



# EASCO News

Monthly news from YOUR trade association

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## Political Change: What does it mean for Tourism?

With a new leader at the helm of the Labour Party, the political news has been intense in September, but less attention has been paid by the main media outlets to the policies that a Corbyn government might follow with regard to tourism.

The chances that he will win the 2020 election are of course hotly debated, but nobody thought he was going to win the leadership when the contest first began. With austerity still very much a part of the present government's economic strategy to balance the books, significant numbers of people may remain disaffected by government policy and politics in general, so forecasting any result may be premature.

Policy for HM Opposition is of course in a state of change with new leadership in position and significant internal division.

We know however that Mr Corbyn is keen on renationalisation of the railways, and is an opponent of airport expansion in the south of England, as is John McDonald, the new Shadow Chancellor, who represents a constituency that includes Heathrow Airport. He opposes HS2 and is generally not favourable towards road network expansion.

These are mixed news for tourism. Road improvements are beneficial to some but not

necessarily a benefit to areas through which new roads cut. Abandonment of HS2 might be a negative for tourism, but might be a benefit if the money is spent in other ways that benefit tourism more.

In another area of policy Jeremy Corbyn is known to be strongly opposed to zero-hours contracts, which are used in seasonal industries such as tourism in some businesses.

The new Labour leader is thought to be potentially interested in the social benefits of tourism as part of a commitment to a fair society and the tourism industry will need to ensure that it highlights those benefits. However we have little insight into their attitude to holiday homes.

The new Shadow Secretary of State for Culture is Michael Dugher, who represents Barnsley East in the House of Commons. The Labour Party spokesman on Tourism and Sport is Clive Efford, also a strong supporter of the new leader. Judging by his social media postings his interests lie strongly with sport and rather less with tourism, a subject not recently mentioned on his Facebook or Twitter feeds.

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## “Bent” Reviews – Restaurateur Reveals Scam tactics

London exclusive restaurant Director James Lewis has revealed how easily false reviews can be bought after receiving an offer of a fake review for just £4 on the review site Yelp. Lewis claimed to the daily Telegraph that he had received a number of other similar offers from people who were prepared to contribute glowing testimonials to yelp, Trip Advisor, and other sites.

Yelp told the telegraph that they took a strong line on fraud and penalised businesses found to have paid for fake reviews with a public message telling consumers to beware, and that they had closed the account of the person offering to provide the fake reviews.

However this news report may be simply one instance of widespread fraudulent reviewing. In June a BBC investigation found that up to an estimated 20% of online reviews were fake, and that some of the more sophisticated sites were not immune despite their systems intended to root out and prevent false reviews.

The Competition and Markets Authority is currently looking at online endorsements as a topic and has published an interim report. Some practices are illegal under consumer protection legislation, in particular:

- ‘Using editorial content in the media to promote a product where a trader has paid for the promotion without making clear in the content or by images or

sounds clearly identifiable by the consumer (advertorial)’

- ‘Falsely claiming or creating the impression that the trader is not acting for purposes relating to his trade, business, craft or profession, or falsely representing oneself as a consumer’

Their research underlined the importance of online reviews:

*Our research found that 54% of UK adults read online reviews in relation to six sectors, although there were differences in the level of use between age groups (Figure 1). Respondents aged 55+ were the least likely to read online reviews (42%), whilst 61% of both those aged 16–34 and those aged 35–64 had read online reviews.*

The CMA makes clear what it considers to be unacceptable bad practice and its ongoing interest in this subject but is less forthright about what it can do to curtail a serious failing in consumer protection that can be very damaging to a small business.

## Legionella: What do you need to know and do?

Legionella Disease can be fatal and is a form of pneumonia. There are also less serious diseases arising from the same source Pontiac fever and Lochgoilhead fever. Older people and those with existing health issues or reduced immunity are at greater risk. The disease is caught when the bacteria are inhaled via water droplets in the air. The bacterium *Legionella pneumophila* is a common one found in natural watercourses and ponds and it is rarely a cause of illness in its natural habitat. Your dawn swim in the local river is not likely to

result in this particular illness. A shower is a much more dangerous activity because the water sprays into droplets that you might breathe in.

