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MPs Step Up Pressure for Hospitality VAT Cut

As Irish Data Boosts Case



Pressure is mounting on the Government to reconsider its approach to hospitality taxation following renewed calls from MPs across the political spectrum for a reduction in VAT, amid continuing concerns over the financial pressures facing pubs, restaurants, hotels and other hospitality businesses.

Ben Maguire, Liberal Democrat MP for North Cornwall, and Chris Webb, Labour MP for Blackpool South and Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Hospitality and Tourism, have both this week highlighted the impact of the current tax regime, arguing that further action is needed to support an industry which makes a substantial contribution to employment and local economies.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3...)

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Editor's Viewpoint

Welcome to the latest issue of CLH News

HOSPITALITY MUST BE ALLOWED TO THRIVE – NOT SIMPLY SURVIVE



EDITOR
Peter Adams

I am genuinely pleased to see that the fight for a reduction in VAT for the UK hospitality sector is continuing, despite the Government's refusal to seriously consider the proposal last month.

I must admit I was concerned that those MPs who have consistently supported the industry's campaign might eventually accept defeat and move on to other causes. So, a big shout-out to Ben Maguire MP and Chris Webb MP for keeping up the pressure and ensuring that this important issue remains firmly on the political agenda.

It is encouraging to see politicians from different sides of the House continuing to recognise the importance of hospitality and, more importantly, the increasingly difficult circumstances in which businesses are operating.

I despair at some of the arguments put forward against a VAT reduction. There seems to be a tendency in certain quarters to view this simply as another tax concession for business, rather than recognising the wider economic and social benefits it could deliver.

Make no mistake, a reduction in VAT would provide welcome breathing space for an industry that is, quite frankly, being taxed into oblivion. But its benefits would extend well beyond the balance sheets of individual businesses. It would also provide a much-needed boost to confidence, investment and, dare I say, the country's morale.

The industry's argument is straightforward. Unlike many other sectors, hospitality is exceptionally labour-intensive. Pubs, restaurants, hotels and leisure venues depend on people. They cannot simply automate their way out of rising costs without fundamentally changing the experience they offer.

While businesses can recover VAT on many of the goods and services they purchase, they cannot recover VAT on wages, one of their largest operating costs. Consequently, the standard 20 per cent VAT rate places a disproportionate burden on an industry whose success depends so heavily on employing people.

And VAT is just one part of the problem. Businesses are facing a relentless combination of rising employment costs, business rates, rent, energy bills, insurance, food prices and other overheads, all eating into already pressured margins.

Anyone who has worked in hospitality understands that this is about far more than individual businesses making a profit.

When these businesses close, the consequences extend well beyond the loss of another name from the high street. Jobs disappear, local economies suffer, and communities lose somewhere to meet, socialise and connect.

I was particularly struck this week by news of the closure of The Ship on Christchurch High Street here in Dorset.

The pub, which closed its doors on November 19 is a business I know. Its owner, Reece Brown, explained that the cost of running the venue had simply become unsustainable.

He said that by next year his running costs would have increased by just short of £60,000, highlighting business rates and rent as particular pressures.

That is an additional cost of more than £1,000 every week.

Just stop and consider that figure for a moment. An extra £1,000 a week simply to keep the doors open, before even considering the many other challenges facing a hospitality business.

How is an independent operator supposed to absorb increases of that magnitude while continuing to invest, employ people, maintain standards and offer customers value for money?

The Ship is not an isolated example. Across the country, operators are making difficult decisions about whether their businesses can remain viable. Some will struggle on, others will reduce investment or operating hours, and too many will eventually conclude that they have no alternative but to close.

Something really has to give.

This is precisely why I believe the campaign for a hospitality VAT reduction must continue. It is not about asking for special treatment or suggesting that businesses should be shielded from every commercial challenge. It is about recognising the unique contribution hospitality makes to the UK economy and addressing a tax structure that places an excessive burden on an industry that creates millions of jobs and supports countless local businesses.

Of course, a VAT reduction alone will not solve every problem facing hospitality. But that is no reason not to pursue it. The industry needs a combination of sensible, practical measures that allow businesses to plan for the future rather than constantly firefight the pressures of the present.

So, once again, it is refreshing to see MPs such as Ben Maguire and Chris Webb keeping up the fight. Their continued efforts deserve recognition, and I hope others across Parliament will add their voices.

I have spent many years arguing that hospitality is one of the most important, yet frequently underappreciated, sectors of our economy. It deserves more than warm words about its contribution followed by a refusal to address the pressures threatening its future.

And I want to finish with one particular point.

The objective should never simply be to help hospitality survive. Survival is not an ambition. It is a constant state of firefighting.

We should be creating the conditions in which pubs, restaurants, hotels and other hospitality businesses can invest, employ, innovate, grow and thrive.

Hospitality must be allowed to thrive, not simply survive.

That is surely not too much to ask.

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MPs Step Up Pressure for Hospitality VAT Cut

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT COVER)

Their current interventions follow a Westminster Hall debate on 12 November, secured by Webb, which examined the impact of hospitality VAT on businesses, employment and economic growth.

IRELAND'S SUCCESS

The renewed parliamentary interest comes as new research from payment provider Dojo indicates that average customer spending at qualifying hospitality businesses in the Republic of Ireland increased by 6.17% in the three months following a reduction in VAT.

The figures compare with growth of 1.85% in the UK over the same period, suggesting that spending per customer increased more than three times as quickly in Ireland.

Ireland reduced VAT on restaurant and catering services, hot takeaway food, and hot tea and coffee from 13.5% to 9% on 1 July 2026.

Although the research cannot establish that the tax reduction was solely responsible for the increase, with factors including summer weather and major sporting events potentially influencing consumer behaviour, it has provided fresh evidence for those advocating a similar measure in the UK.

Separate figures from PwC Ireland also indicated that hospitality insolvencies fell by 23% during the first nine months of 2026 compared with the corresponding period last year.

INVESTMENT CONCERNS

Speaking during the parliamentary debate, Maguire warned that escalating operating costs were placing increasing pressure on pubs, cafés and restaurants, making it more difficult for businesses to expand and recruit additional staff.

He has advocated a targeted reduction in hospitality VAT alongside measures to reduce employer National Insurance contributions for younger workers.

The MP highlighted the experience of a hotelier in his North Cornwall constituency who told him that, had he known about the increase in employer National Insurance contributions, he might not have proceeded with opening a particular hotel.

Maguire said this could have resulted in a lost opportunity to create jobs for young people in the area.

He also drew attention to recommendations contained in the Alan Milburn review of youth employment, published in November, which proposes a phased reduction in employer National Insurance costs for workers aged between 21 and 24.

The recommendation would involve gradually increasing the earnings threshold at which employers begin paying National Insurance for this age group, from £5,000 to £10,000 over five years, initially concentrating on the retail and hospitality sectors.

The proposal is conditional on the state of the public finances and would require Government implementation, but could provide some relief to businesses which rely heavily on younger employees.

LOCAL ECONOMIES

Webb has consistently argued that hospitality should be recognised not simply as a collection of individual businesses, but as a major contributor to employment, tourism and the economic wellbeing of communities throughout the UK.

As Chair of the APPG for Hospitality and Tourism, he has spent considerable time engaging with operators and parliamentary colleagues to highlight the challenges facing the sector.

He has pointed to hospitality's contribution to approximately 3.5 million jobs nationally, emphasising its importance as an entry point into employment for young people and those seeking to develop careers in the industry.

The sector's significance is particularly evident in Blackpool, where hospitality employment is more than twice the national average, according to figures cited by Webb.

For towns such as Blackpool, visitor spending supports a much wider network of businesses than hotels, restaurants and attractions alone. Independent retailers, suppliers, transport operators and other local services all benefit from the money brought into the area by tourists and day visitors.

Webb acknowledged the Government's recent business rates package for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, highlighting that changes to thresholds would mean 68% of properties in these sectors in Blackpool would no longer pay business rates.

However, he maintained that business rates changes alone would not resolve the wider financial challenges facing operators.

He argued that VAT reform could give businesses greater scope to invest, recruit and contribute to the continued development of local visitor economies.

CALLS FOR REFORM

The renewed parliamentary pressure comes against a backdrop of sustained industry campaigning for a reduction in the UK's standard 20% VAT rate, which generally applies to hospitality accommodation, food and drink services.

The issue has become increasingly prominent as operators contend with higher employment costs, energy bills, food inflation and other increases in the cost of running a business.

Industry campaigners have repeatedly argued that the UK's VAT rate places domestic operators at a disadvantage compared with competitors in a number of overseas tourism markets.

UKHospitality's 'VAT's the Problem' campaign has attracted more than 400,000 signatures, reflecting the strength of feeling among businesses and members of the public.

MP BAN

More recently, campaign group Hospitality Voices has called for operators to support a further initiative aimed at increasing political pressure on MPs who do not back VAT reform.

The campaign proposes that hospitality businesses refuse access to MPs who have not publicly supported a reduction in the tax, with action planned for March 2027.

Hospitality Voices is advocating a reduction to 13% for smaller hospitality businesses, which it estimates would cost approximately £3.6 billion annually.

However, the Government has continued to point to the substantial cost of wider VAT reductions to the public finances.

Treasury estimates have previously put the cost of reducing VAT on accommodation and food and beverage services to 10% at approximately £10.5 billion in 2026/27.

Ministers have also highlighted targeted and temporary measures introduced to support parts of the visitor economy, although these have fallen short of the permanent, sector-wide changes sought by industry representatives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The debate on 12 November demonstrated that hospitality VAT remains an issue capable of attracting support from MPs across party lines.

While the Government has acknowledged that reducing VAT would benefit affected businesses, it has also stressed the significant financial implications of introducing a permanent reduction.

For hospitality operators, however, the argument is increasingly about more than taxation alone. Businesses maintain that the cumulative impact of higher operating costs is restricting their ability to invest, maintain employment and remain competitive.

The latest Irish spending figures are likely to add further weight to the industry's campaign, although the extent to which a similar reduction would produce comparable results in the UK remains open to debate.

With parliamentary pressure continuing and the industry seeking more decisive action, hospitality VAT looks set to remain a major issue in discussions between Government and one of the UK's most important employment and tourism sectors.





2027 Unfair Dismissal Reforms: Increased Risks and Opportunities for Hospitality



The new year will ring in much-heralded unfair dismissal reforms, significantly altering the balance of rights and responsibilities between employers and employees. Applying to all organisations, the changes are most impactful for labour-heavy sectors, such as hospitality. But while they increase the risks for employers, they also provide a timely opportunity to review processes and cultures to build more resilient organisations.

HIGHER RECRUITMENT STAKES

Although vacancies within the sector are falling, the Office for National Statistics reported that from August to October 2026 there were still 69,000 unfilled roles in accommodation and food activities. The challenge of attracting and retaining staff means many hospitality businesses have ongoing open recruitment processes, potentially generating a steady flow of new recruits.

From 1 January, the most significant changes to be implemented under the Employment Rights Act 2025 come info effect, giving new hires (and those taken on in the last six months of 2026) unfair dismissal rights upon completing six months of continuous service, rather than the current two years. With the cap on compensation being lifted on the same date, employers face potentially more claims, with significantly higher stakes.

5 STEPS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE

The new unfair dismissal regime will, for many employers, mean rethinking the approach to recruitment, onboarding, probation and performance management:

1. HONEST RECRUITMENT

While it's tempting to fill vacancies quickly, particularly during busy trading periods, setting unrealistic expectations can increase the likelihood of early dissatisfaction, staff churn or even unfair dismissal claims. Employers should ensure job descriptions, interview processes and recruitment communications give candidates a clear and accurate understanding of the role from the outset.

2. EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING

The first weeks of employment should do more than familiarise new starters with systems and procedures. They should establish the standards, behaviours and expectations required for success. Effective onboarding helps employees integrate into the team more quickly, understand performance expectations and develop confidence in the role. It also provides an early opportunity to identify any training or support needs before they become larger issues. Drawing a clear connection between individual performance and business objectives can set the tone for the employment relationship from day one.

3. PROACTIVE PROBATION MANAGEMENT

Probationary periods can no longer be treated as an administrative formality; employers need a structured approach to assessing suitability for the role. Regular review meetings, documented objectives and timely feedback will help identify concerns early and provide employees with opportunities to improve. Equally importantly, they create evidence that reasonable steps have been taken to support an employee and assess their performance fairly.

4. ONGOING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Many workplace issues become difficult because concerns are not raised until they are well established. Businesses should encourage regular performance conversations rather than relying solely on annual or end-of-probation assessments. Clear expectations, constructive feedback and prompt action where concerns arise are all hallmarks of effective people management. Organisations that can demonstrate an ongoing commitment to supporting performance are likely to be in a stronger position than those relying on isolated interventions.

5. MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Supervisors and managers need practical skills in conducting probation reviews, handling performance conversations, documenting decisions and addressing concerns appropriately. In many organisations, the quality of day-to-day management will become one of the most effective safeguards against disputes. Manager capability should therefore be viewed not simply as a development issue, but as an important element of organisational risk management.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITY, BUILDING RESILIENCE

Much of the narrative around the impending changes has focused on the increased risks for employers, and it would be sugar-coating the changes to ignore the real consequences of getting it wrong under the new regime.

But the most successful organisations will see this as more than a tick-box exercise; rather, it presents an opportunity to enhance cultures to create more attractive employer brands to help overcome persistent recruitment challenges and build more successful organisations.

Many of the measures needed to adapt successfully to the reforms are also measures that support stronger business performance, improving the quality of hires, employee engagement, retention and team performance.

In a sector where customer experience depends heavily on the people delivering it, these benefits can be particularly significant; reduced turnover not only lowers recruitment costs but also helps create stronger, more experienced teams capable of delivering more consistent service.

There is also a reputational advantage. Hospitality businesses that develop a reputation as fair, supportive and well-managed employers are often better placed to attract talent in a competitive labour market. At a time when many operators continue to face recruitment challenges, that can become a meaningful commercial advantage.

The businesses that thrive under the new unfair dismissal regime will be those that use the changes not simply to reduce risk, but to strengthen recruitment, improve management capability and build workplaces where people choose to stay and develop.

Gwynedd Pub Supercharges Its Support For Local Community

A Gwynedd pub is bringing its community together through the simple power of pub games, as it ramps up efforts to tackle loneliness and social isolation in its rural area.

The Tafarn yr Heliwr, in Nefyn, Gwynedd, has made its mission to be a welcoming and inclusive hub for everyone from young people and families to older residents and local social groups.

The pub, which was previously called The Sportsman has a long history as a pub and hotel dating from the mid-19th century.

At the heart of its latest initiative is the launch of an interactive darts system, designed to host lively social events, friendly tournaments and informal get-togethers.

The pub has also introduced a new AV system with TVs which is enabling it to host evening events on different topics as well as show old films and history documentaries. The TVs and community space are available for use by everyone, including local groups and organisations.

The new additions are already helping to create opportunities for people to connect, have fun and feel part of their community.

With expert guidance and access to a grant from Pub is The Hub, supported by the Department for Business, Innovation Science & Trade (BIST), the pub has been able to broaden its appeal to the local community and help bring people together.

The project has been supported by the BIST as part of its Hospitality Support Fund, which aims to strengthen rural and remote communities by helping pubs diversify and remain sustainable community assets.



Image Credit: Pub is The Hub

The investment builds on the pub's ongoing commitment to diversification and community support.

Previously, Tafarn yr Heliwr worked with local volunteers to launch a community garden, which was established by volunteers who gave around 1,000 hours of their time towards the design and initial development of the project. This was also opened with the support of Pub is The Hub.

Tafarn yr Heliwr community officer Lois Povey said: "This pub is a real hub for the local community. Being able to bring so many different groups together for a fun, interactive game of darts or an interesting event can make a real difference to those who may be feeling isolated or lonely.

"We want this to be a pub for everyone, where people feel welcome, included and part of something special."

Pub is The Hub Wales advisor Malcolm Harrison said: "The interactive darts system and AV system will have a positive impact in helping to bring people together to help combat loneliness and isolation.

"Tafarn yr Heliwr is a brilliant example of a pub that truly sits at the heart of its community."

Minister for the Future of Work Kate Dearden said: "Rural pubs like The Tafarn yr Heliwr are vital to communities like Nefyn. Whether it's by creating jobs or providing locals with important public services and activities, it's crucial for them to have a place to come together and socialise.

"This is exactly why we are working to secure the future of rural pubs and venues through our Hospitality Support Fund. On top of the £4.3bn support package announced last year, we've slashed business rates for pubs by 15% and are boosting this to 20% from April."

Tafarn yr Heliwr was an integral part of community life in the conservation area of Nefyn for many generations until finally it sadly closed its doors in 2009 along with several other local shops and businesses in the town.

By 2018, locals decided there was a real need to get the pub reopened and after a successful purchase by the community in November 2018 it re-opened to the public in July 2021.

Britons Eat Out Less Often but Restaurant Owners Remain Bullish About Future Growth

Britons are becoming more selective about eating out, but they have not lost their appetite for a good restaurant experience, according to new research from payments company Dojo.

The new report, Serving Growth: The State of UK Dining, is a deep dive on the current state of the restaurant industry, based on interviews with over 100 restaurant owners and an Opinium poll of 2,000 UK diners. It finds that more than a third of Brits (37%) are visiting restaurants less often than before, compared with fewer than one in five (17%) who are going out more frequently. At the same time, more than a third (37%) say they are spending more when they do eat out.



The findings suggest restaurant visits are becoming a more considered experience. Nearly half (47%) of diners are looking for offers and discounts more often, but price alone is not determining where they go. Almost three quarters (73%) cite food quality as an important factor when choosing a restaurant, compared with just over half (58%) who point to price.

Restaurants are responding by looking beyond discounting. Around two in five (39%) operators have introduced new food or drink options to attract customers, while 28% plan to invest in refurbishment and 25% in menu development over the next year. By comparison, 19% have introduced additional discounts.

The research also points to a shift in when Britons choose to eat. Some 43% prefer dining between 6pm and 8pm, with a further 19% favouring 4pm to 6pm. Just 8% prefer to eat after 8pm, highlighting further strain on late night dining. Restaurant operators also identify the 6pm to 8pm period as the most common window for growing customer demand.

The changing habits come against a difficult operating backdrop. More than half (55%) of restaurants surveyed say the higher costs introduced in April increased operating costs, while 52% experienced reduced margins.

Yet operators remain confident in their ability to adapt. Two thirds (66%) are confident about their own business performance over the next 12 months, despite 64% saying they lack confidence in the restaurant sector more broadly.

Charlie Ashworth, Head of Insights at Dojo, said: "People still value eating out, but they are thinking harder about when and where they do it. What stands out is that quality still matters more than price, even when household budgets are under pressure.

"For restaurants, that means the opportunity isn't simply to be the cheapest. Diners still want an occasion that feels worth leaving home for, and operators are responding by investing in their menus, venues and overall experience.

"The trading environment remains difficult, but restaurant owners are backing themselves to adapt. That confidence is important as the industry heads into the crucial Christmas period and looks ahead to 2027."

Heartwood Collection Acquires The Cricketers, Bagshot

Hospitality group Heartwood Collection has acquired The Cricketers in Bagshot, Surrey.

The acquisition will see the pub with rooms undergo a multi-million pound refurbishment, reopening in late Spring 2027.

The Cricketers has long been a fixture of Bagshot's local heritage. Originally serving as a traditional village coaching inn and joins Heartwood Collection's growing portfolio of 36 characterful pubs and pubs with rooms, marking its third 'pub with rooms' in Surrey and ninth pub in the county overall, as the Group continues its expansion.



Richard Ferrier, CEO of Heartwood Collection, said: "We're thrilled to have acquired The Cricketers in Bagshot, a historic pub with rich local heritage that fits perfectly into our growing portfolio. Surrey has always been a key region for us and to be able to resurrect this much loved pub is very special. We look forward to getting started on this important project before re-opening it in late Spring 2027."

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Martyn's Law – Is Your Business Prepared?



With Martyn's Law set to come into force in spring 2027, Leigh Schelvis, Licensing Solicitor at Schofield Sweeney (www.schofieldsweeney.co.uk), outlines the implications of the new legislation for hospitality and leisure operators, explaining who will be affected, what their legal obligations will be and how they can prepare.

Having received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025, the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 or Martyn's Law as it is more commonly known, is set to come into force this Spring introducing a series of new legal requirements for businesses in the hospitality industry.

Named in memory of Martyn Hett, one of the 22 people tragically killed in the Manchester Arena attack in 2017, Martyn's Law has been introduced to help make public venues across the UK safer by improving security and ensuring businesses are better prepared in the event of a terrorist attack.

Pubs, bars, restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, entertainment and other hospitality and leisure venues will all be required to comply with the new legislation, provided they meet certain qualifying criteria.

The legislation is split into two tiers with the standard tier applicable to venues where it is reasonable to expect between 200 and 799 people to be present at any one time, and the enhanced tier applicable to businesses where that figure is expected to be 800 or more.

Importantly, these thresholds are not based on the maximum capacity of a venue or its typical daily footfall, but the number of people, including staff, that can reasonably be expected to be present at one time, even if this is only occasionally.

Responsibility for compliance with Martyn's Law will generally fall to the individual or organisation that has control of the premises on a day-to-day basis – not necessarily the premises licence holder. Home Office guidance gives the example of a pub owned by a brewery or pub company but leased to a tenant who controls its use as a pub. Here, it will be the tenant who is responsible for complying with Martyn's Law, even if the premises licence is held by the brewery or pub company.

All premises that qualify under Martyn's Law must notify the Security Industry Authority (SIA) the Martyn's Law regulator, of their responsibility and will be required to put reasonably practicable public protection procedures in place covering evacuation, invacuation, lockdown and communication.

Enhanced-tier premises will also be required to implement measures relating to monitoring, movement, physical safety and security, and the security of information.

The legislation is designed to be proportionate, with the term "reasonably practicable" involving the balancing of measures to protect people against matters such as cost, time and difficulty of implementation. Significantly, standard-tier premises are not required to make physical alterations or buy security equipment to comply with the public protection procedure requirement.

For businesses preparing for Martyn's Law, a good place to start is by working out whether your premises is/are likely to fall within the scope of the legislation and, if so, which tier applies. Identify who will be legally responsible for compliance, reviewing any leases, management arrangements and operating structures where necessary.

Next, review your existing emergency procedures, most licensed premises will already have fire evacuation and other emergency arrangements in place so use these as a starting point but consider whether they would be appropriate in the event of a terrorist incident. A conventional fire procedure of simply directing everybody outside may not always be appropriate if the threat is outside the building.

Businesses will also need to consider invacuation and lockdown procedures. Invacuation involves moving people to a safer location within the premises, whilst lockdown involves restricting access to all or part of the building to protect those inside.

Communication is another of the statutory public protection procedures, so businesses will need to consider how staff could communicate during an incident, who will have authority to make decisions and how instructions will be relayed to customers. Practical counter-terrorism awareness training will also be valuable in helping staff understand their roles and responsibilities.

For enhanced-tier businesses, reviewing existing security arrangements is another essential step. This could include assessing the current CCTV provision, access controls and physical security measures, as well as reviewing how sensitive information about the premises is stored and shared.

In any business where SIA-licensed door supervisors are used, arrangements should be reviewed with the security contractor and it must be ensured that there is a clear understanding of the emergency response, particularly who will make decisions, who will communicate with customers and what happens during evacuation, invacuation or lockdown.

It is important that businesses don't prepare a plan that exists only on paper. Take time to walk through the premises with managers and staff to assess whether the proposed procedures would work in practice and identify any areas where changes may be needed. If the premises' capacity is likely to fluctuate between the two tiers, it is recommended that multiple plans and procedures are designed to respond to the appropriate level of risk.

For all businesses preparing for Martyn's Law, I would suggest creating a record of the steps they have taken, including their initial assessment, identification of the responsible person, emergency procedures, training records and any decisions made about security improvements. Not only will this provide a useful audit trail, but it will also help businesses identify anything they still need to address before the legislation comes into force.

For licensed premises, Martyn's Law itself will not principally be enforced by the local licensing authority, the police or other Responsible Authorities. The statutory regulator is the SIA. However, Police officers can accompany SIA inspectors where appropriate, or if Martyn's Law related conditions are placed on a Premises Licence, then local licensing authorises we be able to enforce breaches of those conditions.

The key message for the licensed trade is don't panic and don't rush out to buy expensive security equipment. Focus on preparing your teams and ensure you have sensible, workable procedures in place alongside staff who understand what to do if the worst happens.

Marston's 2026 Top Chef Winners Cook Alongside Michelin-Starred Chef Luke Tipping

The winners of Marston's 2026 Top Chef Awards swapped their pub kitchens for an exclusive culinary masterclass, cooking alongside acclaimed Michelin-starred chef Luke Tipping at Marston's Pub Support Centre in Wolverhampton.

In celebration of the 10 winning chefs from across the country, the event recognised the skill, care and commitment to everyday excellence that earned them this year's Top Chef honours.

Hosted in Marston's Development Kitchen, Luke shared insights from his career and the standards behind Michelin-starred cooking, from consistency and ingredient care to discipline and attention to detail.

The chefs then put those lessons into practice, working alongside Luke to prepare and plate a two-course menu of sea bream with potato scales, buttered spinach and caviar cream sauce, followed by tarte fine of apple with walnut and maple crème fraîche.

The day finished around the table, with the chefs sitting down together to enjoy what they had created and share ideas they could take back to their own pub kitchens, before receiving their coveted 2026 Top Chef awards, cheered on by colleagues from our Pub Support Centre.



Image credit: Marston's

CELEBRATING THE 2026 TOP CHEF WINNERS

This year's culinary winners represented pubs from across all five of Marston's operating regions:

- *Red Squirrel, Stevenson*
- *Norman Inn, Monk Bretton*
- *Skymaster, Warrington*
- *Highwayman, Oswestry*
- *Coleham Tap, Shrewsbury*
- *Tavern, Denstone*
- *Copper Coast, Camborne*
- *Llanwern Bull, Newport*
- *Wolvercote, Oxford*
- *Rock Rose, Dover*

The 2026 Top Chef Awards recognise the skill, care and consistency of the chefs behind the great food and memorable experiences served in our pubs every day.

Liam Powell, Chief People Officer of Marston's, said: "Our Top Chef winners represent some of the very best talent in our pub kitchens. This experience with Luke was a brilliant way to celebrate what they've achieved, while giving them the chance to learn from one of the best in the industry and take new ideas and inspiration back to their teams."

Old J Spiced Rum Marks 15 Years on UK Back Bars with a Bold New Look

For 15 years, Old J has been a staple of back bars across the UK, earning a loyal following among consumers and becoming one of the country's most recognisable spiced rum brands.

Now, as the brand approaches its 15th anniversary, Old J has unveiled its first major redesign in over a decade, combining the heritage that made it famous with practical improvements for modern hospitality venues.

The refreshed bottle features a more streamlined shape and slimmer neck, making it easier to handle during busy service, while a cleaner, bolder design improves visibility on crowded back bars. Updated labelling and clearer flavour differentiation also make it easier for both staff and customers to navigate the range.

The redesign has been developed to strengthen standout in an increasingly competitive spirits category, helping venues capitalise on continued consumer demand for flavoured and spiced rum.

But the investment goes far beyond the bottle. The refreshed identity is being rolled out across a new website, PR and a growing suite of point-of-sale materials, creating a more consistent and recognisable brand experience at every touchpoint.



The relaunch provides operators with a modern, high-impact brand that is designed to drive visibility, spark conversation and remain relevant with today's consumers.

For venues looking to refresh their back bar, Old J offers a trusted brand with 15 years of consumer recognition, a distinctive new look and a clear commitment to the future.

WHY OLD J'S REFRESH MATTERS

- *Improved back-bar standout*
- *Slimmer neck for easier handling during service*
- *Clearer flavour differentiation across the range*
- *Modernised design that reflects today's consumer*
- *New POS materials to support activation in venue*
- *Refreshed website and brand assets driving consistency and recognition*
- *15 years of brand recognition and consumer loyalty*

READY TO REFRESH YOUR RUM RANGE?

Contact your LWC Drinks Account Manager today to discover the refreshed Old J range and find out how we're supporting venues with one of the UK's most recognised spiced rum brands.

Here: **www.lwc-drinks.co.uk/contact-us/**

Old J. 15 years behind the bar. Ready for the next round.

Co-op Live Incident Serves as Reminder of the Critical Importance of Public Safety Says NTIA

The incident at Manchester's Co-op Live arena, which saw more than 12,000 concertgoers evacuated following reports of an unknown substance being released during a live performance, has once again brought public safety, emergency preparedness and venue security into sharp focus.

Police declared a major incident at Manchester's Co-op Live arena shortly after 10pm yesterday following reports of people at US rapper Don Toliver's show suffering from the effects of a substance.

While the full circumstances surrounding the incident remain under investigation, it serves as a sharp reminder of the critical importance of robust emergency procedures, coordinated responses and continued vigilance across the UK's live music and night-time economy.



With Martyn's Law expected to come into force in spring 2027, the incident reinforces the importance of ensuring that venues and operators have the appropriate systems, training and support in place to respond effectively to potential threats and emergencies.

Michael Kill, CEO, Night Time Industries Association (NTIA): "Our immediate thoughts are with everyone affected by the incident at Co-op Live in Manchester. We commend the emergency services, venue management, security personnel and all those involved in responding to what was undoubtedly a challenging and concerning situation.

"While information surrounding the circumstances remains limited, this incident serves as a sharp reminder of the critical importance of vigilance, preparedness and coordinated emergency response across our live music and night-time economy.

"Given Manchester's history and the tragic events of 2017, the importance of public safety at live entertainment venues cannot be overstated. With Martyn's Law approaching implementation, incidents of this nature bring into sharp focus why preparedness, effective planning and clear operational procedures must remain at the forefront of our industry's priorities.

"Although we must not prejudge the nature or cause of this particular incident, it reinforces a fundamental principle: preparedness is not simply about preventing potential threats, but ensuring that when an incident occurs, the response is swift, coordinated and focused on protecting lives.

"When thousands of people are gathered in one location, the ability to communicate effectively, manage crowds and execute emergency procedures is absolutely critical. Incidents such as this also provide an important opportunity to review, learn and strengthen existing safety arrangements.

"Martyn's Law represents a significant step in strengthening protective security and terrorism preparedness across public venues and spaces. However, its successful implementation will depend on ensuring that businesses of all sizes have access to clear guidance, practical training and proportionate support to meet their responsibilities.

"As an industry, we remain committed to working collaboratively with government, policing, security partners and venue operators to ensure that public safety remains paramount, while maintaining the confidence of the millions of people who enjoy live music, hospitality and nightlife across the UK.

"Ultimately, we cannot eliminate every risk, but we can ensure that our venues, our people and our communities are better prepared to respond when it matters most."

Pub Invest Group to Open Rope & Anchor in Liverpool



Pub Invest Group is to open a new pub, the Rope & Anchor, in Liverpool city centre this December.

The two-floor venue will occupy the former Cheers site at 48-50 Bold Street, L1 4DS. It is scheduled to open a week before Christmas, in time for the latter part of the festive trading period.

The opening will add to the group's portfolio of city-centre venues and give it a presence on one of Liverpool's busy thoroughfares.

According to the company, the Rope & Anchor has been designed to offer a warm, traditional pub atmosphere, with open fires and comfortable seating. It is intended to appeal to a range of occasions, from drinks after a day's Christmas shopping to Saturday nights out.

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Unlocking Profit Through Stock Control In Pubs and Restaurants



Malcolm Muir, Consultancy Director at Venners, highlights why stock control has become one of the most important profit drivers in hospitality and explores how operators can unlock cash and improve margins through more effective stock management.

While stock management is essential to keeping pubs and restaurants trading smoothly, excessive stockholding can quietly impact profitability by tying up cash, increasing the risk of wastage, creating opportunities for theft, and covering up operational inefficiencies.

At a time when margins remain under pressure, understanding and controlling stock levels has never been more important. Here are some of the reasons why, as outlined in Christie & Co's Pubs & Restaurants Market Review 2026.

MILLIONS OF POUNDS ARE TIED UP IN EXCESS LIQUOR STOCK

Recent analysis by Venners of more than 15,000 liquor stocktakes revealed the scale of the issue across the hospitality sector. Over the last 18 months, 57% of restaurants audited were found to be overstocked with liquor, representing a total cost value of more than £7 million. The situation was even worse within the pub sector, where 67% of businesses audited were holding excess liquor stock, with a combined cost value exceeding £10 million.

In total, that amounts to more than £17 million sitting in stockrooms, bars, and cellars across the audited businesses rather than working for the businesses themselves.

WHY OVERSTOCKING CAN HURT PROFITABILITY

Many operators understandably view stock availability as a safeguard against lost sales. However, carrying excessive levels of liquor stock can create a range of challenges.

Firstly, it restricts cash flow as money tied up in slow-moving stock cannot be invested elsewhere in the business, whether that's refurbishments, marketing activity, staff training, or debt reduction. Secondly, larger stock holdings increase the risk of wastage, spoilage, and shrinkage. Overstocking can also make it more difficult for operators to identify underperforming products and purchasing inefficiencies.

Equally, carrying too little stock can result in missed sales opportunities and disappointed customers. The key is not simply reducing stock levels but achieving a balance between availability and efficiency.

THE STOCKHOLDING GAP

While the recommended stockholding target for liquor is approximately 20 days, through Venners analysis we found that restaurants were holding liquor stock for an average of 51 days and pubs averaged 32 days.

These figures highlight the opportunity for operators to release significant amounts of working capital while improving operational efficiency. For businesses facing rising wage costs, reducing unnecessary stockholding can provide a relatively straightforward route to strengthening profitability without impacting the customer experience.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Effective stock control extends well beyond periodic stocktakes, with the most successful operators treating stock as an indicator of overall business health and ensuring accountability exists throughout the organisation.

This begins with regular monitoring and benchmarking, helping managers understand stock performance and identify trends before they become costly problems. By creating visibility around stock levels, gross profit performance and areas of waste, operators can make better-informed purchasing decisions and improve controls across the business.

WHAT OPERATORS COULD DO

There are several practical measures hospitality businesses can implement to improve stock performance:

- *Review stock on hand every month and benchmark against the recommended 20-day target*
- *Challenge excess liquor stock levels and identify cash tied up in slow-moving products*
- *Clear redundant and ageing stock through promotions, seasonal menus, and targeted offers*
- *Conduct regular independent stocktakes to improve accountability and identify opportunities for improvement*
- *Ensure managers understand stock results, gross profit performance, and key areas of wastage*

THE IMPACT OF EFFECTIVE STOCK CONTROL

In a challenging hospitality market, profit improvement does not always come from increasing sales. Sometimes the biggest gains can be found by improving operational disciplines and making better use of existing resources.

Businesses that maintain tighter control of stock typically generate stronger cash flow, improved gross profit, and greater resilience during periods of economic uncertainty. As operators continue to navigate a demanding trading environment, stock control is increasingly becoming a strategic tool rather than simply an operational necessity.

For many pub and restaurant businesses, unlocking profit may be as simple as taking a closer look at what is already sitting on the shelf.

For more insights into the trends shaping the hospitality sector, read the full 'Pubs & Restaurants Market Review 2026' here: **https://www.christie.com/sectors/pubs/market-review/**

Former Professional Footballer Phil Celebrates 25 Years at The Dolphin

A familiar face, a larger-than-life character and a landlord who clearly loves what he does, Phil King is celebrating 25 years as landlord of The Dolphin in Swindon.



Phil took on The Dolphin in 2001, following an earlier spell at his first pub, The Clifton. A former professional footballer and Swindon Town FC legend, Phil learnt the pub trade on the job, with the support of Arkell's Brewery. Having made the move to The Dolphin, he has never looked back. He credits his long stint to it simply being the right fit and suiting his personality.

He believes there is a right person for every pub, and while recognising that hospitality is a challenging environment, says that with character, enthusiasm and hard work, it is still possible to run a busy, thriving pub.

For Phil, much of the enjoyment comes from the people, both the team around him and the customers who make The Dolphin what it is. He takes pride in seeing the pub continue to thrive and, as Phil puts it, the fact that The Dolphin is still as busy as it is after 25 years says it all.

Reflecting on his time at The Dolphin, Phil says he has thoroughly enjoyed the experience and has no plans to move on.

"I absolutely love it. I don't plan on going anywhere. We've got a good team here and it's working. It just seems silly to move on. I'd be bored doing anything else and I love being on the go, keeping busy."

Football has also remained a big part of Phil's life. He continues to be involved with Swindon Town FC, bringing his trademark charm to hosting and compèring matchday hospitality at the County Ground.

To mark Phil's milestone at The Dolphin, directors from Arkell's Brewery visited the pub to congratulate him, reminisce about the years gone by and present him with a certificate and a special gift in recognition of his 25 years at the helm.

Arkell's Brewery Chairman and Managing Director, George Arkell, said:

"Phil is a fantastic person to have at The Dolphin. He's a great landlord and we know his customers appreciate everything he brings to the pub just as much as we do. Twenty-five years is a wonderful achievement, and we wanted to come down personally to thank him for his commitment and congratulate him on reaching this milestone."

James Arkell, Chairman Emeritus of Arkell's Brewery, added:

"I think Phil King is one of our iconic landlords, and iconic for Swindon too. He's fantastic with the football club and even better with our customers at The Dolphin. We love having him and congratulate him on reaching this 25-year milestone. It's quite an achievement."

Printed Pub Banners: The Secret Weapon for Successful Pub Promotion

First impressions matter, especially in the hospitality industry. Before a customer samples your food, orders a drink or experiences your atmosphere, they'll often make a decision based on what they see from the street. That's where professionally printed pub banners come into their own, transforming blank walls, fences and railings into powerful advertising space that works around the clock.

From traditional village pubs to bustling city bars, printed banners remain one of the most affordable and effective ways to promote events, increase footfall and boost sales. Whether it's live music, quiz nights, seasonal menus, televised sporting events or beer garden promotions, a bold, professionally printed banner can stop people in their tracks and encourage them to walk through the door.



Unlike digital advertising that disappears after a few seconds, a printed banner keeps working day and night. Positioned outside your venue, it reaches local residents, passing traffic and visitors without ongoing advertising costs. It's simple, effective marketing that continues to deliver results long after it's been installed.

Quality is everything when it comes to outdoor signage. A faded or poorly produced banner can send the wrong message, while vibrant colours, sharp graphics and durable materials help create a professional image that reflects the quality of your business. That's why thousands of pubs, clubs and hospitality venues trust HFE Signs to produce banners that are built to withstand the unpredictable British weather while maintaining exceptional print quality.

Printed pub banners are incredibly versatile. Summer BBQs, Christmas parties, Sunday lunches, charity fundraisers, comedy nights, cocktail evenings and live entertainment can all be promoted with professionally designed banners that capture attention from a distance. Better still, banners are easy to replace as your promotions change throughout the year, ensuring your venue always looks fresh and inviting.

As competition continues to grow within the hospitality industry, making your venue stand out has never been more important. Professionally printed pub banners offer exceptional value for money, immediate visibility and long-lasting durability, making them one of the smartest marketing investments any pub can make.

Check out HFE Signs and special offers here: **www.hfe-signs.co.uk**

Hospitality Faces Uncertain Christmas in Face of Consumer Caution Forecast Reveals

Operators will need to manage their spend on Christmas menus carefully in the face of consumer caution and an uncertain outlook for 2027, warns hospitality purchasing specialist Lynx Purchasing.

"By now, operators should have a clear idea of their overall level of Christmas bookings," says Lynx Purchasing managing director Rachel Dobson.

"The main challenges will be on the supply side. Not only whether operators can rely on supplies if they take further bookings from customers who've left plans late, but also uncertainty over whether the costs of core Christmas food products already on order might increase.



"The latest restrictions on poultry in Britain due to avian flu is cause for concern. It has the potential to affect availability of fresh turkey, and the situation can change quickly. Beef and salmon, both staples of Christmas menus, are very costly at the moment, and there are also new welfare concerns about farmed salmon. In contrast, although this year's potato harvest was affected by the summer heatwave, supplies are reasonably good."

The warning comes as Lynx Purchasing publishes the Winter 2026 edition of its regular Market Forecast. The report uses exclusive insight from the range of suppliers that Lynx works with, as well as official inflation data, to look at food and drink pricing in the run-up to the crucial Christmas trading period.

Dobson continued: "The supply chain has proved to be resilient, and Christmas orders already placed with suppliers should be secure, although some pricing may be volatile. However, if there are last minute booking requests, operators may be cautious in terms of the need to place additional orders with suppliers at a time when margins are already under pressure, as well as meeting the cost of additional staff."

Dobson adds: "Attention now needs to firmly focus on the first few months of 2027, when consumer confidence is likely to remain low over concerns about interest rates, food inflation is forecast to increase, and the impact on global supply of the extreme El Niño will start to become apparent.

"Commodities such as cooking oil, wheat and sugar are likely to see sharp price increases, which also impacts the cost of a broad range of manufactured food products, while staples such as coffee and fruit juice, which are already under pressure due to climate change, are also likely to be impacted.

"As ever, the best advice is to work with suppliers to make the most of available produce, buy as locally as possible to help mitigate the impact of higher distribution costs, and to keep menus flexible wherever possible."

A free copy of the Winter 2026 edition of the Lynx Purchasing can be downloaded from the website at **www.lynxpurchasing.co.uk**

Iconic Preston Pub Gets £200,000 Refurbishment

One of Preston's most beloved landmarks is officially back following a £200,000 refurbishment.

The Station on Butler Street will throw open its doors on Friday, 27 November, ushering in a thrilling new era for the historic 1850s pub.

Positioned directly opposite Preston Train Station and steps from Fishergate Shopping Centre, The Station has long been the heartbeat of Butler Street—the ultimate meeting spot for commuters, shoppers, and lifelong regulars. Now, Chorley-based independent operator Blind Tiger Inns has breathed fresh life into the venue.

The £200,000 makeover seamlessly blends heritage charm with high-energy modern upgrades, retaining the pub's classic layout and original features while elevating the entire guest experience.

While the look is brand new, the warm welcome remains the same: the pub continues under the helm of the Whittakers, the well-known family management team at the heart of The Station's community.



The pub will continue to be run by the Whittakers, the family management team familiar to regulars. With live entertainment and a warm welcome, the Whittakers have created a pub that is known to be 'difficult to leave.' Louise Whittaker said "We get many visitors coming in for a quick drink before heading for the train, and getting so wrapped up in our atmosphere and entertainment that they end up catching a train 3 or 4 hours later!"

"We are thrilled to be nearing the finish line on this major transformation," said Chris Tulloch, CEO of Blind Tiger Inns. "Positioned right opposite the station and next to Fishergate, The Station has always been a cornerstone of Butler Street. With our fresh new look, unbeatable drinks range, live sport, and weekend music lineup, we cannot wait to welcome familiar faces and new guests back through the doors."





ChatGPT Ads: What Should Hotels Consider Before Investing?

By Daisy Wolfenden, Managing Director, Wolfenden (https://wolfenden.agency)



More than half (52%) of British travellers now use AI to help plan their holidays, up from 40% in 2025, according to MMGY Travel Intelligence. Research commissioned by Aven Hospitality also found that 31% of surveyed UK hotel guests had booked a hotel recommended by AI.

These findings demonstrate a shift in how travellers discover and evaluate accommodation, with ChatGPT Ads introducing another opportunity to reach guests during that process.

With the platform now available to UK advertisers and minimum spend requirements falling, where should it fit within hotels' wider commercial strategies?

WHEN DISCOVERY AND BOOKING INTENT OVERLAP

Someone searching Google for a luxury spa hotel in Bath probably has a destination and type of accommodation in mind.

Someone asking ChatGPT for a romantic weekend within two hours of London, with excellent food, spa facilities and dog-friendly rooms, could be at an earlier stage of planning.

Within a few exchanges, that traveller might have narrowed down destinations, compared accommodation and started researching specific properties.

For hotels, this creates opportunities to reach potential guests at different stages of consideration, including those who haven't decided where to stay.

That first interaction could be particularly valuable for independent hotels. Aven Hospitality's research found that 16% of respondents who had booked an AI-recommended hotel discovered properties they wouldn't otherwise have considered.

Hotels with distinctive experiences, facilities, or locations may therefore have an opportunity to reach relevant audiences before their preferences are established.

