THE OVERVIEW

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HOSPACE 2018

The wisdom of the crowd

Welcome to THE OVERVIEW

Last month's HOSPACE saw plenty in the way of wise chin-scratching, as the sector continued to try and do that which the government seems incapable: finding a way to handle Brexit.

Mark Essex, Director, Public Policy, KPMG, who took part in the Brexit panel, told me that many companies had now "put on their wet tyres" and were taking a cautious stance towards the March 2019 deadline. Those who were able to whip them off first would be in a prime position to take advantage, but when the rain is due to clear, nobody knows. The fear of a Corbyn-led government was giving many more cause for pause than a bit of a squall.

A study released shortly after HOSPACE reported that a no-deal Brexit could reduce 2019 travel receipts by USD747m and lead to a potential fall in overseas visits by UK travellers by five million.

Caroline Bremner, Head of Travel at Euromonitor International, said: "A 'no-deal Brexit' is forecast to result in five million fewer outbound departures in 2022 than would have been the case under the baseline scenario. With the UK economy in a state of flux, and a decline in the value of sterling, departures would stagnate over 2018 to 2020."

Bremner said that she expected to see a the pound fall by a further 10% in the event of a no-deal Brexit, in which the UK would leave the EU in March with no agreements about the future relationship signed.

She added: "Any 'no-deal Brexit bounce' is only forecast to add 2.0% more arrivals in 2022 than under the baseline scenario. The USA would be the source market contributing the most under this scenario but with fewer than 100,000 additional arrivals over 2019 to 2022."

The rains may be coming, but hopefully a summer like this year's may at least see staycations shine.

Katherine Doggrell

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In November's issue...

HOSPACE 2018
Calling the conference

HOSPA CEO Jane Pendlebury looks back over another successful conference

So, that's it for another year. HOSPACE is over for 2018. The HOSPA team is never quite sure whether to breathe a sigh of relief or mourn the passing of another annual conference. The build up has us all working ridiculously long hours but the event itself makes it all worth it. We are so proud of what the team is able to deliver each year. It is always very gratifying to receive such good feedback and we are confident that the quality of the content combined with the calibre of the networking makes HOSPACE unique. Thank you all for attending and adding to the atmosphere and success of the day.

As I mentioned in the last edition of The Overview (which doubled up as the delegate pack) and also numerous times throughout the day, our annual conference is the event that it is because of the contribution of the sponsors and exhibitors. Without their investment, HOSPACE would be a very different event and we appreciate their commitment to us. As a hotelier, I urge you to keep abreast of the changing landscape out there - not just in technological advances, but also in legal / regulatory changes such as Making Tax Digital and the impact that Brexit will have on the hospitality industry. Talk to the vendors. More often than not the suppliers are ahead of the game and can offer advice and support on facing new challenges.

There are many reports in this month's edition of The Overview, covering specific aspects of HOSPACE, but in short, for me it was a day packed with informed panel discussions and educational workshops, with sprinkles of wisdom from industry stalwarts.

And then the party! I don't think anyone went away from the Gala Dinner disappointed. Helen Richardson-Walsh was full of energy and listening to her talk was a great way to start the evening. She told tales of her gold medal win at the Rio Olympics and the focused mindset that enabled Team GB's remarkable achievement. She said to me during the meal that were it not for London hosting the 2012 Olympics, women's hockey would have been unlikely to have secured the funding for her sport - another reason to be proud. The magicians were breathtaking - the award winners inspiring. The mood in the room was electric and I know that many a new contact was made over the course of dinner and the ensuing party. The last men (and ladies) standing finally admitted defeat at 4am!

We are planning to return to the Royal Lancaster again next year, which I am sure you will be pleased to hear. There will be a few changes to the format and physical layout, but much will continue as usual. Please SAVE THE DATE - 28th November 2019, which is much later in the month, ensuring that we miss half term holidays and will no longer fall on the first day of a new calendar month.

New study reinforces development of hotelier and guest centred systems

Many of today's Property Management Systems (PMS) suffer from poor levels of integration and a lack of support for hoteliers, a new report published this month has claimed.

The report, 'h2c Global PMS Study: The Future of Hotel Management Systems' quizzed executives from 110 global hotel chains on their technology needs.

PMS technology is vital in the smooth running of hotels as it gives managers an overview of everything from bookings to sales and marketing functions, HR, payroll and amenities management.

While poor support was ranked as a major gripe for hoteliers when it came to their current PMS provision (30%), the view on what they wanted in an ideal world was most revealing. Here, 58% called for better integration between their PMS and other systems. Also, on the wish-list was better mobile integration (41%); easy to use interface (36%) and access to better intelligence data (34%).

Similarly, hoteliers suggested today's technology was not built with ease of use in mind. In Europe, a staggering 66% said they were only using a fraction of the functionality of their system. This contrasts with the fact that only one-third (38%) said they could use the PMS in a 'guest-facing' way, be that managing bookings or letting them access hotel services.

Andrew Williams, product director at Guestline commented: "The h2c study demonstrates very clearly something that Guestline has been saying for some time - hoteliers don't want to be IT experts. Instead, they want a PMS that is simple to use, intuitive and gives them the information in an understandable way. The report also confirms how influential support functions are for a hotel when choosing a PMS and that it is absolutely crucial to offer quick responses to problems. This is music to our ears at Guestline.

"Our systems are all built with open APIs because we take the view that our customers are rarely starting from scratch and they need to integrate with many other systems. Hoteliers often add systems together as they grow and it is vital these different components talk to one another. Because we understand the needs of hoteliers, we have long taken the view that technology should add value to your business, not hinder your operation."

The report also revealed conflict amongst hoteliers over how technology was chosen and sourced. While 30% said they wanted a cloud-based solution, the deciding vote on purchasing decisions was very often left to IT departments rather than those at the 'sharp end' of the business.

Andrew Williams, product director at Guestline added: "These findings prove that hoteliers are best served if they have a technology supplier that can work in tandem with them. Our cloud-based systems put hotelier's needs at the heart of all technology development. We offer scalable systems, open APIs and work proactively with customers to tailor our solutions to meet their needs."

Michaela Papenhoff, Founder and Managing Director of h2c, h2c commented: "Today's market dynamics tie the resources of many vendors down to getting their technology right at the expense of support services. At the end of the day, both tasks are equally important to keep hotels happy." says Michaela Papenhoff.

