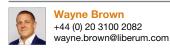
## LIBERUM

United Kingdom | Consumer | Consumer Staples | ART LN | Market Cap £66.2m | 24 May 2023^

## The Artisanal Spirits Company\*

# **Strong Q2 provides confidence for FY23 expectations**



Anubhav Malhotra +44 (0) 20 3100 2197 anubhav.malhotra@liberum.com Adam Tomlinson +44 (0) 20 3100 2174 adam.tomlinson@liberum.com

Membership growth of +10% for the first four months of the year is in-line and underpins confidence and forecasts. However, revenue growth has accelerated in Q2, following a broadly flat start to the year, with the trajectory expected to continue for the remainder of the half. With Europe and China showing strong signs of recovery, and with pricing coming through suggests revenues should yet again outstrip membership growth by at least 5-7 ppts this year. Don't forget comparatives are tough in H1 where revenues grew +25% LY but these soften in H2 to +15%. The multiple margin drivers are identifiable and with the final stage of Masterton Bond now complete so the delivery of c.4% EBITDA margins (2022: 1.7%) this year is in-hand. We see near double-digit EBITDA margins and positive PBT next year. With a strong net asset underpin the shares look very cheap for a premium, luxury whisky business that is truly unique.

#### A clear and concise investment thesis

The Artisanal Spirits investment case is about considerable market share opportunity in the premium segment of the scotch whisky market. With 0.3% share of a c.\$6bn TAM, and all the markets in which it operates exhibiting long-term structural tailwinds, offers decades of future growth opportunity. This together with favourable customer demographics underpins the consistency that Artisanal Spirits has been able to grow its member base by double digits. The case is not just for double-digit revenue CAGR, but avoiding the low margin and high capex activity of resellers and producers means these revenues drop through at high margins. And there are several catalysts that should see these margins rise much further.

- The quality and value of its inventory Not only is the inventory an appreciating asset (which is very rare to see) but provides an inflation hedge and relative gross margin protection.
- Artisanal Spirits avoids the low margin, high capex characteristics seen in resellers/ distillers. Instead, it benefits from all the value enhancing

## BUY

Target Price 130.0p
Publication price 96.0p

\*Corporate Broking Client of Liberum

#### Next events

1H23 Trading Update	July 2023
1H23 results	September 2023

#### Stock performance



#### Summary financials & valuation (£m)

#### Calendar year 22A 23E 25E EV (CY) 24E Market Cap 66.2 66.2 66.2 66.2 Net Debt/(Cash) 18.3 21.8 23.2 22.0 84.6 88.0 89.5 88.2 22A 23E 24E 25E Valuation (CY) (34.0)(28.7)(70.9)112.0 P/E (x) Div Yield (%) 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0 EV/Sales (x) 3.9 3.5 3.0 2.5 EV/EBITDA (x) 225.5 84.7 33.6 19.9 EV/EBIT (x) (95.7)(194.6)84.2 31.0 (19.1)FCFe Yield (%) (5.2)(2.5)1.7 Price / book (x) 3.1 3.5 3.7 3.5

#### Financial year (December year end)

Financials (FY)	22A	23E	24E	25E
Sales	21.8	25.5	30.2	35.1
EBITDA	0.4	1.0	2.7	4.4
EBIT	(0.9)	(0.5)	1.1	2.8
EBIT Margin (%)	(4.1)	(1.8)	3.5	8.1
Net Interest	(0.6)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)
PBT	(1.5)	(1.5)	0.1	1.9
FD EPS (p)	(2.8)	(3.3)	(1.4)	0.9
DPS (p)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Debt/(Cash)*	18.3	21.8	23.2	22.0
Net Debt*/EBITDA (x)	48.9	21.0	8.7	5.0
Net Debt*/MktCap (x)	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3

Source: Liberum, Bloomberg All numbers are on a post IFRS 16 basis unless stated. \* Including leases. \*\* Excluding leases

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- upstream work through maturation and by primarily selling through a D2C model, this ensures very strong GM%
- In five years', Artisanal Spirits should be a double-digit revenue and 20% EBITDA model business. We assess DCF, implied future value creation model, and conduct a detailed peer comparison highlighting the quality of the Artisanal model which provides our 130p TP.

