



Annual Hotel
Conference

Post Show Report

📅 11 – 12 September 2023

📍 Manchester, UK





An event memorable enough to celebrate the AHC turning 20? We think so! This year, two decades on from a small afternoon gathering of 50 industry stakeholders, the event has grown to over 1,000 delegates and 58 best-in-class exhibitors at the Manchester Central Convention Centre.

Unlike its sister event, the International Hospitality Investment Forum, which is known for 25 years of facilitating global capital flows, the Annual Hotel Conference is an overwhelmingly British affair. Over 20% of the delegation at this year's AHC were owners or investors, a clear demonstration of sector's significant and growing appeal as a place to commit capital, and the enduring appeal of the UK as an investment market of strategic importance.

In terms of the content, it was a programme designed to add value to the owner of a single asset as much as an institutional investor and shaped by not one but three advisory board meetings – York, Bristol, and London. An Advisory Board representative of the UK market ultimately supported the creation of a representative programme which covered topics not limited to adaptive re-use, repositioning strategies, building loyalty, and exclusive use hotels. People vote with their feet, and the size of the audience for even the early morning breakout sessions on Day 2 suggest that the topics were on point and the speakers well-qualified.

For the 20th anniversary edition, the Questex team were committed to securing some high-profile speakers, and they fulfilled their promise. Highlights included BBC presenter and Leaf Hospitality's Gethin Jones interviewing The Pig CEO, Tom Ross; The Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, and his Nighttime Economy Advisor and founder of Warehouse Project, Sacha Lord; Simon Wood a former Master Chef champion; and a hospitality icon to close the show in Michel Roux Jr. Some terrific new speakers took to the mainstage, including Ed Fitch of Cushman & Wakefield leading the Capital Talks investment session, CBRE's Lydia Dutton looking at Hospitality through the optics of Social Impact, and Marcus Kinsella of Gerald Eve who was mapping the UK debt landscape with some traditional and alternative financiers. All the sessions, including the powerful lightning talks that took place on the Spotlight Stage, which returned bigger and brighter for its second year, can be viewed on demand on [AHC Digital](#).

It would also be remiss of me not to mention the thriving part of the programme dedicated to Adjacent Spaces. We heard about the innovate ways in which food halls, destination restaurants, arenas, co-living, and student accommodation, for example, are successfully capitalising on the consumer craving for experiences. There were some truly valuable takeaways for owners and asset managers on how to adapt their existing hotel offer, and clearly a growing number of investors considering incorporating these subsectors into their hospitality acquisition strategy.

At the risk of repeating myself, perhaps next year we will finally be seeing a more vibrant transactions market. Either way, the AHC will be back in 2024, in its third decade, with the senior-level delegates, best-in-class exhibitors and an inspiring programme of content championing the best of British hospitality. We hope you are there in Manchester to experience it with us.

Sincerely,

Joe Stather

VP Market Leader, Operational Real Estate, Questex



AHC in Numbers



1,005

Delegates



16.2%

Investors & Owners



104

Speakers



34

Content sessions



21%

Female speaker
representation



59

Sponsors



9

Media partners



10

Registered press



34

Media mentions



1.9m

Media impressions

AHC in Numbers

Social (LinkedIn)



5,766
Page views



2,468
Unique visitors



237
Custom
button clicks



4,772
Followers



3,133
Reactions



100
Comments



189
Reposts



428,469
Impressions

Web & App (theahc.co.uk)



13,000
Web visitors



18,139
Page views



810
Active app users
*80% vs 60% for the avg event



609
Connections
made

Conference Overview

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth edition of the Annual Hotel Conference did not disappoint. While the event has evolved into somewhat of an investment conference, it has not forgotten its operational roots. The advisory board meetings — including regional ones — played a pivotal role in shaping the content to cater to the needs of those buying and running properties. They also helped inform this year's theme "Adapt To Thrive" a phrase that highlighted the challenges of operating in the current environment but also the myriad opportunities.

One consistent theme among investors, given the current economic period we are living through was the importance of understanding every operational detail. There was optimism about the sector's growth potential, despite the many challenges, but there was still a frustration about the gap between potential deals and available capital.

The conference featured breakouts covering specific niches within the UK market, drawing big audiences due to the diverse opportunities and challenges discussed. The event also touched on the interplay between hotels and adjacent spaces like co-living, food halls, and arenas.

Delegates flocked to the main auditorium for some of the biggest names the AHC has ever welcomed, including Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, tv presenter Gethin Jones and chef Michel Roux Jr. Their insights and personal stories added depth to the programme.



