

Next buys Joules out of administration for £34m

Collapsed fashion chain Joules has been rescued from administration by British multinational retailer Next and Joules founder Tom Joule in a £34m deal. The acquisition is expected to save 1,450 jobs and keep 100 of the current 124 Joules stores open in the UK and Ireland.



Source: Geof Sheppard, CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>, via Wikimedia Commons

Next will own 74% of the retailer, with the remaining 26% held by Tom Joule. Next has also acquired Joules' head office for £7m in cash.

Next [reportedly placed a last-minute bid](#) for Joules in the early hours of Thursday morning, edging out South African retailer TFG, the owner of Phase Eight, Whistles and Hobbs in the UK. Marks & Spencer and Frasers Group are also thought to have taken an interest in Joules.



TFG open to participate in UK retail consolidation

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Joules to migrate onto Next Total Platform

Joules, founded in 1989, will retain its management autonomy and creative independence. The company will have its own board of directors and continue to be based in Market Harborough, Leicestershire. Most Joules staff will remain with the business and Joules will migrate onto the Next Total Platform over time.

Joules' websites and online operations will be operated by Next through Next's Total Platform. Total Platform will also provide warehousing and distribution services for Joules' retail, franchise, wholesale and concession businesses, all of which will continue to be operated by Joules. It is anticipated Joules will go live on Next's Total Platform in early 2024.

Management

Having recently stepped back into an executive role as product director, Tom Joule upon completion of the Proposed Transaction, will "take the lead in re-establishing the clear identity of both brand and product" upon completion of the

proposed transaction, said Next. He will also ensure that there is leadership continuity for staff, suppliers and other key stakeholders alike.

Jonathon Brown was appointed CEO of Joules in 2022 and will remain in that role.

"The company will benefit from Tom's understanding of the Joules brand, customer and product direction that served Joules so well historically and from Next's Total Platform, to bring operational efficiency to the newly formed business," said Next.

Simon Wolfson, Next chief executive commented: "We are excited to see what can be achieved through the combination of Joules' exceptional product, marketing and brand building skills with Next's Total Platform infrastructure."

Tom Joule said: "After three years away from the operational side, I'm truly looking forward to inspiring teams with clear direction to excite and recapture the imagination of the customer again. Our customers have always trusted us to lead, not follow, with products that reflect their lifestyle. It's important that we live up to the high standards they desire in design, quality and, with Next's Total Platform delivery and customer support proposition, the service they expect.

"I'm so pleased that we have been able to strike a deal that protects the future of the company for all its loyal customers, its employees and also for the town of Market Harborough, which have been so central to Joules' success."

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