#### Q2 has started strongly, and growth trajectory is positive.

The group has started Q2 well with a positive start to the year. Global membership is now running at over 38,000 having been c.37,000 at the end of March.

Revenues accelerating during the period - Revenue performance has returned to growth in Q2, following a broadly flat start for the first two months of the year. The group is confident that progress seen in the three months, hence, should continue for the remainder of the half. Membership has increased +10% YoY as at the end of April 2023, benefitting from a notably strong performance in Europe.

**Supply chain investment on-track** - The group continues to benefit from the first-year operation from the Masterton Bond facility, a key margin driver for our forecasts and support for international growth. Online fulfilment has very recently been introduced into the facility meaning all three elements of cask warehousing, bottling and e-commerce fulfilment is now up and running in the facility suggesting the group is on-track to deliver on its strategic promises in time and in budget.

Other key strategic milestones are:

- Continued signs of recovery in China, following the Covid impacted slow start to the year. China saw a slow Jan and Feb, but trading started to recover in March and April bouncing back strongly so far in May. This provides confidence that the COVID headwinds have abated, and this geography has returned to pre-COVID growth dynamics.
- Successful launch of the new Franchise in South Korea, achieving 300 new members on initial launch in April 2023.
- Established a new Taiwan subsidiary which is due to launch as planned in Q3 of this year, replacing the existing franchise arrangement. Taiwan is the third largest premium whisky market in the world (2021 TAM of \$498m) and having direct control over the territory through a JV structure provides the right impetus to drive growth. A dedicated country manager has been hired.
- New franchise agreement in Malaysia, as previously reported, and a further new franchise agreement with La Maison du Whisky in Singapore. This brings the group's number of capital light franchise arrangements to 13.
- We also understand the USA is trading in-line with expectations.

**Guidance remains unchanged** - With a strong start to Q2, the group has confirmed guidance remains unchanged. Consensus market expectations for the year ending 31 December 2023 are revenue of £25.2m (2022: £21.8m) vs. Liberum at £25.5m and EBITDA of £1.1m (2022: Adjusted EBITDA £0.4m) vs. Liberum at £1.0m

#### Multiple inflection points ahoy

Artisanal Spirits has invested heavily since 2015 to build out its inventory base. It now has enough whisky stock to satisfy demand into the next decade, hedging inflationary costs and providing security for gross margins. The intensive investment phase has now peaked and as the group moves towards a stock replacement cycle, should allow for rapid EBITDA growth from hereon and positive PBT in 2024.

Of the spirit purchases being made from now on, the age profile is getting younger. This brings two key benefits: (1) the group will get more bang for its buck, in terms of volume acquired, which will over time see the cost of spirit per bottle fall by c.60%; and (2) the maturation of the spirit in ex-sherry casks allows for at least £10/bottle of higher pricing. These two catalysts alongside organic growth and benefits from the supply chain investment, allow for EBITDA to expand and FCF to build.

**Multiple inflection points in sight** – Having accelerated its whisky investment since 2015, the group now moves into replacement cycle thereby requiring less working capital:

- FY23 Gross margins rise 140bps to 65%, expansion of EBITDA margins to 4.1% from 1.7% in FY22.
- FY24 Gross margins rise a further 100bps, EBITDA margins more than double to 8.8%, and the group becomes PBT positive and funds all its working capital, and tax from internally generated cash.
- FY25 The group becomes fully self-funding being FCF positive.

We see this being driven firstly by lower working capital demands in the near term as shown by the two charts below.

Figure 1: Working capital as a % of sales

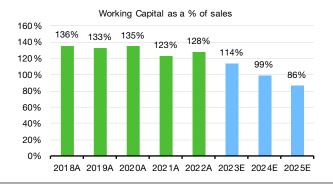
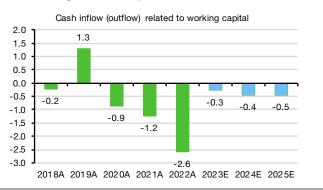


Figure 2: Cash generation dynamics



Source: Liberum

- Then there is a limited further investment in spirit inventory over the forecast period (Fig 3).
- The group has also passed peak capex having spent a significant amount on the in-house supply chain facility and IT spend last year (Fig 4).
- The greatest portion of capex spend will now be on cask wood for the next few years.

