

Delay on implementing rules around short term lets branded shameful

A decision to delay the introduction of a scheme that will give Edinburgh more powers to crack down on short-term lets has been branded “shameful”.

Edinburgh councillors have criticised the move announced last week by The Scottish Government in response to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

Operators of Airbnb-style holiday lets originally had until the end of March to apply for a licence – but the deadline has now been moved back to October 2023.

Representatives from the hospitality trade have railed against the plans, voicing concerns about the impact a licensing scheme could have on tourism – particularly in the capital where accommodation is in high demand during the festival.

But the council has been keen to bring in new regulations to control the number of short-term lets (STLs) in a bid to address Edinburgh’s housing crisis and return thousands of properties to residential use under both the last administration and this one.

Cllr Neil Ross said Holyrood had “caved into pressures from commercial landlords at the expense of residents”.

Council leader Cammy Day, Labour, added: “The delay for

absolutely no reason apart from commercial gain for a small handful of corporate businesses is shameful.”

And he reported that he had been lobbied by Airbnb in the last council term to take a “soft touch approach” to the crack down.

He added: “I think the legislation that many of us in this chamber have campaigned for and many of our colleagues at Holyrood have campaigned for is good legislation. I think there are some unintended consequences that we need to deal with and we need to work through them.”

Scottish Housing Secretary Shona Robison said the deadline extension was a “one off” and urged hosts to continue applying.

Under the new scheme, anyone who has let out an entire property as an STL for less than 10 years will need to obtain planning permission before making the licence application.

The council is already minded to refuse change of use where holiday lets could disturb neighbours and new planning policies are set to introduce a presumption against any loss of housing.

Fiona Campbell, Chief Executive of the Association of Scotland’s Self-Caterers said this will “in effect introduce a de-facto ban on self-catering”.

Reacting to news that operators now have another six months, she said: “The ASSC has been pressing hard for a pause to the implementation of the scheme due to the cost-of-living crisis so it’s good to know our voices are being heard.

“Our ongoing concern however is that it is not long enough to give our members the breathing space they need to get their licence applications approved in the current climate.”

by Donald Turvill

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