COLLABORATION

On the Collaboration Stage the discussions covered topics including operating agreements and debt both especially relevant in the current climate. Hotel operating agreements are evolving, with previously bespoke elements now becoming more common. Factors like specific fee structures, exit terms, which were once rare, are now integral to many contracts. The due diligence conducted by hotel owners is increasing, leading to more detailed discussions and innovation. The debt landscape in the UK hotel industry is evolving, with an emphasis on cash flow and stabilised income rather than Loan-to-Value (LTV) rates. Traditional lenders are reevaluating risk and reward, shifting focus towards debt service and capital stack structures. Despite economic volatility, a lack of distress has led owners to hold off selling at discounted rates. Loyalty was also discussed, a topic especially important in today's data-driven market.

Conference Overview

ADJACENT SPACES

With Adjacent Spaces, Questex's operational real estate portfolio of events explores concepts and brands that overlap or complement hotels. Many of the towns and cities we live in are changing rapidly thanks to the changes in consumer habits accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is leaving more and more buildings that could be adapted for different uses. A panel of experts discussed the importance of collaboration between developers, operators, and architects as well as the challenges in the planning process and the unpredictability of local authorities. The hospitality industry is also moving beyond just beds, as emphasises in another of our sessions with the idea of "live, work, play" in the context of real estate and community development, both for guests and locals. One of the biggest growth areas in the adjacent spaces sector has been extended stay accommodation with revpar increasing and new brands and investors entering the market.



PRODUCTIVITY & PROACTIVITY

The Productivity and Proactivity track covered a range of topics with technological developments featuring prominently. Discussions touched on topics like cloud technology adoption, user engagement, and the role of technology in increasing revenue beyond room bookings. Technology was also important when it came to trying to boost productivity within organisations. It can help in managing employee rosters and facilitating communication between teams and management. Speakers also stressed the value of data in understanding and improving engagement. Exclusive use accommodation contracts for housing asylum seekers and refugees in UK hotels has also become a hot topic in recent times. The demand for hotels in this format has surged due to increasing numbers of arrivals and processing delays. While politically sensitive, it's a significant part of the hospitality industry.

Conference Overview

ASSET MANAGEMENT

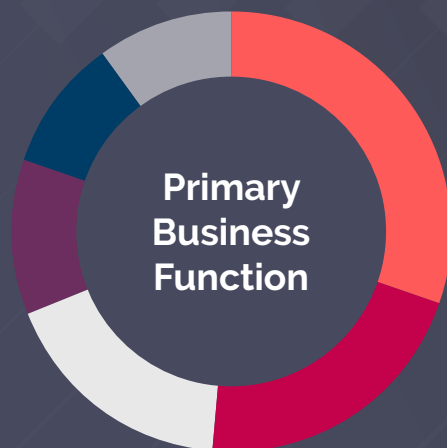
Mid-market hotels have come in for criticism in recent years because of the lack of differentiation in what has become a highly commoditised sector. But how should investors go about refreshing existing stock? Panellists highlighted the potential for repositioning older hotels to attract different demographics and capitalise on unique locations. They also discussed financial considerations, red flags, and the complexities of refurbishing historic buildings. Elsewhere industry leaders discussed asset management and sustainability in the hotel industry. They emphasise the need for sustainable practices, the challenges of balancing guest experience with sustainability goals, and the importance of adapting to changing customer preferences. Finally, Michel Roux Jr gave an intimate talk to a handpicked audience about the importance of restaurant design for creating a comfortable and memorable dining experience. He stressed that design is as crucial as food and service.



SPOTLIGHT

The spotlight stage returned for 2023 giving speakers the chance to share inspiring initiatives, product innovations, and impactful solutions to help drive sustainable business growth. Subjects covered included the importance of forecasting in the food and beverage (F&B) industry for hotels, how generative AI can supercharge revenue and automation and the importance of EV charging infrastructure in the hospitality, leisure, and retail sectors.

Audience Profile



Advisory	313
Design, Building & Construction	216
Hotel Brand/Company	180
Other	117
Operator	101
Investor	100

*Includes Associations, Educational Institutes, Government, Tourism Board/Agency



Asset Management	139
Owner/Operator Hotel/Resort	130
Other	126
Consultant	120
Sales	115
Finance/Investment	94
Owner/Developer Hotel/Resort	91
Lawyer	75
Real Estate Broker	61
Marketing & PR	46
Accounting	18
Journalist	12



19

Countries represented



85%

of attendees plan to participate again next year



Learn

Across all stages, our industry-leading speakers share their vision and insight with examples of how to innovate for success.



Network

The AHC is a thriving community of hospitality investment professionals, all with a common goal of making informed business decisions and unlocking profitable growth opportunities.



Be Inspired

The exhibition floor is where you meet the businesses with a demonstrable track record of enhancing returns in hospitality.





