

CONSERVATIVE CLUBS MAGAZINE



April 2026 75p



A Warm Welcome on the TransPennine Real Ale Trail

April 2026
75p



CONTENTS

AGM Notice	2
Club Law and Management	3, 4, 5, 6
Industry Insights	8, 9, 10, 11
Club Updates	12
A New Chapter for Seaford and District CC	13
The TransPennine Ale Trail	14
Obituaries	14
Pages From The Past	15

Annual General Meeting 2026

The Annual General Meeting of the Association of Conservative Clubs Ltd shall be held on Saturday 16th May 2026 at the Carlton Club, London.

Formal notice of the Annual General Meeting has been enclosed with this edition of the Magazine.

Clubs wishing to attend should ensure a prompt return of the invitation since space is limited.

CONSERVATIVE CLUBS MAGAZINE

Published by The Association of Conservative Clubs, Ltd
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London SE1 7JP
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Sales: 020 7222 0868
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Printed by: Snell Print Ltd,
8 Buckland Road, Yeovil,
Somerset BA21 5EA

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CLUB LAW AND MANAGEMENT

Preparing for an Annual General Meeting

An AGM is held to transact certain business: the report on the ballot for officers and committee (unless they are elected at the AGM itself); the report on the accounts; the adoption of the accounts, as audited; and other reports as required by a club's own rules.

Firstly it is essential for the AGM to be properly summoned. This usually involves a notice being placed on the club notice board announcing the date and time of the meeting and requesting motions to be submitted to the Secretary by a certain date.

The rules of most clubs provide that a notice of the AGM shall be exhibited at least twenty-one days before the date of the meeting; and the notice of any motion must be submitted within ten days following the posting of the notice. Rules can also say that the agenda must be posted for a specified number of days before the date of the meeting.

Before the meeting it is essential for whoever is taking the Chair—Club President or Chairman depending on the club's rules—to undertake a careful study of the agenda. This will mean he can conduct the business effectively and also spot any difficult matters that might arise. Preparation is crucial to the success of the meeting.

When the meeting starts, the Chairman should satisfy himself that the requisite quorum is present. Most club rules require a quorum. This is to prevent a small, poorly attended meeting making decisions which affect the whole club.

The meeting must proceed with each item of business taken in the order in which it appears on the agenda. A normal agenda begins with confirmation of the minutes of the previous AGM, any business arising from them, then the Treasurer's report on the accounts, the election of officers, and so on.

The presiding officer, mindful of the need for a well-ordered, good tempered and constructive meeting, must see that the agenda is followed strictly. Speakers should stand when called by the chairman and, to preserve order, only one person should be on their feet at the same time. When the Chairman rises any other speaker should sit down and this should be insisted upon. Unless this is done, a meeting can degenerate into disarray and chaos.

A proposal for discussion is a 'motion' and when it is accepted it becomes a 'resolution'. Before discussion begins, a motion must be proposed and seconded. A motion that is proposed, but finds no seconder, lapses and the meeting proceeds to next business. When a motion is proposed and seconded it is open for discussion. No speaker should be allowed to address the meeting more than once on each motion, except for the proposer, who may reply to the debate. A motion may be *ultra vires*—that is, outside the scope of the meeting—and should immediately be ruled out of order by the chairman.

An amendment is a proposal to alter the wording of a motion and may be moved at any time during the discussion of the original motion. Special care must be taken over this if the meeting is not to be allowed to become confused. The proposal requires a proposer and seconder before it can be considered by the meeting. The chairman should present an amendment to the meeting, once it has been properly proposed and seconded, in terms such as: 'To the motion before the meeting the following amendment has been duly proposed and seconded, that...' The wording of the amendment then follows and the immediate discussion must be confined to the subject of the amendment. Some bodies permit amendments to be moved to amendments but it is NOT recommended for clubs. If it is allowed it can prolong discussion and make for a complicated passage of business. In practice the proposer of the main amendment may incorporate in it what he considers best in suggestions for further amendments, if he accepts they will improve his proposal. No amendment may be a direct negative to the main motion for this would merely duplicate the need to vote on a particular proposition. An amendment must be disposed of before the meeting can proceed to a further amendment. If an amendment is accepted it becomes part of the original motion; it is then called the substantive motion. Further amendments may be considered in turn until all have been dealt with. Then, discussions may continue on the substantive motion until it is put to the vote. Before the vote on each amendment the chairman should repeat its wording so that there is a clear understanding of the matter on which a vote is being taken.

Similarly the substantive motion should be read out again before the vote. When those 'for' and 'against' in each vote have been counted, the chairman should announce the result. If a large number of people are voting, the President should appoint two 'tellers' to count the votes. The tellers should both count the 'yes' and 'no' votes. If there is any disagreement the vote MUST be taken again. When an issue is controversial a close vote may be disputed so it is useful to be prepared for a written vote.

One further possible motion is 'That this meeting do now adjourn.' This takes precedence over all other business and may be moved at any time during a meeting. The Chairman should not accept such a motion if he thinks it is being moved with the intention of disrupting the meeting. The decision is made on the vote of the meeting, on a motion proposed and seconded, and without lengthy discussion. Amendments are possible but only to set, limit or extend the period of the adjournment.

The correct conduct of a meeting is not an easy skill to master, but many difficulties can be avoided if the presiding officer follows the procedures set out here. However, even this will not guarantee that meetings are without problems. Some issues will so divide the membership that heated, and sometimes irresolvable, exchanges are inevitable. Nevertheless, a basic knowledge of tried, and accepted, procedures will help ensure that most meetings are managed efficiently.

Election of Club Officials

The rules of a club should provide the method whereby its officers and committee are elected. Such rules must be strictly adhered to, otherwise the election may be rendered invalid and a fresh ballot has to be taken. What follows should be read and applied subject to anything appearing to the contrary in the club rules—

Nominations

It is the duty of Secretary to post a nomination sheet on the notice board, which records the names of candidates for the committee or other offices. The nomination sheet must remain displayed for whole period stipulated in club's rules. Day and time when nominations close should be stated on the sheet, even if not definitely fixed by club rules. The proposer and the seconder of any candidate should personally sign their names against the candidate they put forward, having previously ascertained that their nominee is willing to stand and serve if elected. A member may be nominated for any number of offices in the club unless the rules provide otherwise; if elected to more than one office, he can select the one he desires to hold. If the rules say that no candidate shall be nominated for more than one office, it is in order for an officer or committee member who is not due to retire to be nominated for another office without first resigning. If unsuccessful, he would retain his present office.

