

Brewers beat the sales drop

BAD weather and the smoking ban have failed to dampen profits for Bury brewer Greene King, which issued an interim management statement yesterday saying it remained on target for the full year.

The statement covered the 17 weeks to the end of August, and include GK's acquisition of the Loch Fyne chain, with 37 restaurants. Barclays Wealth says it maintains its "neutral" recommendation.



Bluestone looks ahead

BUILDERS, Bluestone at Sawston, part of the Morgan Sindall group, has changed its name to Morgan Ashurst and is part of a national division turning over £750m.

David Huricks (pictured), area director for Cambridge, said being part of a much bigger operation following MS's acquisition of Amec's national construction and civil engineering business, DPS, would mean more local jobs.

New range

MELBROSIN, the over-the-counter division of Cambridge-based BioProgress, has launched its anti-cellulite and skin firming cream under the group's Kudos brand.

Business & Finance

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HOLD

CHRISTOPHER SAUNDERS, Cambridge business angel



"Cambridge's knowledge-based companies continue to face tough trading conditions as a result of the strength of the pound, and I am concerned that any further rate rises will only increase the pressure.

Furthermore, the recent worldwide financial problems caused by the US sub-prime market has shaken business confidence and it is vital that economic stability is restored in order to maintain healthy order books across the region.

The MPC needs to adopt a "wait and see" approach, as it can sometimes be up to 18 months before the effects of a rate rise are fully felt. A rate rise at this stage could result in monetary policy overkill and would be bad news for both the local and wider UK economy.

The committee should remember that our interest rates are also currently a lot higher than many other major economies."

Good money is on rates 'hold'

Each month the Cambridge MPC second-guesses the Bank of England, but with the emphasis on the local economy. The more optimistic members of the Cambridge Monetary Policy Committee this month are calling for a cut in the interest rate, but most commentators reckon it's the 'holds' who will be on the button.

CUT

DR MARTIN SABRY, IDEAS



"To ensure sustained growth of the Cambridge and UK economy, I would like to see a cut in interest rates.

The recent stock market fall has caused unease in the business community, which will have dampened the enthusiasm for investment. A small interest rate cut would help to restore business confidence and counteract some of the damage.

Higher discretionary incomes would encourage consumers to invest in their properties and new technologies. It will also assist the big technology developers to invest in progressive innovation of mass-market product usability."

CUT

JAN CAVELLE, Jan Cavelle Furniture, Haverhill



"With all the financial upheaval worldwide in the last few weeks, the economy and faith in same is as low as it has been for a very long while. It will still take time for the implications of the American banking disaster and its knock on effects to become clear, but most people are in no doubt the good times are over and some degree of knock on recession will undoubtedly hit. The press can do much to help by not over dramatising and taking confidence lower still. Cambridge has seen boom years recently but, particularly with the housing market outside London being the first to take a hit, we will be lucky to maintain any economic growth at all. Yanking up interest rates would not only be overkill but could actually be disastrous to the already shaky situation and I vote for a cut, though would be grateful for the stability, at least, of no change."

HOLD

JULIAN JENKINS, Ernst & Young, Cambridge



"The Cambridge and wider UK economy is showing signs that three interest rate rises this year are taking effect. Although CPI inflation has fallen below the Government's 2% target, and consumer spending appears to have been brought under control, a cross section of sectors are starting to suffer under the burden of high interest rates, the recent wet weather and instability in financial markets. Statistics released this week showed that the consumer services sector, which includes the leisure and tourism industry and personal care goods, has performed particularly badly over the last quarter. The recent stock market crisis, caused by the US sub-prime market, has left the world economies shaking and a rate rise would do nothing to help restore business confidence. At a time of increased financial uncertainty, it is vital that interest rates are held."

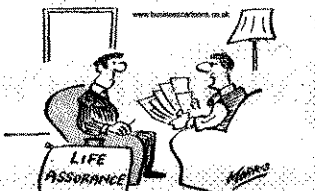
CUT

JOHN BRIDGE, Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce



"I urge the MPC to cut interest rates to avoid causing any permanent damage to the Cambridge and wider UK economy. The latest inflation figures have shown that price pressures are easing and that consumer spending has been brought into line, however I am concerned that if rates remain on hold the MPC risks stunting economic growth for the foreseeable future. The British Chamber of Commerce's quarterly economic report, released in August, is already predicting a sharp slow down in economic growth for 2008, which could be potentially devastating for our small businesses in Cambridge."

funny Business



"Brochures, projections, application forms - the only thing I don't see is the commission you'll be making."

Your £ abroad

Australia	2.32 dollars	New Zealand	2.70 dollars
Bangladesh	129.94 taka	Norway	11.14 krone
Brazil	3.50 reais	Pakistan	114.78 rupees
Canada	2.01 dollars	Philippines	80.30 pesos
China	13.56 yuan	South Africa	13.68 rand
Cyprus	0.82 pounds	South Korea	1642.00 won
Czech Republic	37.57 korunas	Sri Lanka	214.58 rupees
Denmark	10.48 krone	Sweden	13.28 krona
Euro	1.41 euro	Switzerland	2.32 francs
Hong Kong	14.86 dollars	Taiwan	57.97 dollars
Hungary	338.50 forints	Turkey	2.48 new lira
India	72.45 rupees	USA	1.92 dollars
Japan	221.45 yen		
Malta	0.60 lira		
Mexico	19.76 pesos		

FTSE down 29.5 at 6347.3
£/\$ down .0004 at 2.0103
euro/£ down .6 at 67.61

HOLD

PETER HEWKIN, Cambridge Network



"When America sneezes, the whole world catches a cold. Is there a financial crisis brewing as our cousins Stateside worry about whether their spectacular debts will be repaid, and what does this mean for Cambridge? There have been tremors around the world markets in recent weeks - but maybe that is a healthy development, taking out some of the fizz and bringing prices down to more realistic levels. This sort of correction is just as important locally, where, if we want angels and seed funds to invest in the next wave of Cambridge ideas which will change the world, owners and inventors need a sensible view on what these businesses are worth to investors. I hope this will improve the chances of deserving entrepreneurs getting seed funding locally. The correction also reduces the likelihood that interest rates will need to go much higher and I predict no change followed by a gradual fall."

Produced in association with Ernst & Young's Cambridge office.

HOLD

ALAN PHILLIPS, 7Safe Information Security



"I believe the current rate of 5.75% should, and will, be maintained. The Bank of England has already upped the interest rates by half a per cent since May, partially in a bid to stem inflation. As August's inflation figures revealed a surprise drop to below the bank's 2% target, that will be enough to keep things static.

A rate hold would obviously be welcome news for those Cambridgeshire homeowners with hefty mortgage payments, and also for the county's businesses whose borrowing costs have recently risen. Raising rates further at the moment would be premature in my opinion."