

CONSERVATIVE CLUBS MAGAZINE



March 2026 75p



North West Gala Night Spectacular

March 2026
75p



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Message From Chief Executive

I am always impressed by the time and dedication given to Clubs by their Committees. Club Committees are the lifeblood of any Club and, in the vast majority of cases, those serving on them do so on a voluntary basis.

Indeed, one of the great strengths of Clubs has always been that they are run by volunteers. Long before governance became a fashionable word, Committees were quietly giving up evenings and weekends to keep their Club open, solvent and welcoming. That spirit of service remains one of the defining features of our movement.

What has changed, however, is the world in which those volunteers now operate. Running a Club in 2026 is not quite the same as it was twenty or thirty years ago. Employment law has evolved, data protection obligations are more structured, property compliance is more technical and expectations, from Members, staff and regulators alike, are higher. In many respects, a small private members' club is now expected to operate with the professionalism of a small company, while still relying on unpaid officers and Trustees.

We touch on some of these themes in Club Law and Management this month. The aim is always to provide

a balanced overview, highlighting developments that are currently in the news while also offering general reminders of best practice. The intention is not to burden Committees with unnecessary concern, but to ensure that they feel informed and supported.

Above all, we hope the ACC can assist Committees with any issues they encounter. It is always better to contact us if there is a question or emerging problem rather than worry in isolation. Invariably, we have seen similar situations before and can suggest practical, proportionate solutions. I have lost count of the number of times a Committee has approached us with what felt like a significant issue, only to find that a straightforward and manageable solution was available once the matter was properly discussed. Our first question is usually, "What do you want to achieve?", and from there we work with the Committee to identify a lawful and practical way of reaching that objective.

Volunteers remain at the heart of every successful Club. With the right information and a willingness to seek advice when needed, there is every reason to be confident about the continued strength and stability of our Clubs.

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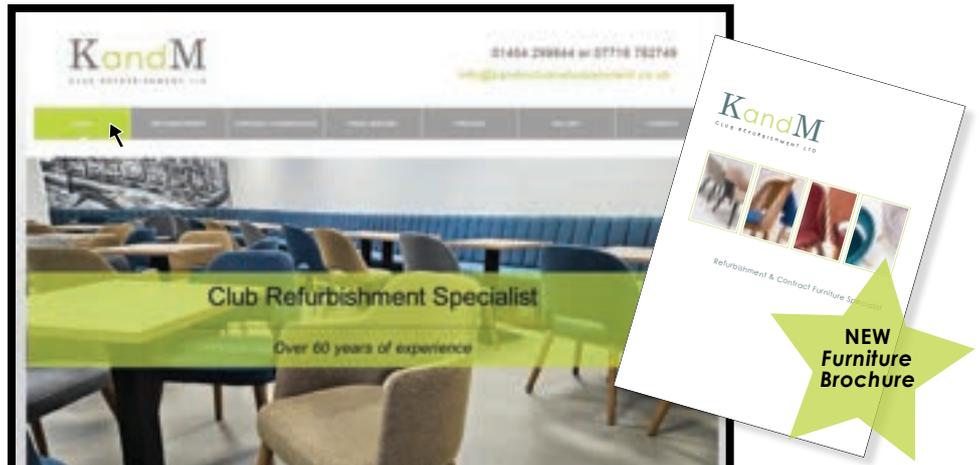
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CLUB LAW AND MANAGEMENT

ACC Chairman Speaks Out on behalf of Clubs

During a January House of Lords debate, entitled: ‘That this House takes note of the impact of Government policy on the retail and hospitality sector’, Lord Smith of Hindhead, Chairman of the Association of Conservative Clubs, set forward the case for private members’ social clubs. We reproduce his speech here.

We are all well aware that the hospitality industry is facing a crisis worse than it has ever seen—astonishingly, even worse than it experienced during the Covid pandemic and lockdown.

We know this as there are daily articles in the press and coverage in the media about the plight of pubs and, in particular, the unfair rating increases that are set to cripple many establishments, with eye-watering multipliers which, for many, will be unsustainable over the next three years.

Putting to one side the increase in wages, which affects all employers, and food inflation and other costs, the proposed increases to business rates have been seen as the final nail in the coffin. I am therefore pleased that noises from His Majesty’s Treasury indicate that there may be some re-examination of this issue, with the prospect of some sensible arithmetic being applied.

My concern, however, is that this appears to be directed towards the plight of pubs alone, and I would like to make a case for the circa 3,000 private members’ social clubs. I do not mean just the Conservative clubs that I know so well, but the working men’s clubs, the Royal British Legions, miners’ welfare institutes, naval and Air Force clubs, railway clubs, Liberal and Labour clubs—indeed, all the social clubs that make up such a significant part of so many people’s lives.

These clubs are not run for profit or underwritten by a hedge fund or private equity firm, as so many pub companies are, but managed by volunteer officers and committees. Some 12,000 people are employed within the clubs.

So often, we hear how important pubs are to their communities, which is true, but every one of the members’ social clubs that I have mentioned is a community in itself.

They are part of the fabric of many people’s lives, and essential to the social well-being of members, as well as to the furtherance of the objects for which the clubs were formed.

As such, I ask the Minister to feed back to the Treasury team that any help or assistance that may be on the way to help pubs should be extended to help clubs in the same way, for the same reasons, and for the same outcome—in other words, a level playing field.

The society which socialises together is a stronger society, and our pubs, clubs, bars, restaurants and hotels put that into practice every day. As I said in my maiden speech, 10 years ago, virtual friends can never be the same as actual friends.

Let us do everything we can to ensure that our clubs, pubs and all the places where we socialise remain, so that we can continue to meet friends and make friends in the years ahead.

Is Your Clubhouse Properly Insured for Today’s Rebuilding Costs?

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting affiliated clubs, the ACC regularly highlights areas of governance and risk which may affect committees. One issue that deserves particular attention at present is building insurance and the accuracy of your clubhouse rebuilding valuation.

With construction costs having risen sharply in recent years, many clubs may now be insured for less than the true cost of rebuilding their premises, often without realising it.