However, there's an important distinction between organic AI recommendations and paid advertising. Investment in ChatGPT Ads doesn't influence organic recommendations, and hotels should consider both forms of visibility.

THE COMPETITION IS ALREADY PAYING ATTENTION

Research published by SE Ranking in August, examining more than 50,000 commercial prompts in the US, found that Booking.com accounted for 62.57% of observed ChatGPT travel ad appearances.

It's a snapshot of another market, but the implications are relevant. Hotels have spent years working to increase direct bookings and reduce reliance on online travel agencies (OTAs). Now those intermediaries are competing for attention in another discovery channel.

That doesn't mean hotels should rush to invest. ChatGPT Ads currently reach eligible Free and Go users, while accurate property information, credible reviews, useful content and third-party coverage remain important to how properties are discovered and evaluated.

WHERE SHOULD HOTELS START?

With minimum daily budgets starting at £15, testing is more accessible, although that spend may not generate enough data for a meaningful evaluation.

I'd start with a specific commercial challenge.

A countryside hotel looking to improve midweek occupancy might explore reaching travellers researching short breaks. A family resort could focus on school holiday demand; a city hotel might target travellers comparing business facilities.

Hotels should also consider what happens after a guest clicks. Is availability easy to find? Are the property's distinctive features clear? Is booking directly straightforward? Attracting interest offers limited value if guests ultimately book elsewhere.

Crucially, I'd establish the objective upfront. Introducing a hotel to new audiences and generating immediate reservations are different goals that shouldn't be measured identically.

MEASURING AI'S CONTRIBUTION

Understanding what influenced a reservation becomes more complicated when discovery and booking consideration can develop within a single conversation.

A guest could discover a hotel through a ChatGPT Ad, search for it on Google days later, read reviews and eventually book directly.

Traditional attribution may credit another channel, obscuring the ad's contribution. . Equally, clicks aren't proof of incremental demand. A hotel could pay to reach someone who was already likely to book.

Organic AI visibility presents similar challenges, with recommendations not always generating measurable website visits.

Comprehensive GA4 tracking should be standard, ideally connected to the booking engine to measure reservations and revenue. Google's Google tag gateway for advertisers is also worth reviewing to strengthen first-party measurement.

Hotels need a consistent framework combining AI visibility, advertising engagement, branded search demand, booking engine activity and direct booking revenue.

Looking beyond last-click performance is important, although these signals won't always establish causation. Baselines and incrementality testing can help identify additional demand.

Acquisition costs must also be considered against booking value, distribution costs and longer-term guest value, without judging awareness-led activity exclusively on immediate reservations.

WHAT WOULD MAKE THE INVESTMENT WORTHWHILE?

ChatGPT Ads offer opportunities to reach travellers as they move from exploring destinations to considering specific properties. Insight from those conversations could also inform the experiences hotels promote, their organic visibility, content and wider paid activity.

For some, a controlled test could uncover new demand. For others, improving organic visibility, their website or the direct booking experience may produce a stronger return. The question isn't simply whether ChatGPT Ads can generate attention, but whether that attention translates into additional, profitable bookings, and whether hotels can measure the difference.

Greene King Continues Franchise Growth with 135 Pub Milestone

Greene King Pub Partners, the leased, tenanted and franchise division of Greene King, has hit a milestone 135 franchise pubs across England, Scotland and Wales.

In 2026, Greene King grew its franchise business with 37 new franchise pub openings, including expanding into Wales for the first time.

This growth has been driven in part by Greene King's new pub estate strategy, announced earlier this year, which aims to set the business up to deliver sustainable and profitable growth for the future. As part of this strategy, Greene King identified roughly 300 pubs that would be better served under different models, with around half of these set to be converted into leased, tenanted or franchise models under its award-winning Pub Partners business.

Twenty-nine of these conversions from Greene King's managed business to its franchise business have taken place in 2026, already delivering strong returns.

The internal transfer within the Greene King business of managed pubs into franchise models has enabled operations talent within the business to run their own pub business for the first time with the full backing, investment and support of Greene King.

So far, one in five pubs that have converted from a Greene King managed pub into a franchise pub have seen a Greene King General Manager or Assistant General Manager step up to become a franchisee.

Of those from the Greene King managed business who have embarked on their journey of pub entrepreneurship, two-thirds are now the franchisee of the pub they previously managed.

To support the conversions and new openings of its franchise pubs, Greene King Pub Partners has invested £12,000,000 in its franchise pubs this year. Key highlights include the Fig Tree in Uxbridge, London, the College Oak in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, The Greystoke in Ealing, London and the Water Tower in Tilehurst, Reading.

Dan Robinson, Managing Director of Greene King Pub Partners, said: "Reaching 135 franchise pubs is another major milestone in the impressive growth of our franchise business.

"Our strategy of converting managed pubs where an entrepreneurial operator can unlock their full potential into partnership models is working extremely well, and it's particularly exciting to see talented people from within Greene King taking the opportunity to become entrepreneurs and run pubs as their own businesses.

"Supporting great operators to run successful pubs at the heart of their communities is what our partnership model is all about, and we're incredibly proud to see talent from within our business taking that next step with our award-winning support and backing."

Penny Bruce, Franchise Operations Director for Greene King Pub Partners, said: "Opening 37 new franchise pubs this year demonstrates the pace at which our franchise business is growing. As we continue this growth trajectory, our approach remains focused on making sure we have the right pub, the right operator and the right investment in place to give every franchisee the tools they need to succeed in their business.

"We have ambitious plans to continue growing in 2027, while maintaining that considered approach and giving our franchisees the support they need to build successful pub businesses."

Established Somerset Village Pub Comes to Market

The Crown Inn, a characterful village pub in Fivehead, near Taunton, Somerset, has been brought to market, offering prospective operators the opportunity to acquire an established free-of-tie leasehold business with a strong food and drinks trade.

The pub has recorded a turnover of £430,000 over the past 12 months, with an adjusted net profit of £78,000 and an annual rent of £26,000.

The property features a main bar and dining areas accommodating 50 customers, a function room with a traditional skittle alley accommodating a further 40, and outdoor trade patios and a garden bar with space for 50 customers. The premises also benefit from a fully equipped commercial kitchen and an eight-space car park.



Private living accommodation comprises two double bedrooms, a sitting room and a bathroom.

The leasehold is available at a premium of £10,000, with fixtures and fittings valued at £55,000, for which 100% finance is available.

The Crown Inn presents an attractive opportunity for experienced hospitality operators or those looking to establish themselves in the licensed trade, with an established business and the flexibility afforded by a free-of-tie lease.

For further information, contact **pje@communityhospitality.co.uk** or telephone **07966 259042**.

Foodservice Prices Edge Down in October, But Winter Supply Risks Grow

The UK Foodservice Price Index recorded a slight month-on-month decline of 0.2% in October2026, offering hospitality operators a modest pause following the upward momentum seen in September. While this marginal easing welcome short-term relief, overall food and drink prices remain firmly above last year's levels, reflecting a persistently high structural cost base.

The Index shows welcome month-on-month softening in prices in several key areas, including dairy, fresh vegetables, cooking oils and sweet goods. This relief was partly supported by a dip in global benchmarks for dairy and cereals, alongside increased harvesting activity in parts of the market.



However, easing of prices was far from universal. Categories that are heavily exposed to seasonal transitions, lagged commodity costs and tight domestic supply continued to climb in October, with imported fruit, bakery items and meat all increasing month-on-month. Seafood remains the most challenging category over the longer term, due to ongoing quota restrictions and high operating costs.

Pockets of relief on prices in October mask several mounting pressures as the sector heads into winter. The lasting impact of an exceptionally hot and dry summer in the UK and Europe is expected to tighten availability for stored root vegetables and potatoes over the coming months. Meanwhile, global sugar markets have risen for a fourth consecutive month, domestic milk supplies are showing signs of tightening, and elevated oil prices continue to keep freight, packaging and processing expenses well above historic norms.

Shaun Allen, CEO of Prestige Purchasing, said: "A 0.2% month-on-month dip in October offers a welcome pause after September's increase, showing that softer global benchmarks in areas like dairy and grains are helping to temper some of the broader pressures in the market. However, operators should treat this as a finely balanced moment rather than a clear return to sustained deflation.

"Crude oil prices have crept higher once again, global sugar markets are tightening rapidly, and the UK is now transitioning into a winter reliant on stored and imported produce following a difficult summer growing season. Procurement teams should use this period of relative calm to review their winter supply lines and protect margins against the pockets of volatility that are likely to emerge heading into 2027."

Reuben Pullan, senior insight consultant in the hospitality operators and food team at NIQ, said: "While October brought some encouraging stability in foodservice prices, there's a lot of turbulence below the surface. Macro global pressures and micro supply issues are creating uncertainty in pricing and businesses will need to be ready to respond to more inflation in key areas in 2027. This volatility, alongside hesitant consumer spending and cost challenges in many other operational areas, means conditions remain difficult for many businesses in hospitality, who are now pinning hopes on a bounce in sales over the crucial Christmas and New Year period."

Record-Breaking Fundraising Year for Hospitality Action's Walk for Wellbeing

UK charity Hospitality Action's Nationwide movement Walk for Wellbeing celebrates a significant accomplishment this year, raising an outstanding £180,000 marking its biggest fundraising year since launching in 2020.

From woodland trails to waterfronts and everything in between, this considerable achievement highlights the power of connection and the importance of coming together both as colleagues and as a community.

Thousands took to the streets across the nation once again this autumn to help raise vital funds for hospitality people and their families in times of need. With this year marking the seventh annual Walk for Wellbeing, to date over £680,000 has been raised across the initiative.

In the past year alone, these funds have supported hospitality workers with clearing priority debts, preventing homelessness, providing mental health support, counselling and much more.

Powered by hospitality talent and recruitment partner mum, and in partnership with Caterer.com, HR in Hospitality, Imperial London Hotels and Nespresso, this October saw fourteen UK locations – the largest number to date – host 10, 15 and 20km walks in addition the many choosing to 'Walk It Your Way'.



Craig Prentice, Creator of Walk for Wellbeing and Founder & Director of UK hospitality talent and recruitment partner mum, said:

"We created Walk for Wellbeing in 2020 to remind people across hospitality that no one has to face challenges alone. What started with a small group of walkers has grown into a national movement and seeing people come together to support one another again this year is a powerful reminder of why the walk matters."

"Every step, conversation, donation and shared message supports our hospitality community and creates connection and community through an important, shared purpose. I'm incredibly proud of how far Walk for Wellbeing has come and deeply grateful to everyone who continues to support it and make it possible. Thank you to everyone who has been part of the journey."

Sean Wheeler, Chair and Co-Founder of Walk for Wellbeing and People & Culture Consultant at Sean Wheeler Consulting Limited, said:

"Walk for Wellbeing 2026 has once again shown what can be achieved when people come together for a common goal. The commitment and dedication of everyone who helped make the event happen has been instrumental in its continued success. By raising vital funds and shining a spotlight on wellbeing across the hospitality industry, Walk for Wellbeing continues to make a positive difference in so many ways. Here's to 2027!"

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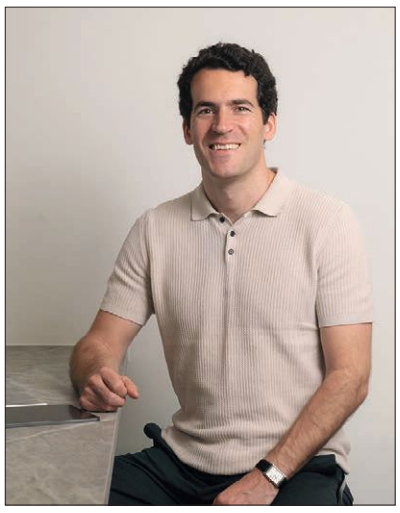
Protect Your Frontline Staff This Christmas With Smarter Body-Worn Cameras, Antare Tells Hospitality Sector



With Christmas less than a month away, UK physical security intelligence company Antare is calling on businesses in the hospitality sector to put in place extra measures for their customer-facing staff during the festive season, when there is an increased chance of incidents involving members of the public. These measures should focus on enhancing video monitoring capabilities, particularly in body-worn cameras (BWCs).

Antare (https://antare.ai) CEO Mark Michaelides set out the reasons for making these changes.

He said, "Christmas means people heading out to celebrate at parties, pubs, restaurants and clubs. Special festive events like Boxing Day football matches and horse racing also attract significant numbers who want to make the most of the seasonal break.

"In these circumstances, the potential for confrontations and other incidents goes up."

EMPLOYERS FACE STRONGER DUTIES TO PREVENT WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Michaelides' comments come after stronger workplace harassment duties for employers took effect on 30 October 2026 under the Employment Rights Act 2025. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published updated guidance setting out what employers are expected to do.

Employers must now take 'all reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment and can be held responsible for harassment of staff by third parties such as customers.

Michaelides continued, "Pubs, bars, restaurants and event venues should all be assessing the systems and processes to protect and keep their staff safe during the busy Christmas period and make important upgrades where required. This includes body-worn camera systems."

EXTRACT VALUABLE INSIGHTS FROM RECORDED FOOTAGE

He explained, "The challenge for every organisation whose staff wear BWC devices is how to extract meaningful insights and value from the many hours of footage they record, and how best to act on incidents."

Normally, when an incident occurs the wearable camera worn by the staff member records footage of the event. The file is uploaded and stored, and somebody reviews it later.

However, this review might not happen for hours, days or even weeks after the event. By the time the manual review process concludes, vital context might be overlooked and important insights lost.

Put an end to time-consuming manual video and audio footage reviews

Michaelides went on, "To solve the problem of time-consuming manual reviews, organisations need an affordable, automated intelligent system that is flexible and responsive.

"This is where the combination of continuous-capture body-worn cameras combined with agentic AI software can make a significant difference.

"The AI component continuously monitors, reviews and analyses video and audio as it happens. It identifies important patterns, trends, and operational insights that might otherwise remain hidden, which the organisation then acts upon.

"This could include identifying inappropriate behaviour by a customer towards a staff member or highlighting a pressing need for extra staff at incident 'hotspots' on specific days or at specific times.

EXTRA BENEFITS OF AUTOMATED SMART REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

He continued, "In-depth smart review and analysis of footage can also single out and record positive moments. For example, when a sales assistant goes the extra mile to help out a customer, or when a security officer successfully de-escalates what could have been a potentially serious incident.

"Because these instances have been recorded, an organisation can use them as best practice examples for training other staff members: and also to reward exceptional acts of individual compassion or professionalism in difficult circumstances."

Michaelides concluded, "The Christmas period brings a new level of security challenges for businesses and organisations across a range of sectors, including hospitality. Now is the time to make the necessary preparations to deal with increased footfall and a higher rate of incidents: enhancing security camera capabilities is a hugely effective way to help create a safer festive season for frontline staff and the general public."

Marston's Profits Jump 18% as Format Rollout Accelerates and Buybacks Return

Marston's has reported an 18.4% rise in underlying profit before tax and announced the return of shareholder payouts. The pub operator will launch a £15m share buyback and speed up the rollout of its new pub formats.

In its preliminary results for the 52 weeks to 26 September 2026, the 1,300-plus-pub group reported underlying profit before tax of £85.4m, up from £72.1m a year earlier. Profits are now more than three times their FY2023 level.

Underlying EBITDA rose 2.9% to £211.0m, with the underlying margin up 110 basis points to 23.9%. Cumulative margin expansion since the company's 2024 Capital Markets Day has reached 250bps, meeting its target ahead of schedule.

Group revenue slipped 1.6% to £883.4m, and like-for-like sales across managed and partnership pubs were 1.2% lower than in FY2025. Trading improved through the year, however, and was broadly flat in the fourth quarter. Marston's credited new pub formats, a stronger summer and the FIFA World Cup.

FORMATS DRIVING GROWTH

The company described its new formats as a "proven engine" of future growth. Revenue at pubs converted to the Grandstand format in FY2026 rose by about 30%, delivering a 30% return on invested capital. Marston's expects the faster pace of openings in FY2027 to add roughly 2% to like-for-like growth.

It completed 60 format conversions in FY2026 at a cost of £16.0m, compared with 31 conversions and £8.0m the previous year. A further 91 formats are already trading, and at least 100 more conversions are expected in the new financial year, mostly in the first half.

Guest satisfaction also improved. The company's Reputation score



Justin Platt, CEO of Marston's. Credit: Marston's PLC

rose to 810 from 806, with converted pubs seeing an uplift of around 20 points. Marston's also highlighted a calendar of demand-driving events and partnerships, including a Luke Humphries darts event and a tie-up with Jeremy Clarkson to launch a limited-edition Hawkstone IPA and Beef Pie. Spend per head through its Order & Pay system was 11% higher than for till-based orders.

BALANCE SHEET AND RETURNS

Total capital investment rose to £73.8m from £61.2m. Recurring free cash flow was £46.0m, down from £53.2m, as working capital gains and good operational delivery were offset by higher capex and cash tax.

Net debt fell to £799.4m from £837.5m, and leverage dropped to 4.2x EBITDA from 4.6x. The board is now targeting net debt to EBITDA of 3.0–4.0x. It said that range preserves resilience through the cycle while recognising the group's cash generation and freehold asset backing.

The improved position allows the board to fund accelerated investment alongside the £15m buyback, which is due to start in the new year. On a statutory basis, profit before tax rose 0.3% to £88.6m, while statutory EBITDA fell 9.0% to £204.7m.

OUTLOOK

Marston's said it expects further margin progress in FY2027, though it said the pace of expansion will moderate after the structural improvements of recent years. Like-for-like sales are slightly down in the first few weeks of the new year, but Christmas bookings are up 9% on the same point last year. The company said results should be in line with current market expectations.

Justin Platt, CEO of Marston's PLC, commented: "We've delivered another excellent set of results this year, executing on our strategy to be a high-margin, highly cash generative local pub company. For the third year running, profit is significantly up, cash flow is strong and margins have improved, as we continue to deliver exceptional guest experiences every day.

"Guest satisfaction levels have improved again, thanks to the amazing work of our pub teams, whose passion and commitment keep our pubs at the heart of every local community they serve. Our new pub formats are performing especially well and are now a proven growth engine for the business, giving us real confidence to accelerate our investment plans in 2027.

"The strength of the business today means we are able to invest further in growth in 2027, whilst also recommencing shareholder returns for the first time since 2020. We enter the new year with real momentum and confidence in our ability to drive sustained growth and ongoing value for our shareholders."

Spotless Results at Speed: Winterhalter's Warewashing Advice for Hotels

Dirty glasses and smeared crockery are among the quickest ways for a hotel to lose a guest's confidence. Now Winterhalter has published Hotels: Advice on Warewashing, a practical guide to help hoteliers achieve flawless presentation across every bar, restaurant, breakfast room and event space they operate.

Hotels face a more varied set of demands than most foodservice businesses. Bars, lounges, restaurants, banqueting suites and kitchens each need their own warewashing provision, often with mixed-skill teams and long trading hours. The guide explains how machine specification, water treatment, chemicals, racks, workflow design, training and service support combine to protect glassware, limit repeat washing and control lifetime running costs.

Topics covered include reverse osmosis for sparkling stemware, choosing machines from compact undercounter to high volume conveyor system, managing heat, steam and noise in guest-facing areas, HACCP audit trails, ESG and sustainability, procurement for hotel groups, and flexible finance options including Winterhalter's innovative Pay Per Wash scheme.



"Every hotel is really several businesses under one roof," says Paul Crowley, marketing development manager at Winterhalter UK. "Each needs its own answer to the same question: 'how do you get spotless ware back into service quickly?' We wrote this guide to encourage hoteliers to look at the whole system rather than just the machine, so they can enhance the guest experience and get the best long-term value."

Hotels: Advice on Warewashing can be downloaded at no charge from the Hotels page of the Winterhalter UK website Hotels

For guidance tailored to other types of venue, contact info@winterhalter.co.uk.

Winterhalter provides a total solution for dishwashing and glasswashing, from pre-sales advice to after-sales service, training and maintenance, with sustainability fitted as standard. Alongside its market-leading dish washers and glass washers, the company's range includes utensil washers, advanced water treatment machines, and cleaning detergents and rinse aids. For further details, call Winterhalter on **01908 359000**, visit **www.winterhalter.com/uk-en/** or email **info@winterhalter.co.uk.**

London Tube Strikes Threaten Christmas Trade as RMT Rejects Last-Ditch Talks

London Underground strikes are set to disrupt travel across the capital during the Christmas trading period and into the New Year, after last-ditch negotiations between Transport for London (TfL) and the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union failed to avert industrial action.

The first of eight planned 24-hour walkouts is scheduled to begin at midday on Thursday 26 November, with further strikes planned throughout December, January and February.

The dispute represents a fresh challenge for London's hospitality and licensed trade businesses, many of which depend on reliable public transport to bring customers and staff into the capital.

The timing is particularly concerning for pubs, bars, restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues, with the December action coinciding with the peak Christmas party season, festive celebrations and one of the busiest periods of the retail and hospitality calendar.

The RMT has called the action in opposition to TfL proposals to introduce revised working arrangements for Underground drivers, including an option to move to a four-day working week.

Although TfL maintains that the arrangements are voluntary and would offer drivers greater flexibility and fewer working hours, the union argues that the proposals would undermine existing employment protections and worsen working conditions.

Representatives from TfL and the RMT held further discussions through the conciliation service Acas in an attempt to resolve the dispute.

However, the talks failed to produce an agreement, with the union confirming that its members would proceed with the planned action.

RMT general secretary Eddie Dempsey said the proposed changes amounted to a fundamental attack on drivers' established working arrangements.

He argued that members would face longer and less predictable shifts,



alongside the removal of protections negotiated over many years.

Dempsey said the union was not opposed to a genuine four-day working week but would not accept changes that it believes could be used to reduce staffing levels, increase workloads and weaken existing terms and conditions.

TfL has rejected the union's characterisation of its proposals, maintaining that drivers would have a genuine choice over their working patterns.

Nick Dent, TfL's director of customer operations, said the organisation had been prepared to explore further changes to address some of the RMT's concerns and had asked the union to postpone the industrial action while those discussions continued.

He said the proposals would allow drivers to choose between different working patterns, including an option to remain on a five-day week while staying at their existing depot.

The other train drivers' union, ASLEF, has accepted the proposed arrangements and is not participating in the planned strikes.

For London's hospitality businesses, the prospect of repeated Underground disruption presents a significant operational and commercial challenge.

