

# Edinburgh in position to begin regulating short term lets

Edinburgh is in a “strong position” to begin regulating short-term lets, council leader Adam McVey has said, as legislation is passed to introduce licensing schemes across Scotland.

Any property being used as a holiday rental, such as Airbnbs, will have to apply for a license from local authorities by April 2023 in order to operate, [The Scottish Government](#) confirmed this week.

Over the last decade the capital has become a hotbed of short-term lets (STLs) and is now believed to be home to around a third of all in Scotland.

The lack of regulation over the market is seen as a key cause of Edinburgh’s housing crisis, with thousands of properties in the city no longer used for residential purposes.

Furthermore, neighbours often report being exposed to excessive noise into the early hours and anti-social behaviour.

Cllr McVey said the introduction of a licensing scheme is “a great step forward for something that Edinburgh has led”.

He added: “We shouldn’t forget that the change that’s

happening on a national level is because of the work that Edinburgh has done and our council has done in calling for these changes and helping shape them to give us the powers we need to resolve these problems.”

Cllr McVey said “hundreds of thousands of pounds and resources” have already been put into setting up the scheme in Edinburgh.

“We’re in a strong position now to start processing applications and crucially, enforcing the new regulations, as soon as we have the ability to do so,” he added.

All local authorities will be required to set up STL licensing by October this year.

Whole properties being let out at STLs will have to apply for a license by April next year, with planning permission for a change of use, or evidence of an application seeking change of use, required before a license can be obtained.

Furthermore, next month the council will decide whether or not to become a ‘short-term let control area’, which would require properties to have planning permission in place at the time of applying.

Cllr McVey continued: “It’s not just about anti-social behaviour issues and impact on individuals and stairs, personally, although those are hugely important, it’s about the overall housing supply in Edinburgh which has seen 10,000 residential properties taken out of residential use and put into short-term let visitor accommodation.

“We need to see that tide starting to turn back and more properties – particularly in the City Centre that we want to remain a vibrant place – continue to be first and foremost for residents.”

A spokesperson for short-term let company Airbnb said: “We are

committed to being good partners to Scotland and want to work with local authorities to make these rules a success.”

They added the majority of hosts “share their homes occasionally to boost their income”, adding: “We look forward to collaborating with everyone to support these families and their communities as they recover from the pandemic.”

Fiona Campbell, chief executive of the Association of Scotland’s Self-Caterers, which represents people working in the short-term letting sector, was critical of the scheme, saying it was “poorly thought out and highly restrictive” that will be “nothing short of a disaster for self-caterers in Edinburgh”.

She added: “Edinburgh has a richly deserved reputation as one of the world’s leading tourist destinations and hard working, professional, and diligent self-caterers are a key part of the diverse accommodation offering in the city.

“Traditional self-catering is worth £70 million per annum to the capital’s economy which is now put at risk.

“To compound matters, Edinburgh’s self-caterers also face struggling under the council’s restrictive city-wide control area as well as the prospect of a tourist tax not far on the horizon. It really is a perfect storm of restrictions for us, which comes during a time at which we need it least.”

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter

*The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency: funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector, and used by qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.*