

12th June 2020

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am writing to you following your recent Ministerial Statement (10 June 2020) which outlined the next steps for the tourism industry as Scotland seeks to navigate its way out of lockdown in a safe and responsible manner.

The Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (ASSC) welcomes your announcement of an indicative date for the reopening of tourism businesses on 15th July 2020, and is grateful for all you have done to support the sector at this incredibly difficult time. We do not take for granted you fighting our corner in government. Your announcement provides a highly encouraging milestone to work towards, providing businesses across the country with real hope after what has been a highly challenging few months for the industry.

We also commend the forthcoming publication of guidance for the tourism and hospitality businesses, enabling them to plan for welcoming guests back to their premises, and we look forward to the creation of the high-level Tourism Task Force that will allow us to rebuild the sector and maintain our ambition to become leaders in 21 Century tourism. Taken collectively, these measures demonstrate just how important the Scottish Government regards our vital tourism industry.

The ASSC fully understands that the Scottish Government must always be guided by the scientific evidence when determining what parts of the economy should reopen, and when they should do so, and take decisions in a holistic context recognising the impact it could have on other parts of the lockdown easing strategy. Nonetheless, we still believe that there may be scope for allowing the self-catering sector to reopen ahead of the provisional date of 15th July, particularly as you acknowledged in the questions following your Ministerial Statement, that *"it is in some ways easier to protect, and to comply with the Covid guidance and rules, in a self-catering establishment than in certain hotel accommodation."* This is call is also supported by other leading stakeholder groups, including the Scottish Tourism Alliance.

As you noted in your statement, the tourism sector has been *"devastated"* by the impact of Covid-19, with businesses from going from *"anticipating another bumper tourism season this summer to seeing their income drop to zero almost overnight."* The fact that there will be a summer season, albeit more limited than under normal circumstances, will come as a great relief to our members but we would ask that consideration be granted to a minor change to the provisional date allow self-catering operators to open on either **Saturday 4th July** or **Saturday 11th July 2020**.

Reopening self-catering on a weekday, as currently planned, would result in the loss of a whole weeks earning potential for operators as most bookings tend to be made

Saturday-Saturday or Friday-Friday. Moreover, an earlier opening would have positive economic benefits for a struggling sector, as demonstrated by economic modelling provided from SuperControl, the leading online booking and management system for holiday let businesses in Scotland.

Their empirical data shows that:

- The potential lost revenue opportunity in Scotland for the professional self-catering sector by opening on 15th July compared to 4th July is **£20,155,422**.
- If the sector were allowed to open on 11th July, the potential lost revenue opportunity would be **£16,772,904**.
- It should be noted that these: (a) are conservative estimates; and (b) represent lost opportunity in *rental terms* only. The ancillary spend in local economies, in terms of employment and supply chain, has not been estimated.

ASSC members are ready to reopen before 15th July 2020, on the aforesaid dates, with stringent safety and hygiene measures in place – and we have presented robust cleaning protocols to the Scottish Government to this effect. This small change to the dates would not only benefit operators who responsibly closed their business back in March 2020 but local economies who are dependent on tourist spend as well as our own citizens who are longing for a holiday.

The ASSC remain extremely thankful for your engagement on a number of issues over the past few weeks, through the work of Scottish Tourism Economic Recovery Group and our individual correspondence. We wish to work in a positive and collaborative manner with the Scottish Government in terms of reopening our sector and I look forward to receiving your reply about the proposals made in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Campbell
Chief Executive
Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers