# Waterloo pub adds 4% optional service charge on bar orders, sparking tipping and cashless concerns



A south‑west London pub in Waterloo station has quietly introduced a 4 per cent “optional” service charge that is applied to food and drink bought at the bar, a move that has provoked fresh argument about tipping, cashlessness and the pressures facing hospitality operators. The Well & Boot displays a small sign at the bar advertising the levy and stating that “100 per cent of all tips go to our staff”; the venue also operates as a cashless outlet, accepting card and contactless only. According to reporting on the issue, the pub’s owners were approached for comment.

The venue’s own online drinks menu confirms the extra charge and sets out the retail prices customers see at the point of order: draught brands such as Camden Hells and Camden IPA are listed at £7.65, Aspall and Guinness at £7.45, wines by the glass around £7.50 for a 125ml measure, and cocktails at £12.50. The menu states that VAT is included and that a discretionary 4 per cent service charge will be added to bills, giving customers primary evidence of the policy and the pricing customers will encounter at the bar.

The location makes the potential financial impact of the charge more significant. Waterloo is one of Britain’s busiest transport hubs, with annual passenger entries well into the tens of millions, and businesses on station concourses rely heavily on passing footfall. That context helps explain why operators might look to small percentage levies as a means of protecting margins as prices and overheads rise elsewhere in the sector.

The move has drawn criticism from campaigners who argue that adding a service charge to drinks ordered at the bar stretches the usual assumption about what a tip is buying. Martin Quinn, campaign director for Campaign for Cash, told The Daily Mail: “You can understand it if you’re sitting down and it’s table service, but you’re ordering it from the bar. Where’s the service in that?” Mr Quinn has also been a vocal critic of cashless-only outlets more broadly, arguing that they discriminate against people who rely on notes and coins.

Consumer commentators say the practice is becoming more common and can catch customers out. Consumer expert Martyn James described such levies as “insidious”, warning that small print and unobtrusive signage can make them hard to spot; he reminded customers the charge is discretionary, but conceded many feel awkward refusing it because of social norms around tipping. Broader industry coverage has recorded a shift in tipping behaviour as cash declines and operators experiment with small charges — and regulators have been moving to tighten rules on how tips are handled, including measures designed to ensure employers pass tips on to staff and record them transparently.

Those pressures are visible in pricing data. Industry surveys show the average draught pint in British pubs has climbed above £5, with higher urban averages; London prices are substantially above the national mean, and premium or craft pints frequently top that regional figure. Hospitality trade groups and individual businesses have pointed to rising wage bills, increases in employers’ national insurance and reductions in business‑rate relief as forces pushing venues to pass costs on to customers.

The Well & Boot is operated by Glendola Leisure, part of a wider hospitality group, and the change should be read against the backdrop of corporate portfolio management and the economics of running outlets in high‑footfall transport locations. The company was contacted for comment about the introduction of the charge.

For customers, the immediate facts are straightforward: the venue’s menu and signage set out prices, the discretionary 4 per cent service charge and the cashless policy; customers retain the right to refuse an optional charge, but industry commentators note social awkwardness and declining cash use complicate that choice. The episode highlights the intertwining of higher operating costs, evolving tipping culture and ongoing debate over access and fairness as hospitality outlets seek new ways to preserve margins.

### 📌 Reference Map:

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15011377/London-pub-4pc-optional-charge-drinks-order-bar.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://wellandboot.co.uk/drinks-menu/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://wellandboot.co.uk/drinks-menu/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Waterloo_station), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15011377/London-pub-4pc-optional-charge-drinks-order-bar.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15011377/London-pub-4pc-optional-charge-drinks-order-bar.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz6dy556gy7o)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15011377/London-pub-4pc-optional-charge-drinks-order-bar.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/consumer-affairs/tip-cash-decline-service-charge/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/Article/2025/05/29/ma-data-shows-average-pint-price-in-pubs-now-517/), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15011377/London-pub-4pc-optional-charge-drinks-order-bar.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://foundationgroup.co.uk/), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15011377/London-pub-4pc-optional-charge-drinks-order-bar.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 8 – [[2]](https://wellandboot.co.uk/drinks-menu/), [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/consumer-affairs/tip-cash-decline-service-charge/), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz6dy556gy7o)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15011377/London-pub-4pc-optional-charge-drinks-order-bar.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://wellandboot.co.uk/drinks-menu/> - The Well & Boot drinks menu shows the venue’s draught and bottled beer, wine and cocktail offerings and retail prices, including Camden Hells and Camden IPA listed at £7.65, Aspall and Guinness at £7.45 and cocktails at £12.50. Wines are shown with 125ml measures priced around £7.50. The page explicitly states that VAT is included and that a discretionary service charge of 4% will be added to all bills. The menu confirms the bar’s location on the Waterloo Station balcony and opening hours, giving direct primary evidence of pricing, the service charge policy and practical details for customers and contactless.
3. <https://foundationgroup.co.uk/> - The Foundation Group website describes the corporate group that operates through two trading arms, Glendola Leisure and the Carlton Hotel Collection, confirming Glendola Leisure’s place within the group. It notes the company’s history, ownership and portfolio of pubs, bars and restaurants across the UK and abroad, and names Peter Salussolia as founder. The page therefore provides corporate confirmation that Glendola Leisure is an operating company responsible for hospitality venues and links to Glendola Leisure’s own websites. This source supports claims about ownership and management structure for sites such as Well & Boot, supplying authoritative company information for verification and credentials.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz6dy556gy7o> - The BBC article reports Martin Quinn, campaign director for Campaign for Cash, saying that he had been unable to use cash at council-run ice cream kiosks in Bournemouth and warning that card-only services discriminate against people who rely on notes and coins. It quotes Quinn describing his experience and criticising local services for going cashless, and it outlines the council’s response that cashless operations since 2020 had reduced break-ins and sped service. The piece establishes Quinn’s role campaigning for cash acceptance, documents public debate about card-only outlets and provides context about government statements on regulating cash acceptance and policy responses.
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Waterloo_station> - The Wikipedia page for London Waterloo station summarises its history, layout and usage statistics and records that Waterloo is one of the UK’s busiest railway termini. The entry notes passenger usage figures of around 57.8 million in the year to March 2023 and more recent figures indicating over 62 million entries in 2023–24, reinforcing the claim that tens of millions of people pass through the complex annually. The article also describes Waterloo’s status as a major transport hub with numerous platforms and Underground links, supplying public data used to estimate footfall for businesses inside the station for journalists and researchers.
6. <https://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/Article/2025/05/29/ma-data-shows-average-pint-price-in-pubs-now-517/> - The Morning Advertiser reports exclusive survey results showing the average draught pint price in British pubs rose to £5.17, up from £5.08 earlier in the year, and notes regional variation with London averaging approximately £6.10 per pint. The MA Pint Price Survey covered multiple brands and found craft and premium draught pints often exceed £6, with Camden Hells and BrewDog Punk IPA among the most expensive. The article explains the methodology uses licensee submissions across Britain and highlights volatility in local pricing, underscoring recent trends of rising pub prices and pressures on publicans to pass on increased operating costs and margins.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/consumer-affairs/tip-cash-decline-service-charge/> - The Telegraph piece examines how declining cash use has left tip jars empty and prompted cafes and hotels to add discretionary service charges to make up lost income. It cites SumUp data and industry voices indicating a substantial fall in tips and gives examples of outlets adding charges ranging from 3% to 12.5% on drinks or table service. The article notes some businesses add charges to takeaway orders and that new regulations coming into force will require employers to pass tips to staff and make tipping records visible. It explores consumer discomfort with automatic charges and the evolving tipping culture.