Why your rebuilding valuation matters. Your buildings insurance is based on the declared rebuilding cost of your clubhouse, not its market value, but the cost to rebuild it from the ground up following a major loss.

If that figure is too low, your club could be underinsured.

In the event of a serious incident such as fire, flood or structural damage, insurers apply what is known as the “average clause”. In simple terms, if your building is insured for less than its true rebuilding cost, any claim settlement may be reduced proportionately.

For example, if your clubhouse is insured for only 70% of its correct rebuilding value, your claim payout could also be reduced by 30%, even if the loss itself is less than the total sum insured. For member-owned clubs operating on tight margins, that type of shortfall could be extremely difficult to absorb.

The impact of rising construction costs. In recent years, construction materials and labour costs have increased significantly across the UK. Even valuations carried out three or four years ago may no longer reflect current rebuilding costs.

Older or character properties, which are common across the ACC network, can be particularly expensive to reinstate. Relying on an outdated figure could unintentionally expose the club to risk.

Have you improved your Club? It is not only inflation that affects your rebuilding value.

Consider the investments your club may have made in recent years:

- Renovated bars or lounges
- New kitchen facilities or catering upgrades
- Extensions or reconfigured layouts
- Refurbished function rooms
- Upgraded lighting, heating or electrics
- New sound systems or staging
- Improved accessibility features

Even modest refurbishments can materially increase the cost of rebuilding the premises. If these improvements have not been reflected in your declared sum insured, your cover may not be providing the level of protection you expect.

A committee responsibility - Insurance decisions are often made by volunteer committees acting in the best interests of members. Ensuring that the clubhouse is insured for the correct rebuilding value is not merely an administrative detail, it is an important part of safeguarding the long-term future of the club.

An accurate valuation provides reassurance that, in a worst-case scenario, the club could rebuild and continue serving its members and community.

Committees may wish to:

- Check when the clubhouse was last professionally valued

- Confirm the current declared rebuilding cost on the policy
- Review whether recent improvements have been included
- Minute any insurance review in Committee records

Club Insure, the ACC's official insurance partner, specialises in protecting members' clubs and has provided guidance on reviewing rebuilding valuations and sums insured.

If you are unsure whether your current cover reflects today's rebuilding costs, you may wish to speak to Club Insure about arranging an updated valuation or reviewing your policy.

club-insure.co.uk, 0344 488 9204

Employment Law Reform 2026, What Every Club Committee Should Know

Employment law reform continues to move in one direction only, towards greater protection for employees and greater responsibility for employers. For Clubs this creates a growing compliance risk if policies and practices are not kept up to date.

There are five areas every Club should now review.

Day-one unfair dismissal protection

The long-standing two-year qualifying period for ordinary unfair dismissal is being removed. In practical terms, this means that employees will no longer need lengthy service before bringing a claim.

For Clubs, this significantly increases risk around early dismissals, particularly during probation periods. It is no longer safe to assume that terminating within the first year carries little legal exposure.

Committees should ensure:

- Written contracts clearly set out probation arrangements.
 - Performance concerns are documented from the outset.
 - Basic procedural fairness is followed, even during probation.
 - Reasons for dismissal are recorded in writing.
- Probation periods must now be managed carefully and actively.

An unmanaged probation period is no protection at all.

Zero-hours and predictable working patterns

Many Clubs rely on casual bar staff, kitchen assistants and event staff engaged on zero-hours arrangements. However, workers are gaining stronger rights to request predictable working patterns.

If an individual has been working regular shifts for a sustained period, they may be entitled to a more stable contract. Continuing to treat such individuals as purely casual increases risk.

Committees should periodically review:

- Who is genuinely casual.
- Who is effectively working fixed patterns.
- Whether contracts reflect reality.

Redundancy in small organisations

Financial pressures are leading many Clubs to merge roles or reduce hours. A redundancy must be genuine, meaning the role itself is disappearing or diminishing.

Even in small Clubs:

- Consultation is required.
- Selection must be fair.
- Alternatives must be considered.
- Statutory redundancy pay may be due.

Failure to follow process can convert a genuine redundancy into an unfair dismissal claim.

Increased Tribunal risk

Employment Tribunal claims are becoming easier to bring and more common. Awards are increasing and legal costs, even if uninsured, can be substantial.

The simplest protection is good documentation, clear policies and measured decision-making. Committees should avoid making

employment decisions in informal conversations or via WhatsApp.

A short annual employment compliance review is now highly advisable for every Club.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 received Royal Assent in December 2025 and is being brought into force in stages throughout 2026, with further key reforms taking effect in early 2027. We will continue to update Clubs.

Subject Access Requests in Clubs

Many Clubs now operate CCTV systems covering bars, entrances and external areas. Cameras can be extremely helpful in resolving disputes, deterring theft and protecting staff, but they also bring legal responsibilities under data protection law. Simply installing a system is not enough, it must be properly managed.

One of the first questions a Committee should ask is, who actually controls the system? It should be clear who holds the passwords, who is permitted to access footage and who has authority to decide when recordings are reviewed. Access should be restricted to a small number of responsible individuals and, ideally, logged. Informal arrangements, where "everyone knows the code", create obvious risk and undermine accountability.

Clubs must also ensure that Members, staff and visitors are aware that CCTV is in operation. Clear signage should be displayed, and the Club should have a short written CCTV policy explaining why cameras are used, how long footage is retained and who to contact with queries. Recordings should not be kept indefinitely. Retention periods should be defined and justifiable, and footage deleted once it is no longer needed.

It is increasingly common for employees or Members to submit a Subject Access Request asking for copies of footage in which they appear. When this happens, the Club must respond within the statutory time limits and provide the footage unless a lawful exemption applies. Care must be taken to consider the privacy rights of others captured in the same recording. Ignoring or mishandling such requests can lead to complaints to the regulator and unnecessary scrutiny.

CCTV footage can also play a role in disciplinary investigations. However, it should not be used covertly unless there is a very clear and lawful justification. Staff should be informed that monitoring takes place, and Committees should avoid selective editing or disclosure that could be seen as unfair or misleading.

