WINTER / SPRING 2026
ISSUE 6

ABBOTTS DIGEST

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS, EVENT TRENDS & SUPPLIER SHOUT-OUTS FROM ACROSS THE SOUTH WEST

With the new season approaching, welcome to this edition of Abbotts Digest. We hope you enjoy, and keep an eye out for our introductory Abbotts Waste offer before prices rise in April.

THE LATEST INSIDER INSIGHTS

UNLOCK YOUR SAVINGS

RICH'S RUNDOWN

NEW TEAM, NEW SERVICES & BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR 2026

Well, we're through the other side of another festive season, and it was just as busy as ever. Hotel Christmas parties, corporate gatherings, family celebrations, all back-to-back through December and into the New Year. There's something rewarding about helping people mark the end of the year together, especially when you remember that just five years ago, we couldn't. It's easy to forget how much that mattered.

January and February have been quieter on the event front, giving us breathing room to focus on the projects that keep the wheels turning behind the scenes. We've been out at a few trade shows, catching up with suppliers and partners, which is always valuable. But quieter doesn't mean slow; if anything, it's been one of the busiest starts to a year we've had.

A lot of that energy has gone into operational improvements. The pack sizes you'll read about elsewhere in this edition are part of a bigger push to work smarter, faster picking, tighter quality control, and far less packaging leaving the warehouse. It's not glamorous work, but it matters. It allows us to hold our hire prices steady whilst reducing waste, which feels like the right balance.

We've also got some new kit arriving. The Green Boho highballs are landing soon, two designs, both a bit different from what we usually stock. And we're adding 5 ft 6 in tables to the range, which should give venues and planners a bit more flexibility on layouts.

Waste? We've got you covered

The big one, though, is Abbotts Waste. It launches in April, and it's something we've spent months getting right. If you've ever stood in a field at 1am wondering where the bins went, you'll understand why this service exists.

This new event waste and recycling service, built for venues, caterers and planners who want the same level of care for waste as they do for glassware, furniture and refrigeration. Less scrambling for bins, more time getting off-site and home.

We're starting with an introductory rate of £30 per bin, but that won't last, so if you've got events booked, it's worth locking it in now at this special pre-launch price.

New faces and new roles

On the team side, we've had some new faces join. Laura's settled into the hire admin team, and as things pick up, you'll meet Hollis and Tyler in the warehouse. Becky's also stepped into a new role as Executive General Manager, overseeing sales and operations. Her job, essentially, is to make sure what gets quoted matches what gets delivered, no gaps, no surprises. She's good at it, and I wish her and all of our new starters the best year ahead.

The season's building now, and it feels like it's going to be a busy one. Becky and I are always keen to speak with customers like yourself, whether it's about upcoming bookings, how we can better support you, or just catching up over a coffee to talk through what you've got planned. We're here to help, so if there's anything we can do or if you'd like to meet up, drop Becky a line at beckystewart@abbotts.info.

Best wishes, as ever,

Rich Abbott

Rich Abbott
Visit: abbottseventhire.co.uk
Call: 01209 212 794

Are you a caterer or supplier who'd like to be featured in this newspaper? Email: Jen@abbotts.info for your chance to feature in our next edition.

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

SUSTAINABILITY AS STANDARD

Something's shifted. A few years ago, sustainability was a conversation starter, something couples mentioned tentatively, almost apologetically, as if worried it might complicate things or cost more. Now it's an expectation. Not shouted about, just assumed.

The numbers tell the story. 45% of couples now prioritise eco-friendly options for décor, catering and attire, while 82% of UK consumers believe businesses have a responsibility to protect the environment. More telling still, over 80% of UK consumers are willing to pay at least 10% more for sustainable products, with millennials leading at nearly 90%.

This isn't virtue signalling. It's a practical reality playing out across the South West events industry. Couples aren't asking if you can source locally or reduce waste; they're asking how you do it already.

The Waste Reality

Here's where it gets uncomfortable. The UK hospitality sector generates around 920,000 tonnes of food waste annually, of which 75% is avoidable. Events account for 15% to 20% of food waste. That's one in five plates, which costs the hospitality sector £3.2 billion every year. Even more striking, only 9% of caterers keep food waste under 5% of their budget, meaning most are wasting double what they think.

For wedding and event suppliers, this creates a different kind of pressure. The average UK wedding emits 14.5 tonnes of CO_2 and produces one-third of a metric tonne of solid waste. When you're orchestrating 50, 100, 200 events a year, that adds up quickly.

What's Actually Working

The caterers and suppliers we work with across the South West make sustainability central to their operations. It's not a marketing angle—it's day-to-day practice.

Local sourcing has become the norm. Partnerships with regional producers, fishmongers, butchers and greengrocers reduce transport miles whilst supporting the community. Seasonal menus work with what's available rather than against it.

