

NEWSROOM

In brief

APAX MAY MAKE A BID FOR WOOLWORTHS

PRIVATE equity firm Apax Partners has confirmed it is considering a takeover bid for Woolworths.

In a brief statement, Apax Partners said: "In response to

speculation, Apax confirms that it is considering, on behalf of a new company to be established by funds advised by it, a possible offer for Woolworths Group.

"However, considerations are at a very early stage and there can be no certainty at all that any offer will ultimately be forthcoming.

"If a decision to proceed is made, it is currently Apax's intention to approach the board of Woolworths to seek a recommendation. A further announcement will be made when appropriate."

Woolworths was demerged from the rest of the Kingfisher empire in August 2001.



JANUARY SALES POOREST SINCE 1999

JANUARY brought more disappointment for retailers as sales again failed to live up to expectations.

According to the Confederation of British Industry's chief economic adviser, Ian McCafferty, the latest study shows an ongoing slowdown in the growth of consumer spending.

Indeed, in the 12 months to January, sales actually fell slightly and retailers called them "below average for the time of year".

Underlying retail sales growth, said the CBI, has now clearly moved on to a slower trajectory than that seen in the first half of last year.

Thirty per cent of firms reported to the CBI's Distributive Trades Survey that sales in January were up on a year ago, but 33 per cent said they were down. Subtracting one figure from the other left a negative balance of minus three per cent. This, said the CBI, makes it the weakest January balance since 1999, when it was minus nine.

Included, the CBI's survey has found sales consistently disappointing since September.

ITMA RECOGNISES SROTY RETAILER CONTEST

SATELLITE Retailer of the Year, the competition organised by Sky, Astra and ERT Weekly, has been recognised as a top UK event.

SROTY gained recognition at the Incentive Travel & Meeting Association (ITMA) annual awards, which were held in Paris last month.

The ITMA annual awards reward the achievements of organisations whose innovative approach has led to some of the most successful and talked about events and product launches in the last year.

Kevin McGann, Sky's head of multiple retail, said: "We are delighted to have been nominated and are extremely proud that an event conceived and developed to grow awareness of Sky's product should receive independent recognition."

SROTY is now in its seventh year. Plans for SROTY 2005 are already under way and this year's competition will kick off in April.

Full details of the event will be posted in ERT Weekly over the coming weeks.

Our picture shows contestants at last year's final in London taking part in a treasure hunt in Mini cars.



Citiraya's new hi-tech recycling facility in Hirwaun uses advanced laser separation technology

New plant will recycle 500,000 CRTs a year

A PLANT for recycling TVs and monitors has been opened at Hirwaun in south Wales.

Citiraya Recycling Technology has invested £1 million in the site, which is claimed to be the first in the UK to use laser separation technology to recycle glass from cathode ray tubes (CRTs).

The new site, which is close to Hitachi's Hirwaun factory, will employ 70 people and has 35,000 square feet of processing space.

Initially, it will recycle 500,000 CRTs a year – around five per cent of the UK's annual tally of scrapped tubes.

Citiraya is part of a Singapore-based group of the

by Penny Williams

same name that specialises in recycling surplus, obsolete and scrap electronics. It is planning sites across Europe to help makers comply with strict new European Union recycling directives.

And it commented that governments around the world, not just the EU, are moving to make manufacturers more accountable for their products when they fall out of use.

It already has recycling contracts with many of the world's leading electronics companies.

Citiraya received help from the Welsh Assembly and the Welsh Development Agency as well as a regional selective

assistance grant to set up the high-technology plant in Wales.

Said minister for economic development and transport, Andrew Davies: "Citiraya is at the forefront of environmental recycling technology.

"I am delighted that we have been able to provide support for the company to establish a hi-tech facility in Wales, which will be the first in the UK to use the latest laser cutting technology in the recycling process."

A Citiraya spokesman said the company had opted for Hirwaun because of the availability of high quality staff and premises and the ease of transport routes for incoming waste from central and southern Britain.

Akai brand in European comeback

AKAI has relaunched itself in Europe as new investors plan to reinvigorate the brand.

With large, undisclosed investments from The Grande Group of Hong Kong, Akai's European relaunch started in the Netherlands.

In the UK and Ireland, Akai's new distributor is Panther UK, an importer, exporter and distributor to the consumer electronics industry.

Pankaj Thacker, Panther's managing director, told ERT Weekly: "We are delighted to be working with Akai.



"The brand still has impact and awareness in the UK market and the initial products we are seeing have exceeded our expectations.

"We will be fast and aggressive in the market, making sure that Akai tracks product and pricing trends to stay ultra-competitive."

Mr Thacker said that all Akai products are coming out

of "the highest-quality suppliers" in Korea and China.

While Akai in Japan has a wide range of products, covering almost every sector, Mr Thacker said it will be selective in the UK at the start.

Akai's launch product is a multi-format DVD recorder, the ADR-5800Di (pictured), which retails at around £199-99.