

Scottish Design Exchange launches expansion with move into Edinburgh city centre

The Scottish Design Exchange has signalled a major expansion with a move from Ocean Terminal to premises in George Street previously occupied by Laura Ashley.

The non-profit business, which provides a presence to hundreds of small, independent producers aims to offer a blueprint for the revival of flagging high streets suffering from competition from online retailers and the effects of the coronavirus lockdown.



The business, which has distributed significant funds to artists since it was launched in 2015, is eyeing longer term plans to open further stores in Dundee, Aberdeen and

Inverness.

The move reflects its popularity as well as a determination to champion the high street, according to owners.

The store, which covers more than 650sq metres across two floors, provides an opportunity to showcase the work of more artists compared with at Ocean Terminal.

Directly opposite The Assembly Rooms, it is in prime position to benefit from high footfall among Edinburgh's 500,000 population and the 3.45million tourists who visit the city every year.

SDX founder Lynzi Leroy said: "We're delighted to be moving to an iconic location in the centre of Edinburgh where we can give our artists and producers the high-profile platform they deserve.

"The philosophy behind SDX is to provide a highly visible shop window with plenty of passing trade that they would otherwise not be able to afford.

"The success of our business model should be a lesson to other retailers that the future of the high street lies within providing customers with products that are unique, authentic and of great quality."

The business has received growth funding from First Port, a Scottish Government-backed awards programme for social enterprises, which provided £125,000 to support the company's own investment.

It is anticipated further outlets in Tayside, the North-east and the Highlands could provide a platform to showcase the work of up to 900 artists north of Perth and from the Highlands and Islands.

Ms Leroy added: "We have been on the lookout for premises in city centres for some time, but we haven't found the right

locations quite yet.

“Having built the business from scratch over the past five years, I have a good sense of the demand that exists for our products. I feel we’re only scratching the surface and that this business model still has some way to run.”