



Euro 2004 hits Wetherspoon sales Free 251224

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No-frills pubs operator JD Wetherspoon is considering allowing TVs in its bars in a bid to lure football-loving drinkers away from rival ale houses.

The group has traditionally shunned TV and music but a successful trial of TV use in some of its outlets has forced Wetherspoon to think again.

However, designated TV areas may be used to preserve the old atmosphere.

The firm, which runs 633 managed pubs in the UK, posted half-yearly pre-tax profits of £20.7m, down from £25.6m.

Pre-tax profits before exceptional items rose 9% to £27.8m, with like-for-like sales up 4.8%.

Pressures build

Managing director John Hutson said the group was still expanding its existing business but faced “a fair amount” of competitive pressure in the managed pubs sector.

This was compounded, he said, by tax rises, the slight increase in the minimum wage and downward pressure on prices due to low inflation.

He said the group had not made any firm decisions over the launch of TVs in its pubs and said they may not be rolled out in time for the Euro 2004 football championships.

“I think it is something that is more likely to evolve,” said Mr Hutson.

Previous major football tournaments, he said, had sometimes triggered a short-term dip in sales, but with no long-term implications for the business.

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