

Accommodation competition heats up with 11,000 rooms set for London

As competition for accommodation heats up in the capital, a new report has revealed the number of new hotels due to open in London could hit 'sharing economy' accommodation like Airbnb.

According to PwC's

European cities hotel forecast, London's hotel industry will be boosted by 6,400 rooms this year, with a further 5,000 set to open in 2016.

"There are sizeable pipelines in supply in cities like London and Amsterdam which could impact performance and factor

in more serviced apartments, home rentals like Airbnb, and new-style hostels, and the competition to accommodate visitors can be seen to be hotting up," it read.

The study also predicted that Dublin will record the highest growth in revenue per

available room of 8.8 per cent this year, followed by Madrid with 5.6 per cent and London at 4.6 per cent. In 2016, Dublin's 152 hotels will top the list again with an expected 8 per cent rise, followed by Madrid, London, Rome, Milan and Barcelona.

Parker and Freer exit Zibrant in agency's management reshuffle

Richard Parker has left his role as director of healthcare strategy at Zibrant as the agency restructures its senior management team, and head of client services, sales, Jacqueline Freer, has also moved on.

MD Fay Sharpe said the aim of the reshuffle was to help clients identify Zibrant's core services, with the agency - now owned by Nigel Cooper following a management buyout in November - focusing on client development and operational excellence.

"Our new brand alignment, coupled with a customer-centric structure and creative approach,



Fay Sharpe

is already paying dividends," said MD Fay Sharpe. "It's the clients that sit at the heart of our business and our collaborative partnership approach enables us to fully understand their brand and strategies to deliver award winning events, while challenging them with fresh creative boundaries."

Alex James has been promoted to director of client engagement, while Jon Harrison returns to Zibrant as operations director, venues. A newly created commercial director role will be taken on by Adam Morris.

Jo Beeson, Emma Hayward and Gemma Parkin have been promoted to account directors, Sandra Collins is now head of strategic communications and Katie Duckett has been appointed business development manager. Jennifer Munro returns to Zibrant after maternally leave as business development director.

Vivid refreshes identity in bid to engage brands

Rapidly growing event management agency Vivid Event Group has launched a new identity after increasing headcount and turnover to reflect the development of its brand engagement offering.

The Brighton-based company moved into new premises last year after increasing its workforce from four to 12, and has noted that delegate attendance has increased by 349 per cent; current clients include Starcom Mediavest, Penguin Random House and Allianz.

Gain control to secure best rates, says HRG

Corporate buyers must 'mind the gap' in their hotel negotiations, ensuring they get the right hotel in the right location at the right price, a study by HRG has found.

The travel management company's biannual hotel survey, now in its 22nd year, looks at hotel room rates for business destinations across the world to provide an insight into global business travel behaviours.

And it has found that greater control over corporate hotel programmes in an increasingly fragmented market will be crucial for clients looking to secure the best possible room rates this year.

"The balance between price, location, quality and availability is crucial," said Margaret Bowler, director global hotel relations.

Event budgets failing to keep pace with cost increases as margins are squeezed

More than two-thirds of meeting professionals expect business conditions to improve in the near future.

However, the industry needs to think strategically to deal with shorter lead times and tighter budgets, according to Meeting Professionals International's Meetings

Outlook 2015 Winter Edition.

The report shows projected budget spend has been increasing and stable for the past three quarters. However, most anticipated increases were between 1-5 per cent - not enough to match cost increases, resulting in tighter margins.

The report's author,

Elaine Poteit, says this means strategy is now more important than ever for event planners: "Overall, the meeting industry is in a good place, economically, and it's only getting better. But planners are still dealing with small budgets and short lead times. The solution? Get strategic."

Business festival eyes big second edition

The launch of the UK's International Festival for Business (IFB) 2016 has heard a vow from its organiser that it will lead to even more investment deals than its

inaugural edition in Liverpool. Max Steinberg, chairman of IFB 2016, outlined the ambitious plans for the event following its successful opening in 2014.

"IFB 2016 will be a unique

opportunity for thousands of businesses to open a new frontier; forging global connections, sharing ideas and exploring the potential of deals with new international partners," he said.

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Conference Contacts has promoted **Antony Waite** to managing director as the company eyes 25 per cent growth.

Worldspan has appointed **David Bennett** as senior project manager - PCO services; **Victoria Evans** has also joined Worldspan as business support executive.

Stephanie Laird has joined Wilgoose Events as head of partnerships.



Ben Atherton, formerly associate director at EY, has joined live communications agency WRG as client director.

Carl Howe has joined event tech providers Universal Live as its new DHotels account manager, and **Deborah Masterson** has been appointed as client services manager. Universal Live has also hired **Natasha O'Grady** as project and marketing administrator.

Edinburgh International Conference Centre has appointed **Amanda Wrathall** as head of sales and marketing.



Mark Pepler has been named as corporate sales director at MCI UK, while **Rob Stanbridge** joins the agency from The Live Group as client director.

Patrick Kuzlir has joined Shepperton-based travel management company Ian Allan Travel as systems development manager, and **Matt Holman** is the firm's new bid writer.