



EASCO News

Monthly news from YOUR trade association

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EASCO Self-Catering Report nearing Completion

Members of the EASCO Council met in January with academics from Greenwich University in London, who have been working on an analysis of the self-catering holiday market in England to produce a report for EASCO.



The purpose of the report is to show how self-catering contributes positively to the economy. We are often faced by government proposals or consultations that demand a response in which numbers are important, but as an industry we are short of data. To begin with, you don't have to tell anyone before offering a property as a holiday home so nobody knows exactly how many holiday homes there are in England. The report will help provide some figures that we can use in discussion with government or other bodies. For example, in our recent response to the government's proposals for additional stamp duty, we would have used the findings of the report if it had been ready!

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At present the report is not finished so we cannot publish any extracts from it or detailed figures yet in EASCO News. However, we do know that it will produce some interesting reading.

563 self-catering owners completed the online survey and we are grateful to them and to SuperControl, who contributed a substantial volume of booking data, along with some of the agencies who are EASCO members.

The report is expected to show that self-catering is a good-value option for a family holiday compared to hotels and other accommodation, and that people tend unsurprisingly to use it more for longer stays.

Around half of all owners employ someone either part time or full time, directly or indirectly and the report will also estimate the indirect employment benefits that arise from the industry. These are substantial, as local pubs, restaurants, attractions and services often depend on the custom of self-catering

holiday guests, and this creates employment in turn.

One of the most interesting points that the report is expected to show is that self-catering holidays tend to transfer wealth from the most prosperous parts of England to some of the less wealthy areas. This may be seen as an advantage as governments of all colours in the future try to wrestle with the growing issue of regional inequality within England.

It is anticipated that the report will be finished in the next few weeks and launched in April, although no date has, as yet, been fixed.

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Gardening: A Salutory Tale from Court

Court cases are often an illustration of health and safety issues that apply more widely and in January a case came to court that illustrated a point of interest for many self catering owners. A 24 year-old gardener injured himself whilst using a ride-on lawn mower and as a result lost a finger and a thumb and landed his employer a fine and costs amounting to over £200,000. The gardener had stopped to clear some grass from the machine that had caused a blockage. He reached into a chute, having stopped the engine, but a fan was still rotating and this caused him severe hand injuries.

Now you may think that the accident was caused by the stupidity of the worker concerned, and that might be fair comment, but the employer, a housing trust, had not given him any proper training, and had not instructed him as to what to do if the mower became blocked. If they had been able to show in court that they had trained the gardener to use the lawnmower, and instructed him to wait one minute after shutting down the engine, before touching anything, then the outcome of the case might well have been different. As it was, they were convicted of health and safety offences at Manchester Crown Court

Only holiday homes boasting larger gardens are likely to have ride-on mowers but the principle applies just the same to simpler machinery, although obviously the amount of training may be less.

The other lesson from the case is about record-keeping. The training to use a small petrol lawnmower, or even an electric lawnmower, may only amount to a few minutes of instruction by an experienced person. But if there is no written record of that training, how are you going to prove to the court, years later, that it took place? Gardening accidents are fairly common if usually minor but mowers, hedge trimmers, and other garden machinery can have their dangers and if you provide this sort of equipment to be used by a gardener you need to protect both the gardener and yourself by doing a risk assessment, and providing training, and keeping a record of both that won't get lost. His Honour may one day want to read it.

Another Salutory Tale of a Scooter

In another court case reported in January, an elderly man using a mobility scooter died following a fall off an elevated walkway. This took place outside a health centre and although similar layouts are rare in holiday homes a lesson can be drawn from it just the

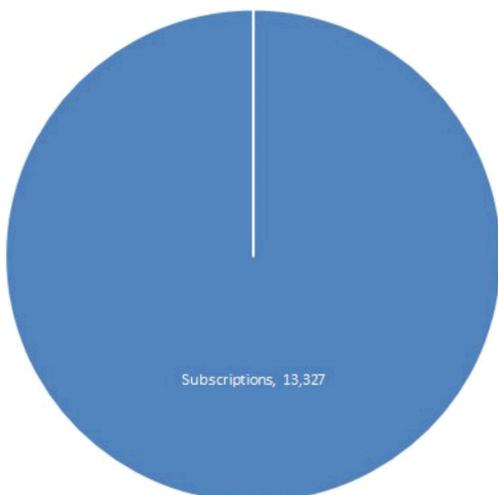
same. What happened in this case, in Hampshire, was that the elderly man drove the scooter in the wrong direction and bashed against a fence, weakening it. A second bad driving mistake resulted in him tumbling over the edge and falling some distance. The key point from this case, which also resulted in a conviction in court, was that if you protect a dangerous edge with a fence, then it needs to be robust enough to resist a collision from a heavy battery-powered mobility scooter if it is reasonably foreseeable that such a conveyance will use the route. It isn't enough to warn people to be good drivers – anyone who has worked with people using these scooters knows that sometimes they are not.