Qualifications

Candidates for office, nominators and seconders must be either honorary members, life members, or subscribing members who are not in arrears with payment of their subscription before nomination sheet is due to be taken down. Otherwise nominations may be objected. Where a rule provides that a certain period of membership is an essential qualification for office, this must be calculated from the date when the candidate was elected to membership to the last day of nominations. For example, should six months be specified, a person elected to membership on 6 July would first become eligible on 6 January the following year.

List of Voters

Unless the rules provide otherwise, every member of the club is entitled to vote. It is the duty of the Secretary to prepare a special list of members for this purpose. The list should be handed to scrutineers, together with the precise number of requisite ballot papers if all such members voted.

Ballot Paper

The ballot paper is compiled from the nomination sheet. In preparing the ballot paper, names of candidates for presidency and other offices are usually typed or printed in separate sections on the same sheet as names of candidates for committee. The different sections are nevertheless distinct, and if one section is spoilt by the voter, it does not invalidate other sections.

Names of all candidates should be set out alphabetically on the ballot paper and in uniform type. The 'starring' of ballot papers i.e. putting an asterisk (*) against the names of retiring members seeking re-election or distinguishing them by printing their names in larger or thicker type is irregular.

Marking the Ballot Paper

If a voter makes some mark other than the customary 'X' against the name of the candidate for whom he wishes to vote, it does not necessarily spoil his paper. The vote is good, if the intention of the voter is clear. Practically the only grounds for the rejection of the paper are—

- Because too many votes have been recorded
- Uncertainty of the voter's intention
- Writing sufficient to identify the voter

If a member spoils a paper he should, on request, be supplied with another, having previously handed back the one spoilt. A member may vote for a fewer number of candidates than there are vacancies—he cannot be compelled to use all his votes—but if he votes for more candidates than there are vacancies, the paper, so far as the particular section is concerned, must be regarded as spoilt.

Taking the Ballot

Unless the rules contain specific instructions on the matter, committees decide how ballot papers are to be distributed – whether sent to members by post or handed to them on request. Where the former method is adopted and the member returns the paper by post or hand, the envelope containing it should be sealed and marked 'ballot.' It should be addressed to the scrutineers, who must deposit it unopened in the ballot box. Where ballot papers are handed to members, the scrutineers should first make sure from the list received from the Secretary that the member is entitled to vote. When this is done, the member's name should be scored off, thus preventing anyone voting twice.

Close of Ballot

The ballot must remain open the full time stated in the rules. When it is closed, the scrutineers count the votes recorded. The results, signed by them, together with the marked list of members to whom they have handed ballot papers, and also all unused ballot papers, must be handed by them to the Chairman at the Annual General Meeting.

Demand for a Scrutiny

If a majority of the meeting demands a scrutiny, the box containing all the ballot papers should be sealed by the Chairman and arrangements made for a recount in the presence of the scrutineers. Once it has been declared and accepted, a ballot stands no matter what discrepancies a subsequent examination of the papers may reveal. Prior to the signed statement being handed to the Chairman by the scrutineers, a system of checking and double checking should be carried out to ensure absolute accuracy in the matter of the votes recorded.

Duties of Club Officials

After the AGM there may well be Members who are holding new positions or have been elected to the Committee for the first time. We hope the following guide will help new and existing Committee Members and Officers with their role.

Only those prepared to carry out the duties of any club, faithfully and fully, should accept nominations. Elected officers, who include members of the committee, are individually and collectively responsible for seeing that the law of the land and rules of the club are observed. Their position is one of trust and authority and should be regarded as such. The rules of a club should specify the duties attached to each office.

The President

He should identify himself actively with the club and its affairs and be more than a figure-head. He should also preside ex officio over all meetings (other than committee meetings).

The Chairman

Clubs can be very successful when they have a body of enthusiastic and dedicated members, for the membership is the heart of a club and at the head of a club, the Chairman often holds the key to success.

The importance of a hard working Chairman, together with the Secretary, is paramount. If such a duo also has the support of a hard-working and harmonious committee, then the club will be doubly blessed.

The records of clubs show that many have enjoyed the benefits of devoted Chairmen and Secretaries, without whom the facilities enjoyed by their members would not exist. Therefore, it may be recognised that an important duty of the members is to choose an able and reliable man or woman to represent the club as Chairman.

The Chairman presides ex officio over all committee meetings and, in the absence of the President, those of the club. He should be thoroughly familiar with the rules of the club and the procedures which govern club meetings. He must, at all times, endeavour to maintain the dignity of his office and, by precept and example, the reputation of the club. The Chairman should not be afraid to exercise his authority, quietly and tactfully, when occasion arises. He should work in the closest co-operation with the Secretary in assuring that all legal and other club obligations are carried out.

Chairmen may be elected directly i.e. by the members in a general meeting or, if the rules provide, indirectly by the committee from among their own number. In the latter case, as the members will have elected all the members of the committee, they will have already signified their confidence in the person who becomes Chairman.

On assuming the responsibilities of the post, the first obligation of a new Chairman is to become familiar with the duties it entails. It would be impossible to describe every situation and problem that might confront a Chairman, which is why the Chairman needs to maintain a cheerful and dignified presence, and to act with tact and fairness at all times.

The Chairman presides over committee meetings and, consequently, will be instrumental in securing the smooth running of the club and the competent conduct of business. Committee meetings have to be held at least once a month in order to settle club policy, and to make decisions affecting the operations of the club and its development. The Chairman's handling of these meetings will determine, above all, how committee members retain their commitment and interest in serving their club.

The Chairman is the vital link in creating an atmosphere that is indispensable to a successful club. If the Chairman fails, it is possible that one of two trends, or both, will become apparent. There may be a lack of interest among members generally, or difficulties may be experienced in obtaining nominations to fill vacancies occurring on the committee.

Most members learn the art of conducting meetings and running the club, and also develop the confidence to address a wide audience at general meetings, by working within the committee. An efficient Chairman, who



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holds the trust of colleagues, will do much to secure the continued success and development of the club. It is up to the Chairman to weld the diverse characters that form a committee into a working unit.

The Chairman will be assisted in his duties if there is a code of standing orders which the committee members themselves have accepted and agreed upon for the proper conduct of their affairs. In conjunction with the Secretary, the Chairman is responsible for arranging the agenda and the priorities of the committee. A carefully prepared agenda will help to ensure that business may be dealt with quickly. As long as all essential business is catered for and all correspondence considered, their choice of priorities is unlikely to cause dissension within the committee.

If an agenda cannot be completed in time, it is better that the committee should agree to adjourn to a later date to conclude the outstanding business. The Chairman and Secretary should not take it upon themselves to omit items from the agenda in order to shorten the meeting. It is for the committee to decide what they will consider for the business is theirs and needs to be dealt with. The authority of the committee should never be usurped. However, a good Chairman will be able to influence them towards wise decisions.

Patience and the avoidance of argument are the best instruments for the smooth conduct of meetings. It should go without saying that the Chairman must conduct meetings in accordance with club rules, standing orders and recognised rules of procedure. This may not guarantee totally trouble-free meetings in all circumstances, but it will prevent most problems from occurring. If the occasion does occur when disorderliness develops, and the Chairman believes business cannot be satisfactorily concluded, the meeting may be adjourned to another date.

In addition, a Chairman should remember that a committee never performs the tasks which are specifically allotted to individual officers or the steward. Not only is this likely to be both confusing and a waste of the committee's time, it can be irritating and frustrating for an intelligent body of people who have given their time to committee work to find they are also engaged in trying to perform duties specifically allocated elsewhere. Similarly, neither the officers nor employees should be allowed to take decisions that are the prerogative of the committee collectively.

The Chairman will fulfil the duties of chairmanship by adopting a conciliatory attitude and try to avoid riding roughshod over even the most awkward participant from the floor. A cheerful, firm, tactful and judicious person will avoid most of the possible pitfalls of chairmanship and earn grateful thanks from the membership.

Trustees

The dictionary definition of the word 'trustee' sums up what is expected of such an office holder. The definition says, simply, 'one who is trusted or to whom something is entrusted.' It adds that the definition in law is 'one to whom property is entrusted for the benefit of another; one of a number of persons appointed to manage the affairs of an institution.' Even on that basis it is clearly not a task that should be undertaken lightly. It is not an office held just for the honour itself, although many justifiably regard it as an honour bestowed by the club.

Trustees must be eighteen years of age or over and elected by members of the club at a General Meeting. They are usually ex officio members of the club committee by virtue of their office. Trustees attend meetings and are subject to the decisions of the committee. Neither the Secretary nor Treasurer of a club should hold the office of trustee.

Generally speaking, trustees are appointed 'at the pleasure of the club' which, in ordinary language, means until resignation, removal or death. It is possible for the club rules to provide for a fixed term of years. Rules should state the method of election or appointment of trustees and how the tenure of office is terminable subject to any separate deeds. On the election of a new trustee, a Deed of Appointment must always be made and conveyances up-dated. The committee must see to it that the club's lawyers are involved in the appointment of the elected trustee to his office so that the essential legal formalities are carried out. The lawyers, too, must be involved when a trustee is 'discharged' at the end of his or her term, or when death, in office, occurs.

It is very important that club trustees gain an understanding of their position. It is essential for trustees to appreciate fully, what they are called upon to do, what they do and why they are doing it so that they do not, through inadvertence, become personally liable. They must remember at all times that they are acting on behalf of the club.

Legal proceedings are taken in the name of the trustees on behalf of or

against the club, unless its rules specify some other person. Orders obtained against trustees do not lie against the property and possessions owned personally by the trustees but against the assets of the club. This is the case providing they are suitably indemnified, which should be in the club's rules, and they have been appointed properly by Deed of Appointment. In other words, trustees' personal effects are not at risk if they are involved in legal proceedings on behalf of the club so long as they have acted strictly within the club rules. If they have knowingly allowed the club funds to be used for objects not authorised by the rules, they become personally liable.

All leases and agreements of the club should be in the names of the trustees and no documents should be signed by them until they are satisfied they are acting on behalf of the club. Clubs must seek advice when any documents are to be signed that involve the future of the club, its property, or its finances no matter who is the other party involved. It is vital that such documents and anything similar should be examined and approved by the club's legal advisers before signature. The club might well have to pay a fee for expert advice, but the peace of mind which it can bring will be well worth the expenditure.

Trustees must pay particular attention to the use of club funds, and must always ensure that no moneys of the club are spent contrary to law or the club rules, or for purposes not connected with the club or its objects. Proceedings against any person or persons, for fraud or misappropriation, are instituted in the names of the trustees. Two of the duties of trustees which are generally well known are that they are the people, when things have gone badly wrong, who sue on behalf of the club and those who are sued as representatives of the club.

For generations in the club movement, the appointment to the position of trustee has been seen as the very peak of achievement. Trustees are chosen from members who have served their club well and faithfully and sometimes the appointment is seen as a 'reward' for their fidelity and long service. That however must not be the sole consideration.

It goes without saying that anyone being considered for the position of trustee must be a person of integrity, held in high regard and be ready to play a full part in the life of the club. Older members will bring the benefit of a lifetime of experience in the club and the outside world to the office.

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However, the case for the appointment of a younger person who can build up the knowledge required while working alongside an older trustee should not be dismissed. Whatever the age of the trustee, clubs should bear in mind, and have faith in, his or her judgement, integrity, and continuing devotion to the interests of club members. At all times trustees have to ensure that whatever they do is in strict accordance with the rules of the club and, in accordance with the law of the land.

Another very important point is to ensure that a club is never left with only one trustee. The number of trustees set out in the club's rules should be maintained at all times. This is necessary because if the one remaining trustee dies, then the 'statutory vesting' of the club's property passes to his executors or administrators. It is important to remember this procedure, as failure to follow it could lead to difficulties which, in turn, could lead to a costly legal process to resolve.