Figure 3: Spend on casks has past its peak

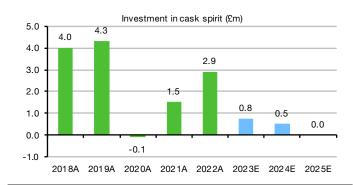
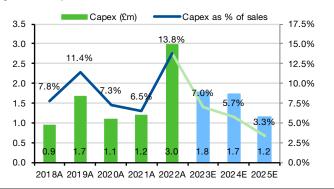


Figure 4: Capex is lower



Source: Liberum Source: Liberum estimates

And all this means, working capital becomes self-funded from internally generated cash in FY24, and the group becomes fully self-funding in FY25.

Figure 5: On the path to being self-funding

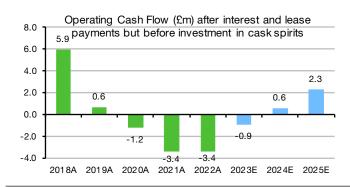
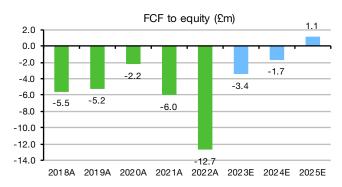


Figure 6: FCF positive in 2 years



Source: Liberum Source: Liberum

## Financial model

Figure 7: Income statement (£m)				
December year-end	2022A	2023E	2024E	2025E
Total sales	21.8	25.5	30.2	35.1
Sales growth (%)	n.a.	17.0	18.5	16.2
Gross margin (%)	63.6	65.0	66.0	66.5
Cost of sales	(7.9)	(8.9)	(10.3)	(11.8)
Gross profit	13.8	16.6	19.9	23.3
Operating expenses	(4.1)	(5.2)	(6.4)	(7.2)
Administrative expenses	(9.2)	(10.2)	(10.7)	(11.5)
Share based payments	(0.2)	(0.2)	(0.2)	(0.2)
Underlying EBITDA	0.4	1.0	2.7	4.4
Depreciation	(1.0)	(1.2)	(1.3)	(1.3)
Amortisation (not acquired)	(0.3)	(0.3)	(0.3)	(0.3)
	(0.9)	(0.5)	1.1	2.8
Underlying EBIT (pre JVs)			3.5	8.1
EBIT (pre JVs) margin (%)	(4.1)	(1.8)		
Revenue	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
PBT	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tax	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
JV post tax profit	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
JV contribution	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Profit on disposal	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Underlying EBIT	(0.9)	(0.5)	1.1	2.8
EBIT Margin (%)	(4.1)	(1.8)	3.5	8.1
Amortisation of acquired intangibles	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Exceptional / extraordinary costs	(0.6)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Reported EBIT	(1.5)	(0.5)	1.1	2.8
Non-operating exceptional costs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Interest income	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Interest costs	(0.6)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)
Pension credit / (cost)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Interest	(0.6)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)
Underlying PBT	(1.5)	(1.5)	0.1	1.9
Reported PBT	(2.1)	(1.5)	0.1	1.9
•	(10.3)	(38.0)	688.7	44.5
Underlying tax rate (%)			688.7	
Exceptional tax rate (%)	(10.3)	(38.0)		44.5
Reported tax rate (%)	(10.3)	(38.0)	688.7	44.5
Underlying tax	(0.2)	(0.6)	(0.7)	(0.8)
Exceptional tax	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Reported tax	(0.2)	(0.6)	(0.7)	(0.8)
Underlying PAT	(1.7)	(2.0)	(0.6)	1.0
Discontinued operations (net)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Profit on disposal	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Reported PAT	(2.3)	(2.0)	(0.6)	1.0
Preference dividends	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Underlying net income	(1.7)	(2.0)	(0.6)	1.0
Reported net income	(2.3)	(2.0)	(0.6)	1.0
Weighted average number of shares (basic) (m)	69.7	69.7	69.7	69.7
Weighted average number of shares (diluted) (m)	74.7	74.7	74.7	74.7
Number of shares at period end (basic) (m)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Reported EPS (basic) (p)	(3.7)	(2.9)	(0.8)	0.9
Reported EPS (diluted) (p)	(3.7)	(3.3)	(1.4)	0.9
Underlying EPS (basic) (p)	(2.8)	(3.3)	(1.4)	0.9
Underlying EPS (basic) growth (%)	n.a.	18.3	(59.5)	(167.9)
Underlying EPS (diluted) (p)	(2.8)	(3.3)	(1.4)	0.9
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		18.3		
Underlying EPS (diluted) growth (%)	n.a.		(59.5)	(163.3)
Pro-forma EPS (diluted) (p)	(3.7)	(3.3)	(1.4)	0.9
DPS (Ordinary) (p)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DPS (Special) (p)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DPS (Total) (p)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

