

WHITBREAD

Trading Statement

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Whitbread PLC

02 March 2009

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TRADING UPDATE

GROUP SALES INCREASE BY 11.5% AND WELL POSITIONED FOR A CHALLENGING YEAR

Whitbread PLC, the UK's largest hotel and restaurant group, today reports trading performance for the 50 weeks to 12 February 2009.

Sales for the 50 weeks to 12 February 2009

	% change vs. prior year	
	Like for like sales	Total sales
Premier Inn	6.2%	14.3%

Restaurants	4.4% ¹	3.1%
Whitbread Hotels and Restaurants	5.4%	9.1%
Costa	2.0%	22.1%
Total	4.9%	11.5%
39 weeks ended 27 November 2008	6.7%	13.4%

Alan Parker, Chief Executive Officer of Whitbread PLC comments:

2008/09 has been a year of further good progress and market outperformance for Whitbread. We anticipate that profits for the year will be in line with market expectations. However, the sales trends we reported in December continued and in recent weeks Group like-for-like sales have been predominantly negative, particularly due to lower occupancy in Premier Inn. Since the start of 2009, it has been difficult to establish any clear trends.

In this first year of the combined Hotels and Restaurants business we have delivered an increase in total sales of 9.1% and like for like sales growth of 5.4%. By the year end we will have 54 new hotels and just over 40,000 rooms in the UK. Eleven of these new hotels are on joint sites with a Whitbread branded restaurant taking the total restaurant estate to 372. Premier Inn's Business Account is attracting larger business clients with total accounts up 48% year on year and total sales via this channel up 26% year to date. Revpar growth for the 50 weeks to 12 February was 2.9% on a like for like basis. Within Restaurants like for like covers growth increased by 7.7% with spend per head falling 1.5%.

Costa continues to perform well with total sales up by 22.1%. Like for like sales increased by 2.0%. In the 50 weeks 204 new Costa outlets were opened in the UK and 151 across our international markets taking the total number of outlets to 1,297, across 25 markets.

Whilst 2009/10 will be a very challenging year, we will continue to play to our strengths, focusing on three key priorities:

First, achieving cash flow neutrality in 2009/10. A material contribution to this will be from slowing our organic expansion. Although we remain committed to opportunities and growth over the long term, we now plan for capital expenditure in 2009/10 to be c£170m, around half the spend seen in 2008/09.

Second, reducing operating costs. The efficiency programme announced last March is on track to deliver the promised £25m savings by 2010/11. Some £7m has been achieved in 2008/09 with a further £13m to be delivered in 2009/10 and the balance in 2010/11. We will continue to look at ways of achieving further efficiencies and will take ongoing action as appropriate.

Third, outperforming our competition. In these recessionary times operating well maintained, value for money hotel and restaurant brands offers significant opportunities for Whitbread to outperform in our market.

Our balance sheet remains robust, underpinned by a strong freehold asset base. Net debt as of the year-end is estimated to be around £630m against committed facilities of £1.16bn.

We believe that Whitbread's brands are well placed for the challenging year ahead.

End

Whitbread PLC will announce its preliminary results on 28 April 2009.

¹ 2.5% excluding closures periods

Conference call for analysts and investors

Alan Parker and Christopher Rogers will be available for a conference call at 8.00am today. To participate, dial 0808 238 0665 and enter the passcode 86264924.

A recording of the conference call will be available until 8th March 2009. To listen, dial 0800 953 1533 and enter the passcode 86264924#. This service will be active approximately two hours after the conference call has finished.

For more information please contact:

Investor Relations

Christopher Rogers, Whitbread PLC +44 (0) 1582 84 4439

Press Contacts

Tabitha Aldrich-Smith, Whitbread PLC +44 (0) 1582 84 4439

Andrew Grant, Tulchan +44 (0) 20 7353 4200

David Allchurch, Tulchan +44 (0) 20 7353 4200

For photographs please visit the image library
on www.whitbreadimages.co.uk

Notes to Editors

Whitbread PLC is the UK's largest hotel and restaurant group operating market-leading businesses in the budget hotels and restaurant sectors. Its well-loved brands are Premier Inn, Beefeater, Table Table, Brewers Fayre, Taybarns and Costa Coffee.

Whitbread PLC employs over 33,000 people and serves 9 million customers every month in its 1,800 outlets across the UK.

In the first half of the financial year ended 28th August 2008, Whitbread PLC reported a 12.6% increase in Group Revenue to £682.2 million and 24% increase in Pre-tax Profit to £123.3 million.

Whitbread PLC is a FTSE 100 company, listed on the London Stock Exchange. It is also a member of the FTSE4Good Index.

This information is provided by RNS
The company news service from the London Stock Exchange

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