



# Fixed Odds Betting Terminals APPG

## Agenda

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017,

### Meeting of the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All Party Parliamentary Group

#### Closed session

1. Welcome from the Chair
2. Agenda for current meeting
3. Progress from the last meeting
  - a. Confirmation of funding
  - b. Supportive organisations

#### Public session

4. Welcome to the public
5. Briefings and questions from:
  - a. Duncan Stephenson, Royal Society for Public Health
  - b. Ronnie Whittington, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
6. Next APPG meeting



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## Minutes of Meeting

### Meeting of the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All Party Parliamentary Group

**Date:** Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017

**Time:** 16.00pm

**Location:** Committee Room 8, Houses of Parliament

**Chair:** Carolyn Harris MP

**Minutes taken by:** Jackson Wild, Interel UK

#### **Speakers:**

Duncan Stephenson, Royal Society for Public Health

Ronnie Whittington, Department for Culture, Media and Sport

#### **Members Present**

Margaret Ferrier MP

Kelvin Hopkins MP

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Graham Jones MP

Stuart McDonald MP

Office of Fiona Bruce MP

Office of David Burrowes MP

#### **External Guests**

Gemma Doyle, Interel UK (Secretariat)

Kenneth Pritchard, Interel UK (Secretariat)

Tosin Adedayo, Interel UK (Secretariat)

Alexander Cassells, Interel UK (Secretariat)

Simon Thomas, Hippodrome Casino

Jimmy Thomas, Hippodrome Casino

John White, bacta

Jason Frost, bacta

Gabino Stergides, bacta

Lisa Speed, Novomatic

Dan Waugh, Regulus Partners

Paul Kelly, BALPPA

Dennis Dowling, National Casino Forum

Lucinda Herring, WE

Marcus Sourer, WE

Paul Terroni,

Leslie McLeod Millar, LMM Associates



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### Private Session for Members Only

- **Carolyn Harris MP** (Chair) opened the meeting of the APPG and thanked members and representatives for attending.

### **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

- Carolyn moved for the minutes of the previous meeting of the group to be accepted.
- The members confirmed that they were accurate and the minutes were accepted.

### Public Meeting

- Carolyn welcomed external guests into the room and began the session by welcoming Duncan Stephenson, from the Royal Society of Public Health, and Ronnie Whittington from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
- Carolyn set out the format for the meeting and invited Duncan Stephenson from the Royal Society for Public Health to begin his presentation.
  - Duncan Stephenson began by explaining the who the RSPH were, detailing their background and membership size.
  - Duncan followed this by explaining RSPH's "Health on the High Street Campaign". The key focus of the campaign was to highlight the positive and negative impacts that businesses have on health and wellbeing on the high street.
  - Duncan explained that RSPH's campaign was finalised with a league table of the healthiest and unhealthiest high streets in the country. This was scored on a scale from -2 (unhealthiest) to +2 (healthiest).
  - The significance of this campaign to the APPG is that bookmakers are amongst the unhealthiest businesses on the high street, and do not promote good health and wellbeing.
  - Duncan mentioned that RSPH had engaged with the ABB on the back of their results of Health on the High Street, and initially they were keen to engage with RSPH to find out what more they could do to have a positive impact on the high street.



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- RSPH's interaction with the ABB spanned over several meetings, the RSPH returned with several ideas to help counteract the negative impact the bookmakers are having on the high street.
  - Duncan noted that despite the RSPH's recommendations, the ABB then fell silent and have yet to address any issues or concerns that were raised by Health on the High Street, and instead blamed problem gamblers for the issues they face.
  - In response to this, Duncan outlined the RSPH's position on blaming individuals with addiction, stating that it would accentuate the problem rather than solve it. He made comparisons between alcohol and drug addictions, and how an addict would be treated rather than blamed for the issue.
  - Duncan moved onto FOBTs, and argued the case that the clustering of bookmakers is a fundamental cause of the problems surrounding FOBTs.
  - He also highlighted that a significant amount of money is taken away from the community, instead being spent on FOBTs. This expenditure lining the pockets of the bookmakers and big corporations instead.
  - Duncan advocated RSPH's position for a reduction of the maximum stake, licensing objectives and creating a better understanding of the clientele of bookmakers.
  - Duncan floated the idea of using business rates as a tool at Local Authority level to encourage bookmakers to remove their most toxic elements, in return for business rate relief. If bookmakers failed to comply with these suggestions, they could be penalised with higher business rates.
- Carolyn thanked Duncan for his presentation, and thoughts surrounding the impact that bookmakers are having on the high street.
  - Carolyn then invited Ronnie Whittington from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to speak. Carolyn made clear that Ronnie would not be able to give any indication of the result of the Triennial review due to his position as a civil servant.
    - Ronnie started by outlining the schedule taken during the triennial review.
    - Ronnie noted that DCMS have responded to various Parliamentary Questions on the timing of the review.



