

Holyrood to consult on Tourist Tax

At The Scottish Tourism Alliance autumn conference, the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced that there will be a national consultation on councils getting the power to impose a tourist levy. Until now the government, which would need to introduce legislation to allow local government to impose the charge, has resisted any move in that direction.



Councillor Cammy Day and Councillor Adam McVey are both behind the introduction of a transient visitor levy Photo The Edinburgh Reporter

City of Edinburgh Council Leader Adam McVey replied : "This is a very welcome announcement and will help provide a national context for Edinburgh's policy and will work alongside the detailed engagement we have carried out in recent months as well as our forthcoming citywide consultation. We have always acknowledged the need for legislation in taking this forward but we as a Council have also maintained the need to develop our own plans to make sure it's not just any TVL but the right TVL for Edinburgh, taking account of our local circumstances.

“Edinburgh has one of the highest occupancy rates in Europe with a growing demand for hotels in the city and I hope our local circumstances will be reflected in the national conversation.

“Over the last few months we’ve heard a range of views from the industry, key stakeholders, residents and tourists themselves. I’m confident that by adopting the same inclusive approach nationally, the evidence in support of Edinburgh’s plans will continue to grow.”

Commenting on the consultation, Scottish Labour Communities spokesperson Monica Lennon said: “Coming just days after Richard Leonard pressed Nicola Sturgeon on the tourist tax at First Minister’s Questions, any movement from the SNP government is welcome, but this must not be an excuse for the government to kick this issue into the long grass.

“Labour stands for more economic power in the hands of our local communities, including the ability to set a tourist tax. The industry generates billions every year – the idea that adding a few pounds to the price of a hotel room would put the industry at risk simply isn’t credible.

“Local services and infrastructure, starved of resources, cannot afford the SNP government to continue dragging its heels on this.”

Last week the Scottish Tourism Alliance responded to the council’s plans to consult on charging a tourist tax. The STA expressed their disappointment that the council were proceeding without ‘formal or meaningful engagement with Scotland’s tourism industry to date’.

There are options in the council’s consultation to either charge a percentage or a flat rate, to raise an estimated £11 million. Subject to approval at a meeting of the Corporate Strategy committee tomorrow, the consultation could begin later this month.