Data protection compliance is not optional. Even small, volunteer-run Clubs are accountable for how they collect, store and use personal data. A modest amount of structure and oversight can prevent a minor issue from becoming a regulatory problem.



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Trustees' Personal Liability: Myth and Reality

Many Club Trustees assume that their role is largely ceremonial, a matter of lending their name and experience to support the Committee. In reality, particularly in unincorporated Clubs, the position carries genuine legal responsibility.

Trustees can be personally liable for the Club's debts and legal obligations if the Club itself cannot meet them. That exposure may arise in connection with lease obligations, loans and finance agreements, employment claims, contractual disputes or even health and safety breaches. If the Club does not have sufficient funds to satisfy a liability, creditors may ultimately look to the Trustees personally.

For that reason alone, anyone agreeing to act as a Trustee should clearly understand the potential risks involved.

A common misunderstanding arises when a Trustee "steps down" informally. Some Committees assume that once a person resigns at a meeting, their exposure automatically ends. This is not always the case. Trustee changes must be properly documented and reflected in the relevant records. Where appropriate, Land Registry entries should be updated, the HMRC Trust Registration Service amended and bank mandates revised. Failure to formalise these changes can leave former Trustees technically in place on official records and potentially exposed years later.

Practical risk management is essential. Trustees should ensure that the Club maintains adequate insurance cover, particularly for public liability, employer's liability and trustee indemnity where available. Major contracts should be reviewed carefully before signature, and significant decisions properly minuted to demonstrate that they were considered and taken in good faith.

The role of Trustee is not merely honorary. It carries real responsibility and potential personal exposure. That responsibility should be understood clearly before accepting appointment, and managed carefully throughout the period of service.

CCTV, Data Protection and Ticket Only Events

Each year many clubs host one or two special events where admission is by ticket only. From time to time, questions are raised by members who believe that their membership automatically entitles them to enter the club premises on any occasion, regardless of whether they have purchased a ticket for a particular function. It is therefore helpful to clarify the position.

It is entirely proper for a club committee to promote an event on a ticket-only basis. Membership of a club does not confer an absolute legal right of entry at all times and in all circumstances. While members enjoy the benefits and privileges set out in the club's rules, those privileges are subject to the lawful management decisions of the committee. Where an event has been properly organised and advertised as ticket only, members who choose not to purchase a ticket are not entitled to attend that event.

In practice, such occasions are relatively infrequent and, in many clubs, are limited to major calendar events such as New Year's Eve. The rationale for ticketing is both practical and responsible. Advance ticket sales enable the committee to plan appropriately, manage capacity, and ensure that adequate staffing, entertainment, catering and refreshments are in place. Without a clear indication of expected numbers, a club risks either overcommitting resources on a quiet evening or being underprepared for an unexpectedly busy one.

Ticket-only events therefore represent a sensible management tool, allowing committees to deliver well-organised and enjoyable occasions while protecting the club's financial position. When implemented transparently and in accordance with the club's rules, they are entirely legitimate and within the committee's authority.

Confidentiality of Committee Minutes

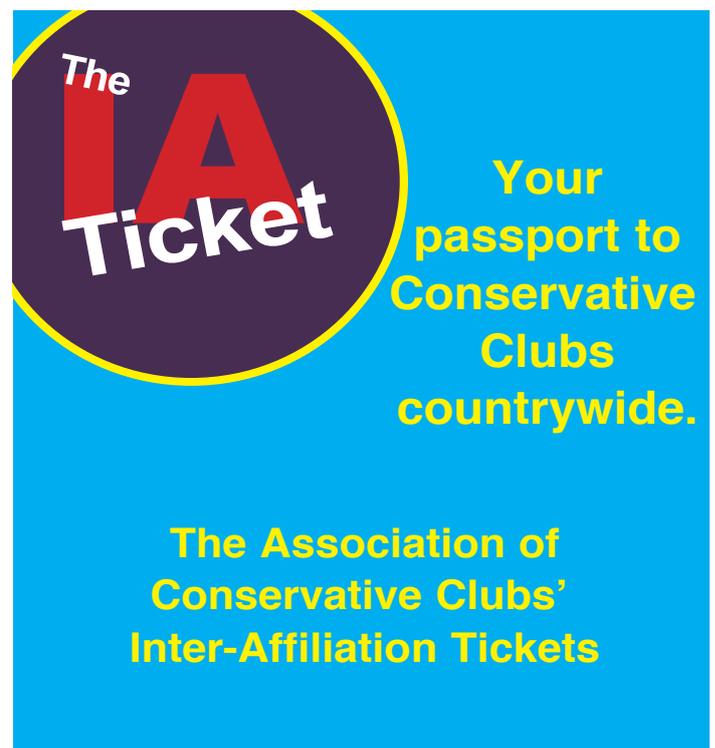
Honoraria are not salaries but voluntary payments made to office-holders in recognition of services, provided the club's rules allow. However, despite often being modest in amount, honoraria are not tax-free. They are subject to Income Tax and National Insurance and must be processed through PAYE in the same way as wages. Only genuine reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses is normally free from tax. HMRC can recover unpaid tax going back six years, and failures can result in substantial liabilities.

This stems from an important Employment Tribunal case where a club officer resigned after their honorarium was reduced and claimed unfair dismissal. The Tribunal ultimately ruled that the individual was not an employee but a volunteer receiving an honorarium, and therefore had no employment rights. This decision confirmed that payment of an honorarium does not, in itself, create an employment relationship, which is a significant clarification for clubs.

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- Ongoing guidance from specialists who understand club governance and operations

We are proud to stand alongside the ACC and its members, providing protection, advice and long-term support to help clubs thrive.

If your renewal is approaching, or you would simply like a no-obligation review of your current cover, our team would be delighted to help.

North West Area Hosts 53rd Annual Gala Dinner at West Tower

The 53rd Annual Gala Dinner of the North West Area Conservative Clubs Advisory Committee was held this year at West Tower, near Ormskirk, providing an elegant setting for one of the region's most anticipated events.

