

East Lothian sees biggest slump in holiday lets in UK

East Lothian saw the biggest fall in short term holiday lets registered in any UK area last year as the number of bed spaces fell by more than 1,000.

Figures released by the Office of National Statistics have revealed that while short term lets appear to be growing in popularity, the number registered in the county fell by 17 per cent.

And they revealed that while the number of properties and bed spaces had fallen, the number of hosts listed operating them remained the same.

The figures, which have been highlighted by building maintenance experts SFG20, reveal that while nationally the number of lets fell by less than 1 per cent across Scotland, where new legislation introduced last year required property owners to licence them, the drop in East Lothian was the biggest.

It said in January last year there were 6320 short term holiday let bed spaces in East Lothian, by December the number had fallen to 5310.

By comparison Midlothian had 1330 in January last year rising to 2060 by December while in the Scottish Borders the number went from 8250 to 9010 over the same period.

The number of listings identified by using data from Airbnb,

Booking.Com and Expedia, in East Lothian also fell from 1160 to 960 while going up in Midlothian from 270 to 330 and Scottish Borders from 1,900 1990.

However the number of hosts listed in East Lothian between January and December remained the same – 600.

The figures come as an independent report commissioned by North Berwick Environment and Heritage Trust said the number of holiday lets listed in the town, which has the largest percentage of short term lets in the county had risen by 100 over a year.

SFG20 said that while several other Scottish areas such as Edinburgh (8 per cent), Perth and Kinross (7 per cent) and Moray West (5 per cent)also saw a decrease in registered lets Corby in Merseyside was the only English area to see a decrease and it was still lower than East Lothian at 10 per cent.

A spokesperson for East Lothian Council said: “Whilst we do not have figures that mirror the ONS data in detail, we would have expected some decrease in short term lets, following the national introduction of licensing in 2023.

“We will be reviewing data from various sources and datasets to compare with our annual tourism monitoring.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter