84% growth in sales at Bluewater's Winter Wonderland versus November 2008.

Andrew Parkinson commented: "At Christmas, we attract significant numbers of guests from much further away because Bluewater is a unique day-out. Such guests tend to spend longer here and view our catering offer as key to the overall Bluewater experience. Similarly, for families, the Winter Wonderland is an important addition."

"We are also seeing some new behaviour this year. Catering sales in the morning, for example, are up as people arrive for breakfast before the stores open at 9am. In addition, evening catering has increased, which suggests that guests concentrate on shopping during retail trading hours, then extend their stay with a meal at one of our restaurants."

Looking ahead to the run-up to Christmas, Bluewater expects a change in behaviour, with Andrew Parkinson adding: "We anticipate that fashion sales, already strong, will surge in December as some retailers begin their sales. Added to which, impulse purchasing becomes much more common in December, driven in part by our new stores. Since last Christmas, we have had 29 new openings and 39 refurbishments, creating additional interest and variety."

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