For more information on Guestline please visit Guestline.com

About Guestline:

Guestline provides innovative property management, channel distribution and digital marketing solutions to the hospitality industry

- Guestline's offices across Europe include Munich, Germany (covering the DACH region), Eindhoven, The Netherlands (covering the Benelux region) and the UK. They also have an office in Bangkok, Thailand (covering Asia)
- Established in the UK, Guestline's UK offices are in Shrewsbury (Head Office) and London
- Founded on cloud-based technology, Guestline's revenue generating solutions enable hotel groups, independents, serviced apartments and pub companies to achieve maximum occupancy at the most profitable rate
- Fully integrated into the Guestline distribution and central reservation platforms, the property management software is currently growing revenues in hospitality businesses in 20 countries across five continents
- The range of products include Rezlynx PMS, online booking, CRS, channel distribution software, PCI compliance, EPoS and digital marketing solutions

HOSPA

The Hospitality Professionals Association

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Enrolling for March 2019, to learn more contact us:

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HOSPA

The Hospitality Professionals Association

Professional Development

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The HOSPA Financial Management and Accounting programme is the only course of its kind providing future finance managers in hotels, restaurants and leisure with an industry specific in-depth programme of study.

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- Develops the skills and knowledge to manage a hospitality finance department
- Graduates receive exemption from two components of the CIMA Certificate in Business Accounting (2017 syllabus)
- Leads to HOSPA Associate (Cert Finance) membership of HOSPA on completion
- Is convenient and relevant to your career in hospitality finance

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Wisdom of the crowd

Delegates at this year's HOSPACE 2018 event pooled ideas when facing rising costs and Brexit.

Jane Pendlebury, Chief Executive of HOSPA, said: "The event was everything I wanted it to be and more. We made some changes to the format this year which went down exceptionally well and we're pleased with the results.

"HOSPACE wouldn't be what it is without the sponsors and exhibitors. They enable us to put on those extra bells and whistles so we're very grateful to them. The rooms were full and buzzing throughout the day and I know the delegates learnt a lot too.

"Thanks to everyone involved and to the HOSPA team, without whom this event would not be possible. We're looking forward to building on the success of 2018 at next year's HOSPACE."

HVS Chairman Russell Kett said that average room rates had also shown little change, leading to a minimal impact on revpar which now sits at £121 for London and £57 in the regions for the year to September.

London has fared better than the provinces over the past three months with hotel occupancy up 3% to 88.2%, boosting revpar by 4%. Intense competition, however, meant that room rates rose just 1% to £158.03 in London, compared with 2% in the provinces to £77.69.

The sector does continue to attract strong investor interest whenever anything comes onto the market, particularly in London, said Kett, citing £5.2bn-worth of sales in the last 12 months of trading. A strong 2017 meant that the volume of comparable transactions in London were down 33% over the past 12 months at £1.8bn, although up 31% in the regions to a value of £3.4bn.

Transaction activity over the past 12 months has included both portfolio and single asset deals such as the sale of Principal's 14 hotels for £750m and the 76-hotel deal by Travelodge worth £246m. In London most notable sales over the past 12 months include that of the Beaumont hotel for £130m, and the Hilton Kensington for £260m.

"Hotel operators have stood firm in what has been a difficult climate. Unfortunately we are unlikely to see any immediate relief in the first half of 2019 particularly with the Brexit agreement as yet unresolved. This has the potential to reduce business travel and therefore corporate demand. The weak pound will benefit incoming travellers and while this may improve occupancy, is unlikely to lift average rates and revpar."

Kett told the audience that occupancy in UK hotels was likely to be heavily impacted by future openings as London was set to see an 8% rooms supply increase next year, with a 5% increase in the regions - a rise on this year's 2% growth in both London and the regions.

"With such a strong pipeline of hotels due to come on stream, we will need a healthy demand growth to avoid a drop in occupancy percentages," he warned.

Revpar in 2019 was expected to show a 1% increase in London, with a 2% increase anticipated in the regions in line with GDP forecasts. However, issues such as sourcing staff, increasing payroll costs and rising business rates continue to be of concern, despite some good news in the Budget.

"The reduction in employment costs and business rates, particularly for smaller businesses and a reduction in the cost of apprenticeships for SMEs is welcome news," said Kett, "as is the freeze on excise duties on beer, cider and spirits. But the biggest issue by far, for all businesses, remains whether Theresa May will pull off a satisfactory Brexit deal, then be able to sell the deal to her party, to Westminster and to the country as a whole."

Continuing the Brexit theme, the message to delegates from Professor Chris Cowls, CEO, Eproductive and Professor Andrew Lockwood, Forte Professor of Hospitality Management, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Surrey was that hotels continued to rely heavily on EU employees.

The pair revisited last year's study, and reported that, in their sample of four hotel chains, EU employees accounted for nearly one third of hours worked in the year to June 2018.

They reported that in the first two years of the study, the decrease recorded in total hours worked by staff was mainly in UK employees. This year had seen a marked decrease (of nearly 7%) in hours worked by EU staff for the first time. The percentage of hours worked by staff from the rest of the world was relatively stable, albeit at a much lower base.

As a percentage of total hours worked, UK had risen by 0.4% in June 2017 to June 2018. In the same period, EU hours were down by 6.7%.

This year's report also analysed sources of staff by contract type and department, with results showing that EU staff worked more flexibly than staff from the UK and the rest of the world. Around 30% of contracts with EU staff were casual, with 69% on permanent contracts and the remainder fixed terms. Lockwood said: "If we want flexibility and the majority comes from EU labour, we're going to have some problems, particularly in F&B and rooms."

The study also noted that, over the three years hotel revenue had gone up, but the number of hours has decreased, so productivity had improved.

Lockwood said: "Over the past three years sales revenue has consistently increased, so the reduction in hours has meant an increased in productivity - but an increase in service? I don't know."

Looking to an area where there was more potential for control was online booking, with Andrew Sangster, Editorial Director, Hotel Analyst, telling delegates: "We've had 20 years of the internet and we're only at the point today where just over a third of rooms are booked online. There's much more to come."

Clive Hillier, Consultant, Colliers Hotel Asset Management Division, added: "The OTAs are a necessary partner and like all partners you hope that they will not dominate the relationship. We don't mind paying you 22% to sell a room on a Saturday night, but we're not paying you 22% to put PwC into a room on a Tuesday night.

"There has been a cost erosion because of the cost of acquisition, now we have energy cost inflation, food price inflation and wage cost erosion. So it is very worrying. It is also worrying from a moral point of view as so far revenue is not defined net of commission. I'm sure the brands will tell you they are taking this very seriously.