While flexible catering models prevent over-ordering, reusable serviceware from hire firms like ours eliminates single-use waste entirely.

These aren't grand gestures. They're sensible choices that happen to be sustainable.

Sustainable Changes Closer to Home

We've made changes on our end, too. Moving to larger pack sizes rather than individual products has significantly reduced packaging waste. Where we used to supply items individually wrapped, we now offer bulk packs that venues and caterers can portion as needed. It's a small operational shift that significantly reduces plastic and cardboard waste, without increasing prices.

It's the kind of change that doesn't need fanfare. It just makes sense for everyone involved - a more efficient operation for us, and the same quality service for you.

The Shift in Conversation

What's changed is how we talk about it. Three years ago, sustainability was a separate section in proposals, something to highlight, evidence to prove, credentials to establish. Now it's woven through everything.

It's in the questions venues ask, the choices caterers make, and the standards couples expect. It's become part of good service, not an add-on.

For suppliers across the South West, this means sustainability isn't something to shout about; it's something to quietly deliver. Reduce packaging. Source locally where it makes sense. Manage waste properly. Track what works. Adjust what doesn't.

The couples getting married this year or the venues organising events won't applaud you for it. They'll just assume you're doing it. Which, really, is the point.

SUSTAINABILITY IN NUMBERS

45% of couples prioritise eco-friendly options for their wedding

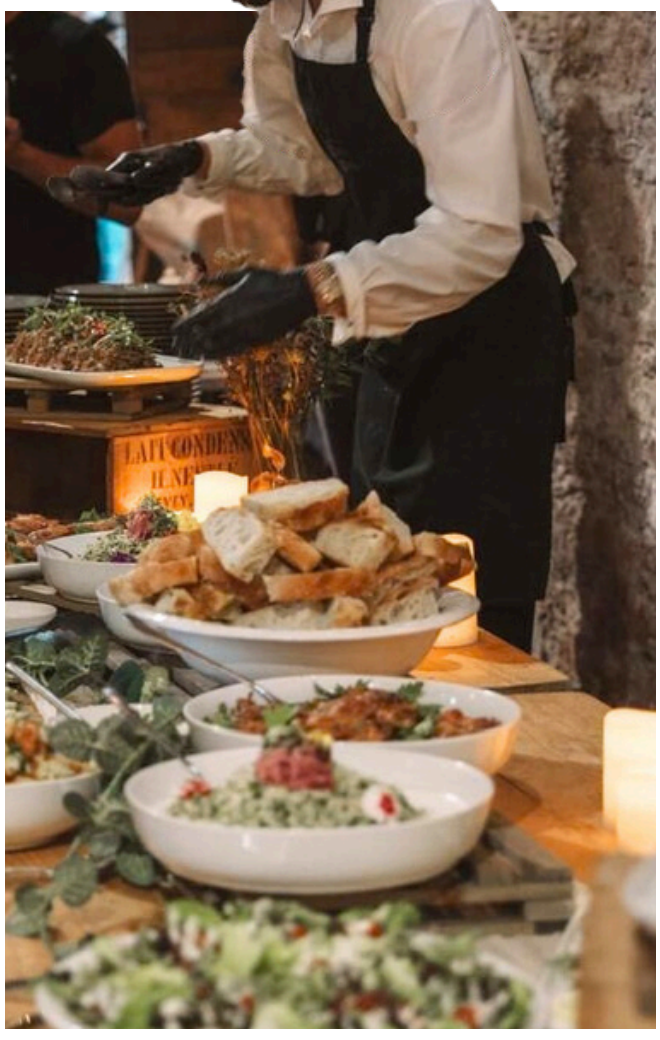
82% of UK consumers expect businesses to protect the environment

Over 80% willing to pay 10% more for sustainable products

CATERER'S CORNER

DOOD AND FRINK

In this edition, we catch up with Ryan and the team at DOOD AND FRINK. Known for their "swagger" and modern approach to hospitality, they've been making waves by trading traditional catering for relaxed, high-end family-style dining.



In a few words, tell us about your business.
We craft bespoke food and drink experiences that are as unique as our name. From rustic countryside weddings to elegant corporate galas, we thrive on creating events that feel personal. We love working with anyone who values quality and a touch of flair, whether that's a local school, a charity, or a high-profile private client.

How did you get started, and what were those early challenges like?
DOOD AND FRINK was born in 2017. Ryan's background involved working with South West greats like Mitch Tonks and Elly Wentworth before heading up event teams at Glastonbury. He envisioned an events service that broke the traditional mould, offering a "pick and choose" approach. In the beginning, the struggle was simply spinning too many plates at once; luckily, we've now grown into a talented team of over 15 people.