EASCO Finance

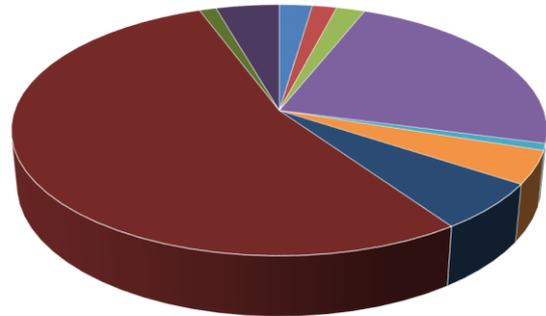
We don't often tell you much about EASCO's finances and although the accounts are not a secret, they're not all that exciting either. So EASCO News presents a short potted guide to how we used our limited funds in 2015.

Firstly, almost all our income comes from subscriptions. In the past we used to reap rewards from insurance commissions but the world has changed, the Internet has transformed the way people buy insurance, and it is no longer a source of income. Our income in 2015 was a bit over £13,000.

Where the income came from 2015



So where did we spend the money? The EASCO Council members give their time voluntarily, and only the Chief Executive is paid. It is a part-time position but pay and expenses are the largest cost for EASCO in a year.



Dispute Resolution Service	360
Insurance	267
PO Box	312
Website	3600
Room hire and events	135
Tourism Alliance	662
CE Expenses	954
CE pay	8400
Office expenses	184
Travel/meetings	691

The website figure was unusually high due to the creation of a new site in 2015 and this explains why expenditure was higher than income in this year. In 2016 website expenditure will be very small.

You can see from this summary that EASCO runs on a very small budget and depends upon members renewing to provide services and do its work of working for members' interests in the long term.

Membership Renewals

Every year, in January, a substantial number of members are due to renew and this year was no exception. A welcome crop of renewals followed on from this and there has been a further crop of renewals in response to a reminder. But there remains a substantial

number of members who are in arrears. There is of course turnover, and recruitment and some members leave the industry or retire each year. Membership continues until a member resigns, so if, unfortunately, anyone wants not to renew, we'd like to hear from them. If you've had a reminder, please renew!

Constituency Day for English Tourism Week

11th March is English Tourism Week Constituency Day.

The idea is that businesses in tourism invite their local MP to pay them a visit. Many MPs spend Fridays in their constituencies and most of them are partial to an opportunity to be photographed so if you can create a photo-opportunity so much the better.

The idea of the week is to raise awareness, mainly amongst politicians, of the value of tourism. You could do worse than raise your parliamentarian's awareness of self-catering too – and point out to him or her that self-catering is a business like any other and ought to be taxed like any other business!

If you need any help writing letters etc. the Tourism Alliance has produced some templates – EASCO can send you a copy on request by e-mail.

Regulations and Red Tape – another push

Reducing regulation is a perennial theme, and there have been efforts to try and cut red tape for quite some years now. The present government is still keen on this but there has been very little progress in making significant reductions in regulation. Largely this has been due to a

simple reality, that most regulations exist for a reason and it is not so common for that reason to have vanished.

Through the revamped Tourism Industry Council the Tourism Alliance is again talking to the government about this and there is a list of topics on the agenda. More ideas are badly needed, if they are practical! Anything related to EU Directives, however, might just have to wait until June 24th. **Please send in your ideas to EASCO!**

Topics currently on the list are:

- **Extension of Primary Authority.** This is mainly about licensing where one local authority can be nominated to avoid having to deal with several.
- **Insurance through Travel Agents.** There are proposals here to reduce the restrictions on agents selling it.
- **Gaming machines** in pubs
- **Fire safety** order. This is mainly about keeping control of over-zealous fire officers. There are some proposals on the table to relax the law for the smallest properties.
- **Taxi Licenses.** The issue of allowing accommodation owners to pick up guests from the station without a private hire licence. This is fraught with safety concerns unless there is some regulation of driving skills and car maintenance.
- **Package Travel.** This is about reducing the extent to which adding extras to a deal makes it a heavily regulated package holiday
- **Alcohol sales** on a small scale – permitting that bottle of Beaujolais in the welcome basket without a license
- **Music and Video** copyright fees. Currently there are several possible licenses needed to play music in public and the autocracy is significant.