

# **Edinburgh politicians welcome introduction of tourist tax**

**Tommy Sheppard MP and SNP Council Group Leader, Adam McVey, have welcomed the publication of a Bill which would give The City of Edinburgh Council the power to invest more in local tourism facilities and services through a levy on overnight stays.**

Sheppard, whose Edinburgh East constituency also encompasses some of the City's most popular tourist attractions like Edinburgh Castle and the Royal Mile, has committed to working with the local tourism industry, city councillors and MSP colleagues to "get the bill over the line."

If approved by The Scottish Parliament, the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill will grant councils the authority to impose a levy on overnight accommodation, calculated as a percentage of the accommodation cost.

All funds generated from this levy would be reinvested locally, primarily in facilities and services used by tourists. This reinvested aims to enhance the tourist experience and bring significant benefits to local communities and their economies.

The council announced some time ago, during the last SNP-Labour administration, the proposal to fix a nightly charge at

£2 for the first week of a stay, to be added to the price of any room with a cap on seven nights. It is estimated the scheme would bring in between £5 million and £35 million a year, depending on the final model agreed.

Mr Sheppard said: "It's great to see The Scottish Government move forward with proposals to give councils the power to apply a visitor levy. It's particularly welcome here in Edinburgh – a city which proudly welcomes over 4 million visitors annually.

"This isn't a question of fleecing tourists as some suggest, but a rather a matter of fairness. It cost money to keep our streets clean, well-lit, and safe. It costs to support our festivals, to keep our museums and public spaces world class.

"Residents pay for this through their council tax and yet many living outside the city centre don't get a lot of benefit from it. It's only fair that people who come here for a few days or weeks and take advantage of these facilities make a modest contribution too. That's what this legislation will give Edinburgh City Council the power to do.

"I look forward to working with the local tourism industry, Edinburgh Councillors and my MSP colleagues to get this Bill over the line."

SNP group leader Cllr Adam McVey, added: "Edinburgh has well-developed plans for a tourist tax, and I'm delighted this legislation has moved to the next stage to make these plans a reality.

"More than 90% of residents backed plans for this levy in the City when asked and the engagement from industry means the Edinburgh plan is well thought out and deliverable for businesses too.

"This has been a key ask of local government for the last 6 years and it's fantastic that the SNP Government have

responded so positively through this process to further empower Councils on this policy as well as progressing many others.”

