

FSB want a say on tourism tax plans



Calton Hill for a panoramic view of Edinburgh

A leading organisation has called for small businesses to have their say on City of Edinburgh Council's plans for a tourism tax.

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) claim a report to council pays scant regard to the views of Edinburgh's tourism businesses or the reservations repeatedly expressed by the Scottish Government.

Garry Clark, the FSB's development manager for the East of Scotland, said: "As councillors discuss this latest report, they should bear in mind that three-quarters of Edinburgh's small businesses were against a tourism tax; and almost as many feared that it would damage Edinburgh's economy.

"The council's report raises more questions than it answers and it is concerning that the report explicitly recommends that the council should press ahead with plans for the tax irrespective of what businesses, residents and tourists actually say during the consultation.

"The report also suggests that the city's tourism businesses should pay more to maintain Edinburgh's tourism environment, an assertion that is in stark contrast to the assurances that the council were making just last week.

"Let's not forget that tourists already spend more than £1.4b in our city each year and support over 34,000 jobs. That is the real contribution that tourism is already making to Edinburgh.

“If the council wants a debate on a tourism tax, then let it be one where the result is not predetermined.

“Give Edinburgh businesses a real say on an issue that will affect them, their customers and the wider local economy.”

An Edinburgh small business owner in the self-catering sector added:

“I oppose a tourism tax as the introduction of such a tax would be most damaging to many small businesses across the Scottish tourist sector.

“If local and national government wants to help sustain Scotland’s thriving and essential tourism sector, they need to source other ways to do this, rather than taxing the small businesses that support the economy, as well as tourists who want to discover Scotland.

“I feel that the City of Edinburgh Council, and other councils across the country, should be looking at other ways to manage tourism – unbelievably, they seem to be overlooking the fact that Scotland relies on tourism.

“As we prepare to exit the EU, this has never been more important for our future.”