

30 October 2024

**The Cockburn Association: Conference:
Responsible Tourism: Solutions for Edinburgh's Future**

Look for publication of the conference slides and recording in due course.

Themes arising:

Concept

Tourism benefits and costs; impact on private space and public space; how to 'measure better'.

What is the city's tourism 'carrying capacity'?

'Overtourism' describes a feeling and a problem. Hits residents 'quality of life'. Careful analysis needed to clarify causes and remedies.

How much 'legislation' should be introduced to curb the (free) market place? (eg. accommodation provision)

Where should 'change' begin? (eg. pedestrianisation; traffic curbs to ease congestion; 'place' repair and (better) maintenance; delivery of visible benefits to locals.)

Shift focus from tourism 'growth' to 'yield' and to 'community benefit' (public realm); from destination marketing to destination management.

Importance of 2022 Responsible Tourism Charter.

Practice

Edinburgh & SE Scotland Regional Prosperity Framework: Visitor Economy & Culture a key regional priority.

Edinburgh Tourism Strategy 2030: Key themes include Towards Net Zero; Fair Work Recruitment and Retention; Visitor management: Destination Marketing & Promotion.

Visitor Levy: Use of proceeds 'directed' by Scot Gov to visitor-related themes. Visitor Levy 'rate' (5% and 7-day cap; plus VAT) not onerous by comparisons. Introduction will have marginal impact on tourism numbers. Visitors from cruise ships (low local economic injection) will be excluded.

Proceeds directed to: housing and tourism mitigation (£5m annual capital debt repayment on £70m of housing investment); participatory budgeting (2% of funds); city operations and infrastructure (49% of funds); culture heritage and events (34%); destination and visitor management (15%).

'Quality of life for locals is important. But what's good for residents is also good for tourists.'

Visitor capacity issues need to be understood better; 'social' and 'cultural' carrying capacity.

'Real costs' of unrestricted travel are considerable – litter, pollution, sewage, impact on heritage (built and natural), social and environmental impacts.

The impact of Edinburgh's visitor economy. Accommodation capacity (hotel room and STL) growing rapidly. (Unregulated STLs a 'black market' issue. 12,000 'lets'??; only 1800 registered??) Biggar Economics Report. (Also 8000 empty homes in the city.)

Management of the Visitor Levy is a key task for CEC. 2030 Tourism Strategy has key strategic aims centred on people / place / environment / partnerships / reputation. What will success look like?

Lessons from NC 500 study: A greater share of the profits from the tourism industry should be directed towards benefitting the wider needs of the city. 'Without residents, there is no heritage'.

Search for more and better community engagement. But how? CEC has a stream of 'consultations'. Residents don't engage. Community councils not as good a consultation conduit as they should / could be.

References:

Edinburgh Napier Tourism Research Centre [Tourism Research Centre](#)

Edinburgh Futures Institute: Research Hubs: [Research - Edinburgh Futures Institute](#)

[Edinburgh-Tourism-Strategy-2030.pdf](#) (2020)

[Visitor Levy for Edinburgh - City of Edinburgh Council - Citizen Space](#) (Consultation closes 15 Dec 2024)

[Microsoft Word - Visitor Levy for Edinburgh - Draft Scheme.docx](#)

[About proposals for a visitor levy – The City of Edinburgh Council](#)

[Further reductions in short-term lets ‘could cost Edinburgh’s economy £57m’ | Scottish Housing News](#)