

# whitco NEWS

## OPERATION RESCUE

How Whitco stepped in to save school meals in Oxfordshire



## KEEP SHARING

Why social media is the key to boosting your business profits

## THE MIGHTY BAGEL

The unstoppable rise of the millennials' favourite breakfast

## NOT FOR ME THANKS

As alcohol sales continue to fall, businesses look to no-booze alternatives...

**Whitco Catering and Bakery Supplies**

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## Working in interesting times...

Hi - a belated happy new year to all our readers, and welcome to the second edition of our Whitco Newsletter.



As the old Chinese curse has it, we live in interesting times. Businesses are facing challenges from staff shortages, rising costs, and a changing market with customers moving away from traditional menu items such as meat, fish and now even beers and wine.

It sounds serious, but our industry has faced challenging times before. Our team at Whitco, have been here for more than 23 years now and have seen just about every challenge and problem imaginable.

Staying fresh, innovative and open to new approaches can be critically important in creating new revenue channels, protecting your assets and winning new business.

If you're looking for inspiration or for a trusted partner to act as a sounding board for your ideas, just get in touch.

**Vita Whitaker**

## News in Brief from Whitco...



### New laws on tipping

The Government says that at the earliest opportunity (Brexit permitting we presume) it will introduce new laws to ensure that diners' tips are passed on to the workers who are providing the service. The government says that while most employers act in good faith, there are examples of excessive deductions being made from tips let by customers.

Public consultation on 2016 showed that restaurant customers were overwhelmingly in favour of staff receiving the tips they are given.

### Breakfast choice

The ascent of the bagel from a modest Eastern-European bun to a position of global dominance continues. The bagel was introduced into the States by Jewish and Polish immigrants more than a hundred years ago and has grown in popularity ever since.

It's now making inroads into the UK market too. It's now the number one breakfast bread choice for young adults below the age of 35, according to data collected by Good Sense Research in a survey called '100 Gen Z and Y consumers 2018'.

Worldwide, bagel consumption has risen despite falling bread sales – probably because bagels have a lower carb content than traditional bread.



### Pub and restaurant spending on the rise

Research by Barclaycard showed that consumer spending rose by more than eight per cent during November 2018. Pub spend was up by more than 11 per cent but despite this, expenditure across the hospitality sector increased by less than three and a half per cent – the smallest increase for eight months.

### Organic wine sales increasing

UK consumption of organic wines are predicted to rise by more than 50% over the the next four years – market share is expected to almost double to nine per cent.



## Our changing industry...

### Social media's key role in marketing

More than one in five diners check both a restaurant's online menu and social media accounts before choosing whether to visit. So says Barclaycard, which processes nearly half of the nation's credit and debit card transactions. Fifteen per cent of diners say they rule out visiting restaurants that don't offer an online menu or social media channels. This rises to a third of 18 to 24-year olds – the highest of any age group.

Displaying appetising visuals of their meals online is the key ingredient to social success for restaurants in today's Instagram-first culture. British diners are using social accounts to read restaurant reviews, to check-out the appearance of dishes, to consider what they might order in advance and to see how well the food is presented.

### Keeping it dry

How's your alcohol consumption going? Sorry to pry but it is the first month of the year and the dry January season is in full swing. If you've got this far without a tittle, well good for you. Last year 4.5 million Brits claimed (at least) to have taken part in a month of abstinence. This year two-thirds of the UK population claimed to be thinking about it – which isn't really the same thing at all.

In the meantime, offering smoothies and no-alcohol cocktails can offer a high-margin alternative. Consumers say that a great taste is the deciding factor in going alcohol-free.

PS

Drinking only dry gin for the first month of the year is not the same as taking part in dry January – despite what one of our team here at Whitco maintains...

### Industry slams meat tax proposal



An MP's proposal to tax meat – and especially beef - has been met with predictable hostility by the meat industry. Taxation suggestions put forward by the Green party MP Caroline Lucas told a farming conference in Oxford that a meat tax should be a priority for the UK government - with a focus on the beef sector. She said: "We need to recognise that diets are already shifting. One in eight people in the UK are vegetarian or vegan while a further 20% are so-called flexitarian."

Chief Executive of the British Meat Processors Association Nick Allen said that Ms Lucas's comments exposed her ignorance of production systems, the supply chain and her prejudices against meat eating.



### Restaurant chains cut 10,000 jobs

Struggling restaurants axed 28 workers a day during 2018 during waves of closures, research reveals.

It was the big-name chains that led the way with Gourmet Burger Kitchen, Carluccio's, Prezzo, Byron, Chimichanga, and Jamie's Italian among the businesses to close outlets in 2018 amid fierce competition and soaring costs. The Centre for Retail Research found 10,413 jobs were lost across the restaurant sector during the year.