"It's inevitable that the brands have to fight back. They chose to get out of real estate and became brand companies. If they were happy to franchise and see the growth of white label operators and have given up management, then if they then give up selling rooms, then their existence becomes questionable. They have to fight back. But it's a bit of a King Canute exercise."

Matthew Shutt, Director, Global Accounts, Expedia Group, said: "People love OTAs for two reasons: the vast array of choice and the frictionless journey."

Ally Northfield, Director, Revenue by Design, was critical of efforts made by the hotel operators to drive direct bookings, encouraging customers to use their own websites, often with a discount offered via joining a loyalty scheme. She said: "Every consumer books direct. Directly with Expedia, with Booking.com and this concept of book direct is something we've created, it's a fallacy. It doesn't make sense to try and fight against an environment where you have convenience of booking for the consumer."

Carmen Hui, Commercial Director, Booking.com, defended the position of the OTAs, commenting: "We need to create an apples to apples comparison. We are told that or costs are too transparent, compared to others. Our costs may look high, but that's one charge - we spend money on sales and marketing and we have 17,000 people doing customer service.

"The next generation merges their physical reality and digital reality - phigital. If you think about it that way, which channels will you partner with to help you distribute your rooms? Because that's all we're trying to do, help you distribute your rooms.

"It's entirely possible to talk to the guests in a technology environment in a way which they want to. You can create an environment which the guests want to experience it's personalised profiling, it's putting the customer at the centre of everything they do. You don't need a neuroscientist to get a guest through the door."

The event was hosted shortly after China-based OTA Ctrip announced that it was launching a hotel brand of its own. Hiller responded: "I've never get met a sheik who wanted to build an Expedia hotel."

Harry Murray, HOSPA President, concluded: "I was delighted to preside over my first HOSPACE event as president. HOSPA makes a very valuable contribution to the hospitality industry and the event was very educational and good fun. I enjoyed all the sessions and definitely learnt a lot. I was also delighted with the turnout and the hospitality we received at the Royal Lancaster.

"A highlight for me was the session we had on women in hospitality. I think there's real scope here and, with Brexit looming, we want to encourage more females to come into hospitality. The talk on technology was also very interesting and there's certainly a place for it to progress in our industry."

Professional Development

Learner Awards Ceremony

Jumeirah Carlton Tower - 24th January 2019

Celebrating the accomplishments of the highest achieving learners from HOSPA's respected programmes in Financial Management and Revenue Management.

Join us at this celebratory event on Thursday 24th January 2019 in the

Garden Rooms at the Jumeirah Carlton Tower, London, SW1X 9PY

Commencing at 2pm with a panel debate with distinguished speakers, followed by certificate presentations, the announcement of the "Employer of the Year" and "Learners of the Year" for Revenue and Financial Management and concluding with a celebratory afternoon tea with networking.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Increase brand awareness at this event which is aimed at key decision-makers for learning & development in hospitality, senior finance and revenue managers and directors, cluster and financial controllers and revenue analysts.

Sponsorship offers can include but not limited to:

Logo on all correspondence, website, event programme, email marketing and social media concerning the event; promotional banners.

Contact: helen.marshall@hospa.org or education@hospa.org

Individual tickets:
£50 + VAT from the online shop at www.hospa.org/en/shop/product/learner-awards-ceremony/

Or email:
education@hospa.org

A wealth of knowledge

In years gone by, HOSPA have awarded scholarships to high-performing university students studying hospitality, enabling them to attend HOSPACE free of charge. This year, we tweaked the opportunity to invite applications from up-and-coming hospitality professionals who have taken up the mentoring opportunity offered by Springboard.

Michael Hanton from Springboard introduced the topic on the main HOSPACE stage by giving some background on the Springboard charity and specifically the mentoring programme, known as Gems. HOSPA sponsors Gems and is proud to have helped recruit a number of mentors on to the programme. The mentors' key role is to support students in their last year at university and in their first few years in the industry, to ensure they receive the guidance and encouragement needed to retain them in hospitality.

Katherine Greenhalgh and Luis Suarez were the proud recipients of the first HOSPACE Gems Mentors scholarship. These two high-achieving undergraduates are both in the final year of their studies in Tourism and Hospitality Management, at CU Coventry.

Katherine has a passionate interest in the industry and has combined her studies with a professional placement at the Copthorne Hotel in Birmingham, where she gained her level two award for personal (liquor) licence holders. She currently works part-time as a journey ambassador at The Hilton Garden Inn. Her experiences and hard work allow her to be a flexible problem solver whose skills have been repeatedly praised by senior management.

Luis has worked in Gran Canaria and more recently at Coombe Abbey - one of the area's premium hotels. Coming from a family of hoteliers he is following a family tradition of excellent customer service. His work and studies are ensuring he will have a long and prosperous future in the industry.

Their course leader, Marion Greenhalgh, said: "The students and the university see the Gems Mentoring programme as a wonderful addition to their CV, not only allowing them to expand their networking possibilities, but also allowing them to communicate directly with professionals who really know what the industry wants and are therefore best placed to advise and guide them in their career choices."

Our president, Harry Murray, was keen to be involved in the presentations as he is passionate about encouraging young people to join (and more importantly remain) in hospitality. Harry's own career is noteworthy and his reputation is testament to his commitment and dedication hotels and their guests. The fact that he enjoys his work and regularly refers himself as being in the 'happiness business' inspires many a young person!

Should you want to get involved with motivating the next generation of hospitality workers and making vital links between your business and universities across the UK - please become a mentor on the Springboard Gems programme or volunteer as a guest lecturer. Find out more: https://industry.springboard.uk.net/getting-involved/gems

The scholarships were kindly sponsored by HFTP – Hospitality Finance and Technology Professionals, headed up by Frank Wolfe and represented in Europe by Carl Weldon, who many of you know well. We are grateful for their support.

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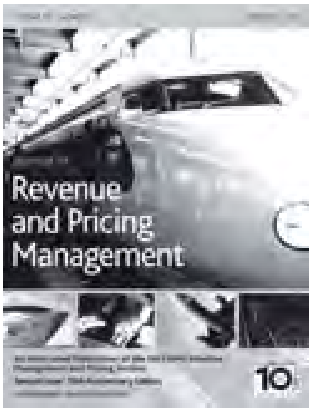

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WTTC makes Brexit move

WTTC brought a delegation of CEOs from all over the world to meet with the UK government for the first time to discuss the government's approach to the growth of the UK travel & tourism sector.

The UK is currently the fifth largest Travel & Tourism economy in the world. It generates 4.1 million jobs and contributes 10.5% of the UK's GDP. International visitor numbers increased by 5.1% to 37.7 million in 2017. Last year, the UK Travel & Tourism sector grew three times faster than the wider economy (5.3% compared to 1.7%).