The December walkouts, scheduled for Thursday 17 and Saturday 19 December, are particularly unwelcome for operators relying on Christmas bookings, office parties, seasonal celebrations and weekend footfall.

Disruption to public transport could make it more difficult for customers to reach venues, potentially resulting in cancellations, reduced bookings and changes to spending patterns.

Employers may also face difficulties ensuring staff can travel to and from work, particularly those working late shifts or in venues where alternative transport options are limited.

TfL has indicated that most Underground services are expected to continue operating during the strikes, although disruption is anticipated across the network.

The Elizabeth line, London Overground, Docklands Light Railway, buses and trams are expected to

Eight strike dates announced

The RMT's planned 24-hour walkouts will begin at midday on the following dates:

- *Thursday 26 November 2026*
- *Thursday 17 December 2026*
- *Saturday 19 December 2026*
- *Monday 4 January 2027*
- *Wednesday 6 January 2027*
- *Wednesday 17 February 2027*
- *Tuesday 23 February 2027*

The Anchor Inn Reopens As 13th Butcombe Boutique Inn

The Anchor Inn in Lower Froyle, Hampshire, has reopened its doors after a full refurbishment from owners Butcombe Group.

It is the group's 13th Butcombe Boutique Inn.

Butcombe said the latest investment underscores the Group's strategic focus on growing its premium accommodation portfolio, responding to strong consumer demand for luxury staycations and experience-led, all-day hospitality destinations. This follows strong trading for Butcombe Boutique Inns which recorded a 6.6% like-for-like sales increase to the end of Q3, further encouraging the group to invest the



premium rooms portfolio, with the group seeing a round map to reaching 20 Butcombe Boutique Inns over the next few years.

Jayson Perfect, COO, Butcombe Group, said: "We're thrilled to welcome guests back to The Anchor Inn following an extensive refurbishment and to officially welcome the pub as our 13th Butcombe Boutique Inn. Across our Boutique Inns collection, we continue to see remarkable demand for distinctive, character-led stays in standout locations. With its idyllic Hampshire setting, luxurious ensuite rooms, and elevated seasonal food and drink offer, The Anchor Inn is a fantastic addition to the portfolio, just in time for the festive season."



Beer Drinkers Face Regional 'Hygiene Deserts' on Cellar Standards Research Reveals

Pub-goers have to navigate a postcode lottery when it comes to checking whether their pint meets basic quality standards.

In some regions, beer drinkers are in a 'hygiene desert' where it's almost impossible to find a pub that holds a star-rated Beer & Cellar Hygiene accreditation.

Industry accreditation body Cask Marque, which oversees the scheme, is urging pubs to sign up for the hygiene rating programme ahead of a consumer awareness campaign launching in the new year.

Regional analysis of shows that 30% of pubs in London have a Beer & Cellar Hygiene rating, compared to just 12% in the North East.

Overall, only around 16% of the UK's c.42,000 pubs hold the accreditation.

Paul Nunny, director of Cask Marque, says: "The fact that only one in six UK pubs has a Beer & Cellar Hygiene should in itself make the industry sit up and take notice. If just that number of restaurants held a food hygiene rating the media would make it a national scandal.

"Even the 30% of pubs in London with a rating falls far short of what consumers have a right to expect, but the fact that there are parts of the UK where it's almost impossible to find a pub with a hygiene rating is simply storing up problems as consumer awareness of the hygiene rating grows. It doesn't mean non-accredited pubs have poor beer and cellar hygiene, but how are consumers supposed to know?



"We know from our research that consumers want to check the ratings when planning a pub visit, and AI search engines will increasingly take hygiene star ratings into account when recommending pubs. Pubs which act now can put themselves ahead of the pack."

PUBS HOLDING BEER & CELLAR HYGIENE ACCREDITATION – % BY REGION

- *London 30%*
- *East of England 20%*
- *North West 18%*
- *South West 18%*
- *Yorkshire 16%*
- *South 15%*
- *Midlands 13%*
- *North East 12%*
- *Central Scotland 11%*
- *North Scotland 7%*
- *Wales 7%*
- *Border 6%*

Around 7,000 UK pubs currently have a 4* or 5* Beer & Cellar Hygiene rating, which measures 11 key markers from the cellar to the beer glass, awarding one to five stars, similarly to food hygiene ratings. Cask Marque aims to have at least 30,000 4* or 5* rated pubs by the end of the decade.

The consumer campaign launching in early 2027 will encourage beer drinkers to check the pub's rating before their visit, online at https://perfectpintpromise.co.uk/pub-cellar-ratings/. Cask Marque will also raise consumer awareness of star ratings displayed outside pubs. The Campaign for Real Ale, CAMRA, is also including pubs' hygiene ratings on its pub search website.

The four main area where pubs fall short of the standards required are:

- *Cellar temperature*
- *Glassware condition and cleanliness*
- *Line and coupler cleanliness*
- *Cleanliness of glasswashers*

BII Announces Winners of 2026 National Innovation in Training Awards

The British Institute of Innkeeping (BII) has announced the winners of the 2026 National Innovation in Training Awards (NITAs).

The NITAs and People Conference celebrate the exceptional individuals and businesses in the pub sector who put people at the heart of hospitality. Each year, the awards recognise those who go above and beyond to champion training, development, sustainability and wellbeing within their teams, ensuring a thriving and sustainable future for the sector.

This year's winners were revealed at the NITAs Awards Ceremony, held at Porchester Hall London on 19th November, where 300 industry professionals, operators and colleagues, came together to share best practice, celebrate achievement, and honour those setting new standards in hospitality excellence.

2026 NITA WINNERS OF THE EVENING:

Sustainability Award
- *Mark Holden – The Victoria Inn*

Training Professional of the Year (Company)
- *Lee Hall – Butcombe Brewery*

Training Professional of the Year (Individual)
- *Dan Sullivan – Yoorcast*

Wellbeing Award
- *Laurence Bowes – Bowes Hospitality*

Rising Star (Pub Team Member)
- *Kaitlyn Povah – Country Village Inns*

Rising Star (Operations)
- *Dan Sullivan – Yoorcast*



Pathway to Success (Individual)
- *Angela Uren – Coach and Horses*

Pathway to Success (Company)
- *Molson Coors*

Hospitality Apprentice of the Year (Front of House)
- *Chloe Dillnutt – The Victoria Inn*

Hospitality Apprentice of the Year (Back of House)
- *Nelly Ellen Bennett – The Swan Hotel*

Hospitality Apprentice of the Year (Operations)
- *Mia Jones – Molson Coors*

This year, after an incredible raft of apprentices in the Hospitality Apprentice of the Year categories, the BII also recognised Mark Holden as Mentor of the Year, hand-picked by the judging panel for their incredible attitude in nurturing the new generation of talent through his apprentices.

One of the evening's most heartfelt moments was the presentation of the Franca Knowles Live Your Life Award, selected by a panel of previous winners and chaired by Keith Knowles OBE.

The award celebrates individuals in the sector who embody Franca's legacy of positivity, passion, and dedication to people development. Huge congratulations to Greg Mangham, Founder and Chief Executive of Only a Pavement Away for winning this incredibly special award in 2026.

Steven Alton, CEO of the BII, said:

"The NITAs recognise the incredible people and organisations who make our sector such an inspiring and rewarding place to work. Each of our winners has shown an exceptional commitment to nurturing their teams, supporting wellbeing, and driving innovation across their businesses. Their dedication and passion help ensure our pubs and hospitality venues continue to sit at the heart of every community.

"Evenings like this remind us all just how incredible our sector is, filled with people who do amazing things every single day for their guests, teams and communities."

"Seeing our brilliant trustee, Greg Mangham, receive the Live your Life award was also an absolute pleasure. His leadership, dedication and incredible work to support people into work is simply inspirational."

Deck The Halls...And Fill The Larder!

We're beginning to hear the distant ring of sleigh bells and the first signs of Christmas here at LittlePod HQ. The first fairy lights of the season are starting to go up, the mince pie chat has begun and our kitchen smells (even more than usual) of warm, gorgeous REAL vanilla.

Before we start thinking about putting our feet up for the festive season, we're preparing ourselves to be busy. Planning to stock up on seasonal gifts and goodies this December? Please don't leave it too late!

It's the most wonderful time of the year. It is also the busiest here at our HQ in East Devon. Christmas is coming and December about to dawn. Need LittlePod products for the festive season? Be it our seasonal gifts and goodies or something else altogether from our responsibly-sourced product range, please order asap to ensure your ingredients arrive in time...



Our final 2026 dispatch for wholesale and trade orders will be 10:00am on Tuesday 22nd December, whilst all purchases made from our online shop must be completed by December 12th (international), Friday 18th (standard UK delivery) and Tuesday 22nd before 10:00am (UK next day) in order to be delivered before Christmas.

Please note that LittlePod HQ will be closed on Christmas Eve – reopening in the New Year, with product dispatch due to resume on 4th January...

Sending vanilla hugs and best wishes to LittlePodders everywhere as the festive season begins to unfold. Please drop us a line for Christmas orders and enquiries – email **sales@littlepod.co.uk** or give us a call on **01395 232022**

Scottish Budget Must Address Mounting Pressure on Business and Back Tourism Growth, Warns STA



The Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA) has called on the Scottish Government to use next week's Budget to support tourism and hospitality as one of Scotland's key industries, warning that rising business costs, taxation, and a decline in the domestic visitor market continue to squeeze profit margins and limit investment.

Ahead of the Scottish Budget on 3 December, the STA has set out six priorities, including a fairer, more proportionate business rates system, greater investment in VisitScotland, and dedicated funding for international air connectivity and route development.

The organisation is seeking a definitive timetable for business rates reform following the 2026 revaluation and warns that failing to replicate the changes announced in the UK Autumn Budget risks creating an even greater gap between Scotland and England, while sector businesses with rateable values above the £100,000 threshold need greater support.

It is also calling for a narrowing of the gap between Scottish and UK income tax rates to encourage domestic visitor spending, and for the Scottish Government to rule out new taxes directly affecting tourism and hospitality businesses.

The STA is also calling for a multi-year funding package for VisitScotland to help Scotland compete for international visitors. The national tourism agency's workforce has been reduced by around a third since 2022/23, while its annual income has fallen by £7.7 million.

The Scottish Budget follows October's UK Autumn Budget, which failed to address the industry's longstanding concerns over hospitality VAT and employer National Insurance Contributions. Borrowing costs remain a concern for businesses and households, while the prospect of higher aviation fuel prices and airfares in 2027 adds to the challenges facing Scotland's international tourism market.

Marc Crothall MBE, Chief Executive of the Scottish Tourism Alliance, said: "Scotland's tourism and hospitality sector has demonstrated time and again its resilience and ability to adapt, but there is a limit to how much more businesses can absorb. Profit margins continue to be squeezed, and the ability to invest in their product, people and offer is hugely constrained.

"Businesses cannot be expected to keep absorbing higher costs while remaining competitive with destinations that are investing heavily in their tourism industries. They can no longer pass on these costs to visitors, while there's a price tipping point for everyone.

"The STA has been calling for business rates reform for many years. The independent review of the 2026 revaluation is welcome, but businesses need to know what happens next and when they can expect to see change.

"Rolling out reliefs every year isn't sustainable. In the interim, existing rates support should be extended to businesses with rateable values over £100,000 to avoid unfairly penalising them.

"There is already a considerable burden on operators, and the prospect of an even greater difference between rates in Scotland and England is deeply worrying. Our tourism and hospitality sector needs to see the Scottish Government address that in this Budget.

"The domestic market has been challenging for some time, with families having less to spend on holidays and days out. Interest rates and the cost of borrowing are affecting businesses looking to invest too. Our members are also telling us that selling Scotland for 2027 is becoming more challenging.

"There's anxiety around flight prices, particularly with aviation fuel costs, and we have to be conscious that visitors have plenty of other destinations to choose from, many of them less expensive than Scotland.

"Scotland needs to be competing for that international business, and VisitScotland must be given the resources to promote Scotland in the international marketplace. A multi-year funding commitment which will enable the agency to plan ahead and focus on the markets that offer the best opportunities for Scotland is what is needed for effective marketing.

"Scotland has a strong tourism and hospitality offering, and there remain opportunities to grow our international markets, but that won't happen without investment. We need to better develop year-round direct air connectivity, continued support for major events and funding to help businesses develop their workforce. The proposed Tourism and Hospitality Growth Plan is an opportunity to put some proper investment behind the industry's ambitions.

"Following missed opportunities to support tourism and hospitality in the UK Autumn Budget, we are looking to the Scottish Government to make decisions that recognise both the immediate pressures on sector businesses and the wider contribution our industry makes to Scotland's economy. Tourism and hospitality provide employment, support communities and attract investment across the country. The Scottish Budget needs to reflect that."





Heineken UK Acquires 304 Pubs and Strengthens Commitment to "The Great British Pub"

HEINEKEN UK has announced the acquisition of 304 pubs from Stonegate Group, significantly expanding its existing 2,300-strong Star Pubs business and underlining its confidence in the long-term future of Britain's pub sector.

The deal is the most significant investment in UK pubs in recent years and builds on the £380m invested by HEINEKEN UK in its existing pub estate since 2018. This investment helps to rejuvenate pubs, support publicans, create jobs and protect valued and much-loved community hubs.

The acquisition underlines the importance of the UK to HEINEKEN globally and the value of its pub business, demonstrating that investment in great pubs and market-leading brands creates a strong platform for further growth.

HEINEKEN UK is the UK's largest beer, cider and pub business, and through Star Pubs the third largest operator of pubs in the country. The 304 pubs will join Star Pubs, with significant investment planned over the coming years. Working in partnership with publicans, Star Pubs will improve the pubs and provide practical support to help operators build successful, sustainable businesses.

Pubs create jobs, support local economies and provide vital places that bring people together, creating moments of connection and strengthening local communities. The ambition is to bring out the best in each pub and help it thrive for the long term.

The acquisition is a strong strategic fit for HEINEKEN UK. Pubs are where consumers discover new drinks, experience brands at their best and come together for occasions that cannot be replicated at home. We believe investing in individual pubs, offering publicans practical support and drawing on the breadth, quality and innovation of HEINEKEN UK's portfolio can deliver better experiences for publicans and consumers.

Boudewijn Haarsma, Managing Director, HEINEKEN UK, said: "This investment reflects HEINEKEN's long-term confidence in British pubs and our commitment to supporting the sector. Pubs play a vital role in communities and the wider economy, and we see a long-term opportunity to invest in venues that give people a reason to go out and come together.

"The UK is an important market for HEINEKEN. This investment builds on the £380m we have invested in transforming our pub estate since 2018 and demonstrates our commitment to British hospitality and to growing our business in the UK."

Lawson Mountstevens, Managing Director, Star Pubs, said: "This acquisition is a major vote of confidence in the Great British pub and its long-term prospects. Buying a pub is only the start. What matters is what you do next: investing in it, backing the publican and making it somewhere people want to spend their time. Through Star Pubs, we have a strong track record of bringing out the best in pubs by combining long-term investment and practical support with the passion, energy and local knowledge of great operators.

"We see a compelling long-term opportunity in the newly acquired pubs and are committed to investing in their success. Our ambition is to build on what they already do well, working in partnership with great operators to create successful businesses that sit at the heart of their communities."

Institute of Hospitality Launches Search for Restaurant Manager of the Year 2027

The Institute of Hospitality (IoH) has launched the 2027 Restaurant Manager of the Year competition, with entries now open to restaurant managers and hospitality professionals performing the role who demonstrate outstanding leadership, service and management skills.

The annual competition recognises the knowledge, leadership, professionalism and commitment to continuous development demonstrated by exceptional restaurant managers, celebrating the people who play a vital role in leading teams, developing talent and delivering outstanding hospitality experiences, and will culminate in a live competition and showcase on Monday 22 February 2027.

With career progression and professional development increasingly important to the future of the hospitality workforce, Restaurant Manager of the Year provides managers with an opportunity to benchmark their skills, demonstrate their expertise and gain recognition for the contribution they make to the industry.



The first annual Restaurant Manager of the Year competition was held in 2009, and has continued to provide an opportunity for talented hospitality professionals to showcase their knowledge, experience and practical skills in front of a panel of industry experts.

Robert Richardson FIH MI Hon DLitt, CEO of the Institute of Hospitality, said:

"This is a competition I am particularly excited to see return in 2027. Restaurant managers make an enormous contribution to our industry, and this is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the knowledge, leadership and professionalism that they bring to their roles every day.

Over the past year, we have seen the Institute of Hospitality continue to evolve, including the launch of our Fellows' Hall of Fame, which celebrates some of the outstanding individuals who have made a lasting contribution to hospitality. You never know, the person who takes the title of Restaurant Manager of the Year 2027 could one day find themselves among those celebrated in the Hall of Fame."

The competition is open to anyone around the world who fulfils the role of Restaurant Manager (this doesn't necessarily have to be their job title), working full-time and in a team management role for at least five years. Entrants will be asked to demonstrate their knowledge, experience and approach to restaurant management, with shortlisted candidates progressing to the semi-final stage.

The competition will begin with the initial entry stage, with applications closing on Friday 8 January 2027. The shortlist will be announced on Wednesday 13 January, ahead of a semi-finalist briefing on Monday 1 February.

The semi-final, final and showcase will take place on Monday 22 February 2027 at Hotel Café Royal, London.

Along with the trophy and prestigious title of Restaurant Manager of the Year 2027, the winner will also receive a professional development programme tailor-made for them, to assist them in their current role and develop their career, plus a year of tickets to attend the top IoH events of 2027 (including Above & Beyond and the Annual Dinner & Awards), and free Annual Membership of IoH.

Entries for Restaurant Manager of the Year 2027 are now open. The closing date for entries is Friday 8 January 2027.

To find out more about the competition, eligibility and how to enter, visit https://www.instituteofhospitality.org/restaurant-manager-of-the-year/.

What LPG Offers to Hospitality Venues

As outdoor dining becomes a year-round expectation, many venues are looking again at liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Its appeal is versatility: the same fuel can run patio heaters, outdoor kitchens and barbecue events, as well as central heating, hot water and even swimming pool heating.

For kitchens, the practical advantage is control. A gas flame is instant and adjustable, which chefs tend to value when service is busy.

Emissions are part of the conversation too. Switching from oil to LPG can cut CO2 emissions by up to 18%*. BioLPG, a renewable alternative, raises that saving to 84%*. It works as a drop-in fuel, so existing LPG equipment doesn't need any changes.



Supply is another consideration. Calor, which has operated for over 90 years, runs more than 1,000 vehicles and has over 6,000 gas bottle stockists across the UK. It also owns two of Europe's largest LPG and BioLPG storage facilities. Drivers do safety checks at each delivery, and engineers provide round-the-clock emergency cover.

For venues extending their outdoor season, LPG offers a flexible, readily available option that can heat guests, fuel kitchens and support lower-emission goals with the right choice of fuel.

For more information visit **www.calor.co.uk/caterers**

** DESNZ (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero) Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2025.*

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based on 25,763 reviews
dated 24th September 2026.

CALOR

Mitchells & Butlers Braces for £95m Cost Hit as Profits Rise

Mitchells & Butlers (M&B) is preparing for around £95 million of additional costs in its new financial year, even after raising underlying profits in a demanding 12 months for hospitality.

The operator of Toby Carvery, All Bar One, Harvester and Miller & Carter said the figure equates to about 4% of its cost base before mitigating action. Statutory pay rate increases are expected to be the main driver.

The warning accompanied full-year results published today (Thursday 26 November). Adjusted pre-tax profit rose 5.3% to £259 million in the 52 weeks to 26 September. On a statutory basis, however, pre-tax profit slipped from £238 million to £229 million.

Revenue reached £2.75 billion, up 1.3%, while like-for-like sales grew 2.1%. Adjusted operating profit edged up from £330 million to £332 million.

That came despite cost pressures of around £120 million. Higher minimum wage rates and employer National Insurance contributions pushed up labour bills, while food inflation, particularly in meat, added to the strain.

Trading lost momentum in the third quarter, when like-for-like sales were flat. Extreme heat and the timing of Easter weighed on performance, and management also pointed to the impact of the World Cup.

Growth returned in the final quarter, with like-for-like sales up 1.7%, helped by stronger drinks demand. London has also been a notably buoyant market for the group.

The momentum has been more modest since the year end, with like-for-like sales rising 1.1% over the first eight weeks of the new financial year.

Energy remains the biggest uncertainty. M&B has secured half of its requirements for the current financial year, leaving it exposed to market movements on the remainder. Management told analysts this could mean up to £15 million of further unmitigated cost.

Chief executive Phil Urban also indicated that the company cannot simply pass all of its extra costs on to customers. He said pricing needs to be judged brand by brand, with an opportunity to revisit it in the spring.

Urban described the results as "another year of strong performance". He said the group remains confident that its operational delivery, Ignite improvement programme and disciplined investment will continue to drive the business forward.

Managing Partner at financial and real estate advisory group BTG, said: "The Christmas classics are going to be on repeat in more ways than one for the pub trade this year. Once more thin margins are being squeezed by rising employment, food, drink and energy costs.

"As one of the bigger players in the market M&B has the power to offset some of these costs with various operational efficiencies, price negotiations with suppliers and ownership of its own pubs to avoid rent increases. In particular its investment in generating its own energy is looking very smart at this time as carbon reduction becomes financial security. But even it will be on tenterhooks over how many consumers it can bring through the doors with cost-of-living pressures intensifying on the back of yesterday's 26% increase in the energy price cap from January.

"The end to a year always brings in additional revenue for the hospitality trade, but this year the profit margin that M&B has protected so diligently needs to be watched even closer to enter the new year with some sound footing. M&B has done extremely well to cope with conditions and shareholders will be reassured that its structure and financial position are strong going into the new year as it competes for an even more discerning customer with less spending power."

Amber Taverns Pushes Ahead with Two Pub Openings

Amber Taverns is pursuing growth on more than one front as it closes in on its 200th pub, with a brand-new build in Thornaby and a landmark first for the business in Bromley.

In Thornaby, the operator has invested £1.4 million converting two former retail units at The Pavilion Shopping Centre into The Aviator, a newly created pub that turns vacant high street space into a destination for the community.

Meanwhile, a six-figure refurbishment of the former Fuller's Barrel & Horn in Bromley will shortly see the site reopen as The Saving Grace. The opening marks a significant step for the company, becoming Amber's first pub inside the M25.