Our Speakers

104 Industry leaders shared their expert insights at AHC.

Sam Allan VP Sales UK, Adyen

David Ancell Chief Brand Officer, Vita Group

Simon Anderson Founder, Ideas Food Consultancy

David Anderson Divisional President, Aimbridge Hospitality EMEA

John Angus Managing Director, Switch Hospitality Management

Felicity Black-Roberts VP Development Europe & North Africa, Hyatt

Jens Blomdahl Principal ECS, KSL Capital

Carine Bonnejean Managing Director – Hotels, Christie & Co

Luc Boschmans Managing Director, Tristan Capital Partners

Louise Burney Operational Real Estate Sector Lead, LGIM

Andy Burnham Mayor of Greater Manchester, Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Heather Byron SVP Services, Alliant

Dev Chana Managing Director, EON Drive Infrastructure

Richard Clarke Managing Director, AB Bernstein

Andrea Colasanti VP, Brookfield

Lewis Corby Senior Director, CBRE

Martin Creydt Director & SVP, Pandox AB

Adela Cristea VP, Head of Business Development UK, Ireland & Nordics, Radisson Hotel Group

Chris Crowley Chief Revenue Officer, Duetto

Andrew Davison Project Director, Queensberry

Richard Dawes Director, Hotel Capital Markets, Savills

Lennert De Jong President, Hospitality, Planet

Martin Donoyan Partnerships Lead, PolyAI

Ian Duncombe Board Director, chapman&d

Lydia Dutton Director, ESG Consultancy, CBRE

Ronald Egelman Senior Director Development UK, Ireland, Nordics, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

Thomas Emanuel Senior Director, STR, a CoStar Group Company

Ed Fitch Head of Hospitality UK, Cushman & Wakefield

Hilton Foster Director, Debt Finance, OakNorth Bank

Chris Gamm CEO, Springboard

Louise Gillon Head of Hotel Finance, Leumi UK

David Goodger Managing Director EMEA, Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics company

Mark Goodyer UK&I HR Director, Sodexo

Patrick Grant Partner, AlphaReal

Keith Griffiths Head of Hotels, Pro-invest Europe

Devin Grosse Chief Executive, Focus Hotels Management Ltd

Michael Grove COO, Hotstats

Ros Hardiman Group People & Organisation Development Director, Kew Green Hotels

Paul Harnedy EVP, Cedar Capital Partners

Ben Harper CEO, Watergate Bay, Another Place & Beach Retreats

David Hart CEO, RBH Hospitality Management

Robert Holland Managing Director UK & Ireland, HotelPartner Revenue Mgmt

Jon Hubbard Head of Hospitality EMEA, Cushman & Wakefield

Henry Jackson Head of Hotel Agency, Knight Frank LLP

Andy Jansons MD, Jansons Property

Daniel Johansson Director of Development & Acquisitions, Cheval Collection

Gethin Jones Partner, Leaf Hospitality & Broadcaster

Steve Jones Managing Director, Wyboston Venue Management

Puneet Kanuga Chief Investment Officer, EQ Group

Andrew Katz Consultant, Prospect Hotel Advisors LLC

Malcolm Kerr Managing Director, Horwath HTL/Crowe UK LLP

Marcus Kinsella Partner, Gerald Eve

Neil Kirk COO, L&R Hotels

Natalia Kolotneva Head of Living & Hospitality Europe, Asset Management, LaSalle Investment Management

Our Speakers

Joanna Kurowska Managing Director, UKI Operations, IHG
Jonathan Langston Chair of AHC & IHIF Advisory Boards, Questex
Philip Lassman VP Development Northern Europe, Accor
Matt Lederer Hotel Acquisitions Director, Castleforge
Sacha Lord Night Time Economy Adviser for Greater Manchester
Matt Luscombe CEO, Cycas Hospitality
Michael McCartan Area VP, EMEA, IDEaS
Sean McClean Director of Regeneration & Development, Sheffield City Council
Patrick Mendes CEO Europe & North Africa – Premium, Midscale & Economy, Accor
Neetu Mistry Chief Commercial Officer, Cycas Hospitality
Muriel Muirden CEO, The Wee Hotel Company
Gregory Naidoo Chief Evangelist & Development Officer, Mews
Ronen Nissenbaum CEO Western Europe, Fattal Hotels UK/Ireland/Benelux/Spain/Portugal
Francesco Orofino Investment VP & Head of Hospitality, DFI
David Orr CEO, Resident Hotels Ltd
Veryan Palmer Director, The Headland Hotel
Chris Penny SVP, Starwood Capital Group
Matthew Plax Head of Corporate Banking, Mizrahi Tefahot Bank Ltd
James Pomeroy Global Economist, HSBC
Kateline Porritt Head of Trends & Insights, Egg Soldiers
Shona Pushpaharan Head of Hotels & Healthcare, Coutts & Co
Tobias Reinecke Director Investments & Strategic Partnerships EMEA, Choice Hotels
Julie Rey-Gore Content Director – Operational Real Estate, Questex
Tom Ross CEO, Home Grown Hotels
Michel Roux Chef Patron, Le Gavroche

