

Pub firm Marston's cheers Christmas and World Cup sales boosts

The boss of Marston's has hailed "encouraging" Christmas bookings despite cost-of-living pressures on customers, and has said the pub group has also been buoyed by the World Cup.


The firm, which runs 1,468 pubs across the UK, saw shares lift higher on Tuesday morning as it also returned to profit for the past year following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

Andrew Andrea, chief executive of Marston's, said: "Current trading to the end of November has been positive with encouraging levels of Christmas bookings as we look forward to the first-restriction free festive period in three years.

"Additionally, the World Cup has benefited trading, delivering like for like drink sales of around 50% growth for the home team games."

Marston's highlighted that overall like-for-like sales across its managed and franchised pubs have been up 6.8% since the start of October, compared with pre-pandemic levels from 2019.

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It said this momentum is building towards Christmas, with bookings for the festive period also above 2019's levels.

It came as the Wolverhampton-based company revealed a £163.4 million pre-tax profit for the year to October 1, compared with a £171.1 million loss in the previous year.

The firm was buoyed by higher sales and efforts to offset rocketing cost inflation.

Mr Andrea added: "I am pleased to report a strong performance over the last 12 months evidenced by a doubling of revenue growth, a return to profit and steady progress with our debt reduction strategy.

"Whilst uncertainty remains, Marston's remains well financed and in great shape to weather the challenges ahead with the right formula, the right strategy and the right team to continue to make progress and deliver shareholder value."

[AJ Bell](#) investment director Russ Mould said: "[Shareholders](#) have a return to profit to toast at Marston's but the pub chain still faces several challenges as it looks to end 2022 on a high note.

"Not least the potential impact of further rail strikes which could lead to cancellations for Christmas parties and people socialising at home rather than struggling with a transport conundrum.

"Marston's may enjoy some benefit from people feeling too strapped to dine in a fancy restaurant but still keen to go out for a meal with friends and opting for some pub grub instead."