The Aviator, which opened on Monday 9 November, has created 14 new jobs and brings a substantial new leisure offering to Thornaby. The Aviator is operated by Daniel Scott, who was born and raised in Thornaby and brings 23 years' hospitality experience to the role. He leads a team of 14 newly recruited employees.

Meanwhile, The Saving Grace on Bromley High Street is preparing to welcome customers in mid-November following a six-figure transformation of the former Fuller's Barrel & Horn.



The refurbishment includes reconfigured trading areas, a new bar, upgraded audio-visual facilities and improvements to the operator's accommodation. The Saving Grace will be operated by Aleks Busarova, an experienced hospitality operator who will oversee the launch and development of the venue.

Richard Lewis, CEO of Amber Taverns, said, "We've never believed there's only one way to create a great pub. Sometimes it's about taking an established local and giving it a new lease of life. Other times, as we've shown in Thornaby, it's about seeing the potential in a property that wasn't a pub at all. Both openings are exciting for different reasons. The Aviator shows just what can be achieved with the right investment and imagination, while The Saving Grace takes us inside the M25 for the first time, opening up opportunities in a market we've been keen to enter.

"As we approach our 200th pub, there's a real sense of momentum across the business. We're ambitious, but we're not interested in growth for growth's sake. It's about finding places where we can create something special, backing great operators and giving people a fantastic local that combines a great atmosphere, quality facilities and genuinely affordable drinks."

TVs in Hotels: Why the AVLA Licence Matters for Compliance

AVLA®
Audiovisual Licensing Alliance

Television is an important amenity in hotels and other temporary accommodation establishments, and an integral part of the guest experience. But for hoteliers, providing TV to guests involves more than simply installing the equipment and connecting it to a television service.

Offering guests with access to television channels in public venues is different from watching television at home. There are additional legal requirements for communicating in public copyright content in a broadcast.

Hotels therefore need to ensure that they hold the appropriate licences to avoid copyright infringement and potential legal consequences. Having a TV Licence or a pay-TV subscription does not, in itself, provide all the necessary copyright permissions.

The AVLA Licence enables hotels, aparthotels, B&Bs, inns and other similar establishments to provide their guests with access to TV channels featuring audiovisual works from AVLA's repertoire. This comprises hundreds of thousands of films, series, documentaries, cartoons and other shows. Works from AVLA's catalogue are broadcast on a wide range of TV channels, including the main national free-to-air networks.

Obtaining an AVLA Licence is not only an important part of legal compliance; it also supports the audiovisual creative community. AVLA is a not-for-profit collective management organisation representing tens of thousands of audiovisual creators, including producers, authors, performers, directors and visual artists. The licence fees collected by AVLA are distributed to the rightsholders it represents, helping to support the continued production of content and the UK's vibrant creative sector.

For hotels, having the appropriate permissions in place is therefore about more than compliance. It demonstrates respect for creative work and a commitment to fair business practices, while helping to support the creators whose work contributes to the guest experience.

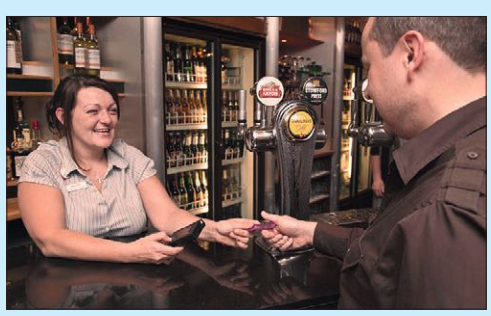
To learn more about AVLA visit **www.avla.uk**

Deter Dine and Dash During the Festive Season

To prevent customers from making off without paying this festive season, hold their bank cards securely while they run a tab with CardsSafe.

The UK hospitality industry faces many challenges, even during the lucrative festive season. Hospitality business managers shouldn't worry about dine-and-dash, either. Too many dine-and-dash cases are reported, but a simple, affordable solution exists. CardsSafe is a deterrent for walkouts because cards are securely stored in lockable units behind the bar.

CardsSafe is a proven and genuine deterrent for walkouts and chargebacks. It helps staff upsell and increases trust between the venue and customers. This is why big brands and independent venues utilise the system, including Young's Pubs, Hilton Hotels, London Golf Club, Lord's Cricket Ground, and many independent restaurants and bars.



Trond Rornes, Director of CardsSafe Ltd., told us. "We've experienced a significant increase in enquiries relating to dine-and-dash. Most recently, a chain restaurant business with 50 venues took on our CardsSafe system because of far too many cases of customers making off without payment. We offer a solution to a national problem."

The wireless CardsSafe units can sit discreetly behind the bar and work alongside existing POS. In addition, the system does not capture data, so it never breaches GDPR. The tab-keeping system is straightforward to use, so it requires minimal training and helps venues and customers keep tabs securely.

For more information, see the advert on page 9, visit **www.cardssafe.com** or call **0845 500 1040.**

TVs in your hotel? Are you sure you don't need an AVLA licence?

Our licence is legally required if your property provides guests with access to TV channels featuring films, series, documentaries, shows and other works from AVLA's repertoire.

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Live-Fire Pays Dividends

By Lester Manley, founder and Managing Director of Trailblazer BBQ, a UK-based authority on commercial charcoal and live-fire cooking (www.trailblazerbbq.com)



The oldest way to cook is the newest way to win!

In a competitive hospitality market, great food alone isn't always enough. Customers want memorable experiences, authenticity and a reason to choose one venue over another.

Live-fire cooking offers all three.

Guests are choosing where to eat based on how the food is cooked, not just what the food is. Lester Manley, founder of Trailblazer BBQ Ltd, explains why live-fire cooking over charcoal, the oldest cooking method there is, is moving from "niche to necessity", and why it costs far less to get started than most operators assume.

A TERM WORTH OWNING

A recent trends report named live-fire among the key trends shaping British dining, and US consumer research found "live-fire" on a menu carried the highest purchase intent of any dish description tested.

Simply put, live fire means cooking with the heat, flame and smoke of burning fuel rather than a gas burner or electric element. Here lies the paradox: it is our most ancient cooking method, and right now the most modern trend in hospitality. In an age of induction hobs and water baths, guests crave something primal, honest and real. For pubs, hotels, restaurants and outside caterers competing for the same guests, that ancient appeal is a thoroughly modern point of difference.

WHY CHARCOAL IS THE FUEL THAT MATTERS

Wood gets the headlines, but charcoal does the work. Good lump-wood charcoal burns hotter, cleaner and more consistently than raw logs, which is why professional kitchens rely on it.

- *Intense, dry heat. Fierce radiant heat sears quickly and builds a proper crust and caramelised flavour that gas simply cannot match.*
- *Flavour you can't fake. As fats and juices drip onto the embers they vaporise and rise back into the food, creating the smoky depth guests remember and come back for.*
- *Control. With the right equipment and a chef who can manage heat zones, charcoal is remarkably predictable, holding steady temperatures for hours.*
- *Theatre. Glowing embers and the sound of the sear sell dishes before they reach the table.*
- *Provenance. Sustainably sourced charcoal gives a responsible story today's guests increasingly want to hear.*

ONE FIRE, THREE MENU OPPORTUNITIES

Charcoal's real strength is its versatility, covering three distinct styles of cooking.

Grilling is the fast, high-heat end: steaks, chops, fish, flatbreads and vegetables, cooked to order in minutes. It suits busy service and turns everyday ingredients into signature dishes.

Smoking adds aromatic wood to the charcoal bed, layering flavour into proteins and even cheese and bringing a premium note to familiar dishes.

Low and slow is the patient art of cooking cheaper cuts such as brisket, pork shoulder and short rib at gentle temperatures for hours until they melt. This is where the economics get interesting: lower-cost cuts become high-value dishes, with much of the work done before service starts.

THE CHALLENGE: PERCEPTION, NOT PRICE

Most operators we speak to assume charcoal is expensive, hard to use and dirty. They picture a five-figure oven, a kitchen rebuild and a specialist chef, and that perception stops too many good kitchens from even trying.

The genuine questions are practical: ventilation must be right, staff need to learn fire management, and fuel must be stored and handled safely.

None of these is a barrier when the equipment is designed for the job. Purpose-built charcoal units, engineered around commercial extraction and safety from the start, remove most of the guesswork. Compact tabletop grills start from a few hundred pounds, and outdoor units can bring live fire to a beer garden or terrace without touching the main kitchen.

In more than 13 years designing and manufacturing commercial charcoal equipment, Trailblazer has learned that the key is matching equipment and menu to what the venue actually requires, rather than investing in capacity or complexity it doesn't need.

THE OPPORTUNITY: A GAME CHANGER

Put "cooked over charcoal" or "char-grilled" next to a dish and its perceived value rises. Guests will pay more for a flame-grilled steak, a smoked platter or twelve-hour brisket than for the same ingredients cooked any other way.



For a pub, it can be the reason to choose you over the place down the road. For a hotel, it creates destination dining, terrace events or a wedding feature. For a restaurant, it can define the whole menu. Start small with one or two charcoal dishes, prove the demand, then build on it. Define the whole identity of the menu.

UNDER-UTILISED OUTDOOR SPACE? PUT IT TO WORK

If you have a beer garden, courtyard, terrace or car park corner sitting half-empty, live fire is one of the quickest ways to turn it into income. An outdoor charcoal unit needs no kitchen refit or extraction, and the sight and smell of the fire pulls guests in from the street. Weekend grill menus, summer smokehouse nights, private parties and wedding receptions all become possible from the same set-up.

It also takes pressure off a busy kitchen: rather than extending the existing cooking line, you can run a separate outdoor offer built around your space and demand. Space you already pay for starts paying you back!

LIGHT THE FIRE

Live fire is a modern trend built on an ancient practice, which is exactly why it will last: it is cooking guests can see, smell and taste. The operators who put charcoal on their menus now will be the ones others are measured against. The question is no longer whether live fire belongs in your kitchen, but how soon you light it. It gives a whole new, positive meaning to the saying- "out of the frying pan, into the fire!"

Chorley Community Pub Reopens Following £212,000 Refurbishment

Popular community pub, the Elephant and Castle on Bolton Road in Adlington recently reopened following a transformational investment of £212,000 by Admiral Taverns.

Internally, the pub has been refreshed, including a redecoration of the bar areas, as well as a new snug area with a games room, and pool and darts facilities.

Externally, the exterior of the Elephant and Castle has been upgraded with brand new signage and a fresh coat of paint to greet visitors, as well as updated seating area to make the most of the summer months.

Licensee, Helen Savill, initially took on the pub with her husband Alex in 2019. After her husband sadly passed away last year, Helen is planning to continue operating the pub with her daughter Arianna, continuing his legacy and love for the pub. Helen herself brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise, having been in the hospitality industry for 53 years, including 32 years in the Gran Canaria owning three bars.

Going forward she is committed to continuing to create a family friendly hub that brings people together and supports all aspects of community life with sport, entertainment, pub games and charity events all available for the local community.

To celebrate the reopening, the pub hosted a launch party which included live music from a local singer.



Helen commented: "It has been fantastic to see our vision for the pub come to life with the refurbishment and to welcome everyone back through the doors. The Elephant and Castle is hugely important to us, and I am looking forward to continuing to run it with Arianna. We want to ensure it remains a community pub – dog friendly, family friendly and somewhere safe for the local community to catch up with friends. We want to support all aspects of the local community, especially sponsoring local sports teams, such as the Adlington Junior Football club and the Adlington Ladies Cricket team, where we can.

We're delighted to welcome locals back into the pub and I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who helped make this possible, particularly the team at Admiral Taverns, who have been a brilliant support throughout."

The pub is also supporting a host of local charities, including Bolton Hospice and MIND, through activities such as Ten Miles Ten Pubs, and the village carnival each year.

Anthony Briggs, Business Development Manager at Admiral Taverns, added: "It is wonderful to see the doors of The Elephant and Castle open again. Helen and the team have worked tirelessly to ensure every detail is just right. It is a fantastic community pub, and the positive reaction from locals since reopening is a true testament to what Helen and Alex have built here over the past seven years. On behalf of everyone at Admiral Taverns, I would like to wish the whole team at The Elephant and Castle all the very best for the future."

Sunfly Karaoke

Sunfly is undoubtedly the best-known name in Karaoke, having been formed in 1991. However, technology has come a long way since the 90s.

Sunfly now have over 20000 HD Karaoke videos designed specifically for large screens. All songs have been digitally remastered for consistent audio quality. There are specially curated playlists and international content on all systems.

Sunfly now have a large range of online and offline systems. The most popular in the pub and restaurant market is the Sunfly Showcase Touchscreen System which features an intuitive interface and robust touchscreen designed for frequent use. Available for sale and on lease for just £100 + VAT per month for two years (then £25 per month).

We also have tablet-based systems such as the EVOBOX Club which is available for only £60 + VAT subscription per month, minimum one year.

In addition, we have partnered with SingPods who have a fantastic range of professional systems as well as their famous self-contained pods.

If you have an under-performing function room, you may be surprised to hear how easy and affordable it is to convert part or all of the room to a Private Karaoke room.

Customers can then book online and enjoy 2 or 3 hour timed sessions; bookings are managed with intuitive room management software. Contact us for a free consultancy or for a full build quote. ROI possible within 3 months.

All systems are fully licensed and legal, sales are reported to PRS every quarter. We also provide great 24/7 IT support.

Visit the website today @ **sunflysolutions.com** to view all our other products such as the Satellite Laptop, Wireless Microphones systems as well as apps and bespoke packages.

See the advert on page 2 for details.



From Rosé Season to Roast Season: Updating Your Wine List for Autumn and Winter



Ben Cotts, Key Account Manager at Lanchester Wines, explains how venues can transition their wine offer for the colder months and help customers discover the rich, warming styles that come into their own throughout autumn, Christmas and New Year.

Every season brings its own drinking habits.

As soon as the evenings start drawing in and menus shift from seafood, salads and lighter dishes towards Sunday roasts, game and comfort food, customers begin looking for different styles of wine too. The crisp Sauvignon Blancs, Pinot Grigios and rosés that perform so well throughout the summer don't suddenly disappear, but this is the time of year when fuller-bodied reds, richer whites and wines with a little more warmth and generosity really start to shine.

For operators, it's the ideal opportunity to refresh the wine list, introduce some seasonal food pairings and give front-of-house teams the confidence to recommend something a little different.

Autumn and winter are arguably the easiest seasons for food and wine pairing. Richer dishes naturally lend themselves to richer wines and customers are often more open to recommendations when they're treating themselves.



Sunday lunches remain a staple for many pubs and restaurants and few combinations work better than roast beef and a glass of Rioja which brings layers of ripe plum, dark cherry and gentle spice that sit beautifully alongside roasted meats and rich gravies. For lamb, a generous Barossa Shiraz offers the kind of ripe dark fruit and warming spice that customers instinctively gravitate towards at this time of year.

Game dishes also come into their own during the colder months. Venison, pheasant and slow-cooked casseroles pair well with wines that have plenty of depth but remain approachable. Primitivo is a great example, delivering juicy blackberry and plum fruit, soft tannins and a warming finish that makes it a natural partner for hearty autumn dishes.



Cheeseboards can be one of the easiest opportunities to increase spend. A well-chosen red wine recommendation alongside a sharing board often feels like an affordable indulgence. Valpolicella Ripasso DOC Scuola Grande works particularly well, offering notes of cherry, tobacco and toasted hazelnut that complement mature cheeses beautifully.

Christmas Presents the Perfect Opportunity

The festive period is when customers are most willing to trade up. Whether they're celebrating with colleagues, hosting friends or enjoying a family meal, people are often looking for wines that feel more special than their usual choice.



Turkey is far more versatile than it's often given credit for. While many customers automatically think red wine, a quality Chardonnay can be equally successful, particularly a white Burgundy which combines fresh citrus and orchard fruit with subtle richness, making it a great match for turkey and all the trimmings.

For guests who prefer reds, stay in Burgundy for a Pinot Noir offering elegance rather than power, with bright red fruit, silky tannins and enough freshness to complement festive dishes without overwhelming them.

And of course, Christmas and New Year wouldn't be complete without fizz. While Prosecco remains hugely popular, customers looking to celebrate often welcome the chance to trade up. A simple swap of Prosecco for Prosecco Superiore brings additional complexity and finesse while still offering excellent value compared to Champagne.

Confidence Sells Wine

The biggest opportunity for many venues isn't adding more wines to the list. It's helping staff feel comfortable recommending the wines already there. Customers rarely ask for technical information about tannins or winemaking methods. What they really want to know is whether a wine will go well with their meal and whether it's worth spending a few pounds more.

In many cases, it's these conversations that transform a standard wine sale into a memorable part of the dining experience.

Wines to Consider This Autumn and Winter from the Lanchester Wines portfolio



Crowd-Pleasing Winter Reds

- *Water's Edge Shiraz*
- *Founder's Stone Shiraz*
- *The Brand Malbec*
- *Water's Edge Merlot*

Regional Classics

- *Ala Rossa Primitivo, Puglia*
- *Marcelino Rioja Reserva*
- *Valpolicella Ripasso DOC Scuola Grande*
- *Marco Gavio Chianti DOCG*

Premium Festive Choices

- *Unruly Barossa Shiraz*
- *Marco Gavio Chianti Classico Riserva DOCG*
- *Famille Moutard Bourgogne Pinot Noir*
- *Amarone DOCG della Valpolicella Scuola Grande*

As customers move from rosé season to roast season, the venues that perform best will be those that adapt their wine offer alongside their menus. Good food pairings, strong regional stories and confident recommendations can help turn an everyday bottle of wine into something memorable while delivering valuable additional revenue throughout the busiest trading period of the year.

Lanchester Wines

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FIND A TREE THAT CAN SURVIVE IN A BUSY VENUE

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MAKE GUESTS STOP AND TAKE PHOTOS

Your guests will know expert craftsmanship when they see it. Realistic foliage, premium materials that stay strong and natural shapes are essential.

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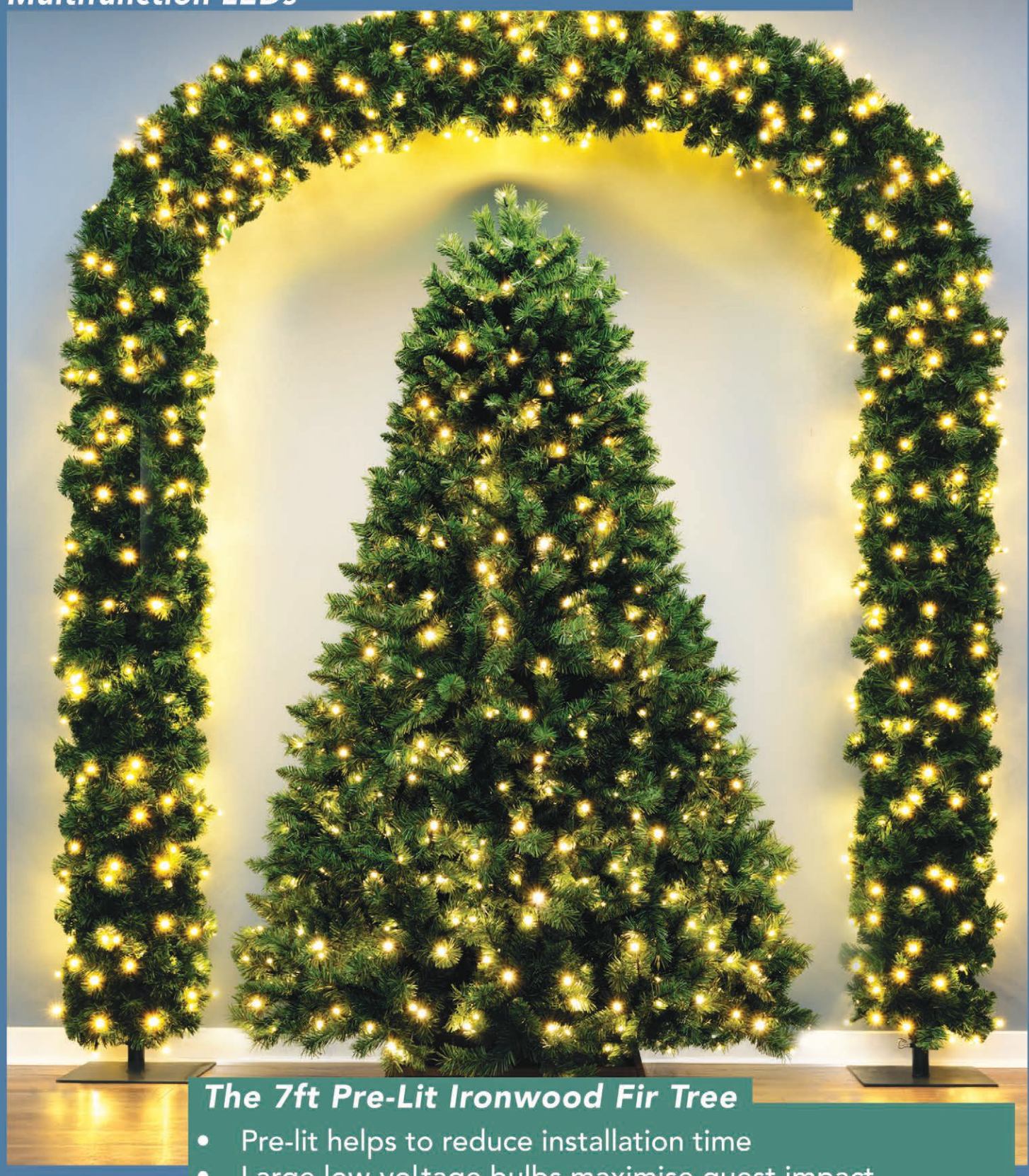
Good value comes from investing in quality that lasts. Shop early and snap up exclusive discount codes for the best of the best, for less.

The 8ft Pre-Lit Ironwood Fir Archway - Dual Colour Multifunction LEDs



The 7ft Pre-Lit Ironwood Fir Tree

- Pre-lit helps to reduce installation time
- Large low-voltage bulbs maximise guest impact
- Heavy-duty cables withstand repeated use
- Matches with Ironwood Wreaths, Garlands, and Archways

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o You Make Yours Special?



