# Scottish union leader criticised for owning multiple homes while campaigning against second home ownership



The recent revelations surrounding Roz Foyer, the General Secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), have ignited a fierce debate on the implications of second home ownership in Scotland. Despite her vocal condemnation of multiple property ownership, it has come to light that Foyer owns not only a family home in Glasgow and a cottage on the Isle of Jura but also a luxurious three-bedroom apartment in southern Spain. The disclosure, which reveals her renting out the Spanish property for over £1,000 a week, raises questions about the authenticity of her stance on housing issues.

Foyer, who reportedly earns up to £100,000 annually, has previously attributed part of Scotland's housing and cost-of-living crisis to the proliferation of second homes. She has advocated for significant council tax increases on such properties, suggesting a 300% premium to help address homelessness. Speaking on the subject in July 2023, she noted, “Second homes and short-term lets can have significantly negative impacts on communities,” an assertion that starkly contrasts with her own property portfolio.

The backdrop to this controversy is an intensifying housing crisis in Scotland, exacerbated by rising property prices and increasing foreign ownership of homes. As local authorities grapple with a shortage of affordable housing, the Scottish National Party (SNP) has proposed policy measures, including a doubling of council tax rates on second homes to deter owners from keeping them vacant. Supported by the Scottish Greens, this initiative aims to free up homes for residents and make housing more accessible. However, concerns remain about its potential ramifications on tourism and the broader housing market.

In the context of these changes, the Scottish housing landscape is evolving, with recent data showing a nearly 50% drop in second home ownership across the nation over the past six years. This decline reflects shifting patterns driven by higher taxes, the rise of short-term rentals, and ongoing economic uncertainties. Communities, particularly in rural and island locations, have expressed concerns about the impact of second homes, claiming that they drive up housing prices and reduce availability for local workers.

Community sentiments were echoed in Scottish Parliament, where MSPs highlighted the need for affordable housing to support local economies. Carol Mochan, a member of the Scottish Labour party, stated, “A lack of affordable housing affects not only individuals and communities but local businesses that want to attract workers.” The situation is particularly strained in the Highlands, where locals have reported difficulties in recruiting essential public sector workers due to similar housing shortages.

While some local enterprises have begun initiatives to combat the impact of second homes—such as launching a rival to Airbnb to keep tourism revenue within community control—the debate over ownership continues. Foyer, implying a defensive position, stated, “I can look in the mirror knowing that I’m actively arguing to increase my fair share to society.” She asserts that her family has worked tirelessly to own properties legitimately, refusing to feel shame for her decisions.

As public scrutiny grows, the duality of Foyer's position complicates the fight for equitable housing in Scotland. The juxtaposition of her personal choices against her public advocacy highlights the broader conflicts surrounding housing policy and the social responsibilities of those in influential positions. As developments unfold, Foyer’s actions may provoke further introspection within the STUC and beyond, raising critical questions about the responsibilities of union leaders in addressing the very issues they advocate against.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14765221/Scots-union-boss-home-time-Spain-despite-condemning-negative-effects-second-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://greens.scot/news/council-tax-changes-on-second-homes-vital-to-tackling-housing-crisis)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14765221/Scots-union-boss-home-time-Spain-despite-condemning-negative-effects-second-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/04/17/snp-plans-scotland-second-homes-double-council-tax/), [[5]](https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/level-of-second-home-ownership-plummets-in-scotland)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/scottish-government-announces-tax-changes-for-second-and-empty-homes), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/dec/05/scottish-islanders-launch-airbnb-rival-in-fight-against-second-homes-crisis)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://greens.scot/news/council-tax-changes-on-second-homes-vital-to-tackling-housing-crisis), [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/04/17/snp-plans-scotland-second-homes-double-council-tax/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/04/17/snp-plans-scotland-second-homes-double-council-tax/), [[5]](https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/level-of-second-home-ownership-plummets-in-scotland)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14765221/Scots-union-boss-home-time-Spain-despite-condemning-negative-effects-second-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/level-of-second-home-ownership-plummets-in-scotland)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14765221/Scots-union-boss-home-time-Spain-despite-condemning-negative-effects-second-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14765221/Scots-union-boss-home-time-Spain-despite-condemning-negative-effects-second-homes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/04/17/snp-plans-scotland-second-homes-double-council-tax/> - In April 2023, the Scottish National Party (SNP) proposed plans to double council tax rates on second homes in Scotland. This initiative aims to address housing shortages by encouraging owners to sell or rent out their properties, thereby increasing the availability of homes for local residents. The proposal has sparked debate, with concerns about its potential impact on the housing market and second home owners. The policy reflects the government's efforts to balance housing needs with tourism and economic considerations.
3. <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/scottish-government-announces-tax-changes-for-second-and-empty-homes> - In April 2023, the Scottish Government announced plans to enable councils to raise council tax on second and empty homes. The proposal includes allowing councils to charge up to double the full rate of council tax on second homes from April 2024, aligning them with long-term empty homes. This measure aims to increase housing availability by encouraging owners to sell or rent out their properties. The consultation also seeks views on further powers to charge more than double the rate in future years.
4. <https://greens.scot/news/council-tax-changes-on-second-homes-vital-to-tackling-housing-crisis> - The Scottish Greens have welcomed plans to double council tax on second homes, viewing it as a vital step in addressing Scotland's housing crisis. The policy aims to free up more homes for those in need by discouraging the hoarding of properties. The Greens argue that such measures are essential for tackling housing inequality and ensuring that homes are used for living in, not for investment purposes. The initiative is part of a broader strategy to make housing more accessible and affordable.
5. <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/level-of-second-home-ownership-plummets-in-scotland> - Recent data indicates a significant decline in second home ownership in Scotland, with numbers dropping by almost 50% over six years. The decrease is attributed to higher taxes on additional properties, the rise of short-term lets, and broader economic uncertainties. This trend reflects changing patterns in property ownership and usage, with implications for housing availability and local economies. The decline suggests a shift in the housing market, potentially easing pressures on communities affected by high levels of second home ownership.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/dec/05/scottish-islanders-launch-airbnb-rival-in-fight-against-second-homes-crisis> - In December 2021, residents of Scottish islands launched a holiday lettings website aimed at competing with platforms like Airbnb. The initiative seeks to ensure that more of the islands' tourism revenue stays local and addresses concerns about the impact of second homes and short-term lets on housing availability. By creating a platform that prioritises local businesses and property owners, the community aims to balance tourism with the need for affordable housing and sustainable economic development.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/04/17/snp-plans-scotland-second-homes-double-council-tax/> - In April 2023, the Scottish National Party (SNP) proposed plans to double council tax rates on second homes in Scotland. This initiative aims to address housing shortages by encouraging owners to sell or rent out their properties, thereby increasing the availability of homes for local residents. The proposal has sparked debate, with concerns about its potential impact on the housing market and second home owners. The policy reflects the government's efforts to balance housing needs with tourism and economic considerations.