

Council elections 2022 – SNP will commit to tourist tax

If they form the new administration after the election, SNP councillors in Edinburgh will introduce the long awaited tourist tax.

The Transient Visitor Levy has been much talked about by the SNP/Labour coalition during the current council term. It would entail imposing a small charge on tourists staying overnight in hotels and other accommodation in the capital. This would be very much in line with other cities in Europe and the US, and the SNP say it would help the council maintain the city's infrastructure – public spaces, transport links and the cultural sector.



Cllr Adam McVey leader of the SNP group on The City of Edinburgh Council

Adam McVey who leads the SNP group on The City of Edinburgh Council and who is standing for election in Leith said: “For the last two years the immediate priority has been taking actions to help the industry survive through Covid. We’re now

in recovery where numbers are returning and the best thing for the Edinburgh and industry is to implement this charge to help fund the City through recovery. That's why revenue raising powers were included in the city centre task force recommendations, produced in partnership between the Scottish Government and all Scottish Cities."

The SNP group propose a £2 per room charge capped at £14 per visitor, saying that such a charge is backed by 90% of residents in a 2018 council consultation. The path to introducing this was delayed by the pandemic in March 2020, but in February this year The Scottish Government confirmed that work on the plans has resumed.

In Edinburgh the charge would include holiday lets through companies such as AirBnB. Only campsites would be exempt.



Edinburgh Castle. Photo: © 2020 Martin P. McAdam
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Cllr McVey said: "Edinburgh is a world-class destination for tourists. The festivals are the largest of their kind anywhere in the world and, in most years, Edinburgh Castle is the most visited attraction in the UK outside London. The sector employs tens of thousands of people.

"But we all know that this footfall also strains the city's capacity. The capital has to work hard to maintain the infrastructure that supports being a tourism hotspot – from keeping the streets clean to providing the transport links essential to getting around. And we also have to find ways to

keep investing in our cities' parks, museums, facilities like public toilets, and culture if we're going to stay in the premier league of holiday destinations.

"While the Conservatives would just see city residents keep footing the bill, SNP councillors will introduce a fairer alternative.

"Anyone who has been on a city break in Europe knows that per-night charges to tourists are normal. Cities around the continent have realised that this is a simple, fair and accepted way of raising money to help deal with the pressure that comes with being a popular destination."

He added: "The number one concern right now for business is staff availability, so some of this revenue could also be used to support people into these jobs, not only helping businesses but helping people across the City into fair work."

Edinburgh Tourism Action Group (ETAG) is "the umbrella organisation for the tourism sector in Edinburgh". They held their conference in early April, two years on from launching the Tourism Strategy which according to McVey, who spoke at the conference, is all about managing the city better for everyone. He said the tourist tax or local finance raising, is an integral part of that. It is a power which Edinburgh council has made the case for over the years leading up to 2020, and he explained it will be much needed in the future as part of the recovery.