

More discussion on tourist tax

While Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop is in Japan she is clearly keeping an eye on Scottish affairs.

Following an Edinburgh Evening News [article](#) in which the City of Edinburgh Council Leader Adam McVey claimed that tourist tax might begin in Summer 2019, McVey tweeted a link. He was then replied to by [@fionahyslop](#) questioning whether he had either a plan or an agreement with the Scottish Government.

McVey certainly appears to have a plan as he and Depute Council Leader Cammy Day told us [recently](#). But he does not yet have the agreement of Holyrood which is required as it will mean a legislative change.



Council Leader Adam McVey and Depute Council Leader Cammy Day marking one year in coalition

He has already met with industry representatives of those dealing with short term lets including AirBnB. A recent survey by the Federation of Small Businesses got a response from only

7% of their membership but still issued a statement saying that three quarters of the small businesses in the capital were against the introduction of a nightly charge. The council administration claim that a £1 charge per night could raise £29million for the city.

COSLA, which is the voice of Local Government in Scotland, has also unanimously approved the proposed introduction of tourist tax.

The President of COSLA, Alison Evison, recently called for more financial power for local authorities starting with TVL. She also said that Scotland need Les to find more innovative ways of funding its public services.

The Council Leader told The Edinburgh Reporter today : "All 32 local authority leaders now stand with Edinburgh and other Councils looking to pursue a "tourist tax" and momentum is building. Key hotel industry leaders in the City are also joining the conversation and giving their support to our efforts. This is a key part of our programme for the Capital and I'm confident we will deliver a TVL in the best interests of our tourist economy and the people of Edinburgh. I'm supporting COSLA's cross party efforts and working with colleagues directly in local and national government to help deliver this policy. The Tories were the only party to oppose this policy in the Capital and while some agree with their stance, it is widely out of step with public opinion and the best interests of Edinburgh."

The Scottish Conservatives issued a statement suggesting that Ms Hyslop had 'slapped down' McVey over Edinburgh's plans. But their statement also seems to miss the point. It appears that they believe the tax would be imposed on businesses not tourists.

The release states :

"Taking time out from a trip to Japan, Ms Hyslop blasted Cllr

Adam McVey for claiming Edinburgh was “ready” to implement the controversial tourist tax by next summer.

“During a tense exchange on Twitter, she responded furiously with a series of question marks, before stating: “So let’s be clear – you have no shared plans, no tourist business consultation and no agreement with Scottish Gov.”

“The clash exposes splits right at the top of the SNP on the issue, with Cllr McVey subsequently informing his senior colleague that the SNP-led council had formally approved the move.

“The Scottish Conservatives oppose the idea, pointing out businesses are already highly taxed, and warning that increases could be passed onto locals rather than visitors.

“Scottish Conservative shadow tourism secretary Rachael Hamilton said:

“This is an embarrassing split right at the top of the SNP on this issue.

“In full public view, the nationalist tourism secretary is slapping down the SNP leader of Scotland’s capital city.

“Fiona Hyslop appears surprised that the council has approved this move, which would suggest she’s not fully on top of her brief.

“It’s also strange that, while on an official engagement on the other side of the world, the minister’s first concern is getting involved in a Twitter spat.

“We don’t agree with Adam McVey that Edinburgh – or anywhere else – should introduce a tourist tax.

“Businesses in that sector are already taxed far too much, and this move would only jeopardise these firms and the jobs they support.

“There is also a risk these taxes could be passed onto local people rather than those visiting.”

SCOTTISH LABOUR

Meanwhile Scottish Labour support the move. (they are also one half of the coalition in Edinburgh’s City Chambers)

Scottish Labour’s Communities Spokesperson Monica Lennon MSP said: “This is a hugely encouraging development.

“Scotland’s public services are under increased pressure after the SNP government’s brutal £1.5 billion of austerity cuts.

“Our local communities are in serious need of additional funding, which means we need to urgently look at new ways for local authorities to raise revenues, including a tourist tax – and it is right that Edinburgh is taking this step.

“Rather than attacking councillors in her own party on social media, SNP minister Fiona Hyslop should give these plans serious consideration – and agree to allow other councils to take similar steps.

“Labour will continue to stand up for local democracy and call for our councils to receive the funding they need.”