



EASCO News

Monthly news from YOUR trade association

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VisitEngland’s Growth Strategy: Consultation Results Released

VisitEngland has announced the results of its summer consultation into the tourism growth strategy.

There were only 119 responses to the consultation and whilst most tourism bodies will have been on that list (including EASCO of course) it would suggest that not many individual businesses took the time to respond.

Unsurprisingly, 93% of respondents agreed with the general direction, which was uncontroversial.

Very few respondents expressed any significant disagreements with the strategy, and most seem to have supported this new simpler approach to strategy forming.

The table reproduced below shows how respondents thought the priorities should lie. It is not entirely clear what some of these things mean in practice. As in the past, a problem lies in that VE, and the tourism industry generally, has limited influence on things that matter such as transport.

In EASCO News 104
 Electrical Safety in Holiday Homes Regulations – which should be chopped?
 Rural broadband
 Hi-Tech smoke alarms

Priority:	Action/s most frequently appearing in top 3:
Priority 1: Investing in tourism products and experiences in line with market trends and strategic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing locally differentiated products and experiences (63%)
Priority 2: Attracting and retaining motivated people and developing their skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repositioning the image of the industry as an employer and career of choice (69%) Employing and developing skills matched to the needs of new markets and increased customer service expectations (68%)
Priority 3: Increasing the visibility and understanding of England’s tourism offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening domestic marketing and promotion to highlight the breadth of the product and local distinctiveness (82%)
Priority 4: Overcoming barriers to business competitiveness and investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing awareness of tourism growth benefits and opportunities amongst development bodies e.g. planners, economic development and transport professionals (66%)
Priority 5: Investing in the infrastructure and environment on which tourism growth relies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving transport provision to meet the needs of visitors, especially in rural areas (70%) Promoting regeneration of urban, seaside and rural town centres and investing in the future of the high street and public realm (69%) Increasing mobile connectivity and promoting access to and take-up of superfast broadband in all parts of England (68%)

Electricity

An EASCO News briefing on a topic where there are plenty of myths and sales calls.

Almost every holiday home has it, all of us use it daily, most of us would struggle to do without it, but of course, it can kill people and it sometimes does.

In this EASCO News feature we take a look at what a holiday home owner needs to know and needs to do to ensure that in a holiday home, only bacon and sausages get fried, not the guests.



There are plenty of myths and pearls of wisdom out there about “what you have to do” but the truth is, as with most health and safety subjects, you have to apply three “C”s, care consideration, and common sense.

Firstly, the law on this is the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. Quite old regulations, but then electricity has not changed much since 1989. Like all regulations, they are lengthy and not a very exciting read but what they boil down to is this: you must maintain everything to do with electricity in a safe condition. The regulations apply to the self-employed as well as to employers and therefore almost all holiday home owners will be duty holders under the regulations. In any case, the general duty towards persons “not in your employment” under the health and Safety at Work Act 1974 can be wheeled out by the prosecution if you find a way to wriggle

out of compliance with the regulations, so there is no escape!

The main duties to maintain things in a safe state are subject to the old favourite phrase “so far as is reasonably practicable”. This means that a balance must be struck between the cost or difficulty of doing something, and the benefits in terms of risk reduction, that accrue from it. It does not mean “reasonably affordable” and whether you can afford the bill or not is irrelevant. You can however, decide that something is not worth spending £1000 on because the risk reduction will be tiny, even if you are a multi-millionaire.

We’ll come to alterations and improvements later, but assuming no changes to your electrics, that’s an outline of what the law demands and the law isn’t very prescriptive.

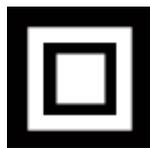
As is so often the case, the legal requirements are followed up by codes of practice and sets of standards and in the case of electricity there are standards known as the “IEE Wiring Regulations”, which are not really regulations at all but a set of established standards.

