

**From the Office of the Minister
DEIRDRE HARGEY MLA**

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Louise a chara

AirBnBs and Short Term Lets

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 May 2024 concerning the management and regulation of short-term lets for visitors (commonly referred to as AirBnBs due to the online platform on which many such properties are advertised) and of short-term lets for other types of tenants.

This is a complex area to deliver change in, with policy and operational responsibilities spanning a number of Executive Departments, Councils and other agencies. The Department for Communities (DfC) is responsible for private tenancies legislation (though this excludes holiday lets); the Courts are responsible for administering it; and the local Councils are responsible for enforcing it. My Department's role is focused on the implementation of the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 ("the 1992 Order") which requires visitor accommodation across eight categories, including self-catering accommodation, to be certified once every four years by Tourism NI.

The scope of the 1992 Order is tightly defined, with Tourism NI's role limited to inspecting each property to ensure that it meets a minimum standard of safety, cleanliness, and the provision of facilities. The policy objectives relate to the consistency of standards across the visitor accommodation sector and providing assurance to visitors that when they book and stay in visitor accommodation in NI that it meets a minimum level of standard. The legislation does not provide any power to limit or cap the number of properties available for visitors in any of the accommodation categories or to regulate the rents charged to tenants.

I recognise that the growth of the tourism sector in NI in recent years, plus lifestyle and other external forces, has resulted in significant growth in the number of self-catering properties certified by Tourism NI to provide visitor accommodation. As such, Tourism NI is shortly going to carry out a review of the role of the certification of visitor accommodation. This review will examine options for the future regulation

of visitor accommodation and present findings for the consideration of Tourism NI and my Department. Any changes which are considered following the review will require new and/or amended primary legislation to be debated and approved by the Assembly.

I recognise too that the pool of short-term lets for visitors interacts with the supply of other properties for short-term let, and other property types for rent and sale. It will be important that any policy change in relation to the certification of visitor accommodation aligns with planning, housing and other associated policy areas. It may be that policy change is needed in those areas too in order to achieve the goal of a sustainable and well-regulated accommodation sector.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Deirdre Hargey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DEIRDRE HARGEY MLA
Minister for the Economy