



# MEDIA RELEASE

## YORK BREWERY IN NEW HANDS

### Cross-Pennine deal sees Mitchell's return to brewing

York's only brewery has been taken over by a Lancashire hospitality group in a deal which both sides say is a "perfect fit". Lancaster-based Mitchell's Hotels & Inns has bought York Brewery for an undisclosed sum but will operate it as a separate company. It marks a return to brewing for the family firm which closed its Lodge Street brewery in Lancaster nine years ago.

"We are very excited about acquiring York Brewery. It takes us back to our roots – our great great-grandfather started brewing in 1871," said Jonathan Barker, who is joint managing director of Mitchell's with his brother Andrew. York Brewery managing director Tony Thomson began searching for new investors in the summer. "I'm delighted that Mitchell's are taking the helm," he said.

"We've put in 12 years of hard work to develop York Brewery and we feel we've taken it as far as we can go. Andrew and Jonathan share our commitment to quality beers and pubs and are the right people to move the business forward."

In the deal, Mitchell's has taken over the brewery itself in Toft Green and the estate of four pubs, three in York and one in Leeds. All 60 staff are to be retained. "It's business as usual," said Mr Barker.

"York will continue to operate as York Brewery Limited. It won't become Mitchell's of Lancaster. "Culturally our companies are very similar. Cask beer is part of our heritage and that's certainly true of York Brewery." Mr Barker said his first objective was to integrate the business successfully. Mr Thomson will remain a non-executive director and be employed as a consultant for 12 months. Co-founder Tony Smith will continue to run York Brewery bars at various external events in the coming year.

In the medium term Mitchell's will be looking to expand both York's brewing and pub operations. There is the potential to increase the current brewing capacity of 150 barrels a week, Mr Barker said. York beers will go on sale in many of Mitchell's 60 freehold pubs – where they have already found favour in selected trials – as well as being made available further afield through the company's distribution network.

He would also like to see a further six to ten York Brewery pubs open in the next five years. "The Leeds pub has been very successful and we would be looking to expand the business there. If there are other suitable sites in York we would be interested, and we might also look at places like Harrogate or Ilkley."

Mr Barker acknowledged the traditional rivalry between Yorkshire and Lancashire but said it made no difference. "There may be some who think the Wars of the Roses never ended but people like good beer wherever they are." Mitchell's Hotels & Inns employs 380 people, 230 full time, and has a turnover of £12 million. Although the smoking ban and the price difference between on and off sales of alcohol have made it a challenging year, Mitchell's remains in a strong trading position Mr Barker said.

"We have a very well spread business with hotels, food pubs and community pubs. York Brewery is a key addition which will help drive the group forward."



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#### Notes to editors

For more information, contact Chris Titley on 01904 412867 or 07751 532248.

York Brewery became the first brewery to operate in York for 40 years on opening in May 1996. Its beers have won several awards, including a Gold Medal at the Great British Beer Festival for Centurion's Ghost Ale two years running.

York Brewery's website: [www.yorkbrew.co.uk](http://www.yorkbrew.co.uk)

Established in 1871, Mitchell's of Lancaster (Brewers) Limited is a family run pub and hotel company based around Lancashire and Cumbria. For more information see: [www.mitchellshotels.co.uk](http://www.mitchellshotels.co.uk)