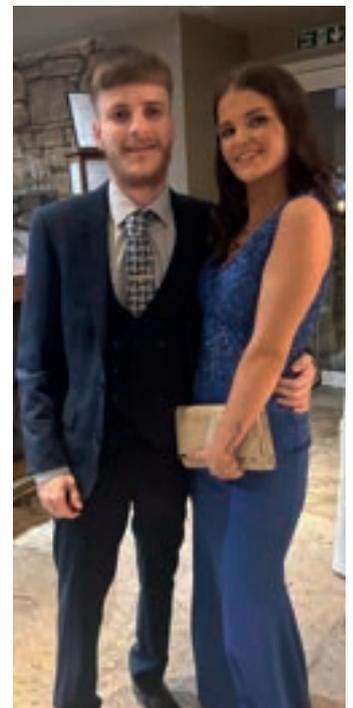
Representing 130 affiliated clubs across the North West of England, the evening brought together delegates and guests from Newton-Le-Willows, Uppermill, Warrington, Waterloo and Taunton Conservative Club, among many others. The event also welcomed the ACC's Chief Executive, Charles Littlewood, ACC Chairman, Lord Smith of Hindhead and representatives from the Northern Area Advisory Committee.

North West Area Chairman Leon Tamcken explained the choice of venue:

"We selected the stunning West Tower for this year's gala, given its central location and excellent travel links. It provided a wonderful opportunity for our clubs to come together, relax, network and celebrate. Our guests also spent time beforehand visiting the fantastic Ormskirk Market. The weekend certainly did not disappoint."

The Gala Dinner once again demonstrated the strength and camaraderie of the North West Area, offering committees and members the opportunity to share experiences, exchange ideas and strengthen regional connections in a relaxed and celebratory setting. As readers would have seen from the front page, the event also hosted an impressive fireworks display.

The Advisory Committee extended its thanks to vocalist Macy for providing the evening's entertainment, to Dransfield's Fruit Machines for sponsoring the prize draw, and to West Tower for hosting such a successful and enjoyable event.



Industry Insights

Industry Insights aims to provide a whirlwind tour of who's doing what in the club sector, from latest launches and new products to business acquisitions and market research into the hospitality sector at large.

Turning first-time visitors into repeat guests in a brand-fluid market

In a market defined by brand promiscuity, success depends on recognising new guests and turning first time visits into second ones, fast, reports NIQ. Signing up new members is an art as well as a science it seems.

The hospitality sector is experiencing a period of high volatility. Consumers are exploring a wider range of options and switching between brands with unprecedented ease. This 'brand promiscuity' is especially pronounced among younger, trend-driven audiences who crave novelty, variety, and the next big thing.

For operators, this creates a paradox: interest in hospitality remains strong, but loyalty is increasingly fragile. Success depends on not only attracting new customers but having a clear, deliberate mechanism to recognise them, engage them, and convert them into returning guests.

A market that's active and highly fluid

Recent data highlights how dynamic consumer behaviour has become:

- 43% of consumers eat out weekly, rising to 68% among Gen Z
- 35% of consumers drink out weekly, increasing to 57% among Gen Z
- 34% of consumers visit licensed venues weekly, rising to 50% among Gen Z
- The number of brands in consumers repertoire has grown from 9.7 to 11.3 in a year
- Among Gen Z, that repertoire has expanded from 13.0 to 15.3
- A quarter of GB consumers say they are typically one of the first to visit new eating and drinking brands, and among 18–34-year-olds, this rises to just over a third.

Consumers are engaging with more brands than before, but they're not consistently returning to the same ones. The challenge for operators is clear: visibility is high, but retention is not guaranteed.

What drives a visitor to return?

Attracting new guests is essential — but converting them into returners is where long-term value is created.



The data shows that the experience metrics which have the strongest relationship with likelihood to revisit are:

- Value for money
- Service quality
- Food quality

These are the fundamentals – the non-negotiables. They matter more than ambience, décor, or even brand identity when it comes to getting someone back through the door.

Getting the basics right remains the strongest driver of loyalty.

The real challenge: Recognising and converting new customers

In a market where consumers are constantly rotating between brands, the venues that win are those that:

- Recognise first-time visitors
- Capture their details in a frictionless way
- Understand their preferences
- Follow up with personalised, timely communication
- Encourage a second visit — the true gateway to loyalty

Without this mechanic, new customers become one-off customers. And in a market where exploration is the norm, that's a costly missed opportunity.

What effective conversion looks like

To turn first-time guests into returning customers, venues need systems that work quietly in the background but deliver big results. These might include:

- *Staff-led recognition*: A warm welcome and a personalised goodbye still go a long way.
- *Automated follow up journeys*: A simple "thank you for visiting" message or bounce back offer can help increase the likelihood of a second visit.
- *Digital loyalty platforms*: Identify first-time visits, reward repeat behaviour and personalise offers.
- *Smart WiFi sign-ins*: A seamless way to recognise new guests and gather contact details.
- *QR-driven engagement*: Menus, competitions, or exclusive offers accessed via QR codes.

The hospitality winners of tomorrow

The venues that thrive in this era of brand promiscuity will be those that:

- Deliver consistently on food, value, and service – the three biggest drivers of revisits
- Embrace the reality that consumers are exploring more than ever
- Use data to understand who is new and who is returning
- Build systems that convert curiosity into loyalty

Hospitality has always been about relationships. Today, the relationship begins the moment a new customer walks through the door – and the smartest operators are the ones who make sure it doesn't end there.

• nielseniq.com

Clubs celebrate at Annual Gala Dinner

A number of local clubs attended the North West Area Conservative Clubs Advisory Committee 53rd Annual Gala Dinner, held at West Tower in Ormskirk on 31 January, 2026.

The event saw representatives from clubs including Guide Bridge Conservative Club, Waterloo and Taunton Conservative Club, Newton-Le-Willows Conservative and Unionist Club, Uppermill Conservative Club, Wallasey Central Conservative Club and many others, come together to celebrate achievements from the last 12 months in what has been a challenging time for the hospitality sector.

