CUSTOMER STORY / SEPTEMBER 2026

Cotswold Serviced Homes

Every booking covered. No Stripe. No chasing.

How Cotswold Serviced Homes took deposits on twelve homes from a five-step manual process to one that runs itself - and pays for itself.



WEEKLY DEPOSIT ADMIN

Under 30 minutes

Previously 3-4 hours

Property photograph: Cotswold Serviced Homes / cshomes.uk

Seven years of homes. Three years on Guestflow.

Cotswold Serviced Homes runs twelve fully furnished homes across Cheltenham, Gloucester, Stroud and Stonehouse, taking bookings from Airbnb, Booking.com and direct. Lee Cookes started the business in 2019 and went on to manage homes for local landlords.

The operation has run on Guestflow for three years. For most of that time, deposits were the part of the guest journey that still needed a person in the loop. In June 2026, that changed.

THE CHALLENGE

Five steps.
A person at every one.

Lee spent thirty years in the building trade before starting Cotswold Serviced Homes. As he began managing homes for landlords, deposits became essential - and every booking meant manual work.

The old deposit routine

1. **The guest registered their card.** They paid £1 through a link.
2. **Someone matched the payment.** They checked Stripe, found the booking in Guestflow and ticked the checklist.
3. **The hold was placed by hand.** On arrival day, someone found the guest in Stripe and placed a £200 hold. A declined card meant ringing the guest, sending a new link and trying again.
4. **Someone returned after departure.** Back into Stripe to release the hold or capture a charge.
5. **The hold could expire mid-stay.** Stripe holds lasted seven days and were not renewed. Longer stays could lose cover when damage was most likely to be found.

Guests questioned the £1 payment, so Lee began refunding it. With Stripe's fee on top, each deposit cost the business around 79p.

Where it broke

In the twelve months before the switch, 55 long stays ran past their seven-day hold. Lee lost at least one claim: a repeat guest, extra cleaning to charge, and "I was a day out."

A Booking.com group flooded a house so badly the ceiling came through. Damage ran well over £1,000. With no deposit in place, everything went to Booking.com. "We just gave up in the end."

On Airbnb, workers smoked through a whole stay. Lee claimed just over £100; Airbnb declined it as extra cleaning.

With a deposit in place

Two weeks before the interview, a three-night booking turned into a party: a ruined mattress and eight bin bags out of the house. This time, £200 was already held through Guestflow. Lee captured it, sent the photos, and the argument went nowhere.

> **"If I had done that through Airbnb, I don't know what I would have got."**
>
> Lee Cookes, Founder & Director

WHAT CHANGED DAY TO DAY

One rule. One button.

The deposit now follows the booking. Lee no longer needs to move between systems to check, chase or release it.

Every booking, every length

Stays of six nights or under get a pre-authorisation hold; longer stays get a full payment. Every booking source, including Airbnb, is covered for the full stay. Nobody has to activate this per booking.

Failed cards handle themselves

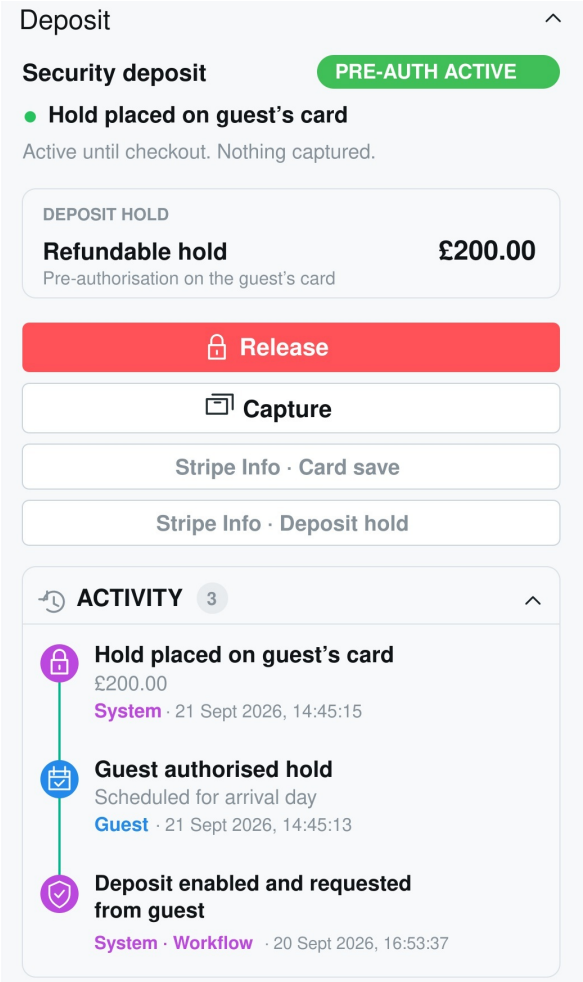
If a card declines during setup or the hold fails on arrival, Guestflow chases it. Lee has watched it happen: “I haven't even touched it.”

One button at checkout

Release or capture sits beside the booking. Lee made a £50 pet-fee capture the morning of the interview - no hunting in Stripe. Door codes stay held until the deposit is resolved; exceptions remain Lee's call.

Fridays are just Fridays

Nobody looks a week ahead to start chasing. Lee checks the dashboard: “I just go on the bubble and I know who's done it.”



Guestflow deposit view: status, release or capture, and activity beside the booking.

£3.50

net per hold

£3 on full payments, after fees.

ON THE RETURN FROM DEPOSITS

“It pays for the system, really, doesn't it.”

Lee Cookes, Founder & Director

THE RESULTS AND THE NEXT STAGE

Deposits that run themselves.

DEPOSITS	BEFORE	TODAY
Admin per week	3-4 hours	**Under 30 minutes**
Deposit handling	5 manual steps	**Automated; release or capture at checkout**
Stripe visits per booking	Up to 3	**None**
Cover on longer stays	Lapsed after day 7	**Full stay**
Net position per deposit	79p cost	**£3.50 per hold; £3 per full payment**

Before/after figures reported by Cotswold Serviced Homes. Net amounts are after Guestflow and Stripe fees.

Since deposits went live

153 bookings covered. Across 153 deposit requests: 147 holds and 6 full payments. **14 of 16 failed cards resolved automatically.** Four deposits captured for damage or extras, totalling **£322.**

Source: Guestflow platform, 26 June - 22 September 2026.

Long stays with lapsed cover fell from 55 in the twelve months before launch to zero since go-live. Codes released before a deposit was in place remained at zero.

Little pushback from guests

At the interview, Lee said only two guests had questioned who should pay the handling fee. Otherwise, he reported no pushback and said he had not seen a dip in bookings using Guestflow.

Where it goes next

Lee plans a damage-waiver fee on top of the hold. Cotswold Serviced Homes is also looking to expand, with the same deposit setup running underneath every new home.



Would you recommend Guestflow?

"100% get Guestflow, for sure. Just the thought of doing them manually now..."

Lee Cookes / Founder & Director, Cotswold Serviced Homes

Still handling deposits by hand?
guestflow.ai/discovery-call

Book a call