

Fresh focus for Perth store

JEANFIELD Road is a relatively wealthy residential part of Perth, and it's the location of one of David Sands most modern new stores.

When the company acquired the shop about 18 months ago it was a newsagent. Transforming it into the brightly-lit, small supermarket it is now was a major challenge.

"It's taken a year and a half to get the planning permission, buy the land and carry out the building work, so it's been a long and very expensive project – in fact, the highest spend we've ever had on what was effectively a refit project," said Ewen Chisholm, the firm's chief operating officer.

At the time of purchase, about 50% of the store's sales came from news, and it still has the biggest newsround in Perth. Before the planning permission was granted, the store continued to operate as a newsagent/convenience store with just one till. There wasn't enough room to do much more.

"We had the customer base there, but we didn't have enough product in-store to really class it as a proper convenience store," said store manager Nathan Whyte.

When the new-look store opened, 5000 leaflets were



The Eat Fresh station at David Sands, Jeanfield Road is a big draw at breakfast and lunchtime. The affluent residents of Jeanfield Road appreciate the store's fresh offer. Some of the local produce is only available through David Sands – or at the local farmers' market.

distributed to publicise the fact. The leaflets carried coupons for a loaf of bread, free milk, free rolls, a coffee and a paper. "We've had about 50% coupon redemption, which gives an indication as to its effectiveness in getting people in the door," said Nathan. "We'll do a follow-up soon, asking for customer feedback."

Many of the local hospital's nurses come in for lunches, and Nathan expects the lunchtime traffic to increase once the offer from the central kitchen

arrives in-store. Other in-store attractions include the half-price range, the "£1 frozen" offers and the fresh produce stand complete with new HealthyLiving branding.

One of the most alluring sections of the store – as with all the David Sands stores – is the display of Stephens cakes, and next to it is the "Eat Fresh" section with hot food to go and an eye-catching electronic menu.

Customer feedback has been excellent. That's been true in terms of the cash going

through the till as well as positive comments, Nathan said. "We've doubled the turnover. Our expectation is that we'll continue to add another 35-40% to that figure."

One elderly gentleman who had lived in the area for 50 years was given a sneak preview of the store just before it reopened: at which point he burst into tears. "I thought I'd upset him!" said Nathan – however the gentleman was just overcome with joy at the transformation of his local store.

It's time to promote provenance

DAVID Sands Ltd carries more high quality local produce than many other retailers and now it plans to shout about it.

The firm is to unroll a raft of in-store POS to promote the provenance of many of the products stocked in the stores. "We're good at doing local," said chief operating officer Ewen Chisholm.

"What we're not so good at is telling people how local things are; telling them the story of the products we sell." And that, Ewen explained, is particularly important when you consider that sales of Stephens bakery products account for 10% of the company's business.

"Did you know that every single Stephens product is hand-made?"

"And we sell over 100,000 of their rolls



a week as a company. We need to educate our customers about these facts."

This will be done via colour posters and leaflets carrying photos of the people who actually produce the local products, not models.

"The photos will show the real Puddledub

and the real baker and the real pie," Ewen explained.

"We've got a £1 bacon and a £2.83 bacon in stock. Why would somebody want to pay that much when there's no story? We need to tell them about the provenance and the premium quality."

Menu cards will also be used to promote local produce. "There's a story here, a recommendation," he said.

"This is how we suggest you prepare it. So if you're having a barbecue, for example, why not buy a buffalo burger and put it into a Stephens roll? These are two fantastic quality local products that go well together.

"It's not about saying our bread is really cheap. It's about saying our offer is really different."