North West Area Chairman Leon Tamcken said: "We selected the stunning West Tower for this year's gala, given its central location. A chance for our clubs to come together, relax, network, and celebrate. It was brilliant to see so many of our clubs represented on the night."

The Advisory Committee thanked Dransfields for sponsoring the prize draw, and also the guest of honour Lord Philip Smith CBE, Chairman of the Association of Conservative Clubs Ltd for attending and his continued support to clubs.



Recognising the value of outdoor recreation



The Sport and Recreation Alliance's Reconomics 3.0 report has been launched in Parliament, outlining the economic, health and social value of outdoor recreation.

Headline findings from Reconomics 3.0 include:

- 34 million people use outdoor recreation as part of their blend of activities, including 1.9 million children (3.1 million more people than were participating 10 years ago).
- Outdoor recreation is increasingly diverse – on average, there has been 22% growth in participation across ethnic minority groups, compared to 10 years ago.
- 1 million jobs are generated by outdoor recreation, with the total value to the UK economy sitting at £22 billion.
- Outdoor recreation has a huge social value, worth

£46.8 billion, and produces savings to the NHS of over £5 billion.

CEO Lisa Wainwright MBE said: "Outdoor recreation is one of the UK's greatest assets, enriching lives and supporting wellbeing, communities and local economies across the country. Reconomics 3.0 provides compelling evidence of the sector's, and our members' immense economic, social and health value, at a time when pressures on public health, the environment and social cohesion are growing.

"I am proud of the collaborative effort behind this research, and hope its findings will now inform policy, guide investment and act as a call to protect and promote outdoor recreation as a cornerstone of a healthier, more resilient nation."

• sportandrecreation.org.uk

Former RFL CEO appointed as Chair of NGB Coalition



The Sport and Recreation Alliance has appointed former Rugby Football League CEO, Ralph Rimmer OBE, (pictured) as the Chair of the National Governing Bodies (NGB) Coalition, and Jack Baker as Deputy Chair.

The NGB Coalition, within the Alliance, brings together National Governing Bodies and aims to provide a unified voice for sports, influence government policy, and better support both grassroots and elite sports development across the UK.

Ralph Rimmer said: "It is clearly critical that as many people as possible are able to access the huge benefits on sport, and the role that the NGBs play in facilitating this access is vital. I feel that I have an understanding of the issues involved and hopefully can play a part in amplifying activity. I look forward to helping the organisation build on the Alliance's impressive recent work and ensure that we can create a happier, healthier nation through sport."

• sportandrecreation.org.uk

Hennessy – Year Of The Horse new editions



In celebration of Chinese New Year 2026 and the arrival of the Year of the Horse, Hennessy has created a new collection of limited editions, featuring Hennessy V.S.O.P, James Hennessy, Hennessy X.O, and Hennessy Paradis.

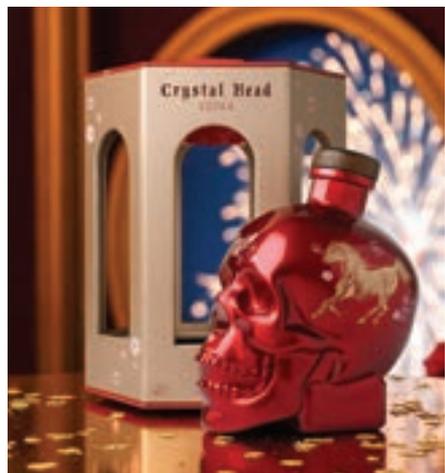
Each edition is adorned with a dynamic interpretation of the horse as an enduring symbol of energy and freedom.

This year's design is rendered in metallic copper tones and deep mineral pigments. Grounded in a red palette, the galloping horse captures the elegance and strength of this revered animal. Designed to evoke both movement and meaning, it is a celebration of bright perspectives and the momentum that defines the Year of the Horse.

Hennessy's legacy with China dates to 1859, when the Maison first shipped 12 crates of Old Pale Cognac to Chinese shores.

• hennessy.com

New addition to Crystal Head Vodka collectables



Crystal Head Vodka has launched a new limited-edition Lunar offering, marking the third release in Crystal Head's collectable Lunar series

The iconic skull-shaped bottle is decorated in metallic red, featuring a golden horse and floral motif in tribute to the Chinese Year of the Horse.

The limited-edition release contains Crystal Head's multi-award-winning Original Vodka, distilled four times from the highest-quality, locally sourced Canadian corn.

Crystal Head Vodka contains zero sugar, is additive-free, gluten-free, and is available through distributors, including Masters of Malt.

• mastersofmalt.com



Orkney Distillery's 63.6% ABV cask strength whisky

Highland Park has released its fourth edition of Highland Park Cask Strength Heather.

This release balances the influence of Orkney peat-smoked barley with sherry-seasoned oak casks. The whisky's rich sweetness comes from first-fill European and American sherry-seasoned oak casks, which have been rounded off with select refill casks for smoothness and balance.

It's been non-chill filtered and bottled at a cask strength of at 63.6% ABV and gets its natural deep

amber colour directly from the cask without the use of additives.

Tasting notes

- Charred marshmallow
 - Macadamia nuts
 - Brandy butter
 - Toasted oak
 - Aromatic heathered peat
- highlandparkwhisky.com



Cointreau introduces bar-quality cocktails in a can

Continuing its tradition of cocktail mastery and mixology expertise, Maison Cointreau has introduced its new range of cocktails in a can.

Launching with two bold new Margarita recipes in a ready-to-drink can format, Cointreau Cocktail Twists, are designed to be a smart, stylish way to enjoy bar-quality Margaritas with zero effort and 100% flavour.

The 12.5% ABV drinks are crafted with Tequila and carefully selected ingredients, and are free from artificial flavours and colours.

• cointreau.com

Neville Irani appointed as MD of Booker Food Service



Wholesaler Booker has appointed Neville Irani into the role of Managing Director for Food Service and SME.

He will sit on the Booker Executive team, reporting to Andrew Yaxley, Booker Group CEO, and will be responsible for leading and growing the company's food service and catering arm in the UK. He moves across from his most recent role as Director of Independent Food Service at Brakes.