24 May 2023

Figure 8: Cash flow statement (£m)				
December year-end	2022A	2023E	2024E	2025E
Reported EBIT	(1.5)	(0.5)	1.1	2.8
Profit in associates	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Depreciation	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.3
Amortisation	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Loss / (profit) on sale of PPE	(0.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Share based payments	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Increase/(Decrease) in provisions	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Loss / (Gain) on business disposal	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	(2.9)	(0.8)	(0.5)	0.0
Operating cash flows before movements in working capital	(2.8)	0.5	2.4	4.7
(Increase) / decrease in inventories	(1.4)	(0.1)	(0.2)	(0.3)
(Increase) / decrease in receivables	(0.9)	(0.7)	(8.0)	(0.9)
(Decrease) / increase in payables	(0.2)	0.4	0.6	0.7
(Increase) / decrease in working capital	(2.6)	(0.3)	(0.4)	(0.5)
Cash generated by operations	(5.4)	0.2	1.9	4.2
Tax paid	(0.1)	(0.6)	(0.7)	(0.8)
Net cash flow from operating activities	(8.8)	(0.3)	1.3	3.4
Purchase of PPE	(2.9)	(1.4)	(1.4)	(0.9)
Purchase of other intangibles	(0.1)	(0.4)	(0.4)	(0.3)
Disposals	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net capex	(3.0)	(1.8)	(1.7)	(1.2)
Dividends from associates	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Movement in short term investments	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Acquisitions	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(Investments) / disposals of associates	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net cash flow from investing activities	(3.4)	(1.8)	(1.7)	(1.2)
Net interest received / (paid)	(0.6)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)
Equity dividends paid	(0.4)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Share issues / (repurchases)	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Increase / (decrease) in borrowings	10.2	3.0	1.0	0.0
Net cash flow from financing activities	9.3	2.0	0.0	(1.0)
Increase in cash and cash equivalents	(3.4)	(0.4)	(0.7)	1.1
(Increase) / decrease in borrowings	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Repayment of finance leases	(0.3)	(0.3)	(0.2)	(0.2)
Exchange / other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(Increase) / decrease in net debt	9.6	3.5	1.4	(1.2)
Net cash / (debt) (start)	(8.8)	(18.3)	(21.8)	(23.2)
Net cash / (debt) (end) including leases	(18.3)	(21.8)	(23.2)	(22.0)