If the need arises to remove a trustee from office, a Special General Meeting should be summoned in the manner laid down in the club rules. The rules should also state by what majority such action can be taken. Remember, a vacancy created in this way must be filled—and the appointment made in the correct manner—without delay.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for seeing that all moneys, whether received by himself, the Secretary, the steward or any other official or employee are duly banked. He is to ensure that all debts of the club are paid as directed by the committee and that cheques are signed by himself and one, or more, members of the Finance Committee, then countersigned by the Secretary. It is his duty to produce the Paying-in Book, Bank Statement, Daily Takings Book etc. at every meeting of the committee, or whenever required.

The Secretary

It is the duty of the Secretary to keep the books, documents and papers of the club in proper order and carefully filed. He must summon and attend all meetings and take Minutes of the proceedings. Other responsibilities may be summarised—

- Keep the register of members up to date, with record of last payment of subscriptions
- See that the names, addresses and occupations of candidates for membership are duly displayed on the club notice board for the period stipulated in the rules
- Issue notices of default to members in arrears and see that names are removed from the register if subscriptions are not paid within the period stated in the rules
- Post all notices in connection with General or Special General Meetings
- Check nominations of candidates for office and allow none to go forward which are not in order
- Comply with the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003
- Comply with the requirements of the National Insurance Acts, Statutory Sick Pay and see that all paid employees are insured
- See that the club is insured against liability at Common Law, for accidents occurring to club employees, and also against fire and burglary

The duties imposed on a club's Secretary make the person undertaking this office the linchpin in the conduct of club affairs. Unless the Secretary is truly competent, a club will find that it is unable to operate effectively and in accordance with the increasingly complex legislation affecting clubs. The Secretary acts under the superintendence, control and direction of the committee of management and is responsible for seeing that the decisions of the committee are conveyed to the proper quarter.

The position of Secretary requires not only considerable administrative skills, but must also fulfil the vital role of providing liaison between the membership and the committee. The Secretary's basic functions are to ensure that the club's clerical and organising activities are carried out, to see that all subscriptions are collected and that correspondence is dealt with.

A competent Secretary should be thoroughly familiar with the rules of his club, so that he can advise authoritatively when necessary. He should possess an intimate knowledge of the Licensing Act in so far as it applies to clubs. He is the official primarily held responsible in law for seeing that its provisions are complied with. The Secretary might be made a party to any proceedings instigated against the club for any breach of the requirements of the Licensing Act. Therefore, the Secretary must be conversant with the

demands of licensing and gaming laws and of registration and other statutory duties under the Licensing, Friendly Societies, and Industrial and Provident Societies Acts. Failure to meet some of these requirements will cause the Secretary to be held personally liable. A plea that it was committed without his knowledge and connivance would be a good defence to any proceedings taken against him personally, if it could be established.

Before considering the possibilities surrounding the choice of Secretary, it must be reiterated that the Secretary, like the Chairman, requires qualities of integrity and impartiality and must be capable of commanding the respect of members. He should be a good mixer who does not yield to the influences of pressure groups or factions within the club, and is not suspected of favouritism. Again, he must always be aware that he is responsible to the committee and the members for his actions, and that his decisions must reflect the policies of the committee.

The choice of Secretary is governed by the rules and the period of tenure is determined by them. They should be sufficiently flexible to enable members either to elect or to appoint a Secretary, depending on their view of the post's requirements. Rules should include a provision for clubs to choose between electing a member from their own ranks, or to appoint some other person. Among the many reasons for members preferring an elected Secretary is that they may feel it possible for him to cope with the work entailed on a part-time basis. Certainly, the volume of work falling to the Secretary will be a fundamental pointer in deciding whether the post should be filled by election or appointment.

If the club chooses to elect a secretary, then the election takes place in exactly the same way as for any other officer. If elected, the Secretary remains a member of the club. He will be entitled to propose or second motions, and to speak and vote both in committee and in General Meetings just like any other officer or club member.

Larger clubs may consider that the demands placed on their Secretary are beyond the capacity of a voluntary officer. The appointment of a Secretary is not normally made by members in general. The committee makes such appointments just as they appoint other employees of the club. Applicants may come from within the membership or from outside. Therefore, the rules customarily provide that where an appointed Secretary is to be preferred, the committee will carry out the appointment. In this position he is an officer without power, except as delegated by the committee.

Committee

It is the duty of the committee to attend their meetings regularly. The committee conduct the general business of the club; are responsible for its management and control, and for seeing that the rules are duly observed. Acting in a quasi judicial capacity they are empowered—subject to what the rules say—to suspend or expel offending members, having first given them an opportunity of being heard in self-defence. The appointment, control and dismissal of all club employees rest solely in the hands of the committee.

The committee is responsible for checking books kept by the Treasurer or Secretary and seeing that all takings have been duly paid into the bank. They should examine the Order Book and be satisfied that only goods authorised by them have been purchased and that accounts submitted for payment have been duly checked and verified with the Goods Received Book kept by the Steward. The committee, realising their position of trust and authority, should rigidly observe the rules of the club, thus setting an example to the members.

Confidentiality of Committee Minutes

Committee meetings must remain confidential to allow effective and open management of the club. Discussions should stay within the committee, and Minutes should record only motions, amendments and decisions, not detailed debate.

Members do not generally have a right to inspect committee Minutes, although auditors may do so to confirm that transactions were properly authorised.

Committee members must not disclose proceedings outside the meeting. Confidentiality enables frank discussion and protects members' views from being misrepresented. Although committee proceedings are not absolutely privileged, qualified privilege may apply where communications are made in the course of duty. Courts generally do not interfere in domestic club decisions if they are made fairly and in accordance with the rules.

In summary, committee discussions and Minutes should remain confidential, with members kept informed only on matters affecting the club generally.



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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.

Venues remain busy as consumers remain longer but drink more carefully

UK hospitality venues continue to see strong levels of activity in early 2026, with consumers spending longer in clubs, pubs, bars and restaurants despite more cautious drinking behaviour, according to new data from The Oxford Partnership.

The latest Oxford Market Watch snapshot shows the UK on-trade remaining broadly stable, with improvements across several operational indicators, even as drinks volumes remain largely flat.

Oxford's dataset currently tracks 99,525 active hospitality venues across the UK, providing a detailed picture of how consumers are using venues and how operators are performing in the current trading environment.