The 150cm Pre-Lit Ironwood Wreath With Dual Colour LEDs

NO MORE REPLACING YOUR TREE NEXT CHRISTMAS

Our Christmas trees are an investment, not an annual expense. We design our trees to withstand busy hospitality environments - something you can rely on season after season.



The 9ft Pre-Lit Ironwood Garland With Dual Colour LEDs

NO MORE ENDLESS ASSEMBLY TIME

Time spent decorating is time taken away from running your venue. Our fast-assembly designs and pre-lit options help your team create a professional festive display in a fraction of the time.

DON'T PANIC COME DECEMBER

Worrying over stock availability or last-minute decorating? Order as early as a year in advance with us to enjoy the widest choice of commercial displays.

- Inflates in seconds for quick seasonal displays
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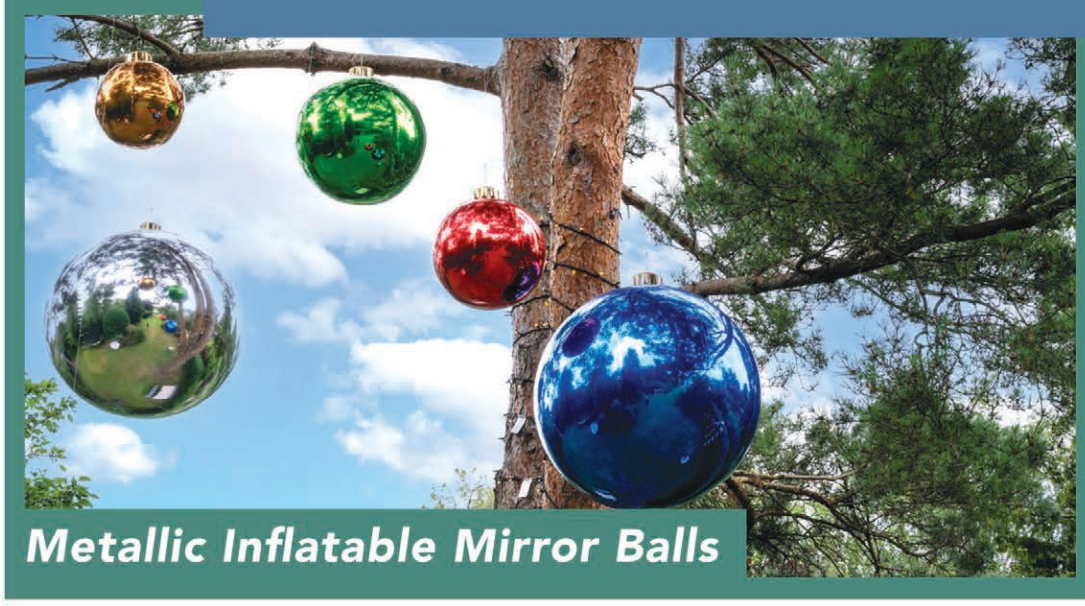
- Lightweight and easy to move between locations
- Available in 40cm, 60cm 80cm and 100cm across 5 colours.



Metallic Inflatable Mirror Balls

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Products and Services

Box Clever: Pre-Built Low-Carbon Hot Water Systems

Reliable hot water is essential across the catering and leisure sector, supporting everything from food preparation and kitchen hygiene to customer washrooms and cleaning operations. At the same time, operators are under growing pressure to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. Adveco's award-winning PPR0008 packaged hot water system has been developed to address both challenges.



Originally designed for UK restaurant developments and refurbishments, the PPR0008 is a compact, offsite-constructed low-carbon hot water system now combining an ADVS-W air source heat pump (ASHP), ARDENT electric boiler, twin hot water cylinders, and intelligent controls within a weatherproof GRP enclosure. Delivered as a complete package, the system can be installed externally or on rooftops, preserving valuable internal space.

For drive-through restaurants, where every square metre of kitchen and dining space directly impacts operational efficiency and revenue potential, the PPR0008 offers a significant advantage. By moving the plant room outside the building, operators can maximise customer-facing and back-of-house areas while benefiting from a highly efficient hot water system. The ADVS-W heat pump provides renewable pre-heating for up to 70% of hot water demand, helping reduce energy costs and carbon emissions without compromising performance.

Public houses and hospitality venues also benefit from the system's flexible, resilient design. Hot water demand can fluctuate dramatically throughout the day, from kitchen service and glass washing to washroom facilities. With 420 litres of stored hot water, rapid recovery and multiple layers of backup protection, the PPR0008 ensures dependable operation during peak trading periods.

Factory-built, pre-plumbed and pre-wired, the system reduces onsite installation time and complexity, enabling quicker project delivery with minimal disruption. Integrated controls provide automated monitoring, fault alerts, backup heating activation and legionella protection.

For restaurants, pubs and leisure venues seeking to decarbonise operations while maintaining reliable service, the PPR0008 delivers a compact, efficient and future-ready hot water system.

https://adveco.co/

See the advert on page 11 for further information.

Sharpening Innovation from Sweden

In a professional kitchen, sharpness isn't a luxury — it's a necessity. From the first prep of the day to the final plating at night, chefs count on their knives to deliver precision. That's where the Tormek T-2 Pro Kitchen Knife Sharpener comes in — a sharpening solution trusted by culinary professionals around the world.



Backed by over 50 years of sharpening expertise, and developed for the intensity of the commercial kitchen, the Tormek T-2 Pro Kitchen Knife Sharpener gives chefs full control over their edge. The machine is gentle on knives — it sharpens, not shortens. Thanks to the slow-rotating diamond grinding wheel and high-precision guide, it only removes minimal steel, preserving the life of your knives while delivering exceptional sharpness.

What sets the Tormek T-2 Pro Kitchen Knife Sharpener apart is its blend of simplicity and professional-grade results. No guesswork. No overheating. Just consistent, razor-sharp edges — time after time. With its low-noise operation and compact design, it integrates seamlessly into even the busiest culinary spaces — and is also suitable for sharpening other blades commonly used in food preparation.

The Tormek T-2 Pro Kitchen Knife Sharpener is designed to handle a wide range of kitchen knives — from large chef's knives to small paring blades — and can also be used to sharpen other common kitchen blades, including mandoline blades and S-blades.

No matter the task, a properly sharpened knife is essential for efficiency and control. The Tormek T-2 doesn't just sharpen knives — it elevates the entire kitchen workflow.

See the advert on page 13 or **tormek.com | Phone: +46 581-147 90 | Email: info@tormek.se**

Fry Food Faster with OilChef

OiLChef has been named the Restaurant Solution of the Year Award winner at the 2026 Restaurant & Takeaway Innovation Expo, held at ExCeL London, marking a significant international recognition for the company's innovative restaurant frying technology.



OiLChef is a true industry disruptor, shaking up the oil and fat industry to the benefit of the food service industry, food processing and food manufacturing industry and their clients!

The award winning OiLChef device is simply self-installed inside your fryer and only takes 3 seconds to insert and only needs replacing every 3 years. This device can increase the life of your oils and fats by as much as three-fold. The technology works at a molecular level to keep the cooking fluid thinner, allowing more efficient heat transfer and acts as a preservative, slowing down the ageing process.

This enables operators to fry food faster at a lower temperature and save money on energy.

Many pubs, hotels, fat food chains and takeaways enjoy these significant savings across the UK and as the one of the most famous golf clubs in the world say "seeing is believing – and we are believing!"

Your customers will enjoy a better flavor profile as the food quality is enhanced because the product remains lighter in colour, crispier, less oily and this increases the hold time of all foods.

Virtually maintenance free, with no breakable parts, OiLChef is a must have for your deep-frying operation.

With a money back guarantee and 3-year warranty, contact OiLChef today and try for yourself and take advantage of free telephone support, and a variety of payment options to suit all budgets.

Visit **www.oilchef.com** or see the advert on the front page for details.

SCAN ME

Robert's Dorset - Reliable Stock, Fast Delivery, Great-Tasting Products

Have you struggled for stock over the past 6-9 months, whether it's for a warming machine, pots for you shelves or jars for self-serve, so many companies can't supply you because they have little or no stock as they don't make anything,

At Robert's Dorset we make our crackling 6 days a week, in multiple flavours.

Why are we different, the best way is to read our reviews on Amazon, TIKTOK, our Website or to pop into any of the 600+ stores, farm shops, petrol stations we supply and ask them. Every flavour is allergen free, yes that includes gluten free and we are 100% Keto but we also produce a high-quality peanut in10 flavours.

ROBERT'S Dorset

The Perfect Snack

HANDMADE IN BRITAIN

Due to current demand you are looking at 7 days from orders placed. If you need stock don't delay, it's simple, email or call, we will get back to you the same day, with a price list and account form.

Contact us via phone **01202 875280** email: **trade@robertsdorset.com** or go to our retail website: **www.robertsdorset.com/trade-enquiries/** and complete trade application form.

See the advert on page 5 for further information.

CLEAN Do The Workwear, So You Can Do The Work

CLEAN Linen & Workwear are one of the UK's most trusted laundry companies. They supply tailored workwear solutions provided by real people. Their comprehensive laundry network means they can service customers throughout England and Wales, providing chefswear, workwear and linen rental services. Whether you operate from a single-site hotel, pub or restaurant or have multiple locations, CLEAN can tailor a workwear rental solution to suit your business requirements. They offer various uniform options to support the entire kitchen brigade, from Executive Chefs to Kitchen Porters.

With their workwear rental service, you can say goodbye to the hassle of purchasing, storing, and maintaining chef and kitchen uniforms. Instead, enjoy the convenience of a hassle-free rental system that provides freshly laundered garments whenever your team need them. By renting with CLEAN, you can avoid upfront purchase costs, spread the payments over your contract, and ensure quality and care with every wash. Delivery is free, and there are no



hidden charges; contracts even include repairs. Each item of clothing can be branded and tailored to the wearer with logos and embroidery. Their managed service prevents issues compiling when supplying your team with work clothes; a convenient locker valet service helps distribute and store uniforms, and they tackle minor repairs early to extend the service life of a uniform. Ultimately, this avoids costly replacements wherever possible as it reduces uniform losses, and uniforms only need replacing when a repair is not safe or cost-effective.

With CLEAN's workwear rental and laundry service, business owners can focus on what matters most — running their business — while CLEAN takes care of the rest.

To find out more: **www.cleanservices.co.uk** or see the advert on page 3.

Hospitality Technology

North East Company Is Leading The Way In Providing Service Robots

A PIONEERING North East company is leading the way in providing a variety of industries with a solution to save money and use staff time more efficiently – thanks to its fleet of robots.

Spark Robotics, based at The Catalyst, Newcastle is becoming the UK's go-to company to supply robots in industries where a solution is needed for repetitive tasks, staffing pressures and labour pressures.

Delivering room service to hotel guests and carrying out cleaning activities in locations ranging from care homes to shopping centres are just some of the diverse tasks that the robots are being purchased to carry out.

They are also being used by amusement arcades, garden centres, casinos and in warehousing and logistics locations, helping organisations which either don't have the staff to carry out these vital tasks or need to free up employees to do other tasks.

SPARK Robotics grew out of parent company, New APEX Ltd, which sold – and continues to sell – electronic point of sale equipment to hospitality and leisure.

Founder Eric Guo recognised the gaps that a variety of industries needed to fill – and realised that bots programmed to carry out those specific tasks could help ease the pressure.

"The aim is not to put people out of a job," he said.



"But to empower them through technology.

"They are a perfect solution at sites like hotels, hospitality venues, logistics sites, shopping centres and large buildings where they manage repetitive work, have staff pressure, consistency requirements and high-volume routines.

"SPARK Robotics helps organisations identify where robots can support those tasks in real working environments."

The company is growing at a fast rate, so much so it will be moving to new premises this autumn.

One of the additional attractions for many organisations is the fact that the robots become a huge talking point – particularly at hospitality sites – and also have the option to be branded or "dressed" so have added value as a marketing tool.

"The robots have so many practical applications," said Eric.

"In hospitality, robotics can support service teams with room delivery or repetitive item movement, while in cleaning, robotics can support teams responsible for large or high-footfall areas.

"The same applies in logistics and large-site operations, where robotics can support repeated movement, cleaning or operational routines.

"We are proud of the rate of growth of the company and the fact that we continue to be able to offer so many solutions across a wide range of industries."

For further information visit **www.spark-robotics.com**

Efficiency at the Heart of Hospitality: Why 3R EPOS is the Operator's Choice

In an industry where margins are under constant pressure and guest expectations are higher than ever, the right operational foundation isn't just a luxury - it's a lifeline. For modern hospitality operators, the goal is simple: reduce administrative friction to focus entirely on the guest experience.

Built on over 60 years of combined industry experience, 3R EPOS offers a bespoke approach to point-of-sale and payment processing. Powered by CES Touch, a market-leading software designed specifically for the daily realities of the hospitality floor. 3R EPOS provides systems that arrive ready to go, pre-configured to minimise setup time and allow businesses to hit the ground running from day one.

Beyond processing transactions, CES Touch provides a comprehensive management suite. Real-time stock control and detailed financial reporting allow managers to move away from guesswork, offering the clarity needed to identify high-margin items and minimise waste. Integrated loyalty features and modules for tableside ordering further empower businesses to cultivate a database of regulars while driving operational efficiency.



In today's economic climate, transaction costs are a critical consideration. By offering competitive merchant rates and a variety of hardware - from fixed terminals to portable units for tableside service - the focus remains on speed and security.

What truly sets 3R EPOS apart is their commitment to partnership. With UK-based support, free on-site installation, and a rapid hardware replacement guarantee, they ensure that the "open" sign stays in the window. In a trade where downtime equals lost revenue, having a reliable, human-centric support network paired with the robust capabilities of CES Touch is the ultimate competitive advantage for any venue, from boutique hotels to bustling restaurants.

To discover a solution tailored to your venue, visit www.3repos.com or call 01992 574 650.

See the advert on page 7 for further information.

Stop Charging Phones Behind The Bar And Start Getting Paid

ChargedUp, the UK's largest phone-charging network, turns one of hospitality's most familiar headaches into an easy new source of income.

"Can you charge my phone?" It's a question every bar team hears, usually at the busiest point of a shift. The phone goes behind the bar, someone digs out a cable, and suddenly your staff are responsible for a customer's £1,000 device and for reuniting them with it at closing time.



ChargedUp puts an end to that. A compact, self-service station sits on your bar or counter, and customers rent a fully charged power bank in under ten seconds with a contactless tap. They carry on eating, drinking and chatting with their phone charging in their hand, then pop the power bank back when they're done.

For operators, the commercial case is simple. It costs nothing. Literally nothing. No charge for hardware, installation, maintenance, liability or support. All ChargedUp needs is a little counter space and a plug socket. Venues then earn a 20% net revenue share on every rental, paid automatically, with top-performing sites making more than £1,000 a year* for next to no effort.

There's no staff hassle either. Stations are 4G-connected and monitored remotely with 99% network uptime, and the ChargedUp team handles everything from installation to upkeep.

It's the safer option, too. No more valuables piled up behind the bar, no trailing cables and no disputes over a missing or cracked phone. And customers leave with enough battery to book a taxi, find their way home or let someone know they're on their way. A genuine duty-of-care win, especially late at night.

With nine years in operation and more than 3,400 sites across the UK – including Greene King, Star Pubs, Marston's and Westfield – ChargedUp runs the country's largest phone-charging network.

Visit **www.chargedup.green** for more information.

**Based on top-performing ChargedUp sites, 2025/26. Earnings are not guaranteed and vary with footfall, usage and agreed revenue share.*

ChargedUp



Beyond the Pint: Why Coffee Deserves a Place on Every Pub's Autumn and Winter Menu



As the nights draw in and temperatures drop, the humble hot drink is becoming one of the most valuable lines on the licensed on-trade menu.

As summer gives way to autumn and winter, the beer garden empties and the demand for something warm takes over. For pubs, that shift is a chance to win new customers and build a revenue stream that does not rely on the bar's busiest hours. Coffee sits at the heart of it.

A CHANGING CUSTOMER, A CHANGING DAY

The traditional picture of the pub customer is out of date. Today's guests include remote and hybrid workers looking for a change of scenery, parents on the school run, older customers seeking a social morning out, and younger consumers who are drinking less alcohol but still want somewhere to meet. Many of them see the pub as a community hub rather than just an evening destination.

Trends are moving in the same direction. Consumers have become more discerning about what is in their cup, from flat whites and oat-milk lattes to cold brew and seasonal specials. The coffee shop has taught the nation to expect quality, and pubs that meet that expectation can capture trade that would otherwise go elsewhere.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS ALREADY WAITING

Recent consumer research puts a number on it. Nearly half of UK coffee drinkers (48%) say they would choose their local pub over a major coffee chain for their morning brew if the pub simply opened earlier. The demand is there, and for many venues the main barrier is the opening time on the door.

Pubs also have a natural advantage over the high street chains. Unlike standard coffee shops, where space is tightly constrained, pubs offer spacious, comfortable seating, large tables and often extensive beer gardens or outdoor spaces. That suits informal meetings, laptop sessions, family catch-ups and dog-friendly visits. With patio heaters and blankets, outdoor areas can keep earning well into the colder months.

WHY COFFEE MAKES COMMERCIAL SENSE

Hot drinks are one of the most attractive categories in the on-trade for several reasons:

- ***Strong margins.*** *The cost of the ingredients in a cup is low compared with the price customers are prepared to pay, which makes coffee one of the better profit earners on the menu.*
- ***Quiet-period trade.*** *Mornings and mid-afternoons are traditionally slow, and coffee fills these gaps without extra stock-holding.*
- ***Food and add-on sales.*** *A coffee customer is a prime prospect for breakfast, pastries, cakes and lunch, lifting average spend per head.*
- ***Seasonal upsells.*** *Spiced lattes, hot chocolates, speciality coffees and festive serves give pubs a reason to promote and a reason for guests to return.*
- ***Loyalty and footfall.*** *The customer who visits for a morning coffee is more likely to return for lunch, a Sunday roast or an evening drink.*

QUALITY IS NOT OPTIONAL

> *"Treat coffee with the same pride as a perfectly kept pint."*

None of this works if the coffee is poor. A mediocre cup does more harm than not serving coffee at all, because customers rarely give a second chance. Quality is what turns a pub into a destination for coffee rather than a convenient stop.

Today's consumers are increasingly savvy about provenance. They view ethical certifications and specialty blends as indicators of quality, and they are willing to pay a premium for them. Pubs that choose a reputable roaster, can tell the story behind the beans, and display credentials can justify higher prices and stand out from the grab-and-go competition. Investing in a proper commercial machine, a quality grinder and good milk is part of the same equation.



THE TRAINING GAP

Here lies the industry's biggest challenge. Pub staff are often traditionally trained to focus on beer and spirit volumes, meaning coffee can sometimes be treated as an afterthought. Cellar management, line cleaning and perfect pints get the attention, while the coffee machine can often be left to whoever happens to be nearby.

The fix is practical and affordable. Barista training, whether through the venue's roaster, a specialist trainer or in-house coaching, covers dosing, extraction, milk texturing and machine maintenance. Consistency matters, as customers expect the same quality at 8am on a Monday as at 3pm on a Sunday. Well-trained staff also learn to upsell confidently, suggesting a syrup, an extra shot or a slice of cake alongside the order. Treating coffee with the same pride as a well-kept pint is what separates the pubs that earn from it and the ones that merely offer it.

THE BOTTOM LINE

As the colder months arrive, pubs have a clear opportunity: open a little earlier, serve a coffee worth paying for, and back it up with trained, confident staff. With demand evidently there and the space already in place, the humble cup could prove one of the most profitable additions to the autumn and winter trade.

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Elevate Every Cup with Espresso Dark Beans

JDE Peet's UK & Ireland has launched new Douwe Egberts Espresso Dark beans to help operators capitalise on the rapidly growing bean-to-cup market while addressing key consumer preferences around quality perception.

Available in a 1kg bag format, the blend consists of Arabica beans with a touch of high-quality Robusta. Designed for maximum versatility, it allows operators to consistently serve a range of coffees, from full-bodied espressos to velvety cappuccinos, from a trusted brand.

Industry data reveals that beans are set to become the largest coffee format in the out-of-home market by 2029, accounting for one-third of all cups served . This market shift is backed up by new consumer research from JDE Peet's UK & Ireland, which highlights a strong consumer appetite for high-quality coffee beans in out-of-home settings:

- *90% of those surveyed say they can distinguish between a standard/poor coffee and a good quality coffee. Furthermore, 55% say that they consider a venue that serves freshly ground bean coffee to have better overall quality standards.*
- *Over two-thirds of consumers are willing to pay an additional premium to get freshly ground bean coffee over instant coffee, which is overwhelmingly driven by quality and taste .*
- *Critically, the research reveals that displaying a trusted brand is a powerful commercial lever for operators, as showing consumers the origin and brand of the coffee bean increases overall venue trust for 65% of consumers.*



DOUWE EGBERTS

ELEVATE EVERY CUP WITH ESPRESSO DARK BEANS

68% of UK consumers say they would trade up to freshly ground bean coffee*

BOOST YOUR COFFEE PROFIT TODAY



NEW

*Versus instant coffee. Mortar Research (n=2,000), July 2026, commissioned by JDE Peet's UK & Ireland.

Bar and Cellar Equipment

Cellartech Solutions: Keeping the Hospitality Industry Running

From traditional pubs to Premier League stadiums, Cellartech Solutions continues to develop its specialist technical services, combining more than 15 years of industry experience with modern drinks dispense technology, refrigeration and engineering support.

Behind every successful hospitality venue is equipment that customers rarely see but operators depend upon every day. From the perfect pint to reliable cellar cooling and comfortable surroundings, technical systems are essential to maintaining quality, efficiency and customer satisfaction.

For more than 15 years, Cellartech Solutions has built its reputation providing specialist installation, maintenance and technical support to pubs, breweries, restaurants, hotels, sporting venues and hospitality operators throughout England.

With an experienced engineering team and a practical understanding of the hospitality industry, the company offers a comprehensive range of services, including drinks dispense, cellar cooling, refrigeration, air conditioning, equipment refurbishment and premium filtered water systems.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY THROUGH MULTI-DISPENSE TECHNOLOGY

One area experiencing significant development is multi-dispense technology, particularly within high-volume hospitality environments.

Cellartech has been involved in the installation of advanced multi-dispense systems at major sporting venues, including Premier League football stadiums, where serving large numbers of customers quickly and efficiently is essential.

