

Retail footfall in Wales improving but still well below pre-pandemic levels

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Retail footfall remains well below pre-pandemic levels but the picture is improving, according to new research from the Welsh Retail Consortium.

Footfall decreased in August by 16.5% compared to the same period two years earlier. The rate was an improvement of 9.3% on July's comparison with two year earlier.

August's decline for Wales was the shallowest of any nation of UK. The average decline for the UK on August 2019 was 18%.

Shopping centre footfall declined by 59.2% in August Wales, up from a 64.3% dip in July.

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In August, footfall in Cardiff decreased by 14.3% on two years ago, an 11.4% increase from July.

Sara Jones, head of policy and external Affairs, Welsh Retail Consortium, said: August provided a glimmer of optimism for Welsh retailers as the footfall rate improved significantly on what was a dire July. That said, footfall is still languishing almost 17% down on pre-pandemic levels with retail destinations, and especially shopping centres and our cities, feeling the pinch from the continued encouragement for home working.

“The sustained weakness in shopper footfall is disconcerting as the hourglass counts down towards what is traditionally retail’s golden quarter prior to Christmas. This is when many retailers generate the revenues required to tide them through the leaner early months in the new year. Whilst retailers will be working hard to encourage customers back in to store it is apparent that their efforts alone are unlikely to be a panacea to the current predicament. With consumer confidence taking time to return, and the ongoing costs and pressures facing the industry and its supply chain, it is vital that Government at all levels engages with the industry over the autumn and acts to save our high streets.”

Andy Sumpter, retail consultant for Sensormatic Solutions, said: “Bolstered by staycationer shopper traffic and the Back To School boost, August saw footfall recovering to its highest point compared to pre-pandemic levels so far this year. In every UK city we track – including larger cities which have sorely felt the impact of slow returning commuter trade in recent months – showed improved shopper counts, as vaccine confidence won out against the fears and spread of the Delta

variant.

“Sustaining this recovery into the Autumn – and as retailers head towards the critical Golden Quarter of peak trading – is no longer just reliant on maintaining consumer confidence. Getting stock on shelves has always been a given retail imperative.

“But amidst the ongoing disruption to stock availability, exacerbated by both Brexit and Covid-19, shoring up supply chains to meet elevated levels of demand, and offering alternative delivery formats like click and collect to ease the burden on the digital fulfilment network, will become even more mission critical if recovery is set to continue.”

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