



Fixed Odds Betting Terminals APPG

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting of the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All Party Parliamentary Group

Date: Wednesday 28th June 2017

Time: 3:00pm

Location: Room U, Portcullis House

Chair: Carolyn Harris MP

Minutes taken by: Tosin Adedayo, Interel UK

Members Present

Carolyn Harris MP

Jim McMahon MP

Jo Stevens MP

Graham Jones MP

Stuart McMillan MP

Ronnie Cowan MP

Alison Thewliss MP

David Linden MP

Hannah Bardell MP

Jeff Smith MP

Kelvin Hopkins MP

External Guests

Tosin Adedayo, Interel UK (Secretariat)

Gemma Doyle, Interel UK (Secretariat)

Kenneth Pritchard, Interel UK (Secretariat)

George McGregor, Interel UK (Secretariat)

Oscar Vernal, Interel UK (Secretariat)

Simon Thomas, Hippodrome Casino

John White, bacta

Gabino Stergides, bacta

John Stergides, Electrocoin

Paul Terroni, Novomatic

Jason Frost, bacta

Matt Zarb-Cousin, Campaign for Fairer Gambling

Derek Webb, Campaign for Fairer Gambling

Lucinda Herring, WE

Amit Sodhi, WE

Leslie McLeod Millar, LMM Associates



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Meeting

- Carolyn Harris began the Private session of the meeting by welcoming her colleagues to the Group's inaugural meeting for this Parliament.
- She then stated that she would be delighted to run for Chair of the Group, this was approved by the Group unanimously.
- Ronnie Cowan was then nominated as Vice-Chair of the Group by Stuart McMillan MP, this was seconded by Alison Thewliss MP.
- Ms Harris mentioned that she had received a request from Jim Shannon MP and Sir Peter Bottomley, who sent their apologies, to become officers of the Group, Vice-Chair and Secretary respectively. The group unanimously approved.
- Kelvin Hopkins MP agreed to take on the role of Treasurer of the group, this was again unanimously approved by the Group.
- As there were no further nominations, Ms Harris then stated that she wanted to put on record the Group's thanks to Margert Ferrier, former MP for Rutherglen and Hamilton West who was a member of the Group during the last Parliament. She suggested that the Group write to her convey the Groups thanks for her work on the campaign.
- Ms Harris then thanked Interel, the secretariat of the Group during the last Parliament and on behalf of the Group she said she was happy for them to continue as the Secretariat, to which there were no objections.
- The Secretariat then gave the statement of accounts update to the Group, they noted that the rules of APPGs had changed due to the way election was called and they were therefore no longer required to submit a formal account with incurred expenditure. However, the Group is required to put forward an asset liability sheet. As the meeting was called at short notice, the Secretariat asked if the sheet could be circulated and approved by email, to which the Group agreed.
- Ms Harris then asked that members of the public be then allowed into the meeting. She thanked them all for attending the meeting. Ms Harris noted that prior to the General Election the Group had thought that they were on the cusp of a decision on the Review on Stakes and Prizes, however that was delayed. She added that she was not optimistic that a decision was going to be made on it anytime soon. Ms Harris thanked Jo Stevens MP for her question on FOBTs during Prime Minister's Question earlier that day and added that it is important for members of the Group to keep the pressure on the Government by asking questions in the chamber and submitting written questions on the issue.
- She then went on to share with the Group the communication she had received on the morning of the General Election from a member of the public on FOBTs, who was about to commit suicide due to the fact that



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he had lost his job, family and properties as a result of his addiction to FOBTs.

