

Long term housing problems need to be fixed

Sarah Boyack MSP writes about Edinburgh's longstanding housing crisis. She has long campaigned against party flats and in favour of more housing for locals.

"We are faced with a significant shortage of homes, particularly social housing, and the highest housing costs in Scotland, both for buying and renting. More and more people are forced to leave the city and commute to work.

"Moreover, our growing population of students, now comprising 20% of the city's residents, struggle to find affordable accommodation.

"As a city that thrives on tourism and culture, Edinburgh's economy depends on it. However, we experience a massive shortage of accommodation, particularly evident during our summer festivals.

"Since I was first elected, I have witnessed the detrimental impact of the uncontrolled expansion of short-term lets, especially for people living in flats and tenements. We've seen communities hollowed out, the rise of issues like antisocial behaviour from party flats, and left residents in the dark about who owns these short-term let properties, making it difficult to carry out necessary shared repairs.

"Therefore, when the Scottish Government agreed to take action to empower local councils to address the challenges posed by

short-term lets, I welcomed this move. There are regions across the country where housing shortages and tourism pressures demand urgent action. However, the SNP's proposals fail to strike the right balance.

"Firstly, they overlook the distinction between short-term lets and the traditional Bed and Breakfast sector, which is a crucial part of our tourism industry, alongside hotels. Long-established and well-managed Bed and Breakfast owners are now required to register across the entire country.

"I have also raised concerns about homeowners losing the flexibility to rent out their homes or rooms during the Festival without incurring additional costs and dealing with bureaucratic hurdles.

"At the end of the day, yes, we need action on short-term lets but we also urgently need £418 million to provide the affordable social housing that would make a huge difference for the people in Edinburgh.

"Once again, we find ourselves in a situation where we have the worst of both worlds: more SNP centralisation and bureaucracy, but no effective action to tackle the worsening housing crisis faced by my constituents."



Sarah Boyack MSP at Pedal on Parliament 2023. Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com