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- The review ended on the 4<sup>th</sup> December with 275 responses, with 100 from the general public. DCMS also received petitions from 38 Degrees, and from the ABB, amongst others.
- Carolyn asked Ronnie which petition had received more signatures.
  - Ronnie responded saying that both petitions had comparable amounts of signatures.
  - Ronnie then returned to talking about the timeframe of the review, stating that DCMS will attempt to publish their proposals in the Spring, however internal processes are not always exact so there is no set date on this.
  - Following the publishing of these proposals, DCMS will consult for 12 weeks, which is the regular time frame for a consultation. The length however is dependent on the proportionality and scale of any changes that DCMS propose.
  - The response to the Triennial Review is at the point which the Government confirms its proposals, this will then provide another opportunity for stakeholders to present their arguments.
  - This process will then go through the procedure of EU and Parliamentary scrutiny, and any proposals to gaming machines will then have to go to the EU for the three months to be scrutinised.
  - Ronnie finalised his summary of the process by stating that any proposed changes will come into force in April 2018.
- Kelvin Hopkins asked Ronnie what his role was in DCMS, and his significance to the Triennial Review.
  - Ronnie answered by saying that the Gambling Policy team in DCMS had around 12-15 people and that he is responsible for high street sectors, which boils down to gaming machines and FOBTs.
- Sir Peter Bottomley asked Ronnie if the reason FOBTs were unregulated was due to a loophole in the 2005 Gambling Act.
  - Ronnie responded by saying that his understanding was that this Act put regulation into effect on existing machines, and not any that were to be made in the future, so arguably this legislation did miss the issue.



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- Sir Peter then highlighted the quoted figure of £1bn being lost to the economy if there was a stake reduction on FOBTs, he asked if the £2-4bn that is spent on these machines would be better spent.
  - Ronnie replied by stating that DCMS' economists will assess the economic impacts of stake reduction whilst HM Treasury, and HMRC will do their own assessment of the tax implications.
  - Ronnie also stated that DCMS has very different objectives to that of the Tax team.
- Carolyn asked Ronnie how much influence HMRC will have on the outcome of the Triennial Review.
  - Ronnie stated he would not speculate on that.
- Duncan Stephenson then asked Ronnie how engaged the Department of Health, and Department for Communities, and Local Government have been engaged during the review.
  - Ronnie responded by stating that at Official and Ministerial level, meetings have taken place to discuss the issue. However, he also highlighted that Public Health was still an orphan policy as far as the Department of Health was concerned, and that there is not a policy lead on the issues surrounding Public Health.
- Simon Thomas, noted that the consultation period was now finished, but asked if DCMS were still receiving and noting newly found data.
  - Ronnie noted that DCMS have worked with the Gambling Commission, and will continue to do so as they release further information.
- Simon Thomas then continued to ask Ronnie if DCMS had received any information about Smashed FOBTs as a result of irate customers.
  - Ronnie answered saying that they had not.
- Carolyn noted that the only people not to respond to the APPG's call for data on damaged machines were the bookmakers.
- Graham Jones asked what the Government are looking at in terms of options on the table, whether it is just a reduction in stake, or if they had considered devolving licensing powers to local authorities.



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- Ronnie said that the primary focus of the Local Government Association in their consultation response was stake reduction, and not devolving powers to Local Authorities.
- Graham also asked about whether the Government would need to pass secondary legislation to make any state changes.
  - Ronnie confirmed that the Government would use that the Government would use its current powers to make any potential changes, however this would still require secondary legislation.
- Margaret Ferrier stated that the attraction for bookmakers to host FOBTs would drop if the stake was reduced, as would the attraction for users of FOBTs.
- Carolyn reiterated Margaret's point, and noted that this money could be spent in much healthier environments, than on FOBTs.
- Carolyn thanked Duncan and Ronnie for speaking and answering questions, and then thanked everyone in attendance.

**The meeting finished at 5.48pm.**

**The next meeting of the APPG will be on 25<sup>th</sup> April at 10.00am in Committee Room 7.**