

The Darker Side to the Airbnb Effect

Your article on 13th June ('What Airbnb has done for us and visitors to city') paints a rosy picture of Short Term Letting in Bath, implying benefits for all. However, there are darker sides to the 'Airbnb effect'. Substantial numbers of whole houses and apartments are being turned over to permanent short term letting, as this can earn the owner much more than long term renting does, resulting in an ever growing shortage of homes for residents to live in. Effectively, this is a business, and yet in most cases neither is tax being paid, nor are they subject to licensing or safety checks. At the last count, there were about 1500 of these conversions in the city and the number is growing rapidly, as it needs no permission to do so but makes money, which means 1500 fewer homes for those who want and need to live here permanently, thus 'hollowing out' the city. Secondly, it can affect neighbourliness as it's like living next door to a small but un-serviced hotel, with frequent comings and goings, extra noise, unusual strangers and the dumping of rubbish. Lastly, it is seriously undermining the Bed and Breakfast trade, for which Bath has been renowned. Something clearly needs to be done, but what, as the Government ignores the problem (unlike most civilised countries)? It would be a start if registration became compulsory: then at least our Council would know how many and where they all were. This is what is being done in Edinburgh and Dublin, so why not here?

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