



Residents' shocked by the U-turn on short-term lets licensing law

PLACE, a group representing residents on the Scottish Government's Short-Term Lets Stakeholder Working Group, has written to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, Shona Robison, to highlight the serious consequences of the sudden u-turn that she announced on the short-term lets licensing scheme, last week. Many people know short-term lets through brands like Airbnb.

The letter explains that the Minister's reasoning for the removal of overprovision powers in licensing legislation shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the scope of the new short-term let control areas in planning legislation. Short-term let control areas are only effective when combined with specific amendments to a Council's Local Development Plan which can only be achieved every 5 years. Only the City of Edinburgh has this process in motion.

If overprovision powers are not granted in licensing, almost all Councils will be unable to deny licenses to short-term lets for reasons of housing shortages for the foreseeable future. Councils will be powerless to address homelessness, poverty and social isolation as we come out of the pandemic.

A PLACE spokesperson said 'In June, Airbnb released their White Paper which set out how they wished their ideal "regulation" to look like across the UK. The changes proposed here by the Scottish Government seem to mirror these disappointingly closely: self certification, no checks on overprovision and a weakening of the ability to enforce planning permission standards.

Corporate lobbying behind closed doors cannot be allowed to win over the needs of communities. We implore the Cabinet Secretary to read our evidence and reconsider her position.'

PLACE has also written to Ms Robison to request the following 10 additional changes:

1. Robust tools to address overprovision of short term lets in licensing and planning legislation.
2. Platform accountability - Experience shows licensing is only effective if platforms can be fined for advertising short-term lets without a valid license number.
3. Robust checking of home sharing applications for fraud by commercial hosts.
4. Mandatory planning permission for commercial licenses, especially in tenements.
5. Cancel temporary exemptions which incentivise the use of homes as short-term lets.
6. A live short-term letting register with natural names for commercial hosts

7. Guidance for lawful home-sharing and home-letting (particularly in flats)
8. Policy statements on overprovision which must consider the supply of accessible and affordable housing.
9. Removal of the 10 year rule which gives immunity to short-term lets which have been operating unlawfully for 10 years.
10. No more delays - every delay is a win to those who exploit communities for profit.

END

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Letter from Cabinet Secretary describing U-turn -
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/short-term-lets-licensing-order-update-letter-from-cabinet-secretary-LGHP-committee/>