Working with specialist equipment manufacturers, including Qualflow, Cellartech installs systems designed to improve drink-serving speeds, increase bar throughput and reduce pressure on staff during busy trading periods.

Rob Grant, Director of Cellartech Solutions, explains:

"The hospitality industry is constantly looking for ways to improve efficiency, particularly when staffing costs are increasing. Multi-dispense technology is a great example of how the right equipment can make a real difference.



At large sporting venues, where thousands of supporters want to be served within a short period, improving throughput is incredibly important. We're proud to be involved in bringing this technology into demanding hospitality environments."

COMPLETE TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR HOSPITALITY

Although drinks dispense remains a core part of the business, Cellartech's services extend considerably further.

The company's cellar cooling division provides new installations, system replacements, fault diagnosis, repairs and preventative maintenance, helping operators maintain suitable storage temperatures and minimise expensive breakdowns.

Cellartech Solutions also operates a specialist refurbishment programme for cooling equipment. Refurbishing and testing suitable equipment can extend its working life while providing customers with a cost-effective alternative to replacement.

More recently, the company introduced Cellartech Water, its fully managed still and sparkling filtered water service, combining premium dispense equipment with installation, filtration, sanitisation and ongoing technical support.

Building upon its established refrigeration experience, Cellartech is also expanding its air conditioning services, offering installation and maintenance solutions for hospitality and commercial environments.

The business additionally supplies mobile event bars for festivals, sporting occasions and temporary hospitality operations, supporting customers beyond their permanent premises.

BUILDING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

For Cellartech, continued growth is centred on understanding customers' operational requirements and delivering dependable technical support.

Rob adds:

"We've always believed that customers need more than somebody who simply installs equipment. They need a technical partner who understands their business, responds when problems arise and helps them make sensible decisions about their systems.

Whether we're installing drinks dispense equipment at a major stadium, replacing a cellar cooling system or supporting an independent pub, our approach is the same. We want to provide reliable equipment, quality workmanship and a service customers can depend on."

As hospitality continues to evolve, Cellartech Solutions remains committed to investing in its engineers, developing new services and embracing technologies that help customers improve efficiency, maintain quality and reduce operational disruption.

For further information about Cellartech Solutions and its services, visit **www.cellartechsolutions.com**, call **01572 729364** or email **office@cellartechsolutions.com**.

Adams - The Bottled Gas Specialist

Adams Gas are specialist bottled gas distributors and suppliers based in Kent. We have been distributing bottled gas throughout the UK via our large stockist network, for over 25 years.

We offer a local delivery service for bottled gas in Kent, East Sussex and South London.

Adams Gas can offer a cost-effective beer and cellar gas solutions for all small, medium and large businesses looking for a better bottled beer, pub and cellar gas services.

With our own cylinders filled at our own filling depot, you can count on us as gas suppliers to offer the right service, at the right price, when you need it. We can also offer this product on a re-seller basis to breweries, beer wholesalers and shipping companies throughout the UK.

We also Supply:

- *Food Grade Co2 gas cylinders for Coca-Cola Frozen, Fanta Frozen, Tango Ice Blast, and Slushy Jack's frozen drinks machines*
- *CO2 for Glass Frosting. Food grade liquid Co2 for instantly cooling glasses Simply attach your machine to our cylinder for fast effective delivery of food grade Co2 strait into your glass!*

Adams Gas have been proud bottled gas suppliers to the UK for over two decades. We endeavour to provide our customers with premium quality gas to best suit their requirements.

You can discuss your queries with us by phone on **01843 220 596** or free phone **0800 195 4445**. Alternatively, you can send an email to sales@adamsgas.co.uk or simply fill out and submit our online contact form and a member of our team will be in touch as soon as possible. We look forward to hearing from you.



Beer Quality: Protecting Your Profits, Pint by Pint

In a busy pub, every pint matters. Customers expect their favourite beer to be served perfectly, every time. But for operators, maintaining consistently high beer quality isn't just about keeping customers happy. It's about protecting profits, reducing waste and making sure every keg delivers its full potential, entirely.

Beer is hugely valuable, and poor cellar conditions, ineffective cleaning routines together with badly maintained dispense equipment can quickly eat into margins. Excessive fobbing, inconsistent temperatures and beer lost through poor line management all add up. Individually, these losses might seem small, but over weeks and months they can have a significant impact on the bottom line.

The good news is that many of these losses are avoidable.

Getting beer quality right starts long before the pint reaches the customer. From the moment a keg enters the pub to the moment beer is poured at the bar, every stage of the process matters.

A well-maintained cellar, with correctly managed temperatures and clean, efficient dispense systems all contribute to better beer quality and that perfect pint. They also help operators minimise unnecessary waste, improve yields and get more saleable pints from every keg.

At Avani Solutions, we understand the pressures facing today's licensed trade. With rising operating costs and customers expecting value for money, there has never been a better time to look closely at what's happening between the cellar and the glass.

Our focus is simple: helping operators maintain excellent beer quality while protecting the profitability of every pint served. We've saved our customers over 8m pints to date!

Great beer isn't just about how it tastes. It's about consistency, customer confidence and running a more efficient, sustainable business.

Every great pint served is another reason for customers to return.

At Avani Solutions, we're here to help you make every pint count.

Call us today on **01638 563237** or email us **info@avanisolutions.co.uk**

CELLARTECH SOLUTIONS

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HOSPITALITY TECHNICAL SERVICES

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Complete technical support for the hospitality industry.

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CELLAR COOLING

DESIGN | INSTALLATION
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- ✓ Specialist cellar refrigeration
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FILTERED. CHILLED.
SPARKLING. SUPPORTED.

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AIR CONDITIONING

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- ✓ Wall-mounted split systems
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- ✓ Installation and commissioning
- ✓ Servicing and diagnostics
- ✓ Repairs and maintenance



MULTI-DISPENSE SYSTEMS

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ACO Grease Traps, Separators and Recovery Units

Find the right grease unit for your kitchen using our selector

In today's catering market there is an increasing focus on managing Fats Oils and Grease (FOG) in commercial kitchens.

At ACO we recognise each kitchen is unique and so we have developed our grease selector to help commercial kitchen owners identify the right solution for their needs. Answer a few simple questions and receive a recommended solution.

Our recommendation will be based on things like:

- *Location of the unit*
- *Your kitchen equipment set up*
- *Days of operating*
- *Number of meals served*

ACO have a range grease units to cater for all kitchen sizes. From small under-sink grease traps for low volume kitchens to large EN1825 separators that can handle industrial kitchen FOG requirements.

For more information about our Grease range and to download our grease guides visit: **www.aco.co.uk/grease-management**

Find a recommended grease unit for your kitchen using our selector now:

www.aco.co.uk/buy-grease-solutions

Complete our grease survey https://bit.ly/GreaseSurvey and you could win one of 5 x £50 Amazon vouchers



Caterquip - Specialists in Ventilation Systems

Caterquip Ventilation Ltd is proud to be celebrating their 25th Anniversary this year.

This Warwick based company offers nationwide coverage for all your commercial catering needs: free site surveys, quotations and designs (CAD), quality bespoke and standard fabrications, specialist knowledge of catering ventilation systems including input air, odour reduction (carbon filtration and ESP) and sound attenuation. Affiliated members of Constructionline and CHAS, Caterquip Ventilation have a strong hold in the marketplace often advising industry professionals on ventilation systems to a DW172 specification & BSEN:6173.

They have strong relationships with all leading kitchen equipment suppliers, and they offer a kitchen design service to help you build your ideal kitchen.

Projects undertaken have included Olympic Villages, Basildon Hospital, The Mitre Hotel at Hampton Court, The Truck Stop at Anglesey, The Lodge at Old Hunstanton, Colleges, Schools, Hotels, Restaurants and Public Houses. They ensure their systems are compliant with the current guidelines whilst maintaining an efficient and dynamic facility.

With extensive knowledge of manufacturing and installing ventilation systems, they can help you design the best kitchen within the space available.

Call: **01926 887167**, visit: **www.caterquipventilation.co.uk**, email: **info@caterquipventilation.co.uk**



Fridge Seals Direct

Fridge Seals Direct proud to be UK's no1 supplier of replacement fridge and freezer seals. We fabricate for a wide variety of commercial fridge & freezers.

The management team at Fridge Seals Direct have over 30 years of experience in the refrigeration industry and have each spent many of those years installing gaskets and hardware for a range of styles, brands and sizes of fridges.

From restaurant kitchens to food warehouses - we have experience in dealing with fridge & freezers of all sizes and scales. To learn more about fridge seals, be sure to explore our range of extensive guides on how to replace a refrigerator door seals. Otherwise, find your specific guides in how to identify, measure, install or maintain your fridge or freezer door seal.

Our reputation in the industry along with our commitment to providing a high-quality gasket without having to buy from the factory allows us to have competitive pricing and fast turnaround time.

Try us out, order your door gaskets from us and discover a better way to do business. We are here to help you.

www.fridgesealsdirect.co.uk

Caterquip Ventilation

With over 20 years experience in the catering/ventilation industry, Caterquip Ventilation offers a complete 'one-stop shop' service.



Specialists in catering ventilation systems to DW172 specification & BSEN:6173:2001 compliance.

As Constructionline & CHAS accredited members we offer a quality professional service at competitive prices.

Input air systems (tempered or ambient) are a necessity in most new kitchens.

Odour reduction systems (Carbon filtration or ESP technology) and acoustic attenuation are commonplace requirements.

Our Midland-based manufacturing facility offers bespoke items like service distribution units (serviced if required), bars, counters, dishwash tabling etc.

We can offer equipment from Blue Seal, Maidaid Halcyon, Lincat and Rational to name but a few.

Caterquip Ventilation Ltd
Unit 1 Triumph House
Rigby Close
Heathcote Industrial Estate
WARWICK
CV34 6TL

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- Make your fridge more energy efficient with a good seal on your fridge
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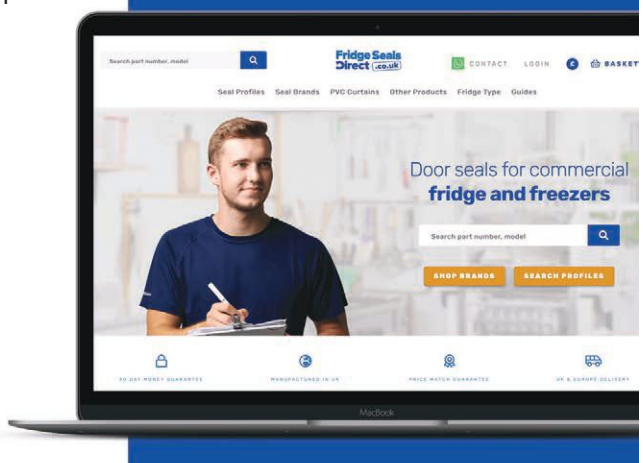
- Next-day delivery service
- Discounted prices on large orders





WhatsApp, phone, and email support

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ACO Grease Traps, Separators and Recovery Units

Find the right grease unit for your kitchen using our selector

In today's catering market there is an increasing focus on managing Fats Oils and Grease (FOG) in commercial kitchens.

At ACO we recognise each kitchen is unique and so we have developed our grease selector to help commercial kitchen owners identify the right solution for their needs.

Answer a few simple questions and receive a recommended solution based on things like:

- Location of the unit
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- Days of operating
- Number of meals served

ACO have a range grease units to cater for all kitchen sizes, from small under-sink grease traps for low-volume kitchens to large EN1825 separators that can handle industrial kitchen FOG requirements.



ACO Grease traps can fit easily under kitchen sinks

Find a recommended grease unit for your kitchen using our selector now: **www.aco.co.uk/buy-grease-solutions**

ACO. we care for water

Kitchen Equipment and Fit Out

How Much Time Is Your Team Spending on Hand Polishing Cutlery and Glassware?

Ask almost any restaurant, hotel or pub operator what keeps them awake at night and there's a good chance labour costs will be near the top of the list.

Finding good staff is difficult enough. Making the best use of the team you already have is often an even bigger challenge.

One area that rarely gets much attention is the wash-up area.

At the end of service, it's common to see members of staff standing polishing cutlery or glassware by hand. It's something the hospitality industry has done for years, so most businesses simply accept it as part of the job.

But when you stop and think about it, how much time is actually being spent on polishing?

If a member of staff spends just one hour per day polishing cutlery and glasses, that's 365 hours over the course of a year. For many businesses, the figure is much higher.

Of course, presentation matters. Guests notice dirty glasses, watermarks and poorly presented cutlery. Nobody wants to compromise on standards.

The challenge is finding a way to maintain those standards without tying up valuable staff time.

This is one of the reasons professional polishing systems have become increasingly popular across the hospitality industry.

Instead of spending time polishing by hand, staff can focus on jobs that add value to the business and improve the customer experience.

At The Cutlery Polisher Company, we work with everyone from independent restaurants and pubs to large hotel groups, contract caterers and event venues. Despite their differences, they all tend to tell us the same thing after installing a polisher:

"We wish we'd done it sooner."

The reason is rarely just about the labour saving.

It's about consistency.

It's about taking pressure off the team during busy periods.

It's about knowing that every knife, fork, wine glass and champagne flute is presented to the same standard every time.



Our range includes Nicem cutlery polishers capable of processing 2000-7000 pieces per hour, along with the Cuttlers GP360 Glass Polisher, which can polish a glass in as little as five seconds.

Many customers choose our all-inclusive rental option, which includes servicing, maintenance, training and support. Others prefer outright purchase. The important thing is that businesses can choose the option that works best for them.

The hospitality industry will always be about people. Technology isn't there to replace them. It's there to help them work more efficiently and spend more time where they make the biggest difference: looking after guests.

The question is simple.

How much time is your team spending hand polishing every week? And what could they be doing instead?

To arrange a FREE On-Site Trial, contact The Cutlery Polisher Company on **01474 873 892** or **info@thecutlerypolisher.co.uk** or visit **www.thecutlerypolisher.co.uk**.

See the advert on the back cover for further information.

Kitchen Clearance UK Limited - *High Quality Refurbished Catering Equipment*

At Kitchen Clearance UK, we specialise in supplying top-quality refurbished and B-grade commercial catering equipment from some of the industry's most trusted brands, including Rational, Lincat, Merrychef, Maidaid, Falcon, Foster, Blue Seal, and many more.

We carefully source only the best pre-owned commercial catering equipment, ensuring that each piece is fully refurbished to a high standard and rigorously tested by our expert engineers. All equipment can be viewed if required to see it working and see the quality of the item.

We also supply B-grade catering equipment — items that may have minor cosmetic imperfections or have been used for demonstrations. All B grade items come boxed and complete with all accessories where required, offering a cost-effective solution for high-performance kitchen equipment.

We pride ourselves in excellent customer service, making sure any initial issues are quickly resolved.



COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABILITY

As a green business, we are dedicated to reducing waste in the catering industry by giving high-quality equipment a second life. Before disposing of any catering equipment, reach out to us, it's not only better for your finances but also for the environment.

Located on the borders of Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire.

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Email: kitchenclearanceuk@gmail.com
www.kitchenclearanceuk.co.uk
See the advert on page 11.

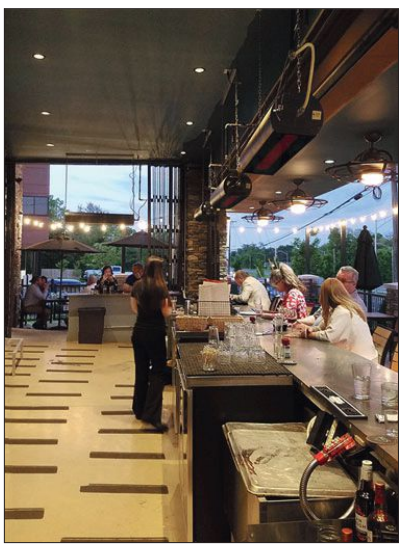


Outdoor Spaces

Maximise The Potential Of Your Outdoor Space With Our Range Of Patio Heaters

As the cold winter months start to make way for the warmer, and hopefully drier spring and summer period, the use of outdoor entertaining spaces starts to increase.

At Space-Ray, we can help you maximise the potential of your outdoor space and extend its use beyond sunset, and the inevitable drop in temperature.



Specialising in heating solutions for external areas, Space-Ray's range of gas fired and electric heaters offer you the option to choose the product best suited to your applications:-

The Coldblocker gas fired radiant heater, is ideal for covered outdoor spaces and is rain proof to IP44. Fitted with a tinted glass front, which not only offers flame protection, it also gives the heater a stylish sleek appearance when not in operation.

The Linea electric radiant heater offer IP55 level of protection along with remote control and glass front, it is ideal for the smaller space where gas is not available, or a viable option.

The Eclipse range of zero glow electric radiant heaters are perfect for those intimate areas where no additional light is required. Ceramic heating elements are utilised, which provide a gentle level of heat from the sleek and stylish fully black heater. Suitable for covered outside areas and offer protection levels of IPX4.

Check out our website for further information.

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SPACE-RAY®

Outdoor Spaces

Make A Statement With All-Year Round Aluminium Furniture



Simple and stylish, aluminium furniture does what it says on the tin. Water resistant and durably constructed to contract grade standards, our entire range is designed for long days and nights outside. However, there is no need to store it away when winter comes, as it looks just as good indoors as it does on pavements and patios!

Now with 10% off for a limited time, the Monaco Aluminium Stacking Chair is a firm customer favourite and comes in particularly handy over the festive season when you need to cater for extra customers quickly and easily.

Attractive and easy-to-clean aluminium tables are as popular with staff as they are with customers and right now ours have 15% off. Indoors or out, the Alma Square Table and Alma Round Table offer a level of stability not often seen with aluminium tables, making them perfect for drinks with friends. If you prefer a rectangular option with the added bonus of being easily stackable when not in use, look no further than the Rossa Aluminium Stacking Table.

Need a finishing touch? Our Alma Aluminium Poseur Table is the perfect addition to add interest and extra seating to your venue, especially when it's paired with the clean modern lines of the Monaco Tall Aluminium Bar Stool.

To order or find out more about the range, please visit **www.trentfurniture.co.uk** or call **0116 286 4911**.



Global Canopies - Architectural Outdoor Dining Canopies Built to Drive Revenue

Louvre roof pergolas and retractable roof canopies that turn weather-dependent terraces into year-round trading space

Global Canopies architectural outdoor dining canopies for restaurants, hotels, bars and venues are designed for hospitality operators who want their terrace to work as hard as their dining room, the range lets outdoor space trade in sun, rain and cooler evenings alike.

For most venues, outdoor seating is only as dependable as the forecast. A sudden shower empties the terrace, a cold snap shortens the season, and covers go unused. Our canopies are designed to end that uncertainty.



ONE TERRACE, EVERY SEASON

Adjustable roof systems open fully for sunshine and close to give weather-proof cover, so the same space can serve a lunchtime crowd in summer and a candlelit table in winter. Add integrated lighting, heating and side screens, and the terrace becomes a space guests actively choose to book, not a fair-weather overflow.

THE COMMERCIAL CASE

"An outdoor space that can only be used when the weather allows is a part-time asset," says Francis Carter, Director [Global Canopies]. "A covered terrace that works in every season is a seat count your business can rely on all year. That is where the return comes from."

For operators weighing the investment, the numbers tend to speak for themselves: more usable covers, fewer cancelled bookings, a longer trading season and a stronger evening and private-hire offer. Crave in Bristol was hampered by limited covers in the main restaurant. With their fully enclosed louvre roof dining space, which became a destination in its own right, the problem was solved. (ADD IN THE VIDEO HERE)

WHY OPERATORS CHOOSE GLOBAL CANOPIES

All-Weather Performance: Rain-ready that open for sun and close against showers, with options to enable versatile al fresco and fully enclosed dining.

More Covers, More Months: Turn weather-dependent seating into dependable, bookable capacity from spring through winter.

Considered Design: Slim, architectural frames in a range of finishes, designed to complement the venue rather than dominate it.

Integrated Comfort: Lighting, heating, audio and side screens specified as part of the structure, so guests stay longer and spend more.

Built Around Your Site: Bespoke sizing, planning guidance and professional installation, from survey to handover.

Enquire: Speak to the team about a site survey and a tailored proposal.

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Commercial Parasols
Shade, heating and LED lighting



Retractable Roofs
Flexible shelter at the touch of a button



Louvre Roofs
Adjustable protection from sun and rain



Why invest in outdoor space?
- ✓ Increase seating and revenue
- ✓ Extend your trading season
- ✓ Create spaces for dining, drinks and events
- ✓ Make patios, terraces and beer gardens work harder

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Dose Easy – Professional Solutions Done Right



The Dose Easy cleaning concept from Zep introduces the Dose Easy cap, delivering a 20ml dose with each tilt of the bottle, controlling chemical usage and helping your team to optimise cleaning results, whilst you start saving immediately. Dose Easy can also be dispensed via traditional wall mounted dosing systems as well. The high-concentrate Dose Easy products from Zep UK require a low dosage, with maximum results, at an extremely low cost per use, be they dispensed manually or through the dosing system.

Dose Easy concentrated cleaning products offer optimum economic usage via compact packaging, thereby reducing transportation and storage; ensuring lower CO^2 impact and less waste. The comprehensive range delivers a solution for all your institutional cleaning needs, throughout kitchens, bathrooms, washrooms and other public areas.

The Dose Easy range spans disinfectant, sanitary ware cleaning, floor cleaning, glass, multi-surface, bathroom and dishwashing with simple-to-use, differentiated products in distinct pack colours and a clear numbering system.

The Dose Easy Cap offers smaller sites, a compact range of cleaning consumables that are easily stored, without the need for bulky dispensing equipment. However, for the larger facility, Zep can offer a range of controlled dosing systems which connect simply with your water supply and help manage your consumable usage levels, and so, consistently control your costs, even with larger cleaning teams. The Dose Easy cap and the Dose Easy wall mounted systems are easy to operate for staff, consigning overdosing and method errors with cleaning chemicals to be a thing of the past.

To see the Dose Easy range, follow the link: **https://zep.co.uk/product/search.asp?P=dose** or send Zep UK an email to **info@zep.co.uk** or call **0151 422 1000** to speak with a local representative.

Clean, Clear Screens. Better Service.

