

Summary of Position Paper

On the 25th October 2018, Minister for Housing, Mr Eoghan Murphy, issued a press release detailing proposed changes to self-catering tourism lets. The press release was titled 'Bringing homes back into the long-term rental market' and outlined his aim to introduce new regulations in respect of self-catering tourism lets. The purpose of these changes to the planning code is primarily to address the longer-term rental issues arising from the 'surge' in house sharing.

The Irish Self Catering Federation utterly opposes these proposals which will not solve the housing crisis – but will cause a crisis in the tourism accommodation sector. Both the Department of Housing and the Department of Tourism have ignored this fact and propose using this blunt instrument to virtually destroy a fully functioning self-catering tourism accommodation sector. Minister Murphy's proposals indicate a total lack of understanding of the current rules and standards which the majority of holiday home providers work within.

Despite numerous requests neither Department has produced any reports to support their decision to introduce this legislation. Recklessly they use hearsay and quote made up statistics to support this legislation. Currently in Ireland there are 8,000 self-catering units actively available to rent. Less than 10% (780) of these are available in Dublin, not 5,000 as is regularly referred to.

Each and every one of these units will be affected by the planning proposals and will result in an estimated drop in supply of 20% – 30%. This will result in a loss of over 350,000 room nights across the country and at least 1 million less tourists visiting Ireland. This will cost the exchequer €15million with a loss of 2,000 jobs.

The ISCF opposes the current proposals for the following reasons:

The proposals are proven to not be fit for purpose. They are based on the failed legislation in cities such as Berlin, Paris, London and Amsterdam

1. The Department of housing wrongly say that all those running self catering tourism lets have planning to do so – 80% of units, do NOT have planning for change of use.
2. Permission will be in the hands of county councils. This is unworkable and will allow bias and lack of clarity to creep in to a sector as decisions are made on a case by cases basis.
3. The proposed regulations target established operators who now must apply for change of use planning whilst owners of principal primary residences do not.
4. The ripple effect will be felt by restaurants, bars, retailers and tourist attractions who will see a decline in business. Guests who use self-catering are shown to use more local services.

Proposed Solution:

The ISCF proposes a set criteria for property standards and tourist service in our sector that all operators must achieve to receive an operating license.

- Register for self-catering units across Ireland. Operators will be issued with a licence number. Only licensed operators can be listed on distribution platforms
- Operators of self catering tourism lets must achieve minimum property standards, prove insurance and tax compliance.
- These proposals will help maintain the high level of tourism product and alleviate the problem of rogue operators.