- Ms Harris noted that the individual had given his consent to having his story shared to whomever she deemed appropriate and she said that she had shared the email with a journalist. She added that she was receiving similar emails and tweets on a regular basis. She went on further reiterate that she is not anti-gambling and neither is the APPG but is focused on the harms FOBTs specifically are causing and the Government needs to act quickly on these machines as it is getting more and more serious.
- Kelvin Hopkins MP asked if the Group could get some support from the DUP MPs now that they had agreed a deal with the Government. Ms Harris agreed and she is glad that Jim Shannon MP of the DUP has now been elected as Vice-Chair of the Group and should be able to get his Party to support the Group's Campaign. Ms Harris then informed the members of the public that the Group had just been reconstituted.
- Ms Harris then asked Matt Zarb-Cousin of the Campaign for Fairer Gambling to update the Group on the work they had been undertaking during the election campaign. Mr Zarb-Cousin said that the Campaign for Fairer Gambling had published new figures on FOBT losses in the Times which showed £14bn of losses on these machines since 2007 and they had put together a constituency breakdown on their website. He added that they had also a story on betting shops clustering on in the Guardian. He further said that they were in the process of releasing these figures on a regional basis across the country.
- Mr Zarb-Cousin also mentioned a conversation he had had with a former Machines Manager at Ladbroke Coral who said that whilst Ladbrokes had a number of markers to detect problem gamblers on FOBTs, they were not using the information and the Machines Manager were pressuring members of staff not to intervene in these circumstances.
- Ms Harris also added that she had received a series of emails from William Hill staff, which she is in the middle of redacting, the emails make it clear that during staff lunch breaks, they are being encouraged to run FOBTs on demo mode and at the end of a 2-3 weeks time period, they would be quizzed on their knowledge of the machines. This activity she added is causing addiction for people that work in the industry.
- She also stated that the National Lottery good causes donation is £1.7bn, whilst the losses on FOBTs alone is £1.8bn, which she described as shocking. In addition to this, she referred to an article in the Guardian that revealed that several bags containing the information of individuals who had requested to be on the self-exclusion scheme were found outside a Ladbrokes in Scotland which she said was a blatant breach of confidentiality.
- Ms Harris again encouraged the Group to intensify pressure on the Government on this issue.



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- Ms Harris then asked the Secretariat to explain the Group's next event. The Secretariat explained that there would be an MPs 'Drop-In' event on the 18th July 4-6pm. It would be a photo opportunity for the MPs to publicly express their support for a stake reduction on FOBTs.
- Mr Derek Webb of the Campaign for Fairer Gambling noted his disagreement that MPs would also be given the option to express their support for a substantial stake reduction instead of a £2 stake option only. Jim McMahon MP argued that a £2 stake only option would send a clear, joint message to the Government.
- Ms Harris explained that there would be two options to accommodate MPs who want to express their support but whose party had not come out in support of a particular stake. Presently, only the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats had made it a £2 stake their party policy, she added. So as to attract as many MPs as possible, there will be two options however, the Group is not compromising its position on a £2 stake.
- Mr Webb insisted that there MPs should not be given an option at the drop-in and that Respublica would not participate in the Drop-in.
- The Secretariat then informed the Group that Respublica had been in touch through the Campaign for Fairer Gambling that they would be interested in partnering with the APPG on the drop-in as they have been conducting research into this issue, solely focused on Conservative MPs.
- The Secretariat said that they had asked to see Respublica's research and findings to share with the APPG so that it can make a decision on whether or not it wants to partner with the thinktank, however they were yet to share this information, as such the Drop-in is an APPG only event and it is up to the Members of the Group to decide how it will run the event.
- Ms Harris said that she was happy to speak to the Campaign for Fairer Gambling outside of the meeting.
- Ronnie Cowan MP asked about the Westminster Hall Debate secured by Jim Shannon MP on FOBTs. Ms Harris said that unfortunately had changed the title of his debate from FOBTs to another topic. She encouraged the Group however, to apply for Westminster Hall debate on FOBTs.
- Concluding the meeting, she thanked Kenneth Pritchard who is leaving Interel, the Secretariat for his work on the campaign and on the APPG and presented him with a gift on behalf of the Group.
- Ms Harris said that the next meeting of the Group will be in September. She also asked that the MPs share any communications they receive on this issue with her and the Campaign for Fairer Gambling.



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