The data shows that consumers are now spending an average of 145 minutes in venues, reinforcing the continued shift towards longer, more experience-led occasions. Average spend currently sits at £26.83 per visit, suggesting that while guests continue to prioritise social occasions, they are managing their budgets carefully.

Overall venue performance indicators are improving. Occupancy levels are averaging 65.3%, with outlets currently trading 64.4 hours per week on average, both modest increases year to date.

However, drinks volumes remain broadly stable at -0.1% year to date, reinforcing a wider trend emerging across the UK on trade where venues remain busy but drinking behaviour is becoming more measured.



Category performance also continues to diverge. Stout remains the strongest performing segment, currently growing +7.3% year to date, while world lager is up +5.2%, reflecting continued consumer demand for more distinctive and premium beer styles.

In contrast, more traditional beer segments remain under pressure, with core lager down -3.8%, craft beer down -3.7% and ale declining -2.2%.

Alison Jordan, CEO of The Oxford Partnership, said: "Across the UK hospitality sector, we are seeing a market that remains resilient

but is clearly evolving. Venues are busy and consumers are spending longer in hospitality environments, but spending decisions are becoming more considered.

"For operators and suppliers alike, that means creating compelling reasons for consumers to visit, whether through food-led occasions, premium drinks choices or experiences that encourage people to stay longer."

Regional performance also continues to vary across the country, with stronger drinks volume growth currently seen in the East of England, North West and East Midlands, while other regions remain softer.

Six Nations drives major trading weekend*

New data also shows that the fourth weekend of the Guinness Six Nations generated 18.7 million pints of draught beer and cider across UK pubs alone, with an average of 571 pints per outlet over the match weekend.

Football increased +8.4% compared with the same rugby weekend last year, highlighting the continued importance of major sporting occasions in driving hospitality trade.

• oxford-partnership.com

Greene King announces latest Fresh Cask Release

Greene King's popular Spring Break is making its annual return. Available until the end of April, the refreshing 4.4% golden ale is described as hoppy, light, with hints of peach, lychee and tropical notes.

The brewer has also introduced two additional pump clip designs, the George and the Flagon, created to help clubs celebrate St George's Day, and Four Leaf, a fresh, seasonal, Spring-themed pump clip inspired by St Patrick's Day.

Customers will receive all three pump clips with their usual beer order, providing the flexi-

bility to tailor bar presentations to the club's style.

Amina Ali, Brand Manager at Greene King, said: "By offering multiple pump clip designs, we're helping our customers create standout moments that appeal to different audiences, while delivering the same highquality golden cask ale that guests return for year after year."

Spring Break is available in firkins and pins (36-pint units), along with all other seasonal cask beers.

• valueforvenues.co.uk.



Dransfields announces senior management changes

Chris Haley, Dransfields Managing Director, is to step into the role of Group Chairman in May, succeeding Robert Dransfield, who is set to retire after his distinguished tenure with the company.

Chris's three decades at Dransfields have seen the company strengthen its position as the UK's leading supplier of gaming and amusement machines to clubs and pubs.

Peter Davies, a well-known figure within the industry, steps into the role of Managing Director.

Quentin Stott of Reflex Gaming Limited joins the Dransfields Board, and Claire Naylor will be appointed to the Board as Commercial Director. Ian Chuter becomes Group Non-Executive Director.

Chris Haley said: "It has been a privilege to lead Dransfields for the past 30 years, and I am incredibly proud of what our team has achieved together.

"As I move into the role of Group Chairman, I look forward to supporting the continued growth of the business while working closely with Peter as he takes on this important leadership role. Peter is widely respected across the industry, and his experience and approach make him the ideal choice to guide Dransfields into its next chapter."

• dransfields.com



Pictured, left to right: Quentin Stott, Peter Davies, Robert Dransfield and Chris Haley

Johnnie Walker introduces new 'accessible' Red Soul

For the first time, Johnnie Walker Red Label is introducing a new global innovation: Johnnie Walker Red Soul.

With a sweeter, smoother take on the original, Johnnie Walker Red Soul is designed to offer a more accessible Scotch for non-whisky drinkers, and began its global roll out last month. It is crafted around rich vanilla sweetness, unfolding into notes of caramel fudge and gentle oak before settling into a smooth, creamy finish. Bright, balanced and bursting with vibrance, it delivers a sweeter, smoother profile with no smoky notes.

The new innovation is underpinned by consumer

insights around perceived taste barriers; over a quarter of non-Scotch whisky drinkers are open to the category but are seeking sweeter flavours (*Source: Consumer Choice Framework - Kantar/Diageo 2023 – sample 30,000 people across 10 countries*), reinforcing the need for an innovation adapted to evolving preferences without compromising on quality.

Johnnie Walker Red Soul also plays into Diageo's ambition to strengthen its portfolio at an entry-level price-point, the largest and fastest-growing market segment in global blended Scotch whisky (IWSR forecast to 2029).

• diageo.com

Absolut Vodka and TABASCO® team up

Absolut® TABASCO™ is a new spicy vodka, created by fusing Absolut Vodka with a natural essence, created from the fermented, aged red pepper mash used to make TABASCO® Sauce.

The vodka delivers the distinctive heat and aroma of the world-famous pepper sauce, and according to Absolut, comes amid strong, growing demand for hotter flavours. Sales of spicy vodka are forecast to increase 27 per cent by 2029 (*source: Datassentials February 2025*).

TABASCO® Sauce uses only three ingredients – handpicked red peppers, salt, and vinegar. Once mashed together, the red pepper mix is aged and fermented in reclaimed oak barrels for up to three years, creating the sauce's subtle, unique flavor.



Absolut Vodka is also made using three natural ingredients – pristine water sourced from a local deep well, a proprietary strain of yeast and winter wheat grown on nearby farms.

• theabsolutcompany.com

Hendrick's Gin releases Another Hendrick's



Another Hendrick's is the first new permanent addition to the Hendrick's line up in nine years. The new spirit is infused with rose and cucumber, and layered with bright, light orange blossom and smooth cacao beans, presented in a striking white bottle.

Hendrick's Master Distiller Lesley Gracie said it was inspired by her love of chocolate and flowers.

