

# Award-winning Edinburgh Ski Retailer Makes Changes at the Top

*New Managing Director for Freeze Pro Shop*



Edinburgh ski retailer, Freeze Pro Shop, will be making a change of MD in the coming weeks, with long-standing leader Al Conroy stepping down on a high, as the online retailer collects the Scottish Export Award for eCommerce Exporter of the Year.

## **Adventure calls for young Director**

The award – which the company picked up recently at a high-profile ceremony attended by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon – is testament to the strong position the business is in, as Conroy, 36, steps aside after nine years at the helm to take some time out to explore the world with his long-term partner,

Becca.

### **A wealth of experience and safe pair of hands**

Stepping in to take the reins is Jim Berkeley, who brings with him a huge amount of experience from big players in the online and physical retail environment – Chain Reaction Cycles, Halfords and Cycle Republic. Having originally started his career in snowsports retail, Berkeley is ideally placed to pilot the firm through the next stage of their strong growth, as one of the UK and Europe's leading ski, snowboard, surf and outdoor retailers.

### **Strong growth, with export at its core**

The business grew by 109% in revenue terms from 2016 to 2017, rocketing to a profitable annual turnover of over £6.1m – helped in part by the weak pound and a favourable export environment, and underpinned by growth in the surf and outdoor equipment segments. Just under 70% of revenue came from foreign markets, with customers consistently impressed by the company's broad range and excellent service record, plus fast and affordable international shipping.

### **Solid foundations for the next stage**

Last year's strong performance enabled Freeze to make the move to a new, bigger warehouse and shop premises at South Gyle, on the edge of Edinburgh. Their new home will provide the capacity they need to succeed in the next stage of their ambitious growth plans, while also giving better links to infrastructure, couriers and the airport. Transport links and increased parking have also been a boon for the physical shop, which has seen revenues rise 25% since the relocation, as customers from out of town find it easier to visit.

### **Exciting developments on the horizon**

Speaking about his new appointment, incoming CEO Jim Berkeley

said: “I’m very excited to get my teeth into the role. The business is in great shape, and there are a number of exciting developments on the horizon – not least of which is our new, mobile-adaptive, multi-language website, which will help to vastly improve our online customer experience. I’m looking forward to joining the team, working with our existing brands and suppliers and leading it through the next phase of its journey”.

### **A smooth transition**

Conroy retains his position on the company’s board, along with original Freeze founder Neil Mitchell, and the outgoing MD is likely to return to the business in some capacity following a year of travelling. Berkeley will be supported in his new role by the existing Freeze senior management team and around 40 full time and seasonal staff who make up the wider workforce. The business continues to enjoy invaluable financial support and guidance from the team at Scottish Enterprise.