From drive-through headsets to self-service ordering kiosks, touchscreen tills and hotel check-in screens, technology plays an increasingly important role in hospitality. But while these devices help deliver faster, more convenient service, how often are they considered as part of everyday cleaning routines?

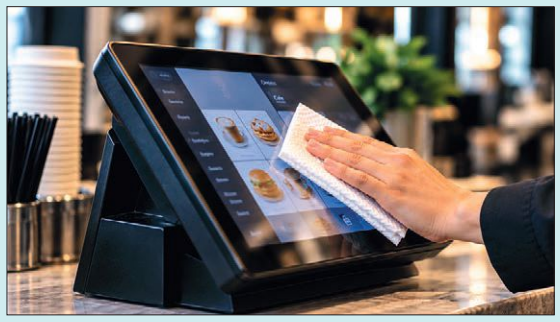
We notice spotless tables, polished counters and clean floors. Yet the screens and devices touched by customers and staff throughout the day can easily be overlooked.

High-touch technology deserves attention too.

In busy restaurants and cafés, touchscreen tills and ordering tablets are used constantly. Self-service kiosks can quickly accumulate fingerprints, smudges and marks, affecting their appearance and the impression they create for customers.

Drive-through headsets present another challenge. Frequently handled, worn close to the face and sometimes shared between colleagues, they require regular attention as part of established cleaning routines.

For hotels, check-in screens and reception tablets are often among the first touchpoints guests encounter.



Keeping them clean and presentable contributes to a positive first impression.

The solution? Make screen cleaning part of everyday operations.

With clear responsibilities, appropriate products and simple routines, hospitality teams can keep their technology looking its best without unnecessarily disrupting service.

Easy Screen™ 70% IPA cleaning wipes offer a convenient solution, with a fast-drying finish designed to help keep compatible screens and equipment clean, clear and ready for use. Always follow equipment manufacturers' cleaning instructions.

From the front counter to the drive-through, looking after your technology is another way of looking after your customer experience.

Clean, clear screens. Better service.

Request your FREE EasyScreen™ samples by emailing **contact@pdi-intl.com.**

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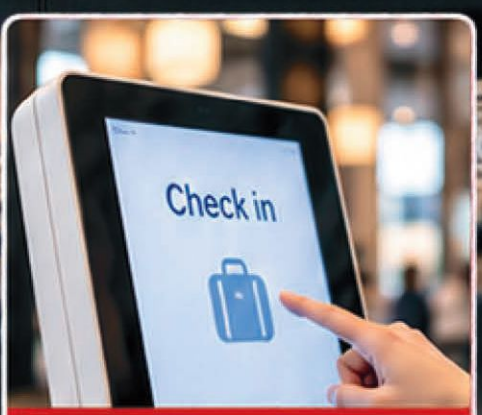
DRIVE-THROUGH HEADSETS



TOUCHSCREEN TILLS & ORDERING TABLETS



SELF-SERVICE ORDERING KIOSKS



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Tork Issues "Washroom Guide" to Help Hospitality Businesses Unlock Hidden Value

Tork has released new guidance aimed at helping pubs, restaurants and hotels transform their washrooms into assets to enhance user satisfaction and benefit business performance. Based on research which shows that 73% of people will not return to a washroom after a bad experience, Tork's "Washroom Guide", available on its website, provides recommendations on improving inclusive hygiene, environmental sustainability and operational efficiency. According to the survey, a negative washroom experience at a venue can also lead to: 23% of people spending less time there, 13% avoid eating and drinking and 10% will choose not to return to that venue.

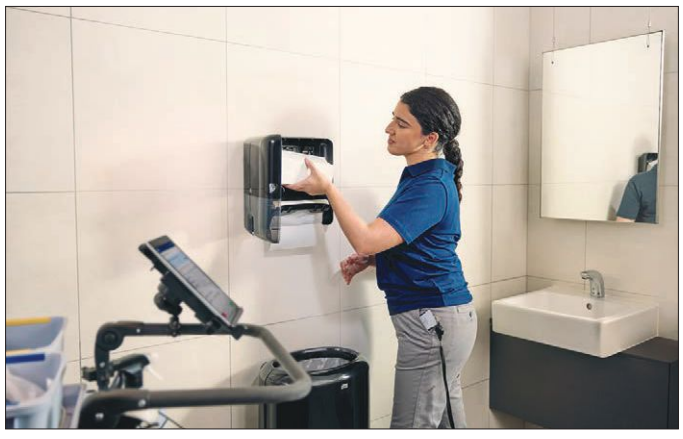
"Our data shows that when washroom users and cleaners' needs aren't met, a business can suffer as people spend less time and/or money there," said Olivia Slater, Commercial Director, Professional Hygiene at Essity. "With three in four people concerned about washroom hygiene,[1] and one in two likely to face barriers to meeting their needs, small, targeted updates to the washroom – the most visited room in a facility – can make a substantial difference for both users and cleaning staff, ultimately benefitting the business."

Recommendations:

1. LEAN INTO INCLUSIVE HYGIENE

Washroom users said that when the following "must have" elements are provided, which exemplify inclusive hygiene, the majority (59%) of people say a business can improve its positive image:

- *Toilet paper and paper hand towels in dispensers that are easy to grasp (67% said these are a "must have")*
- *Spaces and design elements that enable privacy (63%)*
- *Disposal bins in the stall for personal items including incontinence and menstrual products (60%)*
- *Physical accessibility – including grab bars and ramps – for everyone (58%)*
- *The availability of paper hand towels (57%)*



- *Features in public washrooms that enable caregivers to meet their needs (40%) such as changing tables*

2. PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY

Respondents reported experiencing, without limitation, diagnosed or self-diagnosed physical/cognitive conditions, e.g. eczema, chronic pain, general anxiety, claustrophobia.

The washroom is an overlooked place for reducing environmental impact by businesses, yet 67% of people want washroom managers to prioritise environmental sustainability.[2]

Tork recommends the following actions:

- *Promote sustainability practices with signs in the washroom*
- *Ensure teams understand the importance of responsible sourcing and look for third-party certified products using training and educational assets.*
- *Control consumption with one-at-a time dispensing to reduce waste.*
- *Support sustainability goals – avoid landfill with recyclable packaging and recycling schemes like Tork PaperCircle® paper towel recycling.*

3. SUPPORT EMPLOYEE EFFICIENCY

Investing in washroom features and supporting cleaning teams can improve business revenue. To empower cleaning staff, many of whom feel unsupported1 and enhance guest experiences, Tork recommends:

- *Working smarter with data-driven cleaning that identifies service needs in a facility.*
- *Installing high-capacity dispensers that reduce the need for frequent refills, allowing cleaning staff to focus more on cleaning rather than refilling.*
- *Using compressed towels for refills to serve more guests before cleaners need to refill again.*
- *Sourcing products with ergonomic packaging including Tork Easy Handling® packaging for easier carrying, opening and disposal.*

Olivia continued "By addressing these critical aspects, hospitality businesses can help washroom users and cleaners meet their basic needs and deliver an experience that meets the needs of as many as possible. Investing thoughtfully in inclusive hygiene, sustainability, and operational support not only meets evolving public expectations but also improves business performance."

Tork helps businesses realise the benefit of sustainable hygiene with a focus on four key areas materials & packaging, use & waste, carbon and hygiene for all. It also provides free training and educational assets.

For more steps businesses can take, visit: www.torkglobal.com

[1] Tork Insight Survey 2025, conducted in US, UK, Germany, France, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Spain, Sweden, Netherlands and Poland among 11,500 people from the general public and 1,000 cleaning staff.

[2] Tork Insight Survey 2024, conducted in US, UK, Germany, France and Mexico among 6,000 end-users and 900 businesses

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Design and Refit

A-Boards For Pubs, Bars & Restaurants From Majisign

A passing customer could be your next booking, lunch order or round of drinks. A well-placed A board helps catch their attention, promote your latest offers and give people a reason to step inside. Whether you're advertising a lunch menu, happy hour, live music or a special event, it's a simple way to make the most of passing trade.



A leading UK manufacturer of wooden A boards, chalkboards and display products for over 20 years, Majisign is the perfect partner for your signage and point of sale needs.

Housing an extensive range that includes traditional wooden A boards, chalkboards, poster frames, tabletop displays and printed displays, all available in a choice of sizes and styles and colours, Majisign has affordable and practical options for displaying menus, daily specials, promotions and important information, both inside and outside your venue.

SAVE 10% ON A-BOARDS!

If you're looking to attract more attention to your business, we're offering 10% off all A boards when purchased online.

Simply visit our website, choose your A board and enter code **STANDOUT10** at checkout to receive your discount.

The offer runs until 29 November 2026, making it a good opportunity to replace an old sign or invest in a new one ahead of the busy festive trading period *.

GET NOTICED WITH MAJISIGN!

From independent pubs and cafés to busy restaurants and bars, the right display can help you promote what's on offer and help you make more of passing trade.

Take a look at our range and find an A board to suit your venue while the 10% discount is available.

Visit www.majisign.co.uk, call 01284 724980 or email sales@majisign.co.uk.

Terms and conditions apply. Excludes Shipping. See website for full details.

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Mayfair Furniture

Mayfair Furniture will be celebrating 12 years this year of providing the UK's fastest and affordable commercial furniture. Supplying all kinds of establishments from high end hotel chains to small local takeaways.

We keep in stock a huge variety of items ready for immediate dispatch, and can fulfil a wide range of bespoke orders. We deliver to all areas of the UK, Ireland & Europe.

We are not just a supplier; we understand that from time to time hospitality and leisure establishments like to give themselves a fresh new look. That's why not only do we supply contract furniture, but when it's time for your establishment to go through a refurbishment we also offer a complete clearance service. We'll organise everything from a suitable time and date, professional clearance staff to remove contract furniture whether fitted or unfitted. Along with our sister company Caterfair who provides commercial catering equipment for your kitchens we are the ideal people to speak to when you are looking to refurbish.

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Design and Refit

Clean, Secure and Well-Maintained Washrooms Are Essential to Hospitality Success

For pubs, restaurants and hotels, washrooms are far more than a practical necessity. Their cleanliness, condition and privacy can have a significant influence on customer satisfaction, a venue's reputation and the likelihood of guests returning.

While operators naturally focus on food quality, service and the overall customer experience, poorly maintained toilets can undermine even the best hospitality offering. A dirty washroom, faulty fittings or insecure cubicle doors can leave customers questioning the standards of the entire establishment.

Ease of cleaning and long-term durability should therefore be central considerations when designing, refurbishing or maintaining hospitality washrooms. High-quality, hard-wearing surfaces, robust fixtures and fittings, and layouts that allow staff to clean quickly and thoroughly can help maintain consistently high standards, even in busy venues.

Wall-mounted sanitaryware, non-porous surfaces and well-finished flooring can reduce difficult-to-clean areas, while touchless taps, soap dispensers and flushing systems may help minimise contact points. Equally important is the availability of durable replacement parts and straightforward access for routine maintenance, helping operators avoid unnecessary disruption and costly repairs.

Privacy is another essential consideration. Customers expect washroom cubicles to provide a reliable level of security and discretion. Sturdy doors, dependable locks, robust hinges and clear occupied indicators all contribute to a more comfortable experience. Where full-height cubicles are installed, careful attention to ventilation, cleaning access and suitable materials is also necessary.



Inclusive washroom design deserves equal attention. Facilities should be planned to accommodate different needs, with appropriate accessible provision, clear signage and layouts that allow customers to use the space with confidence. In gender-neutral facilities, well-considered cubicle privacy can be particularly important in helping users feel comfortable and secure.

Regular inspections and cleaning schedules remain vital, regardless of the quality of the original installation. Staff should be able to identify faults quickly, replenish consumables and address problems before they become complaints. Clear maintenance procedures can also help ensure that damaged locks, leaking taps and other defects are dealt with promptly.

Ultimately, washroom investment should be viewed as part of a venue's wider commitment to quality, rather than an area where costs can simply be minimised. Cleanliness, reliability and privacy are fundamental customer expectations, and getting them right can support repeat business, protect reputation and contribute to a more positive experience for everyone who walks through the door.

Rearo Transforms Celino's Washrooms with a Stylish, Coordinated Upgrade

Celino's is a well-known name in Scotland's Italian dining scene. Over the years, it has built a loyal following through restaurants and delicatessens that combine generous food with strong, confident interiors.

The Partick venue is busy and well established, with a look that feels deliberate rather than decorative.

When the washrooms were due for renewal, the brief was straightforward: they needed to reflect the same level of quality as the dining space.

A CONSIDERED UPDATE

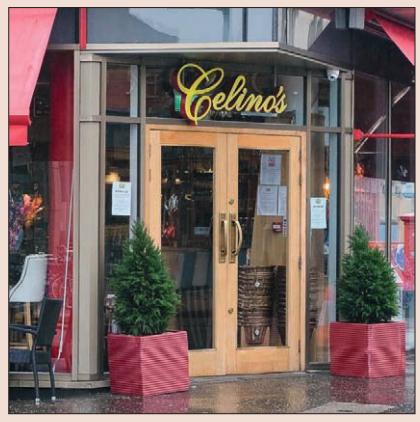
The existing facilities no longer matched the tone of the restaurant. The aim was not to reinvent the space, but to bring it back into alignment.

A coordinated palette was selected

- *Sangha Wenge Aspire MR MFC cubicles and pilasters*
- *Matching IPS panels*
- *Volcanic Black shadow gaps*
- *Nickel ironmongery*

The darker timber finish adds warmth and depth, while the black detailing keeps the layout sharp and defined.

The result is a space that feels consistent with the wider interior not separate from it.



DELIVERED AROUND DAILY TRADING

With the restaurant operating as normal, the works were planned carefully to avoid disruption.

Manufacture and installation were handled efficiently, allowing the upgraded facilities to be introduced with minimal impact on staff or customers.

THE FINISHED SPACE

The washrooms now sit comfortably within the venue.

They feel joined-up, well finished, and in keeping with Celino's identity, a simple improvement that strengthens the overall experience.

For further information on Rearo, see the advert on the facing page.



Eat, Drink And Be Merry With Chic And Versatile Wooden Tables

Christmas is just around the corner, so it's time to make sure you can accommodate all those festive group bookings! Here at Trent Furniture, we have a fantastic range of wooden tables designed to cater from everything from an intimate festive date to the office Christmas party.



If you're looking for a hardworking all-rounder to take you through Christmas and beyond, the bestselling Shaker Table is the perfect solution. Available as a round, square, rectangular and poseur table in a great range of sizes, it's a stylish, no-fuss option for any dining venue. Not only that, it comes in three attractive wood finishes, and you can even add matching square or rectangular coffee tables to your bar area.

For a classic interiors theme, the Rectangular Wellington Table is a solid choice in terms of both build and aesthetics. Again available in a vast choice of sizes and three wooden finishes to match your décor scheme, this solid hardwood table is designed to last in a busy hospitality environment for years to come. A truly versatile choice, it looks just as good with modern seating such as the Washington Side Chair as it does with a more traditional chairs such as the Straight Leg Captains Chair.



To find out more about our wooden tables, available with delivery well in advance of the festive season, please visit **www.trentfurniture.co.uk** or call **0116 286 4911.**

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Premium flush-fronted cubicles with privacy options



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All Rearo doors feature an emergency release lock, helping staff gain access when assistance is needed.



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Design and Refit

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Kinedo has expanded its shower cubicle range with the introduction of Artemis, a practical and stylish solution designed specifically for compact living spaces including mobile homes, caravans, holiday lodges, park homes and modular buildings.

Developed to offer a complete showering solution that is quick to install and easy to maintain, Artemis is sleek and contemporary in appearance, offering the same high-quality solution as the whole Kinedo range. The integrated cubicle package includes a choice of black or white profile, durable 70mm white shower tray, mechanical shower valve, pivot door, a 90mm vertical outlet waste with polished stainless-steel cover. Internal white Kinewall panels are supplied as standard, and these are pre-drilled for rapid installation, helping to reduce installation time on site.



Available in a choice of sizes from 800mm x 800mm to 1200mm x 800mm and heights from 1980 to 2070mm Artemis suits a variety of spaces and can be highly personalised using Kinedo's extensive range of Kinewall decorative wall panels.

Designed with both installers and end users in mind, the Artemis delivers a practical, high-quality showering solution for projects where space is at a premium, without compromising on comfort, functionality or contemporary design.

For further information please visit **https://kinedo.co.uk**

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Five Practical Steps Pubs And Hospitality Owners Can Take Now To Limit Insolvency Threat



Richard Hunt, Director of Liquidation Centre (www.liquidationcentre.co.uk) provides expert insights into the actions pubs and hospitality businesses should consider before pressures become unmanageable.

CARRY OUT COST AUDITS

A cost audit is one of the most vital steps pubs and hospitality businesses can take now to get a grip on their spending. Cost audits can help examine and identify where money is being lost, whether that's on utilities, stock, or outdated supplier contracts. It is the perfect opportunity to separate essential costs from outdated habits and expenses. By doing this, owners can reduce wasteful spending, refine ordering, and gain a clearer picture of where the business stands.

Richard Hunt, Director of Liquidation Centre adds: "For pub owners, margins are tighter than they have been in years. No one opens a pub expecting to worry about insolvency, but the sooner you take a close look at the numbers, the more control you keep. A cost audit can reveal where money is slipping away and fix those pressure points before they spiral."

CONDUCT REGULAR PRICING STRATEGIES

With rising costs continuing to put pressure on the sector, pricing strategies are crucial in ensuring owners are protecting profitability. Regularly reviewing product prices enables pubs to ensure their profit margins align with rising business costs, without alienating consumers.

"Small, meaningful adjustments such as introducing premium menu offerings or rebalancing prices across the menu can boost profitability without impacting every product. Pricing strategies that are clear and well executed help pubs respond more confidently to market pressures, rather than reacting too late, when steep price changes could result in damaging customer trust."

EXAMINE AND RENEGOTIATE LEASES

Managing fixed costs can be even more important than trying to boost sales, especially at a time when consumer confidence and spending are under pressure. When revenue drops and supplier costs rise, fixed expenses like rent can quickly start to feel overwhelming.

"Taking a close look at lease costs can open the door to renegotiation and give businesses more breathing room. It's a practical step that can ease pressure on overheads and help pubs stay resilient during tougher trading periods, while building a bit of financial headroom."

EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE REVENUE STREAMS

Pubs rely heavily on drinks sales, but during times of economic uncertainty, customers tend to spend less, putting pressure on their main source of income. That's why adaptability is vital. Pubs that are willing to explore and diversify revenue streams stand in better stead to cope with economic pressures.

"Transforming the pub into a space that offers more than just drinks can open up new income streams. Quiz nights, daytime co-working offers, lunch deals, or even selling local products can all bring in extra revenue and attract a broader mix of customers."

ENGAGE EARLY WITH LENDERS AND ADVISORS

During difficult trading periods, waiting until it is too late to act is one of the most common and biggest mistakes businesses make. Delaying those difficult conversations only increases the pressure and reduces the likelihood of coming out the other side. By speaking to advisors and lenders at the first signs of trouble, more options are likely to remain available, including restructuring support. Lenders are also generally more willing to work with businesses that are proactive and transparent about their position. Continuing to trade as normal while knowingly facing insolvency can also expose owners to personal liability and reputational damage.

"Insolvency practitioners and advisors can bring experience most operators simply don't have in-house. From cash flow forecasting to landlord negotiations, the key is knowing whether the business is facing a short-term liquidity problem or if there's a deeper profitability issue. This can help to differentiate between a business that may simply have a temporary liquidity problem, one which may need restructuring, or a business with profitability issues. All of these need to be tackled in a unique and accurate way, making this distinction vital."

Richard Hunt, Director of Liquidation Centre, shares his advice for pubs struggling to stay afloat:

"Pubs are under huge pressure at the moment, so it's important to look closely at where money is being spent. Small changes can make a real difference. Reviewing the menu, cutting food waste and focusing on the drinks and dishes customers actually want can help protect profits without having to put prices up across the board.

"Staffing is another area worth looking at. Making sure there are enough staff for busy periods, without paying for extra hours when trade is quiet, can help keep costs under control. But it's just as important to maintain good service and give customers a reason to keep coming back.

"Most importantly, don't wait until things get really bad before taking action. If you're struggling to pay bills, falling behind on tax or constantly worrying about cash flow, take a proper look at the figures and get advice early. The sooner you deal with the warning signs, the more options you may have to turn things around. Leaving it too late can make an already difficult situation much harder to recover from."

Why Use a Specialist Hospitality Consultant?

Answer: because we can help your business to succeed.



With over 30 years of industry experience in the Hospitality sector, The Bowden Group's Managing Consultant David Hunter will work with you to address the following elements:

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Our experts will analyse your entire operation and also its key operating figures if they are available. We then help you to identify strategies to manage costs and overheads associated with the core Profitability of running a Hospitality business.

The largest overhead, even higher than Cost of Sales, is the Labour cost, so, with detailed analysis of your wages and being able to understand "the way your business actually works" we can ensure that you are maximising the labour usage in your business.

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If your business is actually struggling, or if you just feel that it could be doing some things better, give David Hunter a quick call on **07831 407984** to arrange a "Free of Charge" initial consultation (please quote CLH Offer), when David will discuss with you what could be achieved if you ask us to work with you.

Finding Your Perfect Hospitality Investment

For over three decades, Stonesmith has established itself as the South West's premier business transfer agent, specialising in the sale of licensed, hospitality, and catering businesses throughout Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, and Dorset. Whether you're an aspiring publican seeking your first freehold pub, an experienced hotelier looking to expand your portfolio, or an entrepreneur wanting to enter the thriving restaurant sector, Stonesmith's unrivalled local expertise makes them the natural choice for navigating the Westcountry's dynamic hospitality market.

The team at Stonesmith understands that no two hospitality businesses are alike. From traditional country pubs and coastal hotels to contemporary restaurants and boutique guest houses, each property presents unique opportunities and challenges. Their approach centers on listening to clients' individual needs and crafting bespoke marketing strategies that align with specific objectives. This personalized service, combined with their deep knowledge of the regional market, ensures that both buyers and sellers receive guidance tailored precisely to their circumstances.

Choosing Stonesmith means partnering with specialists who genuinely understand the hospitality sector's nuances—from licensing requirements and valuation complexities to the seasonal dynamics that define Westcountry trade.

Thinking of selling or buying? Visit **www.stonesmith.co.uk**

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