"Another Hendrick's is the complete opposite of what we've been doing for the past 25 years, and the delectable combination of orange blossom and cacao beans is really rather unusual," she said.

"Hendrick's has always been a brand that leads with creativity and originality, subverting category norms and conventions as a matter of course," said **Nora Torpey, Hendrick's Global Brand Managing Director**. "The release of Another Hendrick's supercharges this and is far more than a line extension. By releasing 'another' side of ourselves, we make Hendrick's more dynamic, more culturally resonant, and more powerfully positioned to lead the next era of premium spirits growth."

• hendricksgin.com

Garzaia Bolgheri Superiore DOC

Ruffino has released its first Bolgheri Superiore, crafted by winemaker Olga Fusari and produced at Tenuta La Garzaia in Bolgheri.

Grapes are 70% Cabernet Franc and 30% Merlot

Alcoholic fermentation takes place in temperature-controlled stainless-steel vats, followed by skin maceration for about 21 days. The wine then ages for 18 months in French oak barrels (70% new wood and 30% second-passive barrels).

Deep ruby red in colour, the taste is described as balanced, bodied, with plush tannins, the Merlot (30%) giving smoothness and rotundity, and the Cabernet Franc (70%) providing body, structure and aromatic complexity.

• ruffino.it



Lower alcohol Pinot Grigio from Zonin



Zonin Pinot Grigio Early Harvest is made from grapes picked early to moderate sugar levels, allowing it to be bottled at 9% ABV with a light, fragrant taste.

• zonin1821.com

Bright new Dry Humour Brut IPA



Abright, bone-dry Brut IPA with a crisp, sparkling finish and a sharp gooseberry twist. Nelson Sauvin, Hallertau Blanc and Citra hops bring white wine character, citrus and soft tropical notes, while fresh gooseberry adds a vibrant zing. The 6.0% ABV IPA is described as clean, zesty and effortlessly drinkable with a snappy, refreshing finish.

• vocationbrewery.com

Ramsbury Guide to the best Spring cocktails

With the days finally beginning to seem drier and the temperature slowly but surely rising, the Spring season has a way of changing how we drink.

The heavier, slower serves of winter begin to feel out of place, replaced by something brighter – a squeeze of citrus, a sprig of fresh herbs, a splash of soda catching the light in a tall glass. Evenings stretch a little longer. Windows open. Tables move outdoors.

The best spring cocktails capture that shift. They're lighter without being insubstantial, fresh without being fleeting. They lean into botanicals, orchard fruit and clean, crisp spirits that don't need hiding behind syrup or spice.

What Makes a Cocktail Perfect for Spring?

A truly good spring cocktail doesn't rely on richness or intensity for flavour. Instead, it feels considered.

Heavy, oak-led drinks and warming spice begin to be replaced with fresher options. Citrus becomes sharper. Herbs feel greener. A splash of soda or sparkling wine adds length and air, allowing a drink to feel refreshing rather than weighty.

At its heart, a spring cocktail is usually defined by a few simple characteristics:

- Brightness – fresh lemon, grapefruit or orchard fruit
- Freshness – classic herbs such as mint, thyme or rosemary
- Length – often topped with soda, tonic or sparkling wine
- Clarity – clean, well-balanced spirits that don't overpower

Freshness matters more at this time of year. Lemon juice squeezed moments before shaking. Cucumber sliced just before serving. A sprig of thyme gently tapped between your hands to release its aroma.

Balance is equally important. With lighter serves,



Raspberry Royale – Ramsbury Raspberry & Wildflower Honey Gin and chilled prosecco



Ramsbury Estate Spritz – Ramsbury Single Estate Gin, white vermouth, honey syrup and fresh lemon

there's less to hide behind. If a cocktail is overly sweet, it shows. If the spirit is harsh, it jars. Spring drinks reward precision and simplicity.

They also suit a particular kind of occasion. Spring cocktails are rarely solitary. They're poured at Easter lunches, passed across garden tables, or made casually in kitchens with doors left open. They should feel:

- Easy to return to
- Refreshing enough for a second glass
- Interesting without being demanding
- Full guide available at ramsbury.com

Brakes Launches £100,000 Menu Match Promotion

Brakes, the UK's leading foodservice wholesaler, has launched a major new promotion offering more than £100,000 worth of prizes to its mybrakes rewards members.

Menu Match allows a mybrakes rewards customer to 'Peel and Play' to win prizes that include instant cashback, electronics, lifestyle items and much more.

Since its launch, mybrakes rewards has been a sea-change in foodservice loyalty, offering online cashback, exclusive deals, and personalised promotions based on sector and purchasing history. It currently has more than 15,000 active members, and Brakes has given back almost £6m in cashback through more than 400,000 personalised offers in the past



year alone.

In addition, Brakes plants a tree for every redemption made, with more than 110,000 trees planted to date.

Leon French, Sysco GB Marketing Director, said: "Our goal is to provide customers with value every single time they log on and order. mybrakes rewards isn't a one-off initiative; it's a year-round commitment to providing tailored value and rewards that make a real difference to our customers."

"Menu Match provides customers with another chance to win, and it is already proving very popular."

• brake.co.uk

Alcohol industry's Independent Complaints Panel welcomes new appointments



Pictured: Matt Barwell, Richard Schofield (top row, left to right), Karen Betts and Rachel Childs, Panel Chair (bottom left to right).

The alcohol industry's Independent Complaints Panel (ICP) is pleased to announce the appointment of three new Panel members.

Following a rigorous recruitment process, Karen Betts OBE, Matt Barwell and Richard Schofield have been appointed to the Panel and have attended their first meeting.

- Karen is the Chief Executive of the Food & Drink Federation and is a former CEO of the Scotch Whisky Association. Prior to that, she held several posts in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Cabinet Office. Before joining government, Karen was a lawyer. She has also been an Adviser to the Government's Board of Trade. She received an OBE in 2022 for services to international trade.

- Matt has extensive experience working in marketing, corporate affairs and sustainability for three of the world's leading FMCG businesses, Mars, Diageo and Britvic, and currently serves as a board advisor for Accenture. He is a member of the ASA Council and a non-executive director for

several private equity-backed FMCG businesses.

