

The Edinburgh Address celebrating 15 years in business but worrying about the future

As she celebrated International Women's Day earlier this week, one Edinburgh businesswoman is also marking 15 years of running one of the city's most established self-catering holiday home providers.

With 77 exclusive properties available to rent through The Edinburgh Address, founder Anna Morris and her small team have carefully hand-picked each and every home to feature in the portfolio over the last 15 years.

The Edinburgh Address's homes have featured in publications such as Elle, Scottish Field Magazine and Homes & Interiors Magazine, and the team have picked up several awards, including the Feefo Platinum Trusted Service Award in 2022.

Not only did Anna establish The Edinburgh Address 15 years ago, she and her team launched Adore Scotland in 2020, offering some of the finest holiday accommodation all over the country. In 2015, Anna was part of a collective of women in Scotland who created Women in Tourism, with the aim to "inspire, motivate, encourage and support women across the sector; while advocating for greater gender balance across leadership roles within industry."

Susan Russell, Founder & Chair of Women In Tourism said: “Anna’s passion and dedication to the industry was as evident when we founded Women in Tourism as it is now and I’m delighted that The Edinburgh Address has reached this milestone celebration. Anna’s leadership has driven not just the organisation, but the sector as a whole. It’s been my privilege to work with Anna over the years and my heartfelt congratulations to her and the full team on this fantastic achievement.”

Years before AirBnb began dominating the self-catering holiday let world, Anna Morris founded her business which carefully hand-picks unique and luxury holiday homes around the city and markets on behalf of private owners and welcomes guests from all over the world.

But she points out that in recent years, while Edinburgh residents have spoken out about the rise in the number of holiday let homes around the city, the team at The Edinburgh Address has always believed in taking extra steps to ensure the neighbours of the holiday homes are always considered.

Anna reflects on her 15 years in business and what the future may hold for the self catering industry in Edinburgh:

“Celebrating this 15 year anniversary in 2022 is bittersweet for me, as my lovely wee award winning business, our employees and, the many local businesses we work with are threatened due to Edinburgh council’s short term let control zone.

“These are very difficult times for small local businesses involved in self catering in Edinburgh, of which there are many. We have been operating in harmony for decades with our neighbours and communities. I totally understand residents’

worries and indeed I recognise that there are examples of terribly bad experiences, but it is possible for good landlords and agencies to operate self catering across the city as a force for good for everyone.

“I have dedicated most of my professional life to Edinburgh and Scotland’s tourism industry, I have completed the Destination Leadership Programme alongside some of the cities most well known tourism leaders, and was a founding board member of Women in Tourism. Covid-19 dealt a devastating blow to those of us in Tourism and Hospitality and many business owners have made personal sacrifices to get through and are still recovering. On top of this I am so sad that over recent months self catering has been so misunderstood and maligned.

“It breaks my heart that my team and peers who have passionately welcomed guests to our city and worked 24/7 to provide them with memorable experiences could be left jobless and have their livelihoods shattered. Caring and responsible owners will not be able to share their wonderful holiday lets with the public; owners for example who have their own artwork on the wall or who provide freshly made scones or hand picked Christmas decorations. These homes will sit empty.

“As self catering operators we are part of that diverse business offering. Our visitors crave authentic and unique experiences. Personally, my most memorable experiences on holiday have been being picked up by the charming owner of the self catering property we were renting in Verona – what a lovely welcome that was for two weary travelers. My most memorable dining experiences have been without fail in local small restaurants or cafes.

“Our city needs a diverse offering of accomodation to cater for our diverse set of visitors and indeed our own Edinburgh residents who require accommodation if work is being done to their house or the corporate companies who need to place their employees in an apartment for a few weeks.

“It will be a devastating blow to Scotland, Edinburgh, its visitors, residents and business owners if we are not allowed to continue operating. All we ask, as self catering agents, is to be treated fairly and for our owners who have been operating for many years in sensitivity with residents, even within tenements, to be allowed to carry on offering unique accommodation to guests who seek us out and come back year after year.”

Short Term Let Control Area

The City of Edinburgh Council set out in its Business Plan in 2017, when the SNP/Labour coalition came into power, that one of their 52 commitments would be to review short term temporary lets.

Last year the council ran a consultation asking what residents thought of their plans to change the way that properties let out on this basis are controlled by the planning system. The results showed that 88% of those who responded supported the principle of the designation of a Short Term Let area.

And in February the council approved the proposal which will make the city of Edinburgh a short term let area of control.

In future (and all of this is subject to government approval) any properties will require change of use from residential to a short term let.