



ASSC MANIFESTO FOR THE 2026 SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION



CHAMPIONING SCOTLAND'S SELF-CATERING: FAIR REGULATION, STRONG PARTNERSHIPS, SUSTAINABLE GROWTH



Foreword

Scotland's self-catering sector stands at a defining moment. After half a decade shaped by pandemic recovery, regulatory upheaval, and global change, our members continue to embody the resilience and innovation that define Scottish tourism. Self-catering is not simply accommodation - it is community infrastructure, a driver of local employment, and an essential part of Scotland's visitor economy.

As Scotland looks to the next Parliament, the Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (ASSC) calls for a new era of collaboration between industry and government.

This manifesto is explicitly aligned with the Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA) Holyrood Election Manifesto 2026 - Champion, Connect, Invest. Together, we share a vision for a fair, competitive, and sustainable tourism economy - one that champions the sector's value, connects policy with evidence, and invests in people, product, and place.





About the ASSC

Founded in 1978, the ASSC represents 1,500 members across Scotland - from city centre apartments to remote cottages, lodges, and castles, from traditional dwellings to unique bespoke accommodation such as cabins, pods, and converted farm buildings. Not all self-catering takes up residential housing; many properties are purpose-built for tourism or repurposed from non-residential use, helping to revitalise rural and island economies while preserving Scotland's built heritage.

Our members are professional accommodation providers, operating as integral and vital parts of local communities and economies. They create employment, underpin and distribute visitor spend across Scotland, and help prevent tourism leakage by ensuring that income circulates within local supply chains. These small business owners, often long-established in their communities, deliver exceptional visitor experiences while contributing nearly £1 billion annually to Scotland's economy.





Our Shared Mission with the STA

In line with the STA's national vision, the ASSC is committed to ensuring that Scotland remains a world leader in 21st-century tourism.

To achieve this, government and industry must work in genuine partnership - sharing responsibility, evidence, and long-term ambition. This manifesto translates the STA's national pillars into specific actions for Scotland's self-catering and short-term let (STL) sector.

CHAMPION SCOTLAND

Fair, Evidence-Based Regulation and Respect for Small Businesses

The STA calls for a government that recognises the tourism and hospitality sector as a cornerstone of the national economy. The ASSC echoes this call and asks for regulatory reform that restores proportionality, consistency, and trust.

1. Fair, Lawful, and Proportionate STL Reform

Scotland urgently needs clarity, fairness, and consistency in how short-term lets are regulated. The ASSC calls for a balanced system that is clear, workable, and trusted by both businesses and communities.

We support reform of the current framework to:

- Separate planning and licensing functions, ensuring a simpler, more transparent system.
- Protect compliant existing operators from retrospective or disproportionate enforcement.
- Streamline and standardise national guidance so that rules are consistent across Scotland.
- Ensure planning control focuses on areas of genuine housing pressure, not responsible operators contributing to local economies.
- Explore new planning tools, such as national permitted development rights or a modernised Use Class framework, to deliver clarity and reduce bureaucracy.

These reforms will restore confidence, reduce duplication, and create a proportionate, legally robust system that works for communities, businesses, and government alike.





2. Ending Scapegoating: Change the Narrative

Scotland's housing crisis cannot be solved by scapegoating the tourism sector.

- Self-catering makes up just 0.8% of Scotland's housing stock, compared to 3.4% for long-term empty homes.
- The sector contributes nearly £1 billion GVA and supports over 29,000 jobs.

We call on all parties to adopt evidence-based housing policy, and to recognise that a thriving, regulated, and responsible tourism sector strengthens - not weakens - communities.

CONNECT SCOTLAND

Partnership, Policy Coherence, and Shared Accountability

The STA calls for cross-portfolio collaboration and long-term policymaking.

The ASSC supports this ambition through proposals that connect government and business in genuine partnership.