Professor Joshua Bamfield, the centre's head, said that every job lost was a personal tragedy for the people involved. He predicted that a further 10,950 jobs will be lost in 2019, with independent restaurants being hit hardest.

Prof Bamfield said: "Many of the large chains have already made cuts. In 2019, we expect the smaller and independent restaurants to bear the weight of the losses."

## Whitco to the rescue after Carillion collapse

About a year ago the headlines in the business pages were full of news that the construction and facilities management giant Carillion was going into liquidation in the face of a debts of £1.5 billion. One year on, and the effects of that dramatic collapse are still being felt by people all over the country.

What happened in Oxfordshire highlights the problems faced by many. Although in this case Whitco were able to step in and work with the council to rescue abandoned projects and revive vital services.

Carillion had provided services on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council including maintenance of council buildings, property services and building work such as school extensions. When the firm collapsed, the council faced a serious problem. It had little or no information on what schools were being managed and no information was passed across from Carillion for any asset details. There was also limited information regards to outstanding projects.

It was a left to a help-desk team set up by the council



to manage the schools and some public sector buildings such as day centres, schools, council buildings and fire stations. Whitco worked with the team to try and fix some of the problems.

There were several projects for new kitchens, which were in the midst of being agreed and in some cases in progress with Carillion. At County Hall kitchen, a timescale had already been set for an upgrade programme and the project was due to start, at the time of the collapse. Within days Whitco had arranged meetings with the council to renegotiate the contract and go through the full design of works. This was all accepted and the project was successfully completed within a matter of weeks.

Whitco also worked to rescue a kitchen upgrade project at Great Rollright school. This was an ageing Victorian schoolhouse kitchen with a stone floor, crumbling walls, very little space and a high ceiling

### Great Rollright Primary School conversion

Whitco installed a new kitchen into a small run-down area in Great Rollright school. This gave the school a new facility to prepare, cook and serve fresh hot lunches on site. The process went very well, with full consultation with the end-user, and installation was completed on time, to a high standard and minimal inconvenience to all concerned.

Snagging issues were dealt with promptly and any extras that were requested were fulfilled. The equipment is excellent quality, making cleaning and maintaining the area very easy. I would fully recommend Whitco to carry out this type of installation, excellent service and communication.

**Chris Drinkwater - Area Manager**



## Carillion collapse (Continued)

in the existing kitchen. The plan was to upgrade the space and make it suitable for cooking and serving hot meals. The Whitco team stripped out the existing fixtures and fittings and made good before making the best use of space with undercounter fridges, freezer and dishwasher to create prep space. Storage was provided by new wall cupboards on a frame over the lower part of deep-set windows reaching up to the high ceiling. We fitted a false ceiling with inset lighting to also provide natural light, added lined walls and a non-slip floor. The result was a cleaner more modern look that gives the impression of space.

The main challenge of not having space for an oven range or extraction was neatly overcome with the council coming up with a menu that would use the high temperature of a double Regen oven to bake from fresh or frozen. This project was started by Carillion but completed by Whitco and the council during last summer 2018.

On another project for the council we set to work at Bloxham School. Here, we completed building works and upgraded and redesigned the kitchen.

Alongside completing the building projects, the Whitco team also helped the council with a range of maintenance services, which included asset management, planned maintenance, reactive call-outs and the deep cleaning of extraction systems and canopies. We scheduled and carried out maintenance visits. A key part of this role was keeping the council's fledgling team up-to-date with all the work that was being done and the dates for planned maintenance. A key part of our role in working with the council's team



Great Rollright School

was giving them our full support and enabling them to take over as much of the organisation as possible. Away from preventive maintenance, we also ensured that all reactive calls were attended to quickly and made direct contact with site to help with access and site restrictions.

The Whitco team has also have been reacting quickly to deal with condemned equipment and to ensure that old equipment is replaced with reliable units which will fit the required specification. This is done by having units pre-specified and agreed, with prices set with the council for replacements.

Tony Butler, Whitco's MD, said: "The collapse of Carillion was the second biggest bankruptcy in British history. The human cost was equally serious, and we were proud and pleased to go the extra mile and to work with a valuable customer to minimise the impact as much as possible"

### Professionalism and commitment through a very difficult period

In February 2018 Oxfordshire County Council experienced a difficult situation with the collapse of Carillion. We engaged Whitco to pick up the maintenance and supply of catering equipment through this period. We are very grateful for the professionalism and commitment from Whitco to deliver these services through this very difficult period.

They consistently went above and beyond our expectations in delivering world-class customer service. Nothing was a problem or too difficult and I would not hesitate to recommend Whitco to any prospective client.

Thank you to all at Whitco for embracing the true meaning of partnership.

