

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL
POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Item No 3

17 JANUARY 2025

DEPUTATION REQUESTS

Subject	Deputation
3.1 In relation to Item 4.1 – A Visitor Levy for Edinburgh – Final Scheme	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="836 613 1540 696">1) British Holiday & Home Parks Association – via Teams<li data-bbox="836 712 1540 920">2) Edinburgh Tourism Action Group – in person, and supporting written submission (Appendix 1) signed by key stakeholders of the Edinburgh visitor economy.<li data-bbox="836 936 1540 981">3) Living Rent Edinburgh – in person

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Councillor Meagher
City Chambers
High Street
Edinburgh
EH1 1YJ

15th January 2025

Dear Councillor Meagher and Committee Members,

Policy and Sustainability Committee, Friday 17th January 2025: A Visitor Levy for Edinburgh – final scheme

As key stakeholders of the Edinburgh visitor economy, we wish to express our support for the introduction of a visitor levy scheme, which we believe presents a unique opportunity to generate significant funds for the city's long-term development. Our shared ambition is to be a world-leading sustainable destination, preserving and sharing Edinburgh's cultural and historic assets, supporting sustainable economic growth, and enriching residents' quality of life. While our sector continues to face tough challenges—including rising operational costs, the cost of living crisis, and intense global competition—we recognise the levy's potential to generate transformative funds for the benefit of all who live, work, and visit Edinburgh.

We urge the committee to embrace this as a chance to be ambitious and visionary. In the years ahead, we hope to look back and see how the visitor levy has played a vital role in shaping a future where residents and visitors alike can enjoy world-class, authentic, and memorable experiences in the city.

To achieve the city's ambitions, collaboration is key. By forming a strong public-private partnership and investing in high-impact projects aligned with both the levy's objectives and [Edinburgh's 2030 Tourism Strategy](#), we can create value for residents, visitors, and businesses alike. Additionally, this partnership could, under the right conditions and with appropriate investment, unlock further private sector investment to support the continued growth of our vibrant city.

To fully realise our sustainable tourism goals, we recognise that it is essential to invest meaningfully across all three core spending areas: City Operations & Infrastructure, Culture, Heritage & Events, and Destination & Visitor Management. Achieving a fair balance across these areas will allow us to address the city's needs holistically, ensuring long-term growth, sustainability, and a high-quality experience for both residents and visitors.

We also welcome the introduction of a transition period for forward bookings in the final scheme and appreciate the Council's responsiveness to feedback from stakeholders during the consultation process. However, there are ongoing concerns from accommodation providers and intermediaries that the 1st May 2025 does not provide sufficient time to adapt to the levy and meet pricing legislation, especially for online travel agents and tour operators. Extending the transition period would give businesses adequate time to prepare, leading to higher compliance, fewer disputes, and a smoother implementation of the visitor levy.

We support a balanced approach to the final scheme, and we are committed to achieving the best outcomes within the framework. However, we would like to see an increase in the allocation for Destination and Visitor Management from 10% to 15%—which was supported during the consultation but not adopted. Given the importance of effective destination and visitor management in maintaining the city’s appeal, we believe this area merits greater investment.

Effective governance is paramount to ensure the proper allocation of funds in line with legislation, the levy scheme’s objectives, and the city’s tourism strategy. We are encouraged that the scheme proposes to establish an impartial Visitor Levy Forum with an independent chair to ensure fairness, build trust with residents and businesses, and maintain the goodwill of our visitors. It is essential that all levy-funded investments are scrutinised closely to ensure they are used for “developing, supporting and sustaining facilities and services which are substantially for or used by persons visiting”, as stated in the legislation. This independent oversight will be critical to securing the best outcomes for the city.

Transparency is also essential. Clear, open decision-making processes, timely reporting, clear financial accountability, and robust reviews will foster trust and demonstrate how funds are being used to benefit all stakeholders.

The visitor levy presents a unique opportunity to preserve Edinburgh’s cultural heritage, promote sustainable growth, and improve the quality of life for residents. This can only be achieved through the contributions of our visitors. Together, we can create a legacy that benefits current and future generations, strengthens the city’s global appeal, and contributes to Edinburgh’s wider economy.

We encourage the committee to consider these points when reviewing the final scheme. Thank you for your attention to these matters, and we are committed to working in partnership throughout the 18-month implementation period and beyond to reinforce Edinburgh’s status as a world-leading sustainable destination.

For further information, published responses to the ‘Visitor Levy For Edinburgh – Draft Scheme’ consultation can be found on the [Edinburgh Tourism Action Group \(ETAG\) website](#).

Regards,

- Donald Emslie, Chair, Edinburgh Tourism Action Group (ETAG)
Note: ETAG engages with a diverse range of organisations, representing a broad spectrum of views. This deputation reflects the views of many but does not represent a unanimous position.
- Neil Ellis, Chair, Edinburgh Hotels Association
- Roddy Smith, CEO, Essential Edinburgh
- Rob Lang, Head of Marketing, Edinburgh Airport
- Joanne Davidson, Director of Policy & Insights, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce
- Helen Ireland, Director of External Relations, National Museums Scotland, and on behalf of Edinburgh Cultural Venues Group
- June Edgar, B.Sc., M.B.A., F.R.S.A., Blue Badge Guide, Edinburgh Committee of the Scottish Tourist Guides Association
- Amanda Ferguson, Chair, Convention Edinburgh Strategy Group