3. Partnership, Not Paternalism

- Establish a Tourism & Hospitality Partnership Forum, a statutory mechanism co-chaired by government and industry, to oversee policy coherence, cumulative impact assessments, and collaborative reform.
- Embed early, structured engagement on all new tourism-related regulation, ensuring co-design and transparency.
- Create secondment opportunities between government and industry to build mutual understanding, reflecting the STA's call for business literacy within the civil service.

This long-term partnership approach will help ensure future reforms - such as those to planning, NDR, and EPCs - are delivered collaboratively, with real-world insight and evidence at their core.





4. Market-Aware and Future-Fit Policy

The ASSC calls for policymaking that reflects current market conditions and cumulative regulatory impact.

- Conduct regular Cumulative Impact Assessments before introducing new regulation or taxation affecting tourism.
- Respond to cost-of-living pressures, labour shortages, and shifting visitor behaviour through joined-up policy that supports competitiveness and long-term sustainability.
- Ensure coherence between STL, planning, EPC, business rates, and visitor levy frameworks.

Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)

Scotland’s net zero goals must be achieved through support, not sanction.

We call for:

- A fit-for-purpose EPC framework for non-domestic, seasonal, and heritage properties.
- Alternative compliance routes focused on carbon impact rather than rigid scoring.
- Incentives for voluntary improvements instead of punitive minimum thresholds.

These proposals align with the STA’s “Connect” priority by ensuring that Scotland’s regulatory environment is coordinated, evidence-led, and supportive of both net zero and business viability.

INVEST IN JOBS AND GROWTH FOR SCOTLAND

A Fair Fiscal Framework for Tourism

The STA’s third pillar calls for investment in people, product, and place.

The ASSC aligns fully with this ambition and calls for economic reform that supports growth through fairness and transparency.

5. A New Deal for Business and Tourism

- Embed tourism and hospitality as key growth sectors in Scotland’s economic strategy.
- Reform Non-Domestic Rates (NDR):
- Following the problems associated with the draft 2026 Non-Domestic Rates revaluation, with some self-catering businesses hit with increases of around 400%, adopt a profitability-based valuation method for self-catering sector to replace flawed rental comparables.
- Recognise the success of the 2025 Council Tax Amendment Regulations as a model for proportionate, partnership-driven reform.
- Restore parity with England on higher property thresholds.
- Reinstate the Barclay Review’s recommendations to simplify and modernise rates for small tourism businesses.

These measures directly support the STA’s call to accelerate reform of planning and business rates to enable growth and investment.





6. Visitor Levy Reform: Fair, Simple, Deliverable

The ASSC and STA remain committed to ensuring that any discretionary visitor levy taken forwards by a local authority is fair, transparent, and easy to administer. As councils consider how a levy might be designed, we encourage options that promote clarity and ease of understanding for visitors and businesses alike.

We propose:

- The use of a simple flat rate levy rather than percentage-based models.
- Shifting liability from operators to guests, supported by QR-code or online payment systems.
- Expanding coverage to include cruise passengers and motorhomes, ensuring all visitors contribute fairly.
- Supporting rural tourism road user contribution pilots to help maintain local infrastructure in high-traffic destinations.

These principles support practical and visitor-friendly solutions that protect tourism businesses while also delivering genuine community benefit.





OUR SHARED VISION FOR 2026 AND BEYOND

Tourism is one of Scotland's most resilient and dynamic industries.

As the STA has clearly articulated, it is a “force for good” that drives jobs, supports communities, and funds public services. The self-catering sector is central to that success story.

Together with our colleagues across tourism and hospitality, we call on the next Scottish Government to:

- Champion Scotland's tourism sector through a dedicated Minister for Tourism and Hospitality.
- Connect policy and practice through genuine partnership with industry.
- Invest in growth through fair taxation, future-fit regulation, and skills development.

The next Parliament must reset its relationship with business, rebuild trust, and co-create the conditions for sustainable prosperity.

A fair future for Scottish self-catering will be one where regulation is proportionate, partnership is genuine, and Scotland leads the world in sustainable tourism.

Core Message

Champion Fair Regulation. Connect Policy with Evidence. Invest in Scotland's Tourism Future.