What makes you stand out in the South West?
Our dedication to a truly bespoke service. We don't do one-size-fits-all packages. We collaborate closely with clients to design events that reflect their specific vision, combining locally sourced ingredients with seamless planning to ensure the day is distinctive.

Can you share a memorable or challenging event you've tackled?
Back in 2022, we ran a wedding at a stunning cliffside home in Torquay. Logistically, it was a nightmare—we had to carry canapés, family-style sharing bowls, and 20 Tomahawk steaks down 150 rock steps to the three-tiered garden. The waiting team hasn't quite forgiven me yet, but at least they got their 10,000 steps in!

How do you manage the many moving parts of a catering business?
Our challenges usually stem from our passion to grow while maintaining high standards. We started this business with friends, family, and trust, which created a humble, supportive environment that still carries through everything we do. As we say, we all eat at the same table and have the same respect. I'm here to collaborate, not compete.

How important is local sourcing to your menus?
It's integral. We were born in Devon, and we stay loyal to it, partnering with the county's finest, from the Brixham fish market to Roots Greengrocers and Bailey & Sons for our steaks. Devon really is the best, after all.

How has working with Abbotts supported your business?
Collaborating with Abbotts is instrumental in maintaining our standards. Their reliable service means we can focus on creativity, knowing the essentials are in capable hands. Rich and Ryan often meet for a coffee—or a beer—to talk through future plans and new product ranges.

What's next for DOOD AND FRINK?
We're expanding our private dining experiences to offer more intimate, immersive culinary events. We're also exploring new collaborations with local artisans and venues to create themed events that push the boundaries of traditional catering.

To find out more about their bespoke menus and upcoming projects, visit doodandfrink.com or follow their journey on Instagram @doodandfrink.

SUPPLIER SHOUT-OUT

SERVE

EVENT STAFFING

A warm welcome to the team at Serve, who are redefining event staffing by focusing on professional development and a "hands-on" hospitality mindset. They've become the go-to partner for those who need reliable, expert teams for everything from DIY weddings to major festivals.

Tell us a little about your business and what you specialise in.
Serve is a local event staffing company dedicated to providing reliable, professional bar and waiting teams across the South West. We support everything from intimate weddings and festivals to large-scale stadiums across Cornwall and Devon.

How did Serve get started?
We launched with two goals: to provide local hospitality businesses with a consistent, dependable team, and to offer professionals a more flexible way of working. It's all about creating opportunities that fit around people's lives while maintaining a high standard of service.

What makes your service stand out?
Our core team of industry professionals, event managers, wedding coordinators, and bar experts. We understand the behind-the-scenes logistics and pressures of live events. By taking a hands-on approach, we build genuine connections with both our clients and our crew.

What has been a standout project for you recently?
It's hard to pick one, but collaborating with Skybar for a Don Papa Rum activation at Watergate Bay was a highlight. Our team worked as Brand Ambassadors, delivering a theatrical, voodoo-inspired performance with immersive storytelling and character-driven service. It showed just how far our staff can go beyond standard roles.

How do you keep your work fresh for your clients?
Every event is personal, so it's easy to stay inspired. No two weddings or festivals are the same, and each client brings a different energy. We stay fresh by listening closely and tailoring our approach to each day's specific vision.

Are there any industry trends or changes you're excited about?
We are particularly excited about our regional expansion. As demand for professional, flexible teams grows, we are moving further into the South West with the development of Serve Somerset, building on what we've established in Devon and Cornwall.

How has working with Abbotts helped your business?
We often help couples planning DIY weddings who need support with food and drink service. Abbotts is our go-to partner for these private events; their extensive range of crockery, glassware, and fridge trailers is a key asset. Their reliability and flexibility make them an invaluable part of our planning process.

What's next for Serve?
We're launching Serve Academy, a new hospitality training platform. It's designed to upskill our existing crew and help newcomers learn the fundamentals. It's a big step toward raising service standards across the industry.

If you could work at any dream event, what would it be?
We'd love to take the team to iconic UK events like Glastonbury, Royal Ascot, or Silverstone. These events represent the scale, creativity, and high-end professionalism that our crew aims for and where they would truly shine.

Discover their staffing solutions and the new Serve Academy: servehq.co.uk or follow their team over at @serve.southwest.

30 UNDER 30 WINNER:

VICTORIA WESSON ON RAISING THE STANDARD

In an industry that often prioritises "the look" over the logistics, Victoria Wesson is a breath of fresh air. A recently named Cornwall Chamber 30 Under 30 winner, Victoria's consultancy is built on a premise that many overlook: that true luxury isn't about excess, but about the invisible, effortless machinery running behind the scenes.