Members of WTTC, which represents the global private Travel & Tourism sector, praised the UK government for the country's commitment to progressive visa policies as a way of attracting tourists and urged the UK government to support the sector through the process of Brexit to maximise the UK's growth potential and preserve its status as a world tourism leader.

Particularly, WTTC Members encouraged the UK government to maximise the economic and social opportunity of Travel & Tourism to enhance competitiveness of the United Kingdom and embrace the opportunities of technological innovation, such as the use of biometric technology.

Gloria Guevara, WTTC President & CEO, said: "Travel & Tourism is one of the UK's great success stories. The UK is the world's fifth largest Travel & Tourism economy and our sector sustains millions of jobs and billions of pounds for the UK economy. Recent growth in UK has been particularly strong for which the Government should be commended.

"WTTC's partnership with the UK government has resulted in today's delegation of private sector leaders to Number 10 Downing Street to discuss how Travel & Tourism can be used to continue to drive inward investment and job creation. "We look forward to extending our partnership to the next level and continuing to support the long-term sustainable growth of the UK Travel & Tourism sector.

"Part of this growth will come from the most efficient use of existing infrastructure. The UK has an opportunity to lead the world in the adoption of biometric technology in the travel chain. It is vital that we embrace the most modern technology to maximise the use of existing capacity while increasing security and enhancing the traveller journey."

Michel Taride, Group President, Hertz International, said: "The United Kingdom is recognised as an engine for innovation in Europe. In the travel industry in particular, the UK is at the forefront of the digital transformation and now new start-ups are further accelerating this momentum in mobility and travel. There is a great opportunity for the country to continue to enhance its digital leadership after Brexit."

Arthur de Haast, Chairman Global Capital Markets Board and Hotels & Hospitality Group, JLL, said: "From a global perspective, the UK is seen as one of the best places in the world to invest due to its world-leading transparency, taxation, and legal system. Not only does this status need to be maintained and enhanced after Brexit, but we also need to work hard to make sure that this message is understood globally."

HOSPA secures grant

HOSPA is delighted to announce that it has successfully secured a grant from the Savoy Educational Trust, with additional investment from HOSPA, to develop an eBook in Hospitality Financial Management Practice.

The guide is set to focus on the key principles that characterise the practice of management accounting in the industry.

With hospitality witnessing an increase in accounting professionals entering the sector from other industries, the guide will serve as a support tool for their induction and onboarding, helping to familiarise them with the specifics of the sector. Particular guidance will focus on the report formats and the performance measures commonly used, which are based on the recommendations of the Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging Industry.

This follows in the footsteps of the highly acclaimed HOSPA Revenue Management eBook, also funded by the Savoy Educational Trust, which has been used extensively by practitioners and academics following its launch in 2012. The funding will be used to:

- Develop the eBook content which will be freely available to the sector via the HOSPA website
- Provide a tutors' resource for use in the hospitality education sector in universities, colleges and schools
- Include content relating to careers and professional development as well as financial material

Commenting on the Savoy Educational Trust award, HOSPA Head of Professional Development Debra Adams said: "We are greatly indebted to the Savoy Educational Trust for their generosity in supporting HOSPA's determination to provide leading edge resources to underpin these niche areas in the hospitality industry. Our aim is to not only provide a resource for the sector but to widen the access of the eBook and the work of HOSPA to a more diverse audience across the hospitality industry. Additionally, we hope that this resource will prove useful to the world of hospitality education with the inclusion of examples and scenarios to be used in teaching."

For more information on the Finance Management and Revenue Management Programmes and how to enrol, please visit the HOSPA website: https://www.hospa.org/education

About the Savoy Educational Trust

The Savoy Educational Trust is an independent, grant giving charitable trust established in 1961 whose main aim is to advance and develop education, training and qualifications within the hospitality industry. In order to fulfil this aim and help meet the current and future skills needs of an industry that is a major employer and contributor to the UK economy, the Trustees award grants for a variety of hospitality-related projects to educational establishments, trade associations, charitable organisations/ social enterprises, and individuals. For more information visit www.savoyeducationaltrust.org.uk or please contact Margaret Georgiou, Trust Administrator, on 0207 849 3001, email: info@savoyeducationaltrust.org.uk

Welcome and congratulations to the latest Associate Certified members:

Elisa Munerati, JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa | **Kerrie Flitcroft,** Renaissance Manchester Hotel

A mixed bag for the high street

BDO's Neil Stockham looks at the Chancellor's latest plan

When it comes to retail, there are two topics that dominate the news - huge online retailers don't pay enough tax and small businesses are being crippled by business rates.

Mr Hammond announced a cut in business rates by a third for retailers with a rateable value of £51,000 or less. This measure is sensible and will benefit the smallest and most vulnerable who operate independent shops.

However, what of those in the middle - the engine room of the economy; those that aren't huge global corporates that grab the attention of policymakers or small independents that get the sympathy and support of government? They have stores up and down the country (and pay business rates galore), they employ thousands and thousands of people (while employment costs have soared) and they are the ones desperately trying to make their online offerings work in a hugely competitive market.

These larger retailers operating from multiple stores, like department stores which have seen their average rates bill rise by over 25% will see little if any benefit from the proposed rates reforms and still await the long called for overhaul of the rates system. In addition, with the national living wage rising by 5% - the retail sector, as one of the largest employers of staff on the national living wage, is more likely to see a further increase in their cost burden.

The Chancellor did unveil a £675m Future High Streets Fund, which he said will allow councils to rejuvenate high streets, along with a dedicated high street taskforce and a trial of a register of empty shops. This is a welcome start. Together with the proposed measures to provide tax relief for investment spend from 2019 via the increase to the annual investment allowance and ability to claim tax relief on structural spend may encourage retailers to initiate longer-term capital projects. However, it will need much more than £675m over four years to rebuild the high street communities that have suffered years of decline.

As expected, Mr Hammond also revealed a new digital services tax of 2% on UK sales by profitable companies that generate at least £500m a year in global revenues. The tax is forecast to raise over £400m a year from large tech firms such as Amazon when it comes into effect in 2020.

As proposed, most of our mid-sized retailers should escape the new-targeted digital services tax - the Chancellor seems to have heeded the warning that a simple turnover tax on online sales would have hit them hardest and led to more high profile failures.

So, overall, a mixed bag - no level playing field for bricks and mortar v online, measures targeted at the polarised ends of the retail spectrum but little for mid-market retailers at the heart of our high street to cheer. With Christmas trading now upon us, the Government has missed an opportunity to support those in the middle and ease the significant burden they shoulder.

