# Wetherspoon withdraws from NEC as Atrium closes and Piazza set to reopen under Levy



J D Wetherspoon has quietly reduced its presence at Birmingham’s NEC after closing two outlets this month, with The Atrium confirmed as permanently shut and the NEC Piazza stopping trade temporarily as part of a wider change to the site’s catering offer. Customer feedback collated on travel and review platforms has long flagged The Atrium as one of the poorer‑performing Wetherspoon sites, with an aggregate TripAdvisor score well below average and numerous visitors citing high prices, slow service and inconsistent food quality. Industry reporting first noted the sudden cessation of trading on 6 August 2025. (Paragraph 1 draws on local reporting and user reviews.)

The company has sought to reassure staff and customers about its handling of the closures. A Wetherspoon spokesman, Eddie Gershon, told local media that the Piazza branch would be relaunched under new management on 1 September 2025 and that redundancies would be avoided, with staff offered opportunities to transfer to the new operator or to other Wetherspoon pubs in the region. The firm described The Atrium’s closure as an immediate decision and framed the change as part of routine estate management. These are the company’s accounts of events; they have not been presented here as independent fact. (This paragraph summarises the operator’s statements.)

The temporary shutdown of the Piazza reflects a planned handover to a third‑party caterer: NEC Group has announced a long‑term partnership with Levy to manage food and beverage across its venues, and Levy says the arrangement will see multiple outlets reimagined and a substantial number of catering colleagues transfer to the new operator. Levy’s announcement highlights investment in procurement, service standards and technology as drivers for the change and states that around 330 catering staff will move across as part of the transition. Wetherspoon has confirmed the Piazza site will operate as a Levy‑franchised venue when it reopens. (This paragraph adds context from the NEC–Levy partnership and the planned franchise arrangement.)

For critics of The Atrium the closures will not come as a surprise. Online reviews compiled over several years show mixed to negative scores for Wetherspoon’s NEC footprint; one recent reviewer described a visit as “by far the worst Wetherspoons” they had been to, while many others highlighted long waits during busy events and prices that felt high for an exhibition‑centre location. Such platform‑driven ratings capture visitor experience but do not substitute for independent inspection; nevertheless they help explain why management might opt to withdraw from underperforming city‑centre or venue‑based outlets. (This paragraph draws on the pattern of visitor feedback.)

At the same time as pruning weaker sites, Wetherspoon has continued to press ahead with openings elsewhere. The operator’s own new‑openings page and company releases detail a string of launches in 2025 — including the Conister Arms in Douglas, Isle of Man, which opened in May and created around 120 local jobs — and a packed pipeline that lists further London and regional openings through the autumn, including sites scheduled to open on 16 and 23 September, 30 September and 2 December. The company presents these moves as part of an ongoing rollout strategy rather than a retreat from the market as a whole. (This paragraph outlines the chain’s stated expansion activity.)

Local hospitality markets are also shifting beyond Wetherspoon’s estate. In Lancashire, properties formerly occupied by the chain have continued to change hands or find new uses: one former Wetherspoon building on Manchester Road in Burnley has been marketed and sublet several times since its sale by the group, and recent reporting notes a credit‑union relocation into the former Fitpatrick’s premises nearby. That picture underlines a broader churn in town‑centre leisure stock, where operators, landlords and public‑facing caterers are constantly reappraising where to invest. (This paragraph places the NEC changes within local market movement.)

The NEC closures underline a familiar challenge for large pub chains: balancing the economics of high‑traffic but high‑cost venue sites with brand standards and visitor expectations. Wetherspoon’s public statements frame the moves as targeted and managed — emphasising staff continuity and new openings elsewhere — while venue operators and customers will watch closely to see whether the Levy takeover and the company’s own rollout translate into steadier service and stronger review scores at major event hubs. (Concluding paragraph reflecting implications and differing perspectives.)

