

Retail figures show sales boost

June helped boost shop takings, according to the figures from the Scottish Retail Consortium (SRC).

Total sales for the month were 6.6% ahead of the levels registered in June last year.

Comparing stores that were open continuously over the 12 months, sales were up 2.2%.

The figures follow a disappointing showing in May, which the SRC said were its worst figures for nine years.

Non-food sales moved from a particularly sharp year-on-year fall in May to a slight increase in June, while food sales continued to edge up.

The like-for-like Scottish retail figures were ahead of the rest of the UK, having dropped below it in April and May for the first time since late 2007.

UK sales were 1.4% above their June 2008 levels.

Broken down into sectors, product lines that showed strong June sales included fresh fruit, especially summer berries, along with ice-cream, salads, delicatessen food and barbecue meat.

Warm sunny weather also explains a boost to clothing sales that was strongest for t-shirts, shorts, light cardigans, swimwear, sunglasses, sandals and flip-flops.

Childrenswear did better than adult fashion. Casual and versatile was preferred to formal wear, with suit sales lagging.

In the health and beauty category, anti-bacterial washes and tissues saw an upturn, which retailers linked to the spread of swine flu.

Summer also saw a boost to sun care products and hay fever remedies.

Product lines that did badly included discretionary and decorative homewares, and big-ticket household purchases such as furniture.

'Still unsure'

Richard Dodd, spokesman for the Scottish Retail Consortium, described the June figures as "a welcome bit of good news for Scottish retailers".

He said: "The improvement on May's weak performance is particularly sharp.

"But this is no spending free-for-all.

"Fundamentally people are still unsure about jobs and their own personal finances."

He added: "Customers are largely holding back from buying more expensive non-essentials with many retailers selling carpets, furniture and homewares still looking for convincing signs of an upturn."

Earlier this week, a tracker of spending power found that the average Scottish family is June last year.

Calculated for the Asda supermarket chain, the data reflected the sharp fall in mortgage costs as interest rates plummeted.

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