

Review of Gaming Machines - Call for Evidence  
Gambling, Licensing and Lotteries Team  
The Department for Culture Media and Sport  
4th floor, 100 Parliament Street  
London  
SW1A 2BQ

6 December 2016

**Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All Party Parliamentary Group  
Submission to the Call for Evidence  
Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures**

**Introduction**

The Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBT) All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)<sup>1</sup> very much welcomes the Government's Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures and is pleased to respond. As we are a group whose remit is to scrutinise the impact of FOBTs or Category B2 machines, we have confined our response to questions relating to this category of machine.

**Background**

The FOBT APPG is a cross party group of Parliamentarians with members from the main political parties and from both Houses of Parliament. It was established in May 2016 in response to the growth of concerns within Parliament about the impact of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals and the very high stakes of £100, with a recorded account, which can be played on them.

These concerns have also been extensively recorded in the media and Parliamentarians in both Houses have received numerous representations from our constituents and other members of the public on the negative and harmful impacts that FOBTs have on individuals and families.

In response to this and due to our concern about the lack of effective Government action in this area, the FOBT APPG launched an inquiry in June 2016 to assess the impacts of FOBTs on our society and communities.

**Our inquiry**

In a series of hearings, our inquiry has taken oral evidence from a wide range of stakeholders involved in the FOBT debate ranging from those who have experienced the harm these machines at first hand, to the Gambling Minister, Tracey Crouch MP and the Chief Executive of the Gambling Commission. We

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<sup>1</sup> Further information on the All Party Group can be found at Annex A and [www.fobt-appg.com](http://www.fobt-appg.com). A full list of members of the Group is enclosed in the attached folder.

are grateful to everyone who has contributed to our inquiry and provided evidence to it.<sup>2</sup>

The Group also received written submissions from interested parties. To date, we have received around 25 responses and we are grateful for all of the contributions we have had<sup>3</sup>.

Bookmakers declined to appear before the Group and (to date) have not submitted any evidence to us. We provided bookmakers with every opportunity to contribute to the inquiry and present their side of the case. We would have welcomed this and have been interested to hear it. They declined to participate.

## **Findings**

We are formally submitting our interim findings to the Government's review. We will be publishing a full report setting out our findings and recommendations to the Government early in the New Year. We look forward to hearing the Government's response in due course.

While many members of the FOBT APPG are on record voicing their concerns about FOBTs, our report and its subsequent recommendations, will be based on the evidence presented to us.

In addition, to our interim conclusions, we also enclose the full collection of submissions, which have been sent to us where the authors have authorised us to do so. As you can see, we have collected a vast body of knowledge and information through the written submissions alone. The minutes of the evidence sessions will be published alongside our report early in the New Year.

We would be happy to provide further information if that would be helpful and look forward to actively engaging with the Government on the regulation of gaming machines and in particular Fixed Odds Betting Terminals moving forward.

## **Conclusions**

- Through the process of gathering extensive evidence and speaking to many of the major stakeholders involved in the FOBT debate, collectively we find that, from the evidence presented to us, the Government now has a prima facie case for significantly reducing the £100 stake that can be wagered on a Fixed Odds Betting Terminal. The Group sees a strong case for the stake being set at £2. This call is supported many members of Parliament from all political parties and in both houses of Parliament, it is also, the evidence suggests, supported by a significant majority of the public.

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<sup>2</sup> A full list of those who gave oral evidence is set out at Annex B.

<sup>3</sup> A full list of those who provided written submissions to inform the inquiry is attached at Annex C

- At the very least the stake should be reduced on a FOBT on a precautionary basis and the precautionary principle should be applied until sufficient evidence is presented to the Government that the high stakes on these machines do not cause harm.
- In addition to reviewing the stake level, the Government should also consider reducing the speed of spin on a FOBT in order to reduce the potential for harm to be caused and also review the number of FOBTs permitted in an individual bookmaker.
- The Government should address localism concerns and calls for greater controls over FOBTs at the local level. Powers should be given to prevent the clustering of betting shops.
- The Group has heard many reports of the increased levels of crime resulting from the presence of FOBTs in bookmakers. While this suggests the staking level and number of FOBTs should be addressed by the Government, we also urge them to review the levels of staffing in bookmakers to ensure appropriate protection and supervision of players and the safety of bookmaker staff.
- In considering the impact of FOBTs, it is critical that the Government considers not just the impact on 'problem gambling' but wider gambling related harm caused by FOBT machines and the cumulative impact on families and communities that these machines can have.
- The Government has a duty to protect the most vulnerable in our society and to act in the public interest. We strongly urge them to do so and do so with immediate effect.

**Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All Party Parliamentary Group  
December 2016**

# Annex A- Background information on the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All Party Parliamentary Group

## ***About the group***

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The Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBT) All Party Parliamentary Group has been created to provide a forum for discussion and further investigation into the impact of FOBTs in our communities. The group's statement of purpose is:

**“To address the issues associated with fixed odds betting terminals”**

In pursuit of this purpose, The Group has launched an inquiry “*Fixed Odds Betting Terminals – Assessing the Impact*”.

In a series of hearings, the inquiry will be taking oral evidence from the range of stakeholders in the FOBT debate from gambling addiction experts and FOBT users, to regulators, bookmaker Chief Executives and their representatives.

**The inquiry would welcome written submissions from interested parties by 31 August 2016.**

**Using this evidence the group will publish a report setting out their findings early in 2017.**

## ***Committee***

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**Chair-** Carolyn Harris MP

**Vice Chair-** David Lammy MP

**Vice Chair-** Stuart McDonald MP

**Treasurer-** Stephen Timms MP

**Secretary-** Sir Peter Bottomley MP

## Annex B - List of Witnesses and Oral Evidence Sessions of the Inquiry

### Wednesday 6 July 2016, 10am

- **Assessing the Impact people who have gambled**
  - Previous FOBT Gamblers
  - Derek Webb, The Campaign for Fairer Gambling

### Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2pm

- **Assessing the Impact on Local Communities**
  - Sir Robin Wales, Newham Council
  - Councillor Anita Lower, Local Government Association

### Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 10.30am

- **Assessing the Impact on the Vulnerable**
  - Martin Kettle, Church of England
  - Dan Boucher, CARE
  - Helena Chambers, Quaker Action
  - Dirk Hanson, GamCare

### Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November, 10.30am

- **Assessing the Impact on the Wider Gambling Industry**
  - John White, Chief Executive, Bacta
  - Jason Frost, President, Bacta
  - Tracey Damestani, Chief Executive of National Casino Forum
  - Dennis Dowling, Member, National Casino Forum
  - Simon Thomas, CEO, Hippodrome Casino
  - Fintan Drury, Former Chairman, Paddy Power

### Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2.30pm

- **Assessing the Impact – The Policy and Regulatory Landscape**
  - Tracey Crouch, Minister for Sport Tourism and Heritage, The Department of Culture Media and Sport
  - Sarah Harrison, Chief Executive, Gambling Commission

### Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November, 10am

- **Assessing the Impact – The Research Agenda**
  - Kate Lampard, Chair, Gamble Aware
  - Marc Etches, Chief Executive, Gamble Aware
  - Sir Christopher Kelly, Chair, Responsible Gambling Strategy Board

- **Assessing the Impact – Experience from working with Bookmakers**
  - Bill Bennett
  - Barry Phillips

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December, 10.30am**

- **Assessing the Impact – Academic Research**
  - Stephen Sharman – University of Lincoln
  - Dr Sean Cowlshaw – University of Bristol
  - Dr Simon Dymond – Swansea University
  - Prof Jim Orford – University of Birmingham
  - Peter Collins – University of Cape Town
  - Shannon Hanrahan, The Outcomes Group

**TBC**

- **Testimony from the Bookmakers**
  - BetFred (invited)
  - William Hill (invited)
  - Ladbrokes Coral (invited)
  - Paddy Power (invited)

**Annex C - List of Submissions**

### **FOBT APPG – Submissions**

1. Anonymous
2. BACTA
3. Barry Phillip and Bill Bennett
4. Beat the Odds (Report on the 2nd Welsh National Conference on Excessive Gambling Wales)
5. Campaign for Fairer Gambling and The Outcomes Group
6. CARE
7. COSLA
8. Department for Culture Media and Sport
9. Derek Webb
10. Gambling Commission
11. GRASP
12. Haringey Council
13. Hippodrome Casino
14. Hounslow Council
15. Jim Offord
16. Jim Rogers – University of Lincoln
17. Landman Economics
18. Leicester Council
19. Local Government Association
20. National Casino Forum
21. Newham Council
22. Novomatic
23. Professor Peter Collins' Report
24. Responsible Gambling Trust
25. Shamil Gillani
26. Tony Franklin