With over 12 years of front-of-house expertise, Victoria doesn't just "style" events; she audits the foundations. From sales journeys to team training, her work ensures that a venue's brand promise actually matches the guest experience on the day.

Operations as the Foundation of Creativity

Victoria's approach is notably grounded. "I don't believe in a one-size-fits-all solution," she explains. "Every business has its own identity and team dynamics. I help wedding venues and event businesses refine their operations, strengthen their offering, and create experiences that feel effortless and intentional".

She is often brought in to identify opportunities across every area of a business, be it refining sales processes or empowering coordinators to deliver higher standards. For Victoria, the goal is to future-proof venues by ensuring they are both commercially sound and creatively ambitious.

Resilience and the "Stay in Your Lane" Philosophy

Success hasn't come without its hurdles. Victoria launched her business in January 2025, a milestone she achieved while recovering from a broken spine. "My body has had to slow down, but my mind hasn't," she reflects. "Persevering through such a challenging time has reminded me just how much we're capable of when we stay focused on what we love."

When asked what advice she would give to other aspiring professionals in the South West, her answer is punchy: stay in your lane. "The moment you start copying someone else's path, you lose what makes you you. Authenticity is your biggest strength."

Breaking the Mould in the South West

While her roots are firmly planted in Cornwall, Victoria's sights are set on the international stage. She is currently designing styled shoots that intentionally break industry moulds, moving away from fleeting trends toward "meaningful design."

"I see the industry moving toward considered guest experiences, with couples prioritising authenticity over excess," she notes. Her work aims to prove that Cornish venues can stand alongside the best in the world, provided they balance creativity with adaptability and a clear sense of identity.

A Legacy of Determination

Victoria's drive is largely inspired by her Nan, a woman who escaped WWII Germany and travelled the world, always ensuring a beautiful feast and a proper crockery set were ready for any occasion, regardless of the circumstances.

"She built the life she wanted through pure determination", says Victoria. "She reminds me to keep going, to work hard, and to create the life I dream of. Honestly, she'd be very cross if I didn't."

As the events industry continues to evolve, Victoria Wesson is leading the charge for a more intentional, polished, and professional future in the South West—one where the question isn't "Why?" but "Why not?"

ON WORKING WITH ABBOTTS

"I love collaborating with forward-thinking suppliers who share the same creative values, which is why working with Abbotts is such a natural fit. I've used their products across my recent Tartan Fox and Stennack shoots—not only for the quality and versatility of the range but because of the people behind the brand. They are innovative, solutions-driven, and consistently supportive. Having partners like Abbotts allows me to push creative boundaries with confidence, knowing the product and service will deliver every time."

Reach out to Victoria: vwcoordinationandconsultancy@gmail.com or call 07773 885759

INTRODUCING

ABBOTTS WASTE

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY PRICE

If you've ever stood in a field at midnight staring down a mountain of bin bags, you'll know why we've launched Abbotts Waste.

It's our new event waste and recycling service, built for venues, caterers and planners who want the same level of care for waste as they do for glassware, furniture and refrigeration. Less scrambling for bins, more time getting off-site and home.

As for wedding couples and party organisers, it's another worry off their plate as the Abbotts One Stop Shop continues to grow.

What is Abbotts Waste?
This is a full waste and recycling collection service for events. Designed to help you focus on the food, drink and guests, while we handle everything else.

All delivered to your site, and collected afterwards, leaving you safe in the knowledge that everything is processed responsibly.

We know planning a wedding or event can be stressful, so we've made pricing super simple at just £30 per bin.

That works out as:
Only £1.20 per person for general waste. Only 30p per person for glass and mixed recycling.

This service goes live in April 2026, so book now to secure the £30 introductory rate before prices rise.

If you'd like to bolt this onto an upcoming booking, get in touch with the team and we'll size it, price it and get you booked in. Cleaner clear-downs, happier teams and fewer midnight bin dramas—that's the plan.

PACK SIZES: NO PRICE INCREASE, LESS WASTE

Despite continued increases in transport, fuel, and staffing costs, we have not increased our hire prices for 2026.

Instead of passing those costs on, we've made a small operational change: selected hire items are now supplied in pack sizes (e.g., 5, 10, or 25). Pack sizes are clearly shown on each product, and our team will automatically round your order up to the nearest pack size where applicable.

Working in pack sizes means faster picking, tighter quality control, and significantly less plastic wrapping. Fewer individually wrapped items, less waste, and no price increase, which we know matters to our customers.

INTRODUCING

ABBOTTS WASTE

Making event clear-downs simpler, cleaner and more efficient

THE ONE STOP SHOP FOR WEDDINGS, FESTIVALS & PARTIES

www.abbottseventhire.co.uk hireadmin@abbotts.info 01209 212 794