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Pubs group JD Wetherspoon has unveiled a jump in profits, but warned the recent smoking ban in England could crimp profits in the current year.

Like-for-like sales were just 1.1% higher in August, against a 5.3% rise in July, a month after the smoking ban came into force in England in July.

As a result the firm warned its outlook for like-for-like sales in 2008 remained “cautious”.

The alert came as Wetherspoon said full year pre-tax profits rose 9% to £62m.

‘Remaining cautious’

The group added that the figures for the year to July 29 had been buoyed by a 5.6% rise in like-for-like sales, driven by growing food sales.

A combination of food sales and drinks bought to go with table meals now accounts for about two thirds of Wetherspoon's sales.

"Given the smoking bans and our experience in Scotland, our outlook for like-for-like sales for the 2008 financial year remains cautious, as it involves more uncertainty than usual," chairman Tim Martin said.

"Although we have no doubt that this legislation will be to the long-term benefit of the licensed trade."

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