Nick Russell Director, IPW Ltd
Shaun Sequeira Country Lead UK & Ireland, HiJiffy
Karin Sheppard SVP, Managing Director Europe, IHG
Jason Simpson CEO, RAW Charging
Steven Smit Director, Vertiq Capital
Daniel Sprung Senior Director B2B & Partnerships, Peloton
Joe Stather VP, Market Leader – Operational Real Estate, Questex
Andrew Stembridge Executive Director, Iconic Luxury Hotels
Michael Stott Group Commercial Director, Apex Hotels
Ifeoluwa Taiwo Associate Editor, Hospitality Investor
Hugh Taylor Chief Executive, Michels & Taylor (London) Ltd
Kristofer Thomas Head of Content, HIX – Hotel Interiors Experience
Kay Tierney Portfolio Director, Lake Merritt Capital
Peter Tisdale CEO, THAT Group
James Twomey Board Director, REARDONSMITH ARCHITECTS
Gavin Vollans Partner, Katten
Simon Walford Development Director UK, Staycity Group
Louise Wallace Partner – CMS Head of Corporate/M&A, CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP
Kate Wallin Director Development, UK&I, Marriott Hotels International Ltd
Wilhelm Weber Chief Commercial Officer, Grand Metropolitan Hotels
Deirdre Wells CEO, Visit Kent
Peter Werhahn Managing Director, Blackstone
Patrick Whyte Editor-in-Chief, Hospitality Investor
Pete Willis Commercial Director, Harri
Simon Wood Chef Patron/Director, WOOD Restaurant Group

To find out more about our 2023 speakers [click here](#).

Investors

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Allied Irish Bank

AlphaReal

Artfarm

Azure Capital

BGAM Ltd

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Blackstone

Brookfield

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Ciel Capital Ltd

City ID Group

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Davidson Hospitality Group

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Dr Cost

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EQ Group

FIG Developments

Fragrance Group

Generator & Freehand Hotels
(Queensgate Investments)

Hotel Investment & Asset Management

Hudson/Lone Star Fund

ICA

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Legacy Hotels & Resorts Ltd

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Maya Capital LLP

Pandox AB

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THAT Group

The Ascott

Tristan Capital Partners

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Vedanta Hedging Ltd

Vertiq Capital

Zeal Hotels





Hoteliers Owners

4C Group

AG Hotels Group

Andras House Ltd

Arlington House Hotel

Beyond Aparthotels

Bishopstrow Hotel and Spa

Borough Junction Group

Brightstar Hospitality

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Byron Hotel

Cameron Ventures

Castlebridge Group

DC Hotels (Bridgwater) Ltd

Dean Street Developments Ltd

Dominus

Edgbaston Park Hotel

Estee Group

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GHIG

Greenclose Hotels Limited

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Hintlesham Hall Ltd

Homewood

Hospitality & Capital Management

Hunton Hotels

Iconic Luxury Hotels

Jardines UK Ltd

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kaleidoscope hotels – Bird,
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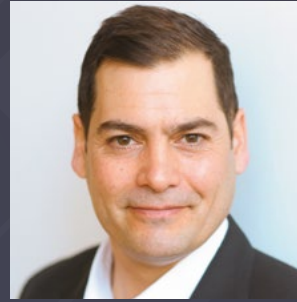
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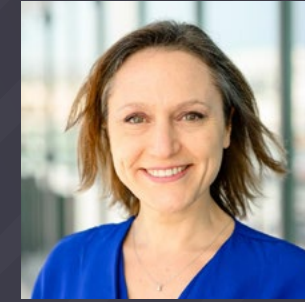
To learn how you and your company can be part of the industry's leading hospitality investment conference.



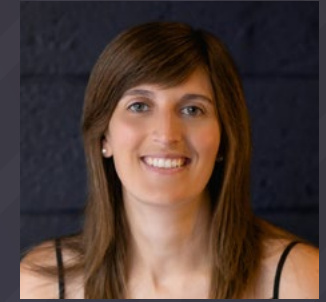
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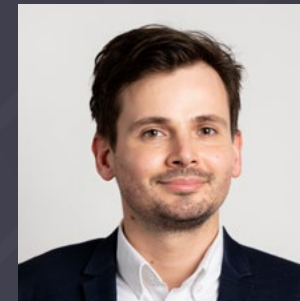
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