



Smoke-free pubs boost Wetherspoon Free 251224

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JD Wetherspoon says its move to make its pubs smoke-free ahead of a ban on smoking in enclosed spaces in England next year has benefited its business.

Its English and Welsh pubs which banned smoking last year have reported 2% higher sales than in the same period in 2004, when smoking was allowed.

In Scotland – where a national ban has already come into force – sales at its 39 pubs were 5.2% higher than before.

Many pub firms have warned that smoking bans could severely hit their earnings.

‘Encouraging performance’

Wetherspoon reported a 9% overall increase in like-for-like sales in the 13 weeks to the end of October, compared to the same period last year.

It also said that like-for-like sales at non-smoking pubs in England and Wales had risen 12% over the past year.

The positive trading update boosted Wetherspoon’s share price, which rose 6% in early morning trade on the London Stock Exchange.

From next summer, smoking in enclosed places will be banned in England and Wales.

Wetherspoon said the early evidence suggested that this would not have a drastic impact on its business.

The firm’s English and Welsh outlets – the first to be converted to non-smoking premises – were a cross-section of urban and rural premises.

“So far in Scotland, most pub companies have said they are encouraged by the performance,” said Jim Clarke, Wetherspoon’s finance director.

He said it was too early to tell whether this reflected the likely long-term effect of the smoking ban.

“But we haven’t had a winter yet,” he added. “Conditions may be more testing in the winter months.”

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Date Created

02/11/2006

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