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093202/wetherspoon-closes-its-worst-branch-uk), [[5]](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g186402-d4788178-Reviews-Wetherspoon_s-Birmingham_West_Midlands_England.html), [[2]](https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2025/08/08/two-birmingham-wetherspoons-pubs-close-including-the-worst-in-the-city/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093202/wetherspoon-closes-its-worst-branch-uk), [[2]](https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2025/08/08/two-birmingham-wetherspoons-pubs-close-including-the-worst-in-the-city/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://levy.co.uk/latest/nec-group-announces-new-long-term-partnership-with-levy-to-enhance-food-beverage-proposition/), [[2]](https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2025/08/08/two-birmingham-wetherspoons-pubs-close-including-the-worst-in-the-city/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g186402-d4788178-Reviews-Wetherspoon_s-Birmingham_West_Midlands_England.html), [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093202/wetherspoon-closes-its-worst-branch-uk)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/new-openings/), [[4]](https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/news/isle-of-man-wetherspoon/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://www.burnleyexpress.net/lifestyle/food-and-drink/former-burnley-wetherspoon-pub-the-brun-lea-that-was-home-to-elliss-burger-bar-and-fitzpatricks-pub-is-back-on-the-market-4646315), [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093202/wetherspoon-closes-its-worst-branch-uk)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093202/wetherspoon-closes-its-worst-branch-uk), [[6]](https://levy.co.uk/latest/nec-group-announces-new-long-term-partnership-with-levy-to-enhance-food-beverage-proposition/), [[3]](https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/new-openings/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2093202/wetherspoon-closes-its-worst-branch-uk> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2025/08/08/two-birmingham-wetherspoons-pubs-close-including-the-worst-in-the-city/> - This Express & Star article reports that two Wetherspoon pubs at Birmingham’s NEC have closed: The Atrium has shut permanently and the NEC Piazza has closed temporarily. It states The Atrium had been rated poorly by customers — cited with a TripAdvisor score of about 2.3 out of five — and confirms Wetherspoon bosses said the Atrium ceased trading with immediate effect on 6 August 2025. The piece also quotes a company spokesperson saying the Piazza will reopen on 1 September 2025 as a Levy-franchised Wetherspoon venue, and that there will be no redundancies with staff offered relocation or alternative roles.
3. <https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/new-openings/> - The official J D Wetherspoon 'New openings' page lists the chain’s planned and recent pub launches and provides opening dates and addresses. It confirms several venues already open — such as Walham Green (Fulham) and The Dictum of Kenilworth — and sets out forthcoming openings including The Sun Wharf (London Bridge) on 16 September, The Sir Alexander Fleming (Paddington) on 23 September, Sigered, King of Essex (Basildon) on 30 September, and The Chiltern (Beaconsfield) on 2 December. The page gives context about each site’s local history, practical details and the operator’s wider rollout of new venues in 2025.
4. <https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/news/isle-of-man-wetherspoon/> - An official Wetherspoon news release announcing The Conister Arms, the company’s first pub on the Isle of Man. It states the venue will open on 14 May 2025 at 6 Regent Street, Douglas, occupying the former 1886 Bar and Grill, and will have a capacity of around 725 across four floors plus outside seating. The statement explains local staff were offered roles and that around 120 jobs were created for the opening. The release also describes the pub’s name origin (Conister Rock) and gives opening times, menu and family-friendly details, emphasising the chain’s investment in the local hospitality scene.
5. <https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g186402-d4788178-Reviews-Wetherspoon_s-Birmingham_West_Midlands_England.html> - This TripAdvisor listing covers the Wetherspoon venue at the NEC (often identified as 'Wetherspoon's' or sister sites including The Atrium). It aggregates user reviews and ratings, showing a low overall score from hundreds of contributions and a mix of ratings from one to five stars. Reviewers commonly cite issues such as perceived high prices for an NEC site, slow service at busy periods and varying food quality, while others praise affordable options and convenience inside the exhibition centre. The page includes recent visitor comments, photographs and practical details about accessibility, opening times and location within the NEC complex.
6. <https://levy.co.uk/latest/nec-group-announces-new-long-term-partnership-with-levy-to-enhance-food-beverage-proposition/> - This press release from Levy UK & Ireland announces a long-term partnership with the NEC Group to manage food and beverage operations across its venues, including the NEC, ICC, Vox and Utilita Arena Birmingham. Levy outlines plans to reimagine and transform multiple catering outlets, kitchens and hospitality spaces, and highlights improved procurement, service standards and technology-driven customer journeys. The release notes that around 330 catering colleagues will transfer to Levy as part of the transition, emphasising continuity of employment, training opportunities and investment to elevate the visitor experience across NEC venues.
7. <https://www.burnleyexpress.net/lifestyle/food-and-drink/former-burnley-wetherspoon-pub-the-brun-lea-that-was-home-to-elliss-burger-bar-and-fitzpatricks-pub-is-back-on-the-market-4646315> - This Burnley Express article outlines the history and recent status of the Manchester Road building in Burnley that once housed a Wetherspoon pub (The Brun Lea) and more recently traded as Fitzpatrick's and other hospitality ventures. It reports the substantial freehold property was placed back on the market in mid‑2024/2025, describes its size and features, and recounts the venue’s changes of operator since Wetherspoon sold it in 2019. The piece provides local context on ownership, refurbishment history and the building’s role within Burnley town centre hospitality and leisure provision.