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PRESS RELEASE

Responsible retailing award for David Sands

CONVENIENCE store group **David Sands Ltd** has been recognised for its commitment to responsible retailing in the prestigious Responsible Drinks Retailing Awards 2007 in London, coming top in the off-trade chain category and fending off tough competition from retailers all over the UK.

The Kinross-based chain, competing against the large supermarkets and dedicated off-licences as well as other convenience stores, impressed the judges with its “thorough and holistic” approach to combating under-age sales and spreading a sensible drinking message.

Organised by trade newspapers Morning Advertiser and Off-Licence News, the awards recognise those businesses that do not just exist within the law, but are going out of their way to make sure that alcohol is sold in an appropriate and responsible manner, thus reducing the anti-social impact it can have in communities.

David Sands, managing director, said: “It is hoped that our various approaches in restricting the supply of alcohol to youngsters together with the promotion of responsible drinking will demonstrate to the critics of our trade that we will always strive to operate our stores in a manner designed to compliment community life, not harm it.

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“Winning this particular award is a tremendous boost to our staff who are at the sharp end of the country’s current enforcement strategy in restricting illegal and socially irresponsible sales of alcohol. And they are under even more pressure since the recent change in the law to raise the age for purchasing cigarettes and tobacco to 18.”

David Sands currently operates 24 stores in Fife, Perthshire and Kinross. In the last 18 months, the £24.8 million-turnover company has invested heavily in expanding and strengthening its portfolio via an aggressive acquisition strategy, ongoing store refurbishment programme and further investment at its £1.5 million warehouse and head office in Kinross.

Meanwhile, David Sands is to introduce a ‘Challenge 25’ policy in relation to age-restricted sales from January 2008. Stores adopted a ‘Challenge 21’ policy some time ago and while this has proved to be an effective means of helping the company prevent sales of alcohol and other products to under-age teenagers, raising the age to 25 will further safeguard staff.

“Staff are very supportive of this change and we believe that in the current political and health climates – and the imminent changes to licensing legislation – it is the responsible way forward for our company,” said Sands. “We expect a small number of customers to vent their frustration but overall we expect our extensive customer base to see the long-term benefits for their communities.”

As part of its entry for the Responsible Drinks Retailing Awards, David Sands put significant emphasis on so-called ‘proxy purchases’ of alcohol – the youngsters who attempt to buy alcohol and the adults who make purchases for onward supply to under-age teenagers. “In the past year we have taken a very robust stance against those ‘other’ offenders,” said Sands.

“Through diligent and astute observations by staff and the use of quality CCTV images from cameras located both inside and outside our stores, we have secured evidence to support the police in prosecuting offenders who commit those offences,” he continued. “We remain disappointed, however, in the apparent apathy towards the prosecution of youngsters.

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“I believe that the off-sales trade has to secure evidence of all cases of those ‘other’ offenders and report them to the police for consideration of prosecution. It is absolutely essential that all stakeholders in this very important climate of encouraging responsible drinking operate on a level playing field.”

Earlier this year, David Sands Ltd won the Scottish Grocer Social Responsibility Award.

ENDS

For further information, contact **David Sands** on 01577 865141 or **Karen Peattie** on 0141 773 1801/07947 075 937

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- David Sands Ltd was founded in Kinross in 1812
- The company currently operates 24 stores in Fife, Kinross and Perthshire: Auchtermuchty; Bridge of Earn; Cardenden; Cowdenbeath; Crossford; Dunfermline; Perth (5 stores); Kelty; Kennoway; Kinross, Kirkcaldy (2 stores); Lochgelly (2 stores); Leven; Methilhill; Methil; Thornton; Strathmiglo; and Burntisland
- Most David Sands stores sell newspapers and magazines and many outlets offer a Post Office, in-store bakery, ATM, PayPoint and the National Lottery
- All stores are licensed to sell alcohol and all stores have a very strong fresh foods offer
- David Sands is a former president of the Scottish Grocers’ Federation and a director of the Nisa-Today’s group’s Central Distribution Services operation
- The company is an original member and major driver of the Scottish Government-supported SGF Healthy Living Programme, an initiative designed to introduce healthier food ranges to local convenience stores