Booker has 190 branches across the UK. Own brands include Chef's Essentials, Chef's Menu and Chef's Premium, Farm Fresh and Blackgate.

• booker.co.uk

Fresh direct – LEAF Marque commitment



Fresh produce supplier Fresh Direct has achieved its pledge to source all contracted British produce from LEAF Marque accredited growers.

Achieving LEAF standards means that Fresh Direct's growers are independently verified against a robust wholefarm sustainability standard, driving continuous improvements in soil health, biodiversity, water and energy management to deliver more responsibly grown British produce.

The company has now created a number of partnerships with suppliers to implement more sustainable farming initiatives, based on regenerative farming principles that aim to promote biodiversity and nature while producing food.

The company is collaborating with Regen Future Co, the regenerative farming experts, to pilot projects with three of its progressive growers – FreshGro, Len Wright Salads and Barfoots.

Projects aim to improve soil health and biodiversity, and include developing a 300-metre diverse hedgerow and wildflower meadow, creating new wildlife habitats and developing a vibrant new freshwater ecosystem that is intended to help boost biodiversity.

Pete Statham, Head of European Sustainability for Fresh Direct's parent company, Sysco GB, said: "Our collaborations with three key growers aim to demonstrate initiatives that can improve commercial farming for biodiversity, soil health and the climate. If successful, this will allow us to share insights and learnings to enhance sustainability and resilience throughout the supply chain. It's an opportunity to collaborate to help build a constructive dialogue around sustainable farming in the foodservice supply chain that supports nature alongside food production."

• sysco.com

IFE – 30 March -1 April



IFE 2026 is taking place at Excel, part of the Food, Drink & Hospitality Week, alongside HRC, The Pub Show, Hospitality Tech360 and International Salon Culinaire.

The International Food and Drink Event (IFE) expects to deliver an explosive experience, with meaningful business connections, inspiring features, and a stellar line-up of global exhibitors. There are 13 dedicated event sections divided by product category across the show floor.

Badges allow you access to all shows for the full three days.

Advice from the organisers: *Due to the volume of visitors at IFE and the verification of trade status requirement, you are advised to register, free of charge, by 29 March 2025. This will allow plenty of time to verify your professional status well in advance. This will ultimately ensure quick and easy access to the event. Registration on-site is possible for £40 + VAT onsite. This charge is to encourage visitors to register before arriving onsite and to discourage any non-trade visitors attempting to enter the event.*

• ife.co.uk

Lanson launches Bio-Organic Champagne

Le Green Bio-Organic is vinified using traditional, minimal intervention techniques, using grapes grown at Domaine de la Malmaison, combining Pinot Noir (46%), Chardonnay (36%) and Meunier (18%).

Tasting notes

- **Look** – Gold, ambered shimmerers.
- **Nose** – Clear and concentrated bouquet. Reminiscent of notes of blackcurrant and white-fleshed fruit such as pear and peach, as well as a hint of citrus, which open gradually into mineral, smoky and Eastern spice notes.
- **Palate** – Great vitality on the palate, with flavours of ripe fruit such as pear, mirabelle plum, a hint of exotic fruit and notes of spice. The finish is long and fresh with profound minerality.



Food and wine pairing

Chef Ambassador Matthias Gfrörer recommends combining the minerality of Le Green Bio-Organic with the creaminess of scallops, accompanied by radishes and a green sauce.

• lanson.com

Penderyn ushers in bold new era for Welsh whisky

Penderyn Distillery, a driving force behind a Welsh whisky renaissance, is redefining the category in 2026 with a series of landmark releases and celebrations timed around St David's Day on 1 March.

The date marks the launch of its first official Aged Statement whiskies, along with the debut of Icons of Wales No. 14 and The Village, which celebrates Portmeirion's centenary – the architectural icon designed by Sir Clough Williams Ellis in 1926.

Stephen Davies, CEO of Penderyn Distillery, said: "When Penderyn started 25 years ago, our ambition was clear: to bring back Welsh whisky and give it a voice on the world stage. We now have the depth of stock and maturity to do that with confidence. Our new Aged Statements are not about nostalgia – they're about progression, patience, and pride.

"The Village and our aged whiskies together represent Welsh imagination and independence at their finest. 2026 isn't just another milestone year – it's the moment Welsh whisky truly comes of age."

• www.penderyn.wales



New Year Celebrations at Little Hulton Conservative Club



Members and guests at Little Hulton Conservative Club saw in the New Year in style with a lively and well-attended New Year's Eve celebration that set the perfect tone for the year ahead.

The clubhouse was filled with a fantastic atmosphere as members gathered with friends and family to enjoy an evening of entertainment, good company and celebration.

The event drew a strong turnout, reflecting the continued popularity of the Club's social calendar and the hard work of the Committee and staff in delivering events that bring the membership together.

Guests enjoyed a full evening's programme, with music and dancing taking centre stage as the countdown to midnight approached. The bar and catering

teams were kept busy throughout the evening, ensuring that everyone was well looked after and able to relax and enjoy the festivities.

As the clock struck twelve, the room came together to welcome the New Year with cheers and celebration, marking a positive start to what promises to be another successful year for the Club.

Events such as this highlight

the important role Conservative Clubs continue to play at the heart of their communities, providing a welcoming and sociable environment for members of all ages. The Committee would like to thank everyone who supported the event and helped make the evening such a success, and looks forward to an exciting programme of events in the months ahead.



Club Calls on Younger Generation

Sutton Bridge Constitutional Club is opening its doors wider than ever as the committee looks to welcome new members and fresh faces to one of the village's long-standing social venues.

Based on New Road in Sutton Bridge, the club is keen to attract younger adults and families to enjoy its wide range of good-value food, drink and entertainment. From traditional pub games to live events and popular food nights, the committee believes there is something for everyone.

Manager David Sones says the venue is something of a hidden treasure within the community.

"I don't think people realise the little gem they have on their doorstep," he said. "We are a welcoming club and want to see the 30 to 40-year-olds and families coming in. It is time to get the younger people in."

"You don't have to be a member to come in, and all the drinks and food are considerably cheaper than pub prices."