- Richard is a senior civil servant and former Chief Planning Inspector for England, with considerable experience of chairing public inquiries. Richard is also an independent complaints assessor for the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, is a Panel Chair for the Nursing and Midwifery Council and sits on the Royal Town Planning Institute's Membership and Ethics Committee.

- The Panel is chaired by Rachel Childs and new members are carefully recruited to represent a cross-section of society with a balance of experience and expertise in key areas such as licensing, public health, children's services and law.

The ICP is independent from the Portman Group and considers complaints brought forward on the naming, packaging, promotion and sponsorship of alcoholic drinks based on the Portman Group's Codes of Practice.

• portmangroup.org.uk

Actress Karen Gillan to appear on whisky bottle

Karen Gillan has travelled far from Inverness to Hollywood, but now she is celebrating her roots in an unexpected way. For Compass Box's Hedonism 2026, the Scottish actor and filmmaker steps into the role of The Muse, becoming the centrepiece of a new artwork by renowned artist Emma Hack - a collaboration that fuses Scottish heritage, contemporary female creativity, and what will become one of whisky's most iconic bottles.



Gillan is the muse for internationally renowned artist Emma Hack, best known for her work on Gotye's *Somebody That I Used to Know* - one of the most viewed music videos of all time.

Hedonism made history when it first launched in 2000, as the first Scotch whisky to place a woman at the centre of its label. This bold creative decision went one step further when, in 2023, Hedonism became a Limited Annual Release, and Compass Box began working with a different female artist each year to reimagine the original Hedonism woman in her own eyes. The tradition continues now with Karen.

Karen Gillan said: "To be considered a muse for this whisky and to be a part of its story is deeply personal to me. Sharing whisky and stories are some of the best times of my life. There's no wilder sensation than seeing yourself on a whisky bottle."

Artist Emma Hack said: "Hedonism means to me the power, the beauty, the goddess, the strength within, and that's what I really wanted to capture."

First released in 2000, Hedonism was the world's first blended grain Scotch whisky.

For the 2026 edition of Hedonism, Compass Box's Creative Director of Whiskymaking, Angela D'Orazio, included some of the oldest components used in Hedonism to date, including a 30-year-old from Strathclyde Distillery. The recipe also includes whiskies ranging from 20 to 24 years old from Port Dundas and Cameronbridge Distillery, alongside some historic Blended Grain Parcels. In addition, a new sherry component contributes notes of cherry and raisins.

• www.masterofmalt

Star Support Helps Secure Bright Future for Barry Club

Cadoxton Conservative Club in Barry recently enjoyed a fantastic evening of entertainment and community spirit, as a number of well-known television personalities came together to support a special fundraising event.

The club welcomed a line-up of familiar faces from television and the comedy circuit, including performers recognised from popular shows such as *Celebrity Gogglebox* and *The Masked Singer*. Their involvement generated considerable excitement locally, drawing a large and enthusiastic crowd for what proved to be a memorable occasion.

The event was organised as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the club's future, showcasing how innovative ideas and strong community engagement can play a vital role in sustaining and growing club life.

Guests were treated to an evening of laughter and entertainment, with the unique opportunity to see high-profile performers in the welcoming and intimate surroundings of the club. The atmosphere throughout the evening reflected the strong sense of community that continues to underpin the success of clubs like Cadoxton.

Cadoxton Conservative Club, a historic and much-valued part of the local area, demonstrated through this event how embracing new initiatives can attract fresh interest while continuing to serve its loyal membership.

The success of the evening is a clear reminder that with creativity, support and a positive outlook, clubs can continue to evolve and thrive, ensuring they remain at the heart of their communities for many years to come.



Celebrating Chinese New Year at Benfleet Conservative Club

Benfleet Conservative Club recently welcomed members and guests for a vibrant and well-attended Chinese New Year celebration, marking the occasion in style with a traditional and colourful event.

A huge number of members and guests gathered to enjoy the festivities, creating a lively and sociable atmosphere within the club. The highlight of the evening was a captivating performance by Lion Dancers, whose energetic display brought both excitement and a sense of cultural tradition to the celebrations.

The event celebrated the Year

of the Flaming Horse, with those in attendance enjoying not only the spectacle of the performances but also the opportunity to come together and share in the occasion. The combination of entertainment and community spirit made for a thoroughly enjoyable evening for all involved.

The photographs from the event capture the colour, movement and enthusiasm of the celebrations, reflecting another successful social occasion at the club and demonstrating its continued commitment to providing engaging events for members and guests alike.



Starbeck Steps Forward to Light Up Town

The Starbeck Conservative Club in North Yorkshire has demonstrated outstanding community spirit by committing to fully fund this year's Starbeck Christmas lights, ensuring the much-loved festive display will continue to brighten the local area.

The decision, made by the Club's committee, reflects a strong recognition of the important role clubs play within their communities, particularly when it comes to supporting local initiatives that may otherwise struggle to secure sufficient funding.

By stepping forward to cover the full cost of the lights, the Club has helped safeguard a cherished annual tradition that brings enjoyment to residents and visitors alike during the festive season. The Christmas lights have long been a focal point for the community, creating a warm and welcoming

atmosphere throughout Starbeck.

Looking ahead, the Club is also planning to host a series of fundraising events over the coming year, with the aim of ensuring the long-term sustainability of the display and potentially expanding the lights further across the area.

The contribution has been warmly welcomed by the Starbeck Christmas Lights Appeal Group, who expressed their delight and look forward to working closely with the Club moving forward.

This initiative highlights the vital role that clubs continue to play at the heart of their communities, not only as social hubs but also as key supporters of local traditions and events. Through proactive involvement and a commitment to giving back, Starbeck Conservative Club has set an excellent example of how clubs can make a lasting and positive impact.



A New Chapter for Seaford and District Constitutional Club

The Seaford and District Constitutional Club has recently embarked on an exciting new chapter in its long and distinguished history, relocating to newly refurbished premises in the heart of the town. While the journey has not been without its challenges, the transformation has been remarkable and those involved are justifiably proud of the result.

The new premises required extensive work, with parts of the building undergoing complete refurbishment and, in some areas, full rebuilding. Despite this, the exterior remains unchanged, preserving its historic character dating back to the 1850s when it first opened as a railway hotel. Situated within a conservation area, the building retains its original appearance and continues to

contribute to the heritage of Seaford.

