

Tourist tax report calls for spending on streets and public transport

A Transform Scotland [report](#) published today confirms that residents are firmly in favour of a new tourism levy, although some businesses oppose it. Almost everyone asked knew about the possible £2 a night levy, and 42% of those asked want the council to use the funds to invest in infrastructure.

Among the findings in the survey there was a majority of 69% of Edinburgh residents who say they are impacted by tourism frequently. 87% said they thought more could be done to manage tourism and 78% believe that the tourist tax is a good way to do that.

The report author, Poppy Marples, said: “TVL schemes are widespread across Europe, being in operation in 19 countries, and in our report we highlight the schemes in operation in Amsterdam, Dubrovnik, Florence and Geneva.

“In Edinburgh, there is now strong public support for The City of Edinburgh Council’s proposals, and we conclude that it is now imperative for the Scottish Government to swiftly come forward with legislation to enable Local Authorities to implement TVL schemes that are appropriate to the local circumstances across Scotland. We note that while Edinburgh has an overheated tourism sector, there are other parts of Scotland where a TVL may not be appropriate.

"We are not persuaded by the hostility from the hospitality industry towards TVL proposals. We have seen no evidence that a TVL scheme in Edinburgh at a rate of £2.00 would impact on visitor numbers, and nor would we expect a charge less than the price of a coffee to have any impact on demand. In the report, we note that Florence has experienced further growth in visitor numbers since the introduction of a TVL scheme in 2011."

Colin Howden, Director of Transform Scotland, said:"There is global concern about the impacts of tourism, from fuelling the growth in aviation emissions, to the impacts that large tourist volumes have on fragile historic environments and ecosystems.

"The volume of tourism is having severe impacts on Scotland's transport system. During Edinburgh's festivals, our bus network now routinely grinds to a halt. So it's clear that something needs to be done to tackle the impacts of tourism in Scotland.

"Our report takes forward the debate on the Edinburgh TVL proposal by presenting additional public opinion on how the revenue from the scheme should be invested. We believe that a significant proportion of the TVL revenue should be invested in improving the City Centre public realm and in supporting public transport services."

Council Leader Adam McVey said: "Time after time, the evidence points to strong and growing support for a visitor levy in Edinburgh and this latest poll backs up our own survey results.

"It's welcome to receive so much support from Transform Scotland and their findings suggest 93% of people are already aware of our proposals to bring forward the UK's first 'Tourism tax'.

"I agree that revenue raised by a levy should be re-invested

into managing and supporting sustainable tourism and its impacts to the benefit of our residents. That's something we'll fully map out with those in the industry, our partners and resident groups.

"We need to remember too that our economy needs tourism – the industry supports 35,000 jobs and generates £1.5bn every year – but in order to remain a global destination, we need to continue to invest in the areas that make Edinburgh the success story it is. We're already reviewing the way the city meets the challenges of tourism and ETAG's consultation on a new tourism strategy for Edinburgh has been extended [until 15 December](#). I urge everyone with an interest to take part."

Sarah Boyack MSP said : "The city centre and its residents have been under increasing pressure from over-commercialisation of our city centre for years now. This report states what we know to be true: that more care must be taken when planning events, and that the council must begin listening to locals when it comes to the huge impact that poorly managed tourism can have on their environment.

"The money raised from the Transient Visitor Levy will raise a £13.6m each year, and provide crucial investment in desperately-needed cheaper, greener transport solutions."

The Lothians MSP pointed out that Transform Scotland's report has urged the Government to legislate to provide Scottish Local Authorities with discretionary powers to develop their tourist taxes.

Ms Boyack added : "Local authorities need the power to be able to tailor the levy to their particular needs, and such a move cannot come fast enough for Edinburgh."



Edinburgh City Chambers. Photo: Martin P. McAdam
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