Now, the catch is, although the law does not say you have to comply with any standards, if you don’t, a court is likely to find you guilty of failing to carry out your duty to maintain the electrics in a safe conditions – the court will regard all the various standards as a benchmark of what it is to be safe electrically. In addition, if you have burned or electrocuted your guests, and not met all the relevant standards, they will hire a smooth-talking lawyer who will sue you for your last penny. So de-facto it is pretty essential to follow good practice even though there is no law that says “You must”.

So how are you going to go about making sure that Sea View Cottage is electrically safe? Firstly eyes are a pretty good resource here. In between clients, you or your cleaner or local agent should be taking a look around and noticing if there are any signs of damage. Cracked or broken sockets, plugs, frayed wires etc or anything loose that ought not to be

should get noticed. Any sign of interference with the wiring should be checked out. If you do find something amiss, you might not have time to get it repaired before the next guests come in and you will need to make a judgement about what to do. A warning might be sufficient for adults "DO NOT USE" but that's unlikely to be enough if you're expecting a family with children, in which case get it repaired. It is wise to know in advance who you are going to call upon if an electrical repair needs to be made urgently.

In the longer term, it is accepted good practice to have a Periodic Inspection Report done by an electrician every few years. How many years? Well, for rented property the advice is every five years and that's a reasonable period for a holiday home too. However there is no hard and fast rule. Old wiring should obviously be tested more often, new wiring in apparently good condition might not need quite such frequent testing. If you have trouble with mice, remember they can chew cables that you cannot easily see



and that might suggest more frequent tests.

Portable appliance testing is another area of myth and sales talk. Portable Appliance Testing is carried out by a competent person (note competent not necessarily qualified) and checks whether there is any leakage to the outer surfaces of the appliance, using a special device. The plug and wiring are also checked. Salesmen will tell you that you need to have everything tested every five minutes but this is nonsense. Double-insulated appliances don't need PA Testing, they only need visual inspection. The inspection should include checking that the fuse is correct and the plug securely wired. In a holiday home there is a chance that a guest has replaced the fuse because if you know how to do it it is a lot easier than calling the agent or owner, but the correct fuse might not have been used.

Appliances like kettles, microwaves, irons, toasters, vacuum cleaners etc are classified as class 1 or class 2 appliances. Class 2 are

double-insulated. That means they don't need an earth wire and they are made so that even if there is a fault, the outside won't become live. The symbol shown here is the double-insulated symbol and appliance. Plastic kettles, and most kitchen appliances will be double-insulated these days. The HSE recommends testing non-double-insulated equipment that gets moved around such as floor cleaners and extension leads every 1-2 years but this is for you to judge. They publish a handy table of what they recommend be tested and how often.

Although visual inspection at a basic level should be frequent, a formal visual inspection with a record kept every year or two is a wise idea, as much to protect you as to protect your guests. It is evidence that you have carried out your responsibilities.

So good practice that will see you keeping out of court is:

- Examine portable appliances and fixed at a basic level often, to check for damage by that horrible kid who came with Mrs Smith last week
- Every year or so, depending on the level of risk in your judgement, carry out and record a formal visual inspection
- Every year or so have a competent person do a Portable Appliance Test on anything that really needs it – there won't be much in a typical holiday home.
- Get repairs done smartly if you need to

Now all the above assumes a steady state of things but you may want to do repairs or have improvements or alterations made. There are some myths around this too. You don't need to get an electrician to change a light bulb. The big danger in changing light bulbs is falling off a chair – use LED bulbs to save energy and greatly reduce the frequency with which you need to undertake this hazardous procedure.

The law does have something to say about this in the form of a tome called Part P of the

Building Regulations 2010. This sets out that certain works are notifiable (to the local authority) and if they are notifiable then either they have to be self-certified by a qualified electrician or you have to get someone in to do the certification if you do the work yourself. In practice it may be hard to find anyone to certify work you do yourself.

Not all work is notifiable. If you are competent to do it you are allowed to do minor things like replacing a socket or a light bulb holder or a switch. It is a myth that such things have to be done by an electrician but the person who does it should be competent to do it otherwise you'll be defenceless when you appear before the magistrates. Any work involving new circuits, extensions, or consumer units is likely to be notifiable. Work in a room containing a bath shower or swimming pool is always notifiable. In a holiday home situation where there is the possibility of liability it would usually be wise to get an electrician to do any such work unless you really do know what you are doing.

