

Department for the Economy

Consultation on Policy – The Statutory Regulation of Tourist Accommodation in Northern Ireland

Response from Propertymark

December 2025

Background

1. Propertymark is the UK's leading professional body of property agents, with over 19,000 members representing over 12,500 branches. We are member-led with a Board which is made up of practicing agents, and we work closely with our members to set professional standards through regulation, accredited and recognised qualifications, an industry-leading training programme and mandatory Continuing Professional Development¹.

Consultation overview

2. The Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 currently sets out the arrangements for statutory regulation of visitor and tourist accommodation in Northern Ireland. Currently, each category of tourist accommodation is required to meet specified criteria and is subject to regular inspection and compulsory certification in order to operate legally. The Department for the Economy (DfE) and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (Tourism NI) are seeking to ensure existing legislation remains up to date and reflects wider changes to tourist accommodation that have taken place since the previous review, which took place in 2011. To achieve this, Tourism NI and the DfE are proposing the following four changes:
 - Proposed amendments and modernisation of the existing statutory minimum criteria.
 - Proposed creation of an additional statutory category of visitor/tourist accommodation - "Alternative Accommodation".
 - Proposed amendments to the regulatory requirements for keeping a "Visitors Register".
 - Proposed amendments to the regulatory requirements regarding the "Display of Charges".

¹ <https://www.propertymark.co.uk/>

Propertymark response – summary

3. Propertymark welcomes the opportunity to respond to the DfE's consultation on changes to Statutory Regulations of Tourist Accommodation. In particular, we are interested in the development of regulations for what is referred to by the industry as "short-term lets", a term we will use to describe this kind of tourist accommodation within our consultation response. These are forms of holiday rentals in homes that could equally be used for long-term private rented sector accommodation but are instead let on a short-term basis. It is our understanding that these properties would qualify as "self-catering establishments" as defined by Categories of Tourist Establishment (Statutory Criteria) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992². The reasons for this include:

- **Property owners** - they can provide enhanced rental income, greater flexibility of letting their property for a term that suits them, reduced void periods and generating extra income while travelling or trying to sell a property.
- **People in the process of buying and selling** – short lets are used by people that are in the process of buying or selling a property and find themselves in need of temporary accommodation in order to meet the deadlines of their buyer or seller.
- **Estate and letting agents** - benefit from business expansion opportunities associated with managing short-term holiday lets to help people boost their rental income and meet their needs without the risk or hassle of listing on sites like Airbnb.
- **Visitors or users of short term lets** - can get a home to stay in rather than a hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation or holiday park.
- **Tenants and people moving for work** – can gain access to temporary accommodation, flexibility in moving between locations, and the ability to trial new areas before committing to a longer-term lease.

² [Categories of Tourist Establishment \(Statutory Criteria\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 1992](#)

4. As the UK's largest professional body of property agents, we seek to ensure that any regulations impacting our members achieve what is best for agents, residents, property owners and the housing sector.
5. Since this kind of tourist accommodation has some key differences from other types, it is important that any changes and new requirements do not impose undue challenges of agents and landlords renting out their homes to visitors. As such, our response primarily seeks to ensure that the DfE and Tourism NI is aware that some of the requirements could be incompatible with how these lets are organised.

Propertymark's response - consultation questions

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed changes/new criteria which shall be applicable to all accommodation establishments as set out in Annex A?

6. While the vast majority of requirements improve the quality of short-term lets, there are two that are more suitable for other forms of tourist accommodation which may be challenging for landlords or agents of short-term lets to meet:
 - Firstly, general requirement 2(1)d requires properties to have "suitable arrangements in place for the reception, including the check-in and check-out". This is not always possible for properties without considerable alteration, nor are they always required. Some short-term lettings arranged via companies such as Air BnB will have online arrangements that do not require any physical check in, additionally, some letting agents will provide a full contract for the visitors. Signing this contract effectively works as checking in, that the agent, landlord and tenant are in agreement that the property will be made available for the tenant during the period designated in the tenancy agreement. We would like to see confirmation or clarity that signing an agreement effectively meets suitable checking in and out arrangements in lieu of a dedicated reception area.
 - Secondly, requirement 3(1)b that the establishment must regularly wash linen, duvets, mattress protectors etc is more applicable to hotels and other accommodation where visitors only stay for a few days. In the case of a short-term let, it would not be practical for the establishment to clean the linen while the tenant is still living at the property. We would welcome an amendment within the requirements for self-catering accommodation

that any contract between the tenant and the agent/landlord must make it clear who is responsible for cleaning linen during the duration of the tenancy. Once the tenancy has come to an end, it must be the agent/landlord's responsibility to clean the property (including the linen) in preparation for the next tenant.

Question 2: Do you agree with the new criteria/proposed changes to the existing criteria for the current eight statutory categories of tourist accommodation as set out in Annex B? Please clearly state which table/statutory category of tourist accommodation your response(s) relate to, e.g. Table 1 – Hotels, Table 4 – Self-Catering Establishments etc.

7. We generally agree with the new criteria for the current eight statutory categories of tourist accommodation as set out in Annex B. For Table 4, Self-Catering Establishments, it is positive to see that the criteria clarifies that both the proprietor and their agent are responsible for the management of the property. This helps to ensure properties managed by letting agents, not just landlords, are included within the regulations. We would recommend replacing the requirement "The proprietor of the establishment, or their agent, shall be reachable at all times in case of an issue or emergency" with "The proprietor of the establishment, or their agent (whoever is managing the property, shall be reachable at all times in case of an issue or emergency." This clarifies that tenants should contact the person who has set themselves up in the tenancy agreement to be contacted. This will ensure more tenants know who to contact in the case of an emergency.

Question 3: Are there any other aspects of the current statutory minimum criteria, outside of the proposals set out in Annexes A and B, which you consider should also be changed, modernised or added to?

8. We would recommend introducing a new category for what we have called "short-term lets". While they are applicable to self-catering establishments, there are some key differences that necessitate a separate category. They are typically lived in for longer periods of time, have been rented out for long-term periods in the past and are likely to involve a letting agent. This makes them more similar to properties within the private rented sector than tourist accommodation. Creating a specific criteria can help improve standards, help to clarify the need to meet these standards for those seeking to rent property on a short-term basis and ensure that criteria can best meet the unique characteristics of this kind of property.

Question 4: Do you agree with the inclusion of Alternative Accommodation as a statutory category of tourist accommodation?

9. Alternative Accommodation is defined as “any structure, or part thereof, that is provided by the proprietor of an establishment for the exclusive use of a particular visitor or party of visitors, and shall include glamping pods, bubble domes, treehouses, shepherd huts and other suitable equivalents.”
10. We would reiterate our recommendation of the need to introduce the statutory category of short-term private rented accommodation as there are more differences between this kind of accommodation from the other categories than alternative accommodation.

Question 5: Have you any views on the indicative minimum criteria for Alternative Accommodation outlined in Annex C?

11. This accommodation would be unlikely to be rented out by Propertymark members or other letting agents. We therefore have no comments to make on the criteria of Alternative Accommodation.

Question 6: Do you have any views regarding the naming of the Alternative Accommodation category, i.e. do you feel another category name would provide a more appropriate description of the styles of properties/establishments proposed to be certified under it?

12. We have no further comments to make at this time.

Question 7: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the regulatory requirements around the keeping of a Visitors Register by visitor/tourist accommodation establishments as set out in Section 3 of this consultation and Annex D?

13. Yes, we agree with the proposed changes to the regulatory requirements around the keeping of a Visitors Register by visitor/tourist accommodation establishments and have no further comments to make at this time.

Question 8: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the regulatory requirements around the Display of Charges by visitor/tourist accommodation establishments as set out in Section 4 of this consultation and Annex E?

14. Yes, we agree with the proposed changes to the regulatory requirements around the Display of Charges by visitor/tourist accommodation establishments and have no further comments to make at this time.