Figure 9: Balance sheet (£m)				
December year-end	2022A	2023E	2024E	2025E
Goodwill	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
Other intangible assets	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.0
PPE	10.4	10.6	10.6	10.3
Trade and other LT receivables	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Deferred tax asset	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Investments in JVs / Associates	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Retirement benefit asset	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other non-current assets	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Fixed assets	13.0	13.3	13.4	13.0
Inventories	28.1	28.9	29.7	29.9
Trade and other receivables	3.9	4.5	5.4	6.3
Cash & cash equivalents	2.3	1.9	1.2	2.3
Financial assets	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other current assets	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Current assets	34.3	35.4	36.3	38.5
Total Assets	47.4	48.7	49.7	51.6
Trade payables	(3.7)	(4.2)	(4.8)	(5.5)
Borrowings	(0.4)	(0.4)	(0.4)	(0.4)
Tax liabilities	(0.4)	(0.4)	(0.4)	(0.4)
Provisions	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other current liabilities	(0.4)	(0.4)	(0.4)	(0.4)
Current liabilities	(4.8)	(5.3)	(5.9)	(6.6)
Total assets less current liabilities	42.5	43.4	43.8	45.0
Net current assets	29.5	30.1	30.4	31.9
Long-term borrowings and finance leases	(19.9)	(23.0)	(23.8)	(23.6)
Provisions	(0.6)	(0.6)	(0.6)	(0.6)
Other payables	(0.6)	(0.6)	(0.6)	(0.6)
Other non-current liabilities	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Assets	21.4	19.3	18.9	20.2
Total equity	21.4	19.3	18.9	20.2
Minority interests	0.2	0.6	0.9	1.3
Shareholders' equity	21.2	18.7	18.0	18.9

#### The Artisanal Spirits Company

24 May 2023

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#### Disclosures

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#### Research

Alternatives Shonil Chande

+44 (0) 20 3100 2259

shonil.chande@liberum.com

**Energy Transition & Infrastructure** 

Resources

Ben Davis

Yuen Low

New Energy

Sam Wahab

**David Hewitt** 

+353 87 704 4038

Sustainability

Dr Kenneth Lee

Susana Cruz

+44 (0) 203 100 2069

+44 (0) 203 100 2277

Support Services

+44 (0)20 3100 2272

+44 (0)20 3100 2278

+44 (0)20 3100 2268

+44 (0)20 3100 2195

Ciaran Donnelly +44 (0)20 3100 2071

+44 (0)20 3100 2086

+44 (0)20 3100 2097

+44 (0) 20 3100 2074

jon.byrne@liberum.com

William Larwood

**Pool Analyst** 

Jon Byrne

Andrew Ripper

**Transport** 

**Gerald Khoo** 

Sanjay Vidyarthi

joe.brent@liberum.com

kenneth.lee@liberum.com

susana.cruz@liberum.com

Joe Brent (Head of Research)

sanjay.vidyarthi@liberum.com

Alexandro da Silva O'Hanlon

alex.ohanlon@liberum.com

gerald.khoo@liberum.com

ciaran.donnelly@liberum.com

andrew.ripper@liberum.com

william.larwood@liberum.com

**Technology & Media** 

**Support Services & Special Situations** 

Joachim Klement

Oil & Gas

Mining & Commodities

ben.davis@liberum.com

+44 (0)20 3100 2083

+44 (0)20 3100 2091

yuen.low@liberum.com

+44 (0) 203 100 2085

+44 (0)20 3100 2095

sam.wahab@liberum.com

david.hewitt@liberum.com

Strategy, Accounting and

+44 (0)20 3100 2073 joachim.klement@liberum.com

tom.price@liberum.com

Joseph Pepper +44 (0) 20 3100 2271

joseph.pepper@liberum.com

Building

**Building Materials, Equipment Hire &** Housebuilders

**Charlie Campbell** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2090

charlie.campbell@liberum.com

Edward Prest +44 (0)20 3100 2096 edward.prest@liberum.com

Consumer

**Consumer Discretionary** 

**Adam Tomlinson** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2174 adam.tomlinson@liberum.com

Consumer Goods

Anubhav Malhotra +44 (0)20 3100 2197

anubhav.malhotra@liberum.com

Roving

Wayne Brown

+44 (0) 20 3100 2082 wayne.brown@liberum.com

Financials and FinTech

Financial & Professional Services

James Allen

+44 (0)20 3100 2088 james.allen@liberum.com

FinTech

**Nick Anderson** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2076 nick.anderson@liberum.com

Healthcare

**Edward Thomason** 

+44 (0) 20 3100 2092 edward.thomason@liberum.com

Seb Jantet

+44 (0) 20 3100 2047

seb.jantet@liberum.com

Industrials **Capital Goods** 

**Edward Maravanyika** 

+44 (0) 20 3100 2275

edward.maravanyika@liberum.com

Leisure & Travel

Leisure Anna Barnfather

+44 (0)20 3100 2176

anna.barnfather@liberum.com

**Nishant Dahad** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2068 nishant.dahad@liberum.com

Real Estate

**Chris Spearing** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2169 chris.spearing@liberum.com

Bjorn Zietsman

+44 (0)20 3100 2067

bjorn.zietsman@liberum.com

Convertibles

Simon Smith

+44 (0)20 3100 2171 simon.smith@liberum.com **Richard Tomblin** +44 (0)20 3100 2172