The club offers classic social

activities including snooker and darts in its dedicated sports bar, which features dart boards and two full-size snooker tables. Live music also plays an important role in the club's weekly calendar, with The Sutton Bridge Strummers Ukulele Group holding a lively jamming session every Wednesday evening.

Fridays bring added excitement with a members' prize draw, where cash winnings can reach up to £700, providing an extra incentive for those considering joining.

Special events are also firmly

on the calendar. A Valentine's two-course meal took place last month, priced at £18 per person, offering couples an affordable way to celebrate locally without compromising on quality. Sundays are another highlight, with a popular carvery serving traditional roasts at excellent value.

In addition, every other Wednesday sees The Loaded Fries van parked outside the club, giving visitors the option of freshly prepared street-food style dishes that can be enjoyed inside with a drink from the bar.

The venue is also available to hire for private functions, including weddings and wakes, making it a versatile space at the heart of the community.



A Century at the Heart of the Community

This month marks a remarkable milestone for the Hawksworth Wood Conservative Club, which proudly celebrates its 100th anniversary. Few institutions can claim such longevity, and even fewer can say they have remained a constant focal point for their local community across an entire century of social change.

To mark the occasion, the Club held a centenary celebration on Saturday 31st, bringing together current members, returning faces

from years gone by, and friends of the Club. The evening proved to be a tremendous success, with a lively atmosphere and a real sense of shared history and pride. Particularly heart-warming was the return of former members who had not visited the Club for many years, drawn back by the significance of the occasion and the warm welcome they received.

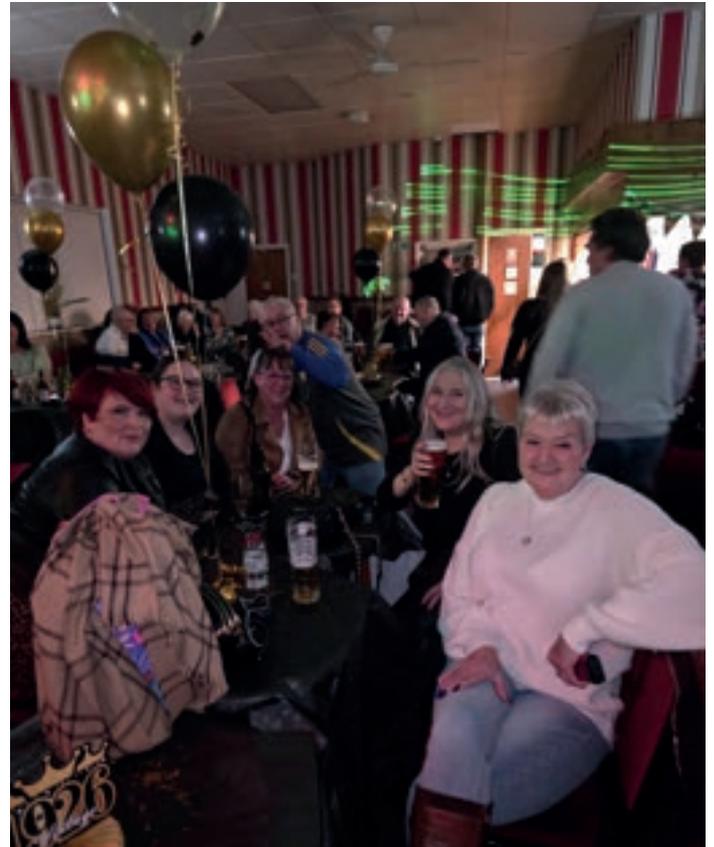
One especially poignant moment came when an old photograph of the Club's original building was

brought along on the night. The original premises, which were tragically destroyed by fire in the 1960s, live on only in memory and in a handful of surviving images. Seeing that photograph sparked conversation, reminiscence and storytelling, reminding everyone present just how rich the Club's history truly is.

As the Hawksworth Wood Conservative Club looks ahead to its next century, it remains keen to reconnect with former members

and to continue building its archive of historical photographs and memorabilia. Anyone with memories, photographs or documents relating to the Club's early years is warmly encouraged to get in touch.

With a successful centenary celebration behind it and a strong community spirit very much alive, the Club's first 100 years have set a fitting foundation for many more to come.



Festive Fundraising at Penarth Conservative Club

Penarth Conservative Club hosted a fantastic Christmas celebration on Saturday 7 December, bringing together members, friends and the wider community for an evening of festive cheer and goodwill.

The event proved to be a lively and memorable occasion, with guests enjoying excellent company and live music from Higher Ground, whose energetic performance kept the dance floor busy throughout the night. The clubhouse was filled with seasonal spirit, showcasing once again the strong sense of community at the heart of the Club.

Importantly, the evening also had a charitable focus. Thanks to the generosity of those attending, the event raised £300 in support

of Penarth Athletic Club, which is currently rebuilding following the devastating fire that destroyed much of its facilities earlier in December.

The Christmas celebration was therefore about more than simply marking the season. It demonstrated how local clubs continue to play a vital role in supporting their communities, not only as social hubs but also as active contributors to local causes.

Penarth Conservative Club extends its sincere thanks to everyone who attended, donated and helped organise the evening. It was a wonderful example of festive spirit combined with community support, and a fitting way to close the year on a positive note.



Tributes to a Much-Loved Kinson Conservative Club Colleague

Members and friends have paid heartfelt tribute to a much-loved and very popular lady, remembered by many as someone who was "loved by all".

Well known for her warmth, kindness and infectious personality, she made a lasting impression on everyone she met. Her positive

spirit and genuine care for others were qualities that shone through both in her personal life and in her work.

She was especially admired for her dedication during her employment at the Club, where she became a familiar and friendly face to members and visitors alike.

Colleagues have spoken of her enthusiasm, her sense of humour and the way she always went the extra mile to make people feel welcome. For many members, she was not simply a member of staff but a friend.

Her passing has been deeply felt within the Club community.

At her funeral, family, friends and members gathered to celebrate her life and to reflect on the many happy memories she created during her time at the Club.

