

Aberdeen Council Moves Ahead with 7 Percent Tourist Tax Proposal

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Aberdeen City Council is preparing to introduce a 7 % tourist levy on overnight stays, a move that could make it one of the highest visitor taxes in the UK. The proposed charge would see an extra £5 added to a typical £70 hotel room, with revenue earmarked for improving local tourism infrastructure, such as upgrading attractions and replacing festive lighting.

Councillors have approved a 12-week public consultation to seek views from residents, business owners, and tourism operators. The council says the levy aims to strengthen Aberdeen's offer as a visitor destination while providing a stable funding stream for public amenities.

Supporters argue that the charge is modest, comparable to the price of a cup of coffee, and necessary to fund services that benefit both tourists and the local economy. If implemented, the levy could take effect as early as April 2027.

However, concerns are mounting within the business community. The Federation of Small Businesses has warned that Aberdeen's proposed rate would be among the highest not only in Scotland but across Europe. Mike Duncan, speaking for the group, cautioned that the tax could undermine the city's competitiveness by deterring potential visitors and damaging its tourism image.

Fiona Campbell, chief executive of the Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers, echoed those concerns, describing the plan as punitive. She highlighted that the charge would be subject to VAT, bringing further cost implications for guests. Campbell also noted the wider impact beyond tourists, pointing out that offshore workers, residents, and people travelling for medical reasons could also be affected.

The proposal places Aberdeen at odds with other Scottish cities. Edinburgh and Glasgow have opted for a more modest 5 % charge, while other areas, such as South Ayrshire and the Western Isles, have paused or shelved similar plans due to economic uncertainties.

As Aberdeen enters the consultation phase, the council faces the challenge of balancing investment in tourism with the need to protect the city's hospitality sector. The outcome of the consultation will determine whether the plan gains enough support to proceed or must be reconsidered in light of public and industry feedback.