

Butchers chain Dicksons back in the black after 'challenging' period with retail driving sales rise

North East butchers chain Dicksons has bounced back into the black after a "challenging" period following a business restructure and solid performance across its divisions.

The South Shields firm – famed for its saveloy dip as well as its pies, cooked meats and sausages – has posted accounts for the years ended June 30 2021 showing a welcome return to profit, as well as rising revenues.

The business, which acts as a supermarket supplier and wholesaler with its own chain of 31 shops, grew turnover from £12.73m to £14.4m, while also converting last year's operating loss of £92,109 to profit of £727,444 after its shops reopened as Covid-19 restrictions came to an end.

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The previous year's pre-tax loss of £109,204 was also turned to profit of £712,607 and the overall profit for the year came in at £417,278.

During the year the firm received Government support of £333,929 in grants, loans and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which the firm said "proved crucial to prevent lasting damage to the business and maintaining our workforce throughout the pandemic, although sadly, total employee numbers did fall from 336 to 293 after some essential business restructuring".

In a report accompanying the accounts, the firm said the

financial year saw all but two of its retail sites fully reopen in the wake of the pandemic. Despite the ongoing closure of the shops, retail turnover rose by 19% while turnover in the wholesale business, which had fallen by 3% during full Covid-19 restrictions, recovered by 5%, which was seen as a very positive result by the board.

It said: "High street footfall has continued to decline and while the ever-increasing popularity of online ordering appears to point to sales revenue in that area growing, local sites that form a key part of smaller communities have not been impacted as badly or at all in some cases."

Following publication of the accounts, managing director Chris Hayman said: "We are pleased to report a return to profitability after what's been a challenging period, the result of a successful business restructuring programme and better sales performance across both retail and wholesale divisions.

"The Covid pandemic presented us with a number of trading restrictions, most notable of which was the closure of our retail sites during lockdown one.

"The introduction of an online delivery app in February 2020 did help to offset the impact and become an increasingly important source of revenue as our customers adapted to online ordering.

"New listings and brand loyalty helped to drive a 5% increase in turnover across the wholesale division during the year to 30 June 2021 and reflects our increasing reach across the wholesale market.

"Our results also reflect ongoing innovation within operations during the period while development of our leadership team gives our exceptional workforce a strong platform to deal with ongoing economic challenges as we approach our 70th year of trading."

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