

Chamber of Commerce flip blame for “burger king” awards fiasco

Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce has come under fire for failing to take action over a debt-ridden business which was nominated for a top honour in its prestigious business awards.

The Capital’s [leading business organisation](#) dished out a Rising Star Award to Alexander Galpin in 2024, and at its glitzy 2025 ceremony held at the EICC on 27 February, his Luxford Burger chain was [shortlisted as a potential winner](#) in the High Growth Business of the Year category.

Mr Galpin, who operates two Luxford Burgers restaurants in Edinburgh, had earlier boasted: “Incredibly proud that we have been nominated for the [High Growth Business of the Year](#) by Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce for the second year running! Let’s hope we smash it this year.”



High Growth Business of the Year

- Edinburgh Letting Centre
- Edinburgh Trams
- Forth Ports
- Luxford Burgers
- RoslinCT – WINNER
- Tata Consultancy Services

But days before the awards ceremony, [The Edinburgh Reporter revealed to the Chamber](#) that Mr Galpin had crashed the parent company of Luxford Burgers with debts of almost £120,000 – including £78,000 due to HMRC for unpaid VAT and corporation tax.

[Secure Kitchens Ltd was placed into liquidation](#) on 9 January with debts of just under £135,000 due to 17 creditors including a number of small local suppliers. According to a report by the official liquidator, Begbies Traynor, the company had assets of £48,768 so the estimated deficit due to creditors was £118,869.

We asked Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce five times to comment on whether it was appropriate that Luxford Burgers was shortlisted in the awards, and if in light of the information provided would it review its award application procedures.

It took the Chamber of Commerce two weeks to respond – and then it passed the buck to “senior business figures” – who it said judge the awards independently. The Chamber claimed it had received no complaints or notes of issue.

However, one creditor listed in the Begbies Traynor report and

who is owed thousands of pounds by Secure Kitchens Ltd, said: "I would have thought it should have been a prerequisite of any award nomination that a business should be financially and ethically sound. It is wrong that Luxford Burgers was shortlisted in these awards, especially when it has put other businesses in the area at a financial disadvantage.



alex.galpin

Florence, Italy



Alexander Galpin enjoying La Dolce Vita in Florence – while creditors are out of pocket to the tune of £120,000

“The fact this information was brought to the Chamber’s attention prior to the awards ceremony makes it worse.”

The creditor, who asked not to be named, added: "Alex Galpin seems to think it is ok to leave all this debt behind and carry on in the same premises under a similar trading name as if nothing has happened. There is no doubt he exudes an arrogant persona and does not lack confidence."

The award nomination fiasco was also criticised by an ex-employee of Mr Galpin, who won an Employment Tribunal ruling against one of his other companies for unpaid wages.

The woman said: "It is unacceptable that individuals like him (Alexander Galpin) continue to operate businesses, win awards, and receive public recognition while their former employees struggle to get the wages they rightfully earned. He should be held accountable for his actions."

Luxford Burgers was started from a shipping container in Leith in 2020 as a "click and collect" and delivery service before opening its first restaurant in St Leonard's Street in March 2022. A second restaurant in Brandon Terrace opened last September and "dark kitchen" units operated in Glasgow, Manchester, Nottingham and Leeds.



Luxford Burgers, St Leonard's Street, Edinburgh

Mr Galpin's LinkedIn profile states he is Executive Director of hospitality management business Galpin Group which "owns and operates a portfolio of restaurants across the UK, with a combined gross turnover of £6m+ per annum".

But behind the grandiose claims of a multi-million-pound business empire – and in addition to the publicly available information on the liquidation of Secure Kitchens Ltd liquidation – brutal reviews by customers and former employees paint a different picture.

Out of [33 customer reviews on the respected Tripadvisor site](#), more than half rated the burger business as "terrible" or "poor" with only one or two star ratings, while on the Indeed recruitment/employment website one ex-staffer who left a one star review said: "If I could give them zero stars I would."

One Tripadvisor visitor last November pledged to “never go back” after “one of the worst dining experiences I’ve ever had”. Another in September 2024 said: “Grubby toilet – in fact the whole place, including staff, could do with a scrub”, while a third commented that they waited so long for service that they left before ordering any food: “Luxford – if you don’t like hospitality, you shouldn’t have opened your doors to guests – you should have remained as a dark kitchen and only sell on Deliveroo.”

[Reviews on Indeed left by former members of staff](#) were equally scathing with one stating: “No breaks, terminally understaffed, you won’t receive the correct training, your employment rights will be disregarded” before adding: “Hardest part of my job was not quitting as quickly as I wanted to – most enjoyable part was handing in my notice.”

A former front-of-house manager at the Canonmills restaurant said: “If you dare to stand up to the regular gaslighting from management, you can expect to be shown the door. If you value your well-being and self-worth, I urge you to think twice about applying.”

Another former employee in Leeds said the company culture and work environment was “toxic, disrespectful and uses staff like slaves”, adding the most stressful part about working for Luxford Burgers was “getting paid properly and on time”.

1.0

.....



if i could give them zero stars i would

Waiter (Former Employee) - Edinburgh - 18 September 2024

NO breaks

terminally understaffed

you wont receive the correct training

management are terrible

your employment rights will be disregarded

workplace culture is faux friendly

hardest part of my job was not quitting as quickly as i wanted to

most enjoyable part was handing in my notice

A statement from Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce said: “The Edinburgh Chamber Annual Business Awards are free to all members to enter, and it is important to note they are judged independently of the Chamber by senior business figures.

“They are well-regarded, although we constantly seek to improve. This year the awards had record entries across 15 categories, with our highest on-the-night attendance. We have received no complaints or notes of issue since the event took place.

“You will understand the Chamber has no locus to comment on legal matters involving any business, member or not, that the Chamber is not a party to. We note that the business concerned provided a full response to your initial questions, and the Chamber has no further comment to add.”

The Edinburgh Reporter made several attempts to obtain a comment from Mr Galpin but he failed to respond.

Earlier, he told us that Secure Kitchens Ltd had experienced cash flow problems in March 2023 and was found to be trading at a loss. Cost cutting measures had included closing operations in Nottingham and Leeds and Mr Galpin claimed he had “cut off a limb to save the body” which had safeguarded 37 jobs, 27 of which were in Edinburgh.

[Luxford Burgers'](#) two Edinburgh restaurants and dark kitchens are continuing to trade through Got Buns Ltd, a company set up on 14 June 2024 with Mr Galpin and Alexis Bedetti-Dato listed as directors, and Mr Galpin as the majority shareholder with Andrew Hinchcliffe named as a minority shareholder.