Government loses gamble

An under-pressure government has brought forward the date to cut maximum stakes of FOBTs, reports Katherine Doggrell.

The government has pulled forward a reduction in the top wager from £100 to £2 for fixed-odds betting terminals in the face of a Commons revolt.

The Chancellor Philip Hammond, had said in the Budget that a reduction in FOBT stakes from £100 to £2 would not take effect until October next year, a decision which provoked the resignation of sports minister Tracey Crouch.

Crouch said: “From the time of the announcement to reduce stakes and its implementation, £1.6bn will be lost on these machines, a significant amount of which will be in our most deprived areas, including my own constituency. In addition, two people will tragically take their lives every day due to gambling-related problems and for that reason as much as any other I believe this delay is unjustifiable.”

She added that “ministers must adhere to collective responsibility and cannot disagree with policy, let alone when it’s policy made against your wishes relating to your own portfolio”.

More than 100 MPs including Boris Johnson, Jacob Rees-Mogg and David Davis put their names to an amendment designed to force the government to bring forward the stake reduction.

With the government also under pressure over Brexit, a climbdown was quick. Jeremy Wright, the minister for the department for digital, culture, media and sport, said: “The government has been clear that protecting vulnerable people is the prime concern, but that as a responsible government it is also right to take the needs of those employed by the gambling industry into account and provide time for an orderly transition.

“Parliament has, however, been clear that they want this change to be made sooner. The government has listened and will now implement the reduction in April 2019.”

He added that the government “will expect the gambling industry to work with it to reduce the effect of any impact on jobs and to support employees that may be affected by this expedited timeline”.

In 2016 the government launched a review of gaming machines and social responsibility measures, looking at covers proposals relating to: maximum stakes and prizes for all categories of gaming machines permitted under the Gambling Act 2005; and social responsibility measures for the industry as a whole to minimise the risk of gambling-related harm, including on gambling advertising, online gambling, gaming machines and research, education and treatment.

At the time, the British Beer & Pub Association called on the government to ensure that Category C amusement machines (also known as fruit machines) in pubs remain attractive to customers, so that they continue to form a vital revenue stream for Britain’s pubs.

The BBPA called for the government to allow a modest rise in stakes and prizes for pub machines. The BBPA it also called for an urgent consultation on the Category C technical standards to ensure the pub amusement machine can survive into the future.

Brigid Simmonds, Chief Executive, British Beer & Pub Association, said: “The amusement machine offer in pubs needs to be able to develop to meet the expectations of the consumer and form part of a low stake, low prize entertainment offer in a pub. Our proposals to increase both stake and prize should help keep pub amusement machines competitive.

“Any gaming machine use in pubs is overseen by the licensee/manager and their team, and pubs represent, much as they do for drinking, a socially responsible environment. The BBPA already has a long-established code of practice to ensure machines are operated responsibly.

“Operating costs for pubs are under pressure from high beer duty, business rates, the apprenticeship levy, and mandatory auto-enrolment pensions for employees. Income from amusement machines can be vitally important in keeping many pubs viable, and an increase in prize for Category C machines will enable pubs to invest in the business and keep an important social resource viable.”

Prior to the consultation CLMS, which analyses fruit machine data, warned that the future of AWPs was under threat. Colm Taylor, Owner, CLMS, said: “The data I have researched, which is taken from 60% of the UK’s managed houses, shows that the average weekly income from pub AWPs has decreased by 25% since 2007 - a figure which I estimate to have cost the pub sector at least £600m over the last decade.

”Three decades ago, Britain was manufacturing 50,000 pub machines a year, now that figure is less than 10,000. The triennial review can relieve the headache of decline which is why it’s so important, particularly when pubs are up against the competition of licensed betting offices.”

John White, Chief Executive, BACTA, the UK trade association which represents the low stake gaming sector, concluded: "The scale of decline in pub machine income demonstrated by these figures provides yet another powerful endorsement for our case that the stake and prize levels for pub machines must increase. Both BACTA and the pub industry have called for a maximum stake of £2 and a maximum prize of £150. Our modelling suggests this would boost the cash in box figure by around 6%. The impact of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals on pub machine income has also been highlighted by these figures. The case for a substantial reduction in the stake on these machines is compelling."

On the supplier side, last September analysts at Barclays forecast that Ladbrokes Coral would lose £437m in annual revenue if the maximum stake was reduced to £2, William Hill £288m and Paddy Power Betfair £60m. Philip Bowcock, Chief Executive at William Hill, who described the limit as a "rumour" thus far commented: "In addition to thousands of lost jobs and closed shops, a £2 stake, essentially a ban on FOBT content, would mean tens of millions wiped off [horse] racing's income as each betting shop pays £30,000 in media rights."

The Association of British Bookmakers added: "The focus of any final decision should be to adopt measures that will help problem gamblers. A £2 stake is effectively a ban on FOBTs, would put 21,000 people out of jobs and have huge consequences for sports such as horse and greyhound racing.

"Betting shops are investing significant sums of money in new technology to help identify those at risk and ensure they get the help that they need."

The government pullback came as the Gambling Commission reported that only 10% of pubs intervened to stop children gambling on their premises.

Helen Rhodes, Programme Director at the Gambling Commission, said: "We are extremely concerned that pubs across England are failing to stop children playing gaming machines designed for adults. We urgently call on the pub sector to take action immediately to enforce the laws in place to protect children and young people."

Simmonds, said that pubs should offer a "safe and friendly environment for families". She said: "We have ensured that all of our members are aware of both the BBPA's and Gambling Commission's codes of practice and we are already taking steps to develop a social charter for responsible gambling, for use by licensees and pub companies.

"However given the importance of this issue we are seeking urgent meetings with the Gambling Commission and local authorities to ensure appropriate action is taken."

UKHospitality reiterated that underage gaming in pubs is wholly unacceptable and highlighted its, and the sector's efforts to stamp out illegal play.

The move follows the publication of data by the Gambling Commission showing high levels of underage gaming machine play in pubs.

UKHospitality Chief Executive Kate Nicholls said: "Underage play on gaming machines in pubs is wholly unacceptable. Our members, and the wider pub sector, understand this and the issue is taken very seriously.

"UKHospitality is already working with its members and other trade bodies to develop a social responsibility charter, with bespoke pub-specific messaging; highlighting responsible gaming and the prevention of underage play.

"We will also be writing to the Gambling Commission to seek a meeting at the earliest opportunity."