She will be fondly remembered for the joy she brought to others and the valued contribution she made to Club life.



Caption: Chrissy with her daughter Becky.

Club Members Share the Love for Local Mental Health Charity

Members of Waterloo and Taunton Conservative Club demonstrated compassion and community spirit on Valentine's Day with a fundraising initiative supporting a local mental health charity.

On 14 February the Club held a raffle featuring two signed football frames, with members digging deep to back the cause. The event was a great success, raising £180 for the Anthony Seddon Fund, an Ashton-based charity providing vital peer support services to help individuals manage their mental wellbeing.

Club Chairman Leon Tamcken

explained the choice of charity, noting the important work the Anthony Seddon Fund does in the local community, particularly in supporting members and others with their mental health.

The raffle proved a highlight of the evening, with congratulations going to the two lucky winners, Kevin Goddard and George Biddle, who each took home a signed frame.

The event underlined the ongoing commitment of Conservative Clubs to support local causes and bring members together in support of community wellbeing.



Pages From The Past

In this month's Pages From The Past we go back to July 1983 where we can see with some irony that even then there were arguments over the Rates that Clubs were being expected to pay.

Recently Lord Smith in the House of Lords argued in support of Clubs, his speech is reprinted in Club Law and Management, which we hope will be persuasive. Ultimately, there is always conflict within

Government between the need to raise taxation revenue vs the costs of doing so. We will continue to make the case that Clubs are part of their social community and that taxing them to oblivion will be regretted in future years. As all Committees will know, one operating Club pays a lot more in terms of employment taxes, corporation tax, VAT, business rates than a empty property of a former club would do so.

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CLUB LAW & MANAGEMENT

by Gordon Waterman

THE RATE BURDEN

IN PREVIOUS ISSUES of the Magazine we have consistently returned to considering practical ways of reducing the Rate Burden. We have examined the principles on which it is based, and how they work out in practice. In our approaches to Local, and in particular, National Government, we have considered what relief can be obtained for our Clubs, bearing in mind the responsibilities of Governments to ratepayers and taxpayers.

We have considered how far a Club member is affected by rates in his capacity as a Clubman, as a householder, as a taxpayer and as a businessman. In this way we are able to discover in a more practical and sure-footed way how far we can press for relief for Clubs.

We have always been concerned with the nature of Clubs and how they should fit into the rating pattern since they are neither strictly business, nor domestic, and they are certainly not commercial.

Successive administrations have tried to grapple with the rate burden problem. Each has been concerned to preserve the democratic rights of the electors in terms of their pockets as much as in who shall control the various services for which each have been responsible for raising the finances. National Government has had to increasingly support local government funding, and this has brought its own problems relating to where control should lie.

FAIRER WAY

The most recent Conservative Government sought ways of abolishing the rating system, whilst the present Government looks for a fairer way of dealing with the problem.

Democratically and financially both industry and commerce have had the worst of the bargain, and in consequence the prospects for employment have diminished.

Inevitably the domestic ratepayer feels the effects of this policy, but Clubs, by their very nature, have not in all respects been as fairly treated by many local authorities as it is thought they should have been bearing in mind its contribution to society.

In consequence, Clubs are often seriously affected, not only by their own rates burden, but by the fall in their income from members. The Clubmen's worst position is to be unemployed either for this or some similar reason.

Therefore, Clubs may feel a sense of outrage because by their very nature, any income generated comes not only from the other two classes of taxpayer, and that income is voluntary spending.

A Club will only grow to the extent that it can attract active members. If its income is depleted, then the Club has less with which

to develop its facilities, and that in itself reduces its chances of healthy development.

PRIORITIES

It could be said that a Club is in the most uncomfortable position of being "pig in the middle". But it is, of course, a matter of priorities. Business and employment must come first, but the leisure of members is important too, and that is what we are concerned with.

WHAT RELIEF CAN BE OBTAINED FOR CLUBS

The complexity of the problem commands sensitive and sympathetic consideration for its ultimate solution by Government and governed alike.

A recent campaign has been launched which it is reported is seeking a 50% mandatory relief of rates.

The organisation behind the campaign apparently claims the support of leading Clubs' organisations. This Association is not one of them, nor do we believe are the Club & Institute Union.

The organisation concerned says its supporters include Labour and Conservative Clubs, Workingmen's Clubs and Trades Clubs. We do not dismiss this proposition as out of hand, but we do stand upon our record of success in obtaining improvements and individual successes for a long time, and we shall continue to do so in co-operation with our Parliamentary friends who have always been sympathetic to the needs of Clubs generally. Our means of access is well established and we intend to maintain it.

TACKLING THE PROBLEM

It is obviously right to try and get fair and equitable relief to the fullest extent possible

within reasonable bounds. We have always advised and arranged for individual Clubs professional help to appeal against Rating Assessments, and this work goes on now.

In practice we have found that Clubs have, as mutual trading associations, had a right and reasonable expectancy of success. Most of those who have appealed through our auspices have achieved that success. Relief of rates, mandatory or discretionary, is but part of a package for a fair deal.

A FURTHER LINK

We have already arranged index-linking for Insurance in many fields, and we are currently exploring with the respective surveyors and insurers its further development in respect to insurance of buildings. The importance of rateable value has a place in these considerations.

The present Government is to continue its examination of the whole thorny problem and we shall be in the forefront of those putting our case forward on the widest and most comprehensive front on behalf of our Clubs.

IMMEDIATE REMEDY

We now strongly recommend readers to turn their attention to the article on page 4 by Mr. J. R. Hearn, in which he deals with the possible ways of reducing a ratepayer's occupied rate burden, and to act accordingly.

In any event it is probable that initially their solicitor could deal with the application, but depending upon his advice, a good local chartered surveyor's help should be sought.



DONATIONS

Sir Donald Kaberry, A.C.C. Chairman, is very grateful to the following Clubs for their donations:

Cheadle & Gatley Conservative Club, Cheshire	£200
Dunstable Conservative Club, Bedfordshire	£26
Horfield & Bishopston Unionist Club, Bristol	£25
Letchworth Conservative Club, Herts	£10

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