# Fife Council's dramatic rent increase puts East Pier Smokehouse at risk



James Robb, the owner of East Pier Smokehouse, a well-known fish restaurant in St Monans, Fife, has expressed significant concern over a recent decision by Fife Council to increase the ground rent on the property from £1,800 per year to £8,000 annually. This dramatic rise, which more than quadruples the current rent, has raised doubts about the future of his business, particularly as Mr Robb is considering retiring and plans to sublease the restaurant to new operators.

The increase was unexpected, as Mr Robb indicated that there had been no rent reviews conducted by Fife Council since 2012. “The lease was set up in 2012 and Fife Council has not actioned any rent reviews,” he stated. "Now, out of the blue, they have said it’s going up to £8,000. Initially, they wanted £10,000 but reduced the amount when I complained. I still think the amount is madness. According to them, it’s not based at all on how busy or successful the business is.”

The increase in ground rent is particularly problematic given that Mr Robb had already agreed on terms with a potential new operator for the business. However, he has indicated that the significant hike in rent could jeopardise this arrangement, stating, “If the ground rent goes up this much, it knackers me subleasing the building. It won’t make it worth my while; I’d be better selling up.” As a result, the potential deal is currently on hold while he navigates the financial implications of the council's decision.

Concerned about the impact of the rent increase on his business and the local economy, Mr Robb hopes to generate a “public outcry” that might compel Fife Council to reconsider its decision. He noted the struggle many businesses are facing in the area, saying, “A lot of things in the village have shut down. I feel Fife Council are driving out businesses and not helping at all.”

In response to the situation, Fife Council has defended the rent adjustment. Michael O’Gorman, the assets and estates manager for Fife Council, explained that the current rent had not been raised since 2012 and suggested that the increase is necessary to align the rent with current market rates. He said, “The council is operating in a challenging economic environment and we need to make sure that rents are fairly applied to all of our tenants,” while also offering to work with Mr Robb should he wish to transfer the lease to a new operator.

As Mr Robb navigates this significant business challenge, the future of East Pier Smokehouse remains uncertain, caught in the balance between council policy and local economic realities.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.fife.gov.uk/news/2025/rent-increase-will-allow-investment-in-council-houses> - This article discusses Fife Council's rent increase for council houses, which provides context for how council decisions on rent are made to align with current economic pressures.
* <https://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/641086/DYSwinter24.pdf> - This document provides information on rent surveys and financial pressures faced by Fife Council, which can relate to the context of rent adjustments.
* <https://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/excel_doc/0036/197829/NE-Fife-Responses.xlsx> - This Excel sheet contains community responses to various proposals, offering insights into public engagement with Fife Council on local issues.
* <https://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/300107/> - This report provides information on the Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance for Fife, which might relate to the broader housing policies in the area.
* <https://www.fife.gov.uk/housing> - This webpage provides general information about Fife Council's housing services and policies, which could offer background on how rent decisions are made.