This move marks a significant milestone for a club with roots stretching back well over a century. Founded in 1896 by Mr Jacks, the club originally operated from two cottages in Church Lane, located behind the parish church of St Leonard. These cottages still stand today, offering a tangible link to the club's origins. As the club grew, it expanded into an adjoining hall, which later became St Leonard's Church Hall after the club relocated.

The club has carefully preserved elements of its past, including the original members' book, which contains the names of the founding members. Remarkably, some of their descendants still reside in the town, maintaining a strong connection between the club and the local community.

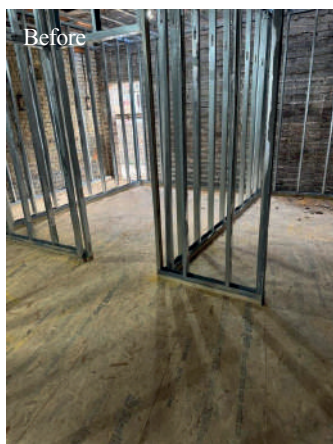
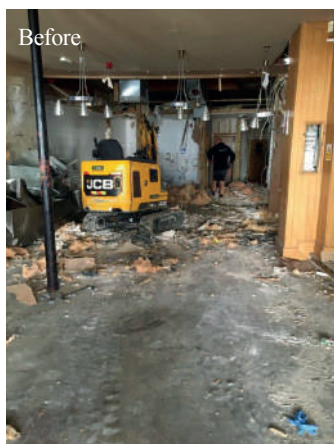
In the late 1960s, the club sought to expand further and purchased land in Crouch Lane. Construction of a purpose-built clubhouse followed, culminating in its official opening in 1974 by William Whitelaw. During this period, the club enjoyed considerable success, with membership reaching around 1,800 and the premises regularly filled to capacity. However, as times changed and membership numbers declined, the scale of the building became increasingly difficult to sustain.

Recognising the need to adapt, the decision was made to relocate to a more central and accessible location. The opportunity arose to move into a building with its own rich and fascinating history. Originally a farmhouse believed to be at least 300 years old, it was

later extended in 1850 following the arrival of the railway, becoming the Terminus Hotel. At one time, a tunnel even connected the hotel to the nearby railway station, adding a unique historical feature to the site.

Today, this characterful building provides an ideal setting for the club's future. Early signs are encouraging, with membership already on the rise and renewed optimism about the club's prospects.

While the recent transition has been both demanding and, at times, emotional, it represents a bold and positive step forward. With its new home firmly established and a strong sense of heritage behind it, the Seaford and District Constitutional Club looks ahead with confidence to a period of renewed growth and success.



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Community Spirit Shines at Honiton Charity Skittles Night



A Warm Welcome on the TransPennine Real Ale Trail

Marsden Conservative Club in West Yorkshire recently played host to fellow members from Waterloo and Taunton Conservative Club, Lancashire, as they embarked on the ever-popular TransPennine Real Ale Trail.

The trail offers a unique and sociable journey through some of the region's finest real ale destinations, all connected by rail. Travelling between Huddersfield, Slaithwaite, Marsden, Greenfield and Stalybridge, participants are able to enjoy a variety of traditional pubs while taking in the scenic Pennine landscape.

As part of their visit, Marsden Conservative Club opened its doors early to warmly welcome the travelling group. Chairman David Wilkins greeted Waterloo Chairman Leon Tamcken, Treasurer Brian Higgins and their fellow members, ensuring they had a comfortable and friendly stop along their route.

The visit provided a wonderful opportunity for members of both clubs to come together, share stories and strengthen the sense of camaraderie that lies at the heart of club life. The afternoon proved to be a great success, with a lively atmosphere and plenty of good conversation enjoyed by all.

Reflecting on the occasion, David Wilkins said, "It was great to open our doors to another one of our clubs and spend time with Leon and his members."

Leon Tamcken added, "Thanks to David and his son Matthew for hosting us. It made for a nice stop on our journey visiting the towns and villages on the ale trail."

Events such as these highlight the strong connections between clubs and the enduring appeal of shared experiences, ensuring that traditions like the Real Ale Trail continue to bring members together across the region.



A recent charity skittles night at Honiton Conservative Club proved to be a resounding success, bringing together members of the local community for an enjoyable evening in support of a worthy cause.

Organised in aid of InFocus, a charity dedicated to supporting visually impaired young people, the event combined friendly competition with fundraising, creating a warm and sociable atmosphere throughout the evening. Participants took to the skittle alley in good spirits, with plenty of laughter and camaraderie on display.

The event was made possible thanks to the efforts of organiser Gareth Richards, along with a team

of dedicated volunteers who helped ensure everything ran smoothly. Their hard work was rewarded with a successful turnout and a positive response from all those who attended.

As well as providing an entertaining evening, the event raised valuable funds for InFocus, contributing to the charity's ongoing work and making a meaningful difference to those it supports.

Events such as this highlight the important role that clubs and community venues continue to play in bringing people together, while also supporting charitable causes. The success of the evening stands as a testament to the generosity and community spirit of those involved.

Obituaries

Mrs Valerie Blease

Richmondshire Conservative Club is saddened to announce the passing of its President, Mrs Valerie Blease, who died on 19 March 2026.

Val had served as President since 2019 and held the distinction of being the first female President in the Club's history. She was a dedicated member for over 50 years, during which time she became a well-known and much respected figure within both the Club and the wider Richmond community.

Her commitment, warmth and presence will be greatly missed by all who knew her.



Chris Ridler

It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of Chris Ridler, a much valued and longstanding member of the Club.

Chris served as Chairman at the time of his passing and had dedicated over 25 years to the Club in a variety of committee roles. A gentle soul, he was very much the heartbeat of the Club and played an integral part in its day-to-day life and continued success.

He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Our thoughts are with his wife, Dawn, and his family at this difficult time.



Pages From The Past

In this month's Pages From The Past we go back 50 years to September 1976 for an amusing advert promoting Primo Furniture solutions for Clubs.

As the article states, furniture is an important part of first impressions for any Club and

always important that the future being used is projecting the best image of the Club.

The ACC now recommends K and M Club Refurbishments which can also assist with furniture for Clubs and can be contacted on 01454 299844



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