→ AWARDS

The HOSPACE Gala Dinner always has a lively atmosphere, and 2018 was no exception.

Since introducing the presentations of our 'Professional of the Year' awards last year, the Gala Dinner has become jam-packed with activity, glitz and excitement. Following a full day of educational content - the mood of anticipation and relaxation was almost palpable even during the drinks reception.

As soon as our wonderful toastmaster Peter Hancock had us seated, Helen Richardson-Walsh MBE took to the stage and kept the audience spellbound as she played a video of the England hockey team's road to victory. As you no doubt remember, they won Gold in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. She then produced her medals and told us how psychology played a big part in their success. Before their momentous win, the team would regularly ask themselves 'Would a gold medal-winning athlete eat this for breakfast? Would a gold medal-winning athlete…" We were so lucky to have Helen as our guest this year. She was charming, eloquent and inspirational. She generously posed for many pictures with her medals, even one in the ladies' powder room - but as Helen said to me, "to be fair, they were great loos!".

The first award for Inspirational Finance Professional of the Year was sponsored by BDO and presented by Stuart Collins, Partner at BDO. The winner J'aininne Sinclair, Financial Controller at The Radisson Blu in Glasgow, had been nominated by a former work colleague Margita Alsina who is now working at The Hallmark Hotel in Glasgow. According to Margita, when J'aininne was her boss, she 'fed her curiosity' and ensured she had a 'well-rounded understanding of the bigger picture'. J'aininne is 'a living example of why you should not act fast, but think the decisions through. She proves her worth with actions, not promises.'

J'aininne has supported HOSPA over the years by hosting our 'Scottish Quiz Night' in her hotel, so I was doubly pleased when I found out she had won. We were fortunate to have J'aininne there at the dinner. She had some deadlines in Glasgow that were potentially preventing her from joining us this year. As Margita and I plotted to get her to London, I was sure J'aininne had figured out the reason we wanted her at the dinner. However, I hadn't accounted for J'aininne's modesty. She had no idea and was suitably surprised.

The second award was for the Inspirational IT Professional of the Year. It was sponsored by KeyStep and presented by Andrew

Evans, KeyStep's CEO. The winner, Iain Cowieson, IT director at Malmaison and Hotel du Vin received a number of nominations and the competition was high. However, Iain stood out as he 'always steers a steady course' is 'very knowledgeable, always cheerful and well-respected by suppliers, hoteliers and his colleagues'

As luck would have it, Iain and Andrew know each other well, so the presenting of the award was all the more exciting. Andrew had already invited Iain as his guest to the dinner despite not knowing he had won the award. Andrew was able to add some personal detail into his description of Iain which made it all the more emotional.

After the main course, we presented the award for Inspirational Revenue Professional of the Year. Michael McCartan, Managing Director represented Duetto. This was the first year that Duetto had been a sponsor and we are very pleased to welcome them into the HOSPA family! The winner, Darren Kerr, Area Director of Revenue Management in Europe for Rosewood Hotel Group, had been nominated by last year's IT winner. Typically, we receive more nominations for the revenue management award than any of the other categories, and this year was no exception. Darren stood out from the other entrants not just because of his impressive financial results, but also his total dedication to ensuring all departments within Rosewood deliver the best possible service to guests. He offers one-to-one training classes to any Rosewood associate interested in Revenue Management and to date has delivered these sessions to waiters, IT support and housekeepers. Darren has not only surpassed expectations within Rosewood, but has also outperformed his competitor hotels. He is a great mentor and clearly deserves the accolade of inspirational leader. Well done Darren!

And finally, the Marketing Award which sent the judging committee into rather a spin! Our colleagues at the Hotel Marketing Association were the sponsors of the award, so when their chairman was nominated for the award, sadly we could not allow that entry to be included in the judging. And what a great nomination it was too! We also received numerous submissions for another amazing marketing guru, but the HOSPA awards are all about leadership and inspiring others - so whilst that marketing individual had achieved remarkable feats, he did not qualify to win the Inspirational Leader award. There were, of course, many entries that did meet the criteria, and the one that was a step above the others was Andrew Wall, who is joint managing director and co-founder of Pineapple Hotels - luxury hotel specialists. Andrew and his business partner have grown their team over the last 20 years and now represent some fabulous London properties, as well as operating a sales office in New York. Steve Lowy made his 3rd visit to the HOSPACE stage to present the award on behalf of the HMA.

Well done to all our winners and a big thank you to all the sponsors…

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Pub and restaurant groups deliver flat October trading

Britain's managed pub and restaurant groups saw collective like-for-like sales grow just 0.2% in October, according to latest figures from the Coffer Peach Business Tracker - with pubs and bars doing better than casual dining chains.

"People are still going out to eat and drink, but there is little or no growth in the market - and stronger London trading is making up for poorer sales outside the M25," said Phil Tate, chief executive of CGA, the business insight consultancy that produces the Tracker, in partnership with Coffer Group and RSM.

Regionally, London saw like-for-likes grow a relatively healthy 2.5%, against a 0.5% like-for-like sales fall outside the capital. Pub and bar groups were the top performers both nationally and in London.

Across the country, managed pubs and bars were collectively ahead 0.6% on a like-for-like basis, and up 3.6% in London against last October. However, sales declined by 0.4% outside the capital.

Restaurant chains also did relatively better in London, with like-for-likes up 0.9% compared to a 0.7% fall in the rest of the country. However, the national figure showed a 0.3% decline, reflecting the continuing pressure on the casual dining sector.

"Restaurants saw volume sales, measured by covers, down 1.4% for the month - which is worrying, although spend has remained essentially static. But the really big problem for the sector, and restaurant brands in particular, is continuing fierce competition, added to the burden of increasing business costs that are squeezing both margins and profits," added Tate.

Total sales, which include the effect of new openings since this time last year across the 49 companies in the Tracker, were up by 2.6% on October 2017.