richard.tomblin@liberum.com

Corporate & Investor Relations

Natalie Clarke +44 (0)20 3100 2191 natalie.clarke@liberum.com

**Chris Cooper** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2258

chris.cooper@liberum.com Nicole Barbour

+44 (0)20 3100 2182 nicole.barbour@liberum.com

Skaiste Miglin

+44 (0)20 3100 2187

skaiste.miglin@liberum.com

**Equity Sales – London** 

David Parsons (Head of Equities) +44 (0)20 3100 2125

david.parsons@liberum.com

Oliver Baxendale (Head of Sales)

+44 (0)20 3100 2193

oliver.baxendale@liberum.com

William Game

+44 (0)20 3100 2120

william.game@liberum.com

Joel Knight

+44 (0)20 3100 2030 joel.knight@liberum.com

Guy Froud

Marcio Remedios

Martin Parker

Connie Owens

+44 (0)20 3100 2033

+44 (0)20 3100 2065

+44 (0)20 3100 2021

marcio.remedios@liberum.com

martin.parker@liberum.com

connie.owens@liberum.com

+44 (0)20 3100 2242

guy.froud@liberum.com

Oliver Houghton

+44 (0)20 3100 2129 oliver.houghton@liberum.com

Paras Amlani

+44 (0)20 3100 2113

paras.amlani@liberum.com

Specialist Sales

Real Estate

John Mozley

+44 (0)20 3100 2115

john.mozley@liberum.com New Energy, Mining and

Industrials

Simon Fickling

simon.fickling@liberum.com

+44 (0)20 3100 2112

**Alternative Funds** James Shields

+44 (0) 20 3100 2266

james.shields@liberum.com

Tom Biltcliffe

+44 (0) 20 3100 2253 tom.biltcliffe@liberum.com

Sarah Giovannetti

sarah.port@liberum.com

peter.penha@liberum.com

+1 212 596 4818

+1 212 596 4808

Peter Penha

**Equity Sales – New York** 

Julian Plant (CEO - USA)

+1 212 596 4824 julian.plant@liberum.com

Tony Beckett

+1 212 596 4807

tony.beckett@liberum.com

Sales Trading

Graham Smith (Head of Execution) +44 (0)20 3100 2101

graham.smith@liberum.com

Nick Worthington +44 (0)20 3100 2106

nick.worthington@liberum.com

Mark O'Hara (Head of Sales Trading) +44 (0)20 3100 2061

mark.o'hara@liberum.com

**David Thompson** 

Rhys Henry +44 (0)20 3100 2119

+44 (0)20 3100 2109

**Cameron Symes** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2062

david.thompson@liberum.com

rhys.henry@liberum.com

Alternative Execution

**Dominic Lowres** 

(Head of Execution Strategy)

+44 (0)20 3100 2103

dominic.lowres@liberum.com

**Agency Trading** Simon Warrener

+44 (0)20 3100 2108

simon.warrener@liberum.com Market Making

James Cass

(Head of Small & Mid Cap Trading) +44 (0)20 3100 2205

james.cass@liberum.com David O'Gram

+44 (0)20 3100 2201

david.ogram@liberum.com
Marc Wilkinson

+44 (0)20 3100 2206

marc.wilkinson@liberum.com

Retail Execution Stuart Rutherford (Head of Retail

**Execution Services)** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2110

stuart.rutherford@liberum.com

**Matt Hudson** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2063 matthew.hudson@liberum.com

cameron.symes@liberum.com

Peter Jennings +44 (0)20 3100 2207

peter.jennings@liberum.com **Peter Turner** 

+44 (0)20 3100 2203 peter.turner@liberum.com

STX 77440

+44 (0)20 3100 2200