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HIGH NOON STORES EXPANDS WALES NETWORK WITH NEW STORE OPENINGS

Award-winning independent convenience store and petrol station operator High Noon Stores is to expand its presence across Wales with two new stores opening this month, creating 12 new jobs.

The company, which was recently crowned The Grocer Magazine's Independent Retailer of the Year, is opening a petrol station and Spar retail store in Llyswen, Brecon, and a Spar retail store in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire.

The store openings will bring the number of petrol stations and convenience stores in its portfolio to 10, with much of that expansion occurring in the past 18 months. The company has plans to expand the brand across the UK to become a national chain.

The Carmarthen-headquartered company moved its banking to HSBC's South West Wales Commercial team at the end of 2012 when it operated just two stores. Since that point, HSBC has provided funding and working capital facilities to support its store opening programme, helping the business drive turnover from £2.8 million to over £12 million.

HSBC recently committed £400 million of lending to support ambitious businesses in Wales through its SME Fund, £100 million of which has been allocated for businesses in South West Wales. With 2014 marking a turning point for businesses in the area, the new lending has been made available to support those looking to capitalise on the UK economic recovery to invest in growth.

High Noon Stores was launched by former discount supermarket managers Gordon Miller and Rhys Evans in 2009 after they spotted a gap in the market for convenience stores in semi-rural locations and small towns. They acquired a disused

petrol station just outside of Carmarthen to convert into their first store and now the business operates petrol stations and convenience stores in Brymeurig, Llanteg, Laugharne, Carmarthen, Llanelli, Cowbridge and Symonds Yat

High Noon Stores Managing Director Gordon Miller said: “We have worked with HSBC’s team in Swansea to expand the business across South Wales and into England, and ultimately we want to develop a national network. We are always looking out for potential new sites and would be keen to hear from petrol station and convenience store owners that wish to sell.

“We spotted the opportunity after seeing the disused petrol station and realising that people didn’t want to drive for miles to go to a big supermarket for basics; they want something locally based that offers a good selection of reasonably priced goods. It’s a model that is working well and has scope for expansion both here in Wales and in England.”

Stephen Yorke, HSBC South West Wales Area Commercial Director, said: “High Noon Stores is a Welsh success story and it was fantastic that its success was recently recognised by The Grocer magazine, which is the top publication for the sector. We have worked closely with the company throughout its expansion and have funded several store purchases. We look forward to developing our relationship further over the coming years.”

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