**Anthony Hulsman**  
Interim Head of Hard services

*'World-class service...'*

# Industry News

## Award winning burgers



Entries have now closed for the National Burger Awards 2019 but the live Cook-Off final beckons on February 20 in Islington (where else?)

The chef of the UK's best burger, as determined by a panel of industry judges, will receive £1,000 as well as the coveted title.

The competition is open to casual dining, hotels, QSR, pub and street food sectors, with chefs being asked to enter a recipe and method behind the best burger in their business.

The live final consists of two cooking rounds – one for their signature burger and one for the creation of a technical burger made up from a specific set of ingredients supplied on the day.

For more information about attending the final, head to [nationalburgerawards.co.uk](http://nationalburgerawards.co.uk).

## Cashless is coming...

Restaurants, pubs and coffee shops are seeing a massive increase in cashless payments from customers – up 83% in the first six months of last year, compared with the same period 12 months earlier. Giant pub chain Wetherspoon says that cash transactions fell from 78 per cent of all purchases in 2013 to 60 per cent in 2017.

The trend has grown from cash-averse millennials to an older generation of customers who say that they prefer the convenience of going cash-free. At the same time, research by WorldPay shows that we are all growing more impatient – 67 per cent of diners say that they won't wait more than five minutes to pay in a pub or restaurant.

The benefits for business owners include providing insight into customer spending patterns and growing customer loyalty through reward schemes. The net result is a boost to the bottom line - the Tossed chain in London saw turnover rise by 13.6% to £10 million after introducing cashless payments.

## Rising food costs...

If you haven't noticed (and we're sure you have) food prices are going up everywhere. We've been hit by a cocktail of causes – both natural and man-made.

- The hot dry summer led to falling yields of UK crops – spuds, onion and carrot crops were all down by 20 per cent
- The cost of wheat rose by 30% after the hot months and low yields



- We're planting 40 per cent fewer root crops than we did – and scarcity increases prices
- The fall in the value of sterling made imports dearer
- The introduction of a sugar tax increased the price of processed and prepared foods
- Increased global demand – for example, canned tuna prices rose 15 per cent last year
- Falling milk production has jacked up the cost of butter by 50 per cent in the last year.

Between March and July last year, the wholesale "farm gate" prices of some staples rocketed by up to 80 per cent, say economists, who used European Commission figures to make their calculations.

The price of wheat for bread rose by a fifth, strawberries by 28 per cent, carrots by 41 per cent and lettuce by 61 per cent. The farm gate price of carrots rose by 80 per cent,

A farm gate price is the cost of the product available at the farm, excluding any separately billed transport or delivery charges.



## Industry News

### We are drinking less...



Millenials are leading the abstinence trend as a large proportion of young people in England are shunning alcohol completely, according to a study.

Researchers said abstaining from alcohol was becoming “more mainstream” among people aged 16 to 24 after the analysis showed a rise in the proportion of non-drinkers.

The research, published in the journal BMC Public Health, found more than 25% of young people now classed themselves as “non-drinkers”.

University College London’s researchers said the norms around drinking appeared to be changing. And while young people are still the most likely to binge drink, rates of binge drinking – defined as drinking twice the recommended daily limits – fell from 27% to 18%.

Researchers studied data from the annual health

survey for England and found the proportion of 16- to 24-year-olds who do not drink alcohol had increased from 18% in 2005 to 29% in 2015.

Meanwhile, the proportion of “lifetime abstainers” rose from 9% to 17%. The study also appeared to show fewer young people were drinking harmful amounts. In 2005, 43% said they drank above the recommended limits, but this proportion had fallen to 28%, ten years later.

### Christmas charity event nets £240



The Motor Neurone Disease Association (MNDA) benefited to the tune £240 as a result of the Whitco Christmas fundraiser.

The MNDA works to eliminate a cruel, fatal disease for which there is currently no treatment and no cure. It’s now a year since motor neurone disease claimed the life of Whitco founder Jeff Whitaker and we are committed to helping the MNDA on a personal and corporate level to support the great work that the charity does. The MNDA is Whitco’s chosen charitable cause.

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Temporary  
Minimum 3 months 37.50 Hrs p/w

**WANTED**  
Temporary  
Minimum 3 months 37.50 Hrs p/w

**JOB VACANCIES**

### Whitco are growing... and we're looking for the right people

We need a

- **National Sales Manager,**
- **Regional Sales Manager (Beds/Herts/London)**
- **Catering Equipment Engineer - Fully qualified Gas/Electrically Qualified (for Cambridgeshire)**
- **Service Administrator**

to join our amazing and smiley team.



**Find out more...**

If excellence, achievement, customer service and team player are part of your ethos please contact Denise Halson by email on [denise@whitcoltd.com](mailto:denise@whitcoltd.com) with your CV or call us on **01832 735007**.