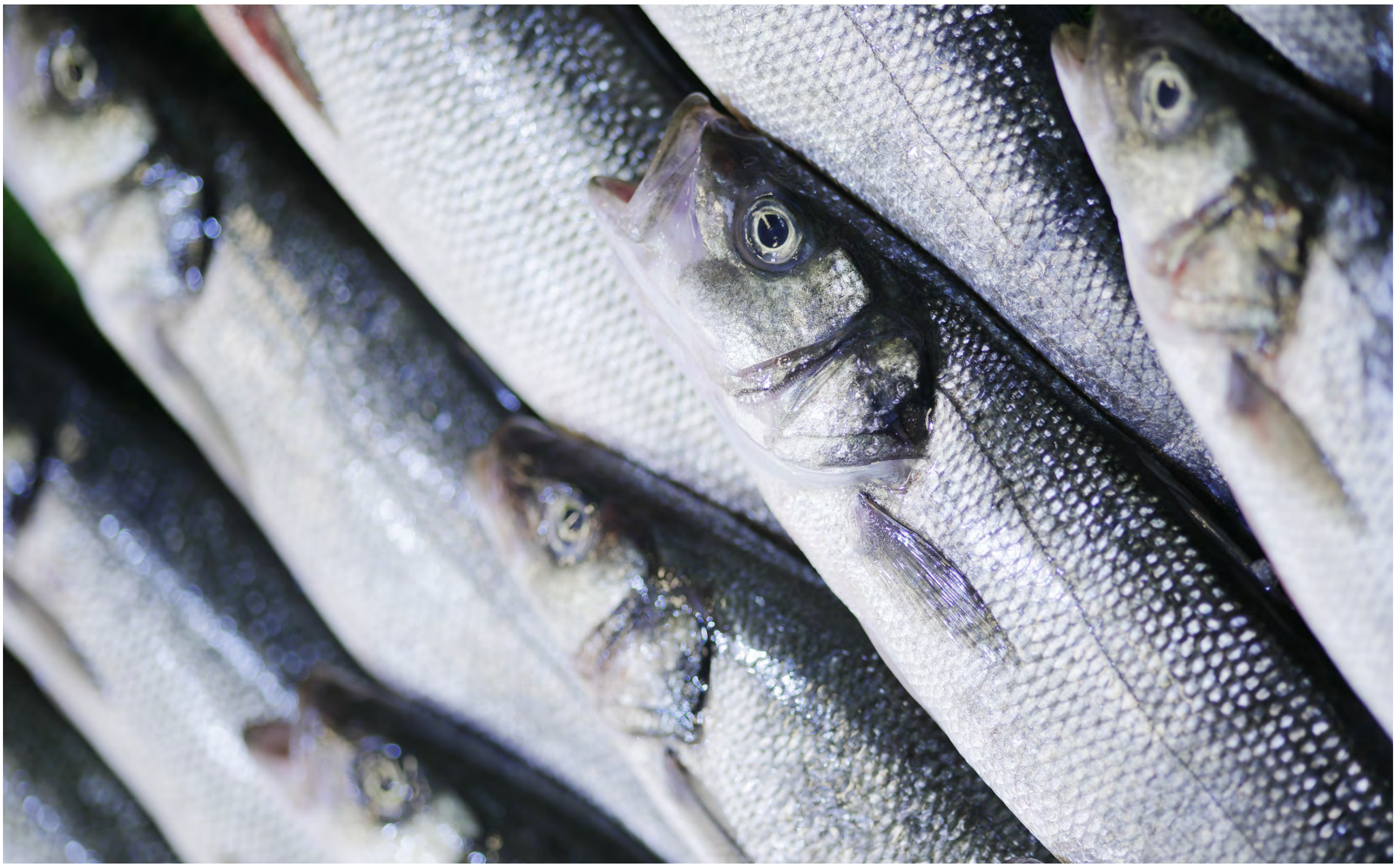
Underlying like-for-like growth for the Tracker cohort, which represents both large and small groups, was running at 0.7% for the 12 months to the end of October. The figure is virtually the same as at the end of the last three months, showing that the eating and drinking out market remains at best flat.

"These figures show the challenges faced by the industry," said Trevor Watson, executive director, valuations at Davis Coffer Lyons. "But just because some weaker brands have closed some branches outside London is not leading to a reduction in capacity - these units are re-opening with better operators and concepts paying sustainable rents.

He added: "Competition is stronger than ever. The pub market remains more resilient because it does not have the same over-capacity issue. The ongoing relative strength of London is borne out by our own views of the London restaurant property market, which remains active."

Paul Newman, head of leisure and hospitality at RSM, said: "Against a backdrop of reduced spending on the high street, these figures show that consumers continue to favour the eating and drinking out sector when allocating household budgets. Wet sales have fuelled the growth for pubs, while casual dining operators continue to feel the pressure. Despite concerns that younger generations are avoiding alcohol in favour of wellness, drinks sales were up 1.4% against a fall of 0.5% for food sales, driving this month's better performance."

Fish fattens up



Both Fish and Oils and Fats continue to trade at prices over 25% higher than last year, according to the CGA Prestige Foodservice Price Index.

Recent falls in the Hot Beverages index have corrected this month, while Fruit prices continue to reduce from the highs of the summer months. Sugar, Jams, Syrups & Confectionery has fallen back again in line with the recent trend, declining a further 5.2% month on month.

Of the ten categories featured in the Foodservice Price Index, six were down year on year in September, while four increased. But the size of the swings were very different, with Fish at 25.7% and Oils and Fats at 31.2% the largest upward movers, while only Sugar, Jams, Syrups & Confectionery showed any meaningful reduction at -8.4%.

Over 70% (by value) of the fish and seafood we consume in the UK is made up of salmon, prawns, tuna and the leading white fish, cod and haddock. When these markets come under pressure the impact can be signifcant. This category of the Foodservice Price Index is now showing record levels of inflation, and the outlook over the winter months remains uncertain. Salmon pricing continues the recent trend of violent swings, with a near-20% drop in the summer now reversed, and prices have crept slowly down again since. And of course, all imported fish has been affected by recent further declines in the value of the pound, and trade turbulence has been created in world markets by the imposition of a 10% tariff by the US on Chinese fish imports, which in turn is pushing up demand and price in other countries.

In February this year the edible Oils and Fats category of the Index was at 117 and since then it has risen every month, to a high of 156 in the most recent edition. Much of this rise has been driven by a huge surge in the price of butter over the past two years, and the upstream wholesale price reached a peak in October 2017 of almost three times the level of the previous year. Around 70% of this price spike came off in the early part of 2018, but weather problems contributed to a further rise mid-point between the two. We expect things to ease as we enter the winter period as the upstream wholesale price eases off.

At the end of 2016, the price of arabica coffee on the New York Stock Exchange had fallen to $1.55 per pound. Since then the price has dropped further to a dramatic low point of less than one dollar per pound, following surplus supply from Vietnam, the world's second largest coffee producer. While this is good news for operators, the price is below the cost of production, jeopardising both the livelihoods of up to 25 million coffee-farming families worldwide, and potentially even future supply capability.