The problem happens when these troublesome bacteria are in water that is stored between 20 and 45 degrees centigrade. That's nice and warm for them and they multiply, but not hot enough to kill them. There is a particular problem with evaporative cooling towers and condensers but holiday accommodation does not normally have this industrial type of equipment so that leaves us with two places where trouble might be brewing:

- Hot water systems
- Spa pools

The law is somewhat unclear on this but essentially, the management of the risk of legionella disease is a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act, along with all the other things you need to worry about for the safety of guests and employees. If you are self-employed and do your own cleaning and servicing you can claim some exemptions from the Act but this does not prevent you being sued for every last farthing by the holidaymaker whose husband caught the disease in your bathroom, so it is definitely necessary to manage the risks.

Domestic water systems are pretty simple to manage and control. If you have a storage tank, this is where the bacteria will multiply. The thermostat needs to be set to a minimum of 60 degrees to kill them. The Temperature at the taps etc. should be 50 degrees or higher. If you have a continuous water heater it should heat the water to 60 degrees or more.

You do need to carry out and write down a risk assessment, possibly as part of a

more wide-ranging risk assessment. It is important to review it when there are changes and every couple of years to show that you have not forgotten it.

Generally in a typical domestic hot water system the review is likely to conclude that the risks are very low, provided the temperature is maintained, and no further action will be needed. There is no requirement for regular testing unless your risk assessment shows this to be needed.

Cold water tanks should be below 20 degrees centigrade. If there is a situation that causes cold water to be heated unintentionally, this needs to be addressed and resolved as this could create the ideal breeding ground for the bacteria.

Shower heads should be kept clean and descaled regularly to ensure proper operation.

If you have a spa pool or anything similar, there are additional issues to consider. Spa pools generate water spray and may have water in them at a temperature favourable to the bacteria for a long time. The principal method of control is disinfection with chemicals according to the manufacturer's instructions. Water testing needs to be carried out regularly. In addition the proper maintenance of the pool is important with cleaning and maintenance on a regular basis.

In holiday complexes where more elaborate hot water systems are in place, then specialist advice and assessment is likely to be a good idea, for example if there is a large-scale system that provides hot water to a block of flats or a terrace of cottages. These systems will have longer

runs to the taps and present some greater risks.

For most people in self-catering legionella control is mainly going to be a matter of maintaining and adjusting a hot water system periodically, and recording a risk assessment. For some there is more work to do and more reading: The HSE website provides a lot of detailed information.

## Business Rates – a small reduction in workload?

In the Enterprise Bill currently before parliament, there is a measure to permit the sharing of data between local authorities and the Valuation Office Agency. The stated intention is to reduce the need for business owners to fill in two sets of forms with the same data.

Undoubtedly this will also mean that the VOA will become aware of more businesses including self-catering properties. We believe their current database does not include anything like all self-catering holiday homes.

## VisitEngland Targets Purple Pounds

VisitEngland has launched a new phase in its efforts to improve tourism for disabled people and bring those “purple pounds” flowing in the direction of England’s tourism industry.

The tourist board has received a grant from the European Commission of £125,000 for a campaign to raise awareness of the industry’s increasingly good offer for the disabled tourist. Focussing on a number of pilot areas, they have worked to improve facilities in a first phase and are now raising public

awareness of the delights of Kent, Birmingham, Lincoln, Northumberland, Peak District, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Brighton.

VisitEngland believes that that the overnight accessible tourism market is now worth £3billion to the English economy. There will be a series of magazine adverts as well as online guides and materials that are already in place to support the campaign.

## EASCO Self Catering Study

Greenwich University is continuing to work on the EASCO-commissioned study of self-catering in England, with a view to completion of the report by the end of this year.

The anonymous data on over 200,000 bookings has been collected from a variety of sources and some 500 or so responses were received to the individual owners’ survey, which has now closed. EASCO is grateful to those who took the trouble to answer the questions!

The data analysis is now under way and some preliminary results are expected in October. A draft report is expected to be prepared by the end of November. Help is being sought from VisitEngland, who have access to a good deal of industry data, to validate findings and share information.

We hope to learn more about the self-catering market so that we have a tool in our bag for advocacy and influencing!

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