

[National Assembly for Wales](#)
[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)
[Inquiry into Tourism](#)

Evidence from Under the Thatch – TOU 04

I believe you're currently undertaking a tourism review and looking for suggestions etc. I'm the director of Under the Thatch <http://www.underthethatch.co.uk> - one of the self-catering agencies in Wales, with around 100 Welsh properties. We're not the largest company but we do bring £millions into the Welsh economy every year. I'm always happy to contribute to discussions about tourism in Wales, and have 13 years experience in the sector.

We're the only agency that currently gets no support from the current structures, either central or regional (or county) because we refuse to play what I consider to be the 'accreditation game' (where self-catering property owners have to pay annually or bi-annually to receive a star grading). I've never been satisfied with the grading system or its cost, and prefer to do our own, saving our clients money, and refusing the 'kick-back' within the system that the other agencies keep. This means, however that we never get support and PR, which I've always felt was unfair.

We're fortunate that we have the most unusual selection of niche self-catering in Wales so we tend to get more publicity anyway than any other Welsh tourism provider (eg last weekend alone in the travel press we had photo features in the Times, Daily Mail and Observer travel sections). But with support from VisitWales, the local authorities and the regional tourism support we could do so much better. We've a few properties in England and Scotland and the difference in support is amazing - eg Discover (or is it Visit?) Somerset were tweeting us all over the place last week when we launched a new property there, and we hadn't even contacted them. They weren't calling us first to demand their £120 fee for grading before helping us promote the place.

So, it's a small part of the big picture, but my submission is to end the system that means only the companies that pay into the (in my opinion deeply flawed) star grading system get the support for PR etc.

with best wishes, and feel free to get in touch at any time

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