The Fruit category of the Index has dropped by over 5% this month, continuing a downward trend seen since July, following a difficult start to 2018 for many producers. This reflects news of a bumper apple crop, particularly in Poland. Fruit prices surged up in the summer months, mainly due to the well documented challenges experienced with the UK soft fruit harvest, but we expect this part of the Index to stabilise in the months ahead, even though we see some challenges emerging with banana imports in the lead up to Christmas.

End of Summer profit hit

Profit per room at hotels in the UK fell by 4 percent in September, as a summer marked by GOPPAR growth came to a halt and demand levels shifted toward a more business-led mix, according to the latest data tracking full-service hotels from HotStats.

The drop in profit was primarily due to a 1.3-percent decline in rooms revenue, which fell to £105.77. This was in contrast to an increase in non-rooms revenue, which included an uplift in food & beverage (up 0.8 percent) and conference & banqueting (up 1.7 percent) revenue, on a per-available-room basis.

As a result of the movement across all revenue centres, TRevPAR at hotels in the UK fell by 0.9 percent in the month to £159.66. This represents the first decline in this measure since before the strong period of summer trading began back in May 2018.

The fall in revenue was further exacerbated by rising costs, which included a 1.0-percentage-point increase in payroll to 25.7 percent of total revenue, as well as a 0.6-percentage-point increase in overheads, which grew to 19.9 percent of total revenue.

On a departmental basis, rising costs contributed to falling profit levels in both the Rooms (down 2.3 percent) and Food & Beverage (down 0.9 percent) departments, on a per-available-room basis.

Overall, despite the year-on-year decline in GOPPAR, profit conversion at hotels in the UK in September remained relatively strong at 42.8 percent of total revenue.

Profit & Loss Key Performance Indicators - Total UK (in GBP)

September 2018 v September 2017

RevPAR: -1.3% to £105.77	Payroll: +1.0 pts. to 25.7%
TrevPAR: -0.9% to £159.66	GOPPAR: -4.0% to £68.26

In addition to the 0.2-percentage-point decline in room occupancy in September to 85.0 percent, hotels in the UK recorded a 1.1-percent drop in achieved average room rate, which fell to £124.44.

The drop in volume and price this month was led by the commercial segment, which suffered a 2-percent decrease in the achieved rate in the corporate sector to £119.62.

"Whilst hoteliers across numerous markets in the UK would have been glad to see the back of the quieter summer period, unfortunately, the return to business as usual has been blighted by a return to the challenging trading conditions of early 2018," said Michael Grove, Director of Intelligence and Customer Solutions, EMEA at HotStats. "This is unsurprising due to the relatively stagnant UK economy, with GDP growing by just 0.5 percent in Q3 2018, and the UK being slow to come back to work following such a celebrated summer period."

In contrast to the performance of the total UK, hotels in Liverpool recorded a robust month of profit growth in September as the city welcomed the 2018 Labour Party Conference.

The burgeoning demand levels enabled hoteliers in the River Mersey city to leverage achieved average room rate, which increased by 11.8 percent in the month to £88.64, the second-highest rate recorded in the city in 2018. The growth in rate fuelled an 11.4-percent increase in RevPAR in September to £75.39.

Despite the growth in rooms revenue, hotels in Liverpool missed the opportunity to drive non-rooms revenue this month, which fell across all departments, including food & beverage (down 5.9 percent) and conference & banqueting (down 11.5 percent).

Despite the decline in non-rooms revenue, hotels in the city drove a 6-percent increase in TRevPAR to £102.84.

The growth in revenue, as well as cost savings, which included a 0.6-percentage-point drop in payroll to 23.7 percent of total revenue, contributed to the 10.2-percent increase in GOPPAR for the month, which was recorded at £42.19.

Profit & Loss Key Performance Indicators - Liverpool (in GBP)

September 2018 v September 2017

RevPAR: +11.4% to £75.39	Payroll: -0.6 pts. to 23.7%
TrevPAR: +6.0% to £102.84	GOPPAR: +10.2% to £42.19

"The political party conferences are typically a huge benefit to hoteliers in the host city, and this month was no exception for properties in Liverpool," Grove said. "However, the lack of revenue derived from non-rooms sources will be a disappointment to owners and operators and will be considered a missed opportunity."

Further south, hotels in Cambridge suffered only their second month of GOPPAR decline in 2018, marring what has been a very positive period of performance so far this year.

Whilst profit per room at hotels in the university city dropped by 12.3 percent year-on-year in September to £65.53, it remained well above the year-to-date figure of £58.45.

The drop in profit was primarily led by a 3.8-percent slide in RevPAR, which was a result of a 1.0-percentage-point drop in room occupancy to 83.8 percent, as well as a 2.7-percent decline in achieved average room rate, which dropped to £123.21.

The year-on-year decline in top-line performance was primarily due to the absence of key events, which fuelled demand during the same period in 2017.

Profit & Loss Key Performance Indicators - Cambridge (in GBP)

September 2018 v September 2017

RevPAR: -3.8% to £103.24	Payroll: -0.1 pts. to 17.4%
TrevPAR: -4.8% to £145.32	GOPPAR: -12.3% to £65.53

In addition to the drop in rooms revenue, declines were recorded across all non-rooms departments and, as a result, TRevPAR for hotels in Cambridge fell by 4.8 percent year-on-year to £145.32.

And whilst hotels in Cambridge recorded a 0.1-percentage-point uplift in payroll, this cost remained relatively low at just 17.4 percent of total revenue, enabling profit conversion to be recorded at a strong 45.1 percent of total revenue.

24th January 2019
Learner Awards Ceremony

Event Details:
Celebrating the achievements of learners on the HOSPA Revenue Management and Financial Management programmes.

The event commences with a panel debate with expert participants chaired by Professor Peter Jones MBE, Chairman of the HOSPA Professional Development Committee.

We will then be celebrating the achievements of all our highest achieving learners on the HOSPA Revenue Management and Financial Management programmes with a presentation of certificates and the announcement for the "Learner of the Year" for both programmes. The afternoon concludes with a celebratory Afternoon Tea with champagne and will finish by 5pm.

We will also be presenting our company awards for "Commitment to Education" in Financial Management and in Revenue Management.

Location:
Jumeirah Carlton Tower, London.

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4 March 2019
Last enrolment date for Professional Development programmes

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21 March 2019
Wholesaler Round Table

Event Details:
TBC

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20 April 2019
Property Management System Review

Event Details:
TBC

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8 May 2019
Understanding Rate Parity

Event Details:
TBC

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11 July 2019
Managing Last Minute Room Rates

Event Details:
TBC

Please visit www.HOSPA.org for all registration details and all other events.

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For Further Information please contact
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Thursday 28th November
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