

Glasgow party flats policy holds key for Edinburgh action

☒ Over the last few years, I have been working with local campaigners to tackle anti-social behaviour associated with 'party flats'.

These flats are residential properties rented out for a short period of time – often to large groups such as stag and hen parties over weekends.

This has caused an [unbearable level of stress](#) for residents of neighbouring properties who have frequently reported extreme cases of noise disruption, concerns over safety and damage to common property .

In March last year, following a long-running campaign which I supported with local residents, The Scottish Government introduced new rules allowing landlords to be served with [anti-social behaviour notices](#). However, incidents continue to occur while the Council and Police put systems in place to deal with complaints and to enforce the order.

Residents across the city affected by party flats are growing increasingly exasperated at the lack of regulation of these businesses and in particular the fact that operators do not need to seek planning permission to use a residential flat for a commercial venture.

Time and again, the Council have told me that they don't consider party flats to constitute a change of use to a property, and have cited planning regulations and case law to back up that view.

However, I've been made aware that Glasgow City Council have

[introduced regulations](#) which could hold the key to addressing Edinburgh's problem. It is clear from Glasgow's policy that there is scope within existing regulations to tackle this issue.

Glasgow's policy aims to ensure that residents within a block are not adversely affected by the introduction of flats used principally as a form of short-term accommodation. It does so by creating a presumption against granting planning permission for a change of use to short-stay accommodation, within existing blocks of residential flats.

The policy highlights problems of noise, over-crowding and lack of care for common areas as justification for the presumption against permission – precisely the problems people in Edinburgh are being forced to live with.

I know councillors are sympathetic towards the plight of residents and I want to turn that to action by following Glasgow's example. I have [lodged a motion in Parliament](#) which I hope will be debated to highlight this important issue.

By requiring operators to seek planning permission, residents would be given the opportunity to have their say on how these businesses impact on their day to day lives.

I have written to the Council to ask them to look at the Glasgow policy and to ask them to consider following its example to protect residents from party flats.

[Sarah Boyack](#) is Labour MSP for Lothians.

The motion which she lodged in Parliament read as follows:-

That the Parliament expresses concern at what it believes are the continued problems experienced by Edinburgh residents in relation to party flats; understands that such flats are commonly let to large groups over weekends and that this causes considerable disruption to residents in terms of noise, antisocial behaviour and damage to common areas; further understands that the City of Edinburgh Council's position is that the operation of a party flat does not constitute a change of use for a residential property and that, as a result, providers are not required to seek planning permission for their activity; notes that Glasgow City Council, under its City Plan 2, has a provision related specifically to this type of property, which states that planning permission will not be granted for a change of use to short-stay serviced apartments in an existing block of flats where it would result in mixed use; believes that Glasgow has set a good example in order to protect residents from the acute problems that can be associated with party flats, and notes that the Antisocial Behaviour Notices (Houses Used for Holiday Purposes) Order 2011 gives local authorities the power to issue antisocial behaviour notices to landlords of party flats where persistent problems have occurred but that, despite this, issues continue to be experienced by residents in Edinburgh.