

Council leader queried over short term let comments

The leader of Edinburgh Council has been criticised after he apparently backed a further delay to the introduction of the city's short-term let licensing scheme.

Holiday let hosts have until 1 October to lodge an application if they want to keep on operating while that is determined – but fewer than 300 have registered with just over a month to go.

The council and The Scottish Government have been met with a backlash from the industry in response to the crack down, who say it will put thousands out of business.

The licensing system was set to go live Scotland-wide in April when a six-month extension was announced by the government.

City council leader Cammy Day has said another delay would be “something we would be supportive of”, but later added in a social media post the date was “set in legislation and we can't change it”.

In an interview with BBC Radio Scotland on Wednesday he admitted there had been a low number of applications made, adding: “I understand the sector will put their applications in towards the end of September for that date in October.

“But if they want to join us in the lobby to ask for an extension to that time then we'd be more than happy to have that discussion.

“Only the government can change that date. So the lobby of changing that date is live and we would be open to having that discussion with the government as well, the 1st October is looming but only the government can change that deadline.”

Cllr Susan Rae, Edinburgh Greens spokesperson on licensing, called his comments “entirely unacceptable” and urged the leader to “issue an urgent clarification of council’s position and an apology for any confusion”.

She said: “This council does not support a further extension to the STL licensing deadline, and Councillor Day is fully aware of that.

“Every party on the council agreed as recently as February that we regretted the delay to the deadline from April to October.

“Communities across Edinburgh and even the more responsible holiday let operators, have been urging the council and the Scottish Government to introduce effective licensing of the sector for years.

“The scheme has already been delayed by six months and most responsible operators have used this time to submit their applications. While we have faced vociferous opposition in the form of intensive lobbying and Judicial Reviews brought by some within the short term let’s industry, we have pledged to introduce this legislation to help address a desperate housing crisis and because it’s what the people of this city very clearly want.

“It would be grossly unfair on both responsible operators, as well as those residents who continue to suffer from daily upheaval to their lives from problem holiday lets, to have any further delay.”

Cllr Day said in a statement on Twitter today: “Yesterday I was interviewed on BBC Radio Scotland about incoming short

term let legislation and we discussed the impending registration deadline.

“As a Council, we remain absolutely committed to ensuring the whole city benefits from our thriving visitor economy but it has to be managed and has to be sustainable and I continue to believe that fair and effective STL controls would be an important step in the right direction.

“From speaking to industry, I know that there’s a nervousness around the 1 October deadline, and they’re lobbying the Minister for this to be extended further, but this is a date set in legislation and we can’t change it.”

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter.



Edinburgh City Chambers. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam
www.martinmcadam.com