



Wetherspoon profits surge as customer demand grows Free 221224

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Founder and chairman Tim Martin said it has seen sales 'continue to improve' into the new financial year.

Pub giant JD Wetherspoon revealed a jump in profits for the past year as it witnessed higher customer demand in the face of cost-of-living pressures.

Founder and chairman Tim Martin said it has seen sales "continue to improve" into the new financial year.

The company told shareholders on Friday morning that pre-tax profits surged by almost eight-fold to £36 million for the year to January, compared with £4.6 million a year earlier.

Wetherspoons benefited from a continued improvement in demand and easing cost inflation.

Like-for-like sales grew by 7.4% for the year, with this now 15.3% ahead of pre-pandemic levels from 2019.

The company recorded revenues of £991 million for the year to January, up from £916 million a year earlier.

Mr Martin said it has seen like-for-like sales grow 5.8% so far in February and March as it continued to witness an improvement in demand from customers.

"The company currently anticipates a reasonable outcome for the financial year, subject to our future sales performance," Mr Martin added.

It came as the pub group also confirmed it has trimmed the size of its pub estate further.

Wetherspoons said it now has 814 pubs after selling five pubs, terminating the lease of another five and subletting another three sites.

The company said: "In the last decade, there has been a reduction in the number of trading Wetherspoon pubs, which peaked at 955 in December 2015.

"In spite of a reduction in the overall number of pubs, sales have continued to increase – total sales are now about one third higher than in 2015."

However, Wetherspoons stressed that it still believes it has the "potential" to reach 1,000 sites across the UK.

Derren Nathan, head of equity research at Hargreaves Lansdown, said: "A lot of capacity has come out of the market and the hint that there might be potential of about 1,000 pubs compared to a current total of 814, could see the estate start to grow again.

“That may see the return of dividends kicked further down the road.

“Location is key and recent openings include the Stargazer at the old Millenium Dome in Greenwich and the Star Light at Heathrow Airport.

“Overall, returning the estate to growth could be a welcome development.”

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