

First gaming concession in a UK airport opens for business at Manchester



Gaming Point makes its debut at Manchester Airport

The Bluedog Group company Kounter has partnered with travel retail entrepreneur Graeme Stewart in a joint-venture collaboration to unveil the UK's first ever airport gaming concession - named Gaming Point - in Manchester Airport Terminal 1.

Kounter - an agency which elevates retail experiences through best-in-class brand activations with a strong portfolio of travel retail work - was responsible for the full design and build of Gaming Point, plus digital infrastructure work for the 120 square meter space. The project was led by The Bluedog Group Technical Director Ollie Potter.

The gaming venue at the UK's busiest airport outside London features five gaming PCs, a Formula One racing simulator, a Nintendo Switch and an immersive Virtual Reality (VR) Escape/Arcade room.

A range of popular PC/console games are available to play in the space, including for example Fortnite and Mario Kart, with prices starting from £5. The large VR room offers a vast array of experiences from high-tech VR arcade games to immersive VR escape room challenges, featuring genres such as Zombies, Orcs, Dragons, Spaceships and Robots.



Inside the Gaming Point space

The concession - which will operate for 16 hours a day - is staffed by a gaming expert, known as the Game Master. He or she assists users with set-up and offers guidance, and where needed hints and tips, throughout the gaming experiences.

The concession is being promoted by externally facing promotional screens at its entrance, with digital messaging to tempt passengers inside. In addition, extensive social media campaigns are planned which will primarily target young passenger demographics.

Manchester Airport is also playing a key part in promoting Gaming Point with its own social media initiatives. Gaming Point aims to not only open more standalone airport concessions but also to partner with airport lounge providers and retail businesses to introduce gaming and experiential food & beverage elements, which will help increase passenger dwell times.

The Bluedog Group CEO and Founder Nick King commented: "We were delighted when Graeme Stewart approached us about a year ago with the outline of the project vision. What began as an exploratory conversation evolved into a visionary collaboration; an unprecedented opportunity to merge our expertise and translate ideas into a ground-breaking concept for enhancing airport spaces with interactive entertainment.

"Bluedog Group's special retail activation agency Kounter has embraced this project whole-

heartedly from the initial design concept through to the complete install and finished store. The result unites the creativity of design with the immersive world of gaming and brings a captivating experience to airport travelers, blending innovation and entertainment seamlessly.

“It’s a truly pioneering project that sets a precedent for other airports worldwide, showcasing the potential to revolutionize passenger experiences by integrating design and gaming. We are very hopeful that the concept will encourage other airports globally to explore similar innovative partnerships with Gaming Point and Kounter.

“We believe that Gaming Point will enhance the overall airport experience by offering travelers an engaging and immersive environment that complements traditional shopping opportunities. By providing an exciting blend of design and gaming, we aim to captivate passengers and encourage them to explore and enjoy all that the airport has to offer.”

Graeme Stewart, who has senior roles with other airport businesses including Luggage-Point and Enviro-Point, commented, “It is with immense pride that we open our first Gaming Point in the UK at Manchester Airport. In terms of what we provide, this is also a world first gaming concession in airports, as we offer a unique combination of VR escape and arcade room, F1 racing simulator and a PC gaming lounge. We are delighted to partner with Kounter to introduce this new experiential concession to the airport world, where new ideas to engage with passengers are needed, especially to entertain the younger generations. Gaming Point delivers that.

“We are also excited at the potential for collaborations with other airport concessionaires, to integrate Gaming Point spaces. For example, we have already entered discussions with two duty-free operators to introduce ‘Pause Zones’ featuring elements of our offer, together with numerous other ideas we have. We would also like to give a shout out to Manchester Airport and its visionary commercial team, including Retail Director Richard Jackson and Category Manager Catherine Holmes, for its support in getting the concession up and running and helping to create a unique partnership between retailer and airport. Collaborations of this nature will play a key part in our future success.”