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Gwynedd Council Delays Visitor Levy Until at Least 2028

About 80% of businesses and visitors opposed the proposed £1.30 nightly charge on hotels and bed-and-breakfasts.

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Gwynedd Council in northwestern Wales has put on hold plans for a local visitor levy after a strong public backlash from businesses, tourists and many residents, delaying any likely introduction of the charge until at least 2028.

The council had been preparing to bring in a £1.30-a-night charge on hotel and bed-and-breakfast stays and a 75p nightly charge on hostel beds and camping pitches from next October. But council papers released ahead of a meeting this week said the authority was stepping back from a final decision after receiving what it described as a record response to its consultation and after taking legal advice on how that feedback should be considered.

According to the council’s own summary of the consultation, around 80% of businesses and visitors who responded opposed the levy, while about half of residents were also against it. In meeting documents, the authority said public sessions on the plan had been “heated,” “challenging” and oppositional. It said the meetings were difficult and showed the depth of feeling around the proposal.

Gwynedd, which is run by Plaid Cymru, is the second-largest county in Wales and includes Snowdonia National Park, home to Mount Snowdon. The area attracts about four million visitors a year and has faced long-running complaints about overtourism, pressure on local services and strain on infrastructure in busy periods. Supporters of a levy have argued that a charge on overnight stays could help local authorities cover

some of those costs.

The wider legal framework for the tax was created by the Welsh government last year, when ministers gave councils the power to introduce a flat visitor levy if they chose to do so. Revenue from such a charge has been presented as a way to pay for public facilities used by tourists, including toilets, beaches, footpaths and visitor centers.

Gwynedd’s decision does not remove that power, but it signals that local political support is not strong enough for the council to move forward quickly. By postponing a final decision, the authority is effectively pushing the issue beyond its original timetable. Based on the current delay, any local tax in Gwynedd now appears unlikely before 2028.

The pause comes at a sensitive time for the hospitality industry across Britain, where business groups have argued that new visitor taxes could discourage travel, increase pressure on operators already dealing with higher labor, energy and supply costs, and make domestic vacations less affordable for families. Those concerns have been especially strong in places that depend heavily on tourism income but also face intense competition from other destinations.

The debate has also widened beyond Wales. Earlier this month, hospitality leaders criticized plans by the Labour government to allow mayors in England to introduce overnight visitor levies. Industry figures said the move risked weakening tourism demand and raising costs for consumers. Metro mayors aligned with Labour have indicated that charges in England would likely be kept at about 5%, but ministers have not imposed a national cap, raising concern among business owners that rates could rise over time.

Some hospitality operators have warned that the policy could also affect investment decisions. Chef Simon Rogan, whose group includes Michelin-starred restaurants, recently said Britain’s new tourist tax approach could force him to shelve plans to open more restaurants in the country, arguing that expansion in the UK is not commercially viable for him at present.

In Gwynedd, the immediate effect of the council’s decision is to remove, for now, the prospect of an extra nightly charge on visitors staying in the county. That may ease some pressure on hotels, guesthouses, pubs with rooms, campsites and other tourism businesses that feared the levy would make the area less competitive. It could also help preserve discretionary spending by visitors on meals, beer, wine and other drinks in local bars and restaurants, since higher accommodation costs can reduce what travelers are willing to spend elsewhere during a trip.

The issue remains politically difficult because Gwynedd, like other major visitor destinations, is trying to balance the economic value of tourism with concerns from residents about overcrowding, waste, traffic and the cost of maintaining public spaces. For now, the council has chosen not to test that balance with a new tax while opposition remains high and legal advice has highlighted the need for a fuller review of consultation responses.

That leaves the county in a holding pattern. The power to create a levy remains available under Welsh law, and the pressures that prompted the proposal have not gone away. But after the scale of the resistance, Gwynedd’s leaders have decided they are not yet in a position to press ahead.