# Calls for regulation of short-term holiday lets amid housing crisis



Calls for new legislation regulating short-term holiday lets have intensified following the advertisement of a house in East Belfast for a staggering £19,000 for ten weeks. The property, located in the Holywood Road area, was listed for a stay between early June and mid-August this year for two adults, raising concerns over the impact of such high prices on local communities.

Ruth Brooks, a councillor representing the Titanic area and a member of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), highlighted the detrimental effects of the growing number of short-term lets on the housing situation in East Belfast. According to Brooks, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive recently reported over 10,000 individuals experiencing housing stress in Belfast. "Every week I hear from my constituents who have insufficient points to be considered for a social property but feel that a private rental is outside of their reach. With these figures, I’m not surprised," she stated.

Many residents are reportedly 'sofa surfing' or residing in overcrowded homes, indicated Brooks, reflecting on the lack of stable housing affecting their quality of life. She emphasised that while Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are subject to housing regulations, short-term lets, such as those listed on platforms like Airbnb, fall under tourism regulations instead, governed by the Department for the Economy.

Brooks pointed out that while Tourism NI does inspect these properties, the focus is only on quality, leaving the quantity and their impact on local housing unregulated. She expressed concern that without stricter regulations, the issue will escalate, further restricting access to affordable housing. “Why would you put your house on the rental market when you can hand it over to an Airbnb and make ten times the amount?” she asked. The existing legislation limits HMOs to a 10 per cent threshold per street, but no such limit exists for Airbnbs, resulting in unrestrained expansion in the sector.

In pressing for legislative change, Councillor Brooks noted a commitment made in August 2024 by the Economy Minister to potentially review existing regulations. She asserted that the current classification of short-term lets as tourism-related creates a significant loophole in the housing strategy, exacerbating the crisis for individuals seeking affordable housing.

Addressing prevailing narratives around housing shortages, Brooks remarked, “A lot of the conversation and narrative we get is, ‘we can’t get a house because of foreigners’, but that is actually not the case; they can’t get a house because of these short-term BnBs." She illustrated the crisis with an example of a family from East Belfast who had been temporarily relocated to Coleraine due to the lack of available accommodation, an indication of the challenges facing those in urgent need of housing.

Brooks concluded by asserting that the lucrative short-term rental market has contributed to a deficiency in temporary accommodation options within Belfast. The evolving dynamics of the rental market in East Belfast reflect underlying challenges that continue to pressure local communities amid a broader housing crisis.

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

## References

* <https://www.cozycozy.com/us/belfast-short-term-rentals> - This URL supports the claim about the prevalence and variety of short-term rentals in Belfast, highlighting the options available for visitors.
* <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Planning-and-building-control/Planning/Applying-for-planning-permission/Short-term-holiday-lets> - This URL provides information on planning regulations for short-term holiday lets in Belfast, which are relevant to the concerns raised by Councillor Ruth Brooks about the impact on local housing.
* <https://www.daft.ie/property-for-rent/ireland/houses> - Although not directly related to Belfast, this URL illustrates the broader context of housing rentals in Ireland, which can inform discussions about housing availability and affordability.
* <https://www.airbnb.com/> - This URL is a platform where many short-term lets are advertised, contributing to the issues discussed in the article regarding the impact of such rentals on local housing markets.
* <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/housing-benefit-and-housing-stress> - This URL provides information on housing stress in Northern Ireland, which aligns with the concerns raised by Councillor Brooks about housing challenges in Belfast.
* <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/> - This URL is for the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland, which is responsible for regulating tourism-related activities, including short-term lets, as mentioned in the article.