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AIRLINE'S £2BN BUG WOE BUT OMICRON HIT MUTED

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THE emergence of a new strain of Covid-19 has already led to softer demand at EASYJET — but the airline said it was too early to tell what the full impact would be.

Winter bookings have started to weaken and some travellers are transferring trips to early next year after the UK and other European countries reintroduced travel restrictions to limit the spread of the Omicron variant.

City destinations in particular have been affected, according to the group, and the airline now plans to fly 65 per cent of 2019's capacity in the current quarter, down from the 70 per cent previously forecast.

But EasyJet, run by Johan Lundgren, said: "It's too soon to say what impact Omicron may have on European travel and any further short-term restrictions that may result. However, we have

prepared ourselves for periods of uncertainty such as this."

Bosses said they had access to £4.4billion-worth of liquidity to see them through the pandemic.

And the airline is still hopeful of a recovery to pre-pandemic capacity levels by next summer.

It came as the firm posted statutory pre-tax losses of £1.04billion for the year to September 30, adding to pandemic losses of £1.27billion the previous year.

Sophie Lund-Yates, equity analyst at **HARGREAVES LANSDOWN**, said: "Airlines can't seem to catch a break."

Yesterday new restrictions came into force in an effort to control the new variant, with the Government ruling all travellers returning to the UK must now take a PCR test and self-isolate.

Mr Lundgren questioned the Government's move to introduce PCR testing for all travellers regardless of destination. He said: "There's still a big question mark around why we have introduced blanket PCR testing when we are bringing in people from countries where they have no recorded cases whatsoever."

