

Edinburgh Woollen Mill to open 100 new stores

✘ Edinburgh Woollen Mill Group, the fashion to textiles retailer that owns The Edinburgh Woollen Mill and Peacocks, is to open a further 100 stores in the next two years after recording strong sales and record profits.

The Group, which also owns fashion brand Jane Norman, homewares retailer Ponden Mill, and golfing brand Pro-Quip, said that its focus on quality, value for money products and positive customer service had helped it deliver strong underlying like-for-like sales across its brands in the year to February 28, 2015.

Total sales at the Group – which opened a total of 71 new stores in the UK and Ireland during the period – had increased to more than £562.6m, with profits before tax rising by 28 per cent to £91.2m.

Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation was also up 16 per cent to £100.9m.

In continued investment the Group will open a further 53 outlets in the current year, including five new overseas stores, and create 800 new jobs. It will also further update its existing shops as it targets the organic growth of both its Edinburgh Woollen Mill and Peacocks brands.

The group currently operates more than 1,000 stores across the UK, as well as hundreds of concessions and multiple e-commerce sites, and employs more than 10,000 staff across the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Steve Simpson, Group Commercial Director of Edinburgh Woollen Mill Group, said: “Each of our brands has its own core focus, but they are united in their determination

to reward strong customer loyalty with excellence in quality, value for money, and customer service.

“Whether they are cost-conscious mums looking for family fashion or discerning shoppers seeking a more timeless sense of style, our customers know they can rely on us to deliver what the quality they want, at the price they want, both on the high street and online.”

The Edinburgh Woollen Mill enjoyed positive like-for-like sales, although it recorded slightly reduced total sales of £166.2m from £168.5m in 2014 after closing a small number of underperforming stores.

Online sales grew by 15 per cent, partly thanks to enhanced e-commerce platform that allows ‘in store’ ordering and click and collect, while it had also increased its range to include ladies’ as well as men’s fashion, helping it broaden its customer base.

Sales in destination towns such as Oban, Fort William, Stratford, Oxford, and Windsor, also rose due to strong numbers of overseas visitors keen on buying British.

Peacocks, which focuses on value fashion for the entire family, grew sales by eight per cent to £351.7m.

The business, which was founded in 1884 by market trader Albert Peacock as a Victorian penny bazaar, has so far received more than £150m in investment since being bought out of administration in 2012. It now has 477 stores in the UK and Ireland, with international operations in a further eight countries.

Online sales at Peacocks rose by 62 per cent, including a 154 per cent increase in purchases made on mobile devices aided by the implementation of a new mobile optimised platform. Online sales also rose by 23 per cent at Jane Norman.



Mr Simpson added: "Edinburgh Woollen Mill was already a category leader in over-40s fashion, and further broadening

its demographic will only help it to continue its growth, both here in the UK and overseas.

“Peacocks, meanwhile, is benefiting from a truly omni-channel approach comprising online, mobile and high street, as well as out of town stores and concessions.

“While this has helped boost sales across both brands, control of sourcing and input prices has helped deliver strong margin growth.

“As well as opening more than 50 stores during the current year, we are now actively looking for new sites both here in the UK and overseas with a target of opening a further 100 new stores in the next two years.”

The Group said it believed the fact that it was debt free and with a strong balance sheet meant it was in a good position to continue its strong performance to date, despite increased competition and a growing squeeze on consumers’ disposable income.