So, to sum up, there are hardly any laws saying that you must do this or that except:

- You must maintain the electrical installation and portable appliances in a safe condition
- You must notify any serious installation or alteration work to the local authority's building control and either get it done by someone qualified to self-certify, or get it inspected

You would be most unwise to take the above as meaning you did not need to do anything! In order to avoid both civil liability and criminal prosecution you need to be able to prove that you have maintained an installation properly and unless you have invented your own system and standards and can defend them in court, you are best adhering to established good practice. But don't be conned by sales people into having that double-insulated kettle PAT tested every six days, it is simply not necessary!

Regulations: What should get the chop?

One of the points in the Government's new Five Point Plan for Tourism is ***Common Sense Regulation***

The Tourism Alliance is trying to assemble a list of what the industry believes could be scrapped, and has the ear of the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport in respect of this. We have been here before, and more than once, and the issue is usually that most regulations were created for a good reason and it has only sometimes gone away.

Changes that are proposed will have to be realistic – there is no chance of getting rid of taxes in this exercise – and cannot have an adverse impact on other people. Whilst a lot of people decry "Health and Safety", as a nuisance, when something goes wrong they always demand more regulations – just read the reports about the recent tragic air accident at Shoreham for an example of a situation like that. We all want less red tape but actually proposing reductions in it is quite difficult.

If you can come up with ideas for regulations that no longer have their original purpose, or that are excessively burdensome in relation to the risk, please pass them to EASCO and we'll try and put the best ideas into the Tourism Alliance list.

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Smoke Alarms move into the hi-tech age.

EASCO News has recently become aware of developments in smoke alarm technology that will be of interest to self-caterers. In the self-catering situation, many if not all owners are some distance away from the property, and also the property may well be empty for some weeks in the year. CCTV monitoring of your guests might be considered a step too far for owners' peace of mind when the property is occupied, but a new generation of smoke alarms give some tranquillity benefits without creating a privacy issue.



The Nest smoke alarm is sure to be copied by other manufacturers, but for the moment it is the leading Wi-Fi connected smoke alarm. It is an early implementation of the so-called "Internet of Things", which basically means machines being controlled via the internet, a technological advance that will benefit self-caterers in particular. The best smoke alarms these days use two different technologies to detect fire or smouldering, ionising detection and photoelectric detection. The first are the most common and respond well to sudden flaming fires. Photoelectric alarms respond better to slow smouldering, but some alarms combine both methods.

The really interesting thing about this device is its connectivity, which in a self-catering situation means that you get informed via the Wi-Fi connection and the Internet of a problem that has arisen. The device includes

a loudspeaker and speaks early warnings to the house occupants but the ability of the device to distinguish early warnings from emergencies will be a comfort to owners and guests alike.

They can interconnect wirelessly so providing better warning than isolated alarms, and best of all they'll tell you, the owner, when the batteries are low or if there is a device failure, (they self-test) so the potential nightmare of a fire in which a smoke alarm fails to work and you get the blame can be avoided or at least the chances minimised.

Fire precautions in self-catering are from time to time a source of controversy but this new technology allows for higher standards of protection at a fraction of the cost of having a wired system installed, although they are considerably more costly than the cheap smoke alarms you buy on the high street.

Perhaps for self-caterers there is a considerable added bonus of getting to know directly about any incidents rather than waiting until that lovely family from somewhere you have never heard of leave a blacked bedroom for your cleaner to discover.

Rural Broadband: Subsidies for Satellite

Following a Select Committee report earlier this year the Government has promised a scheme for subsidised satellite broadband for the 5% of geographical areas that are hardest to reach with wired services.

The detailed scheme has yet to be launched but it is expected that there will be equipment subsidies for satellite broadband installations in those hard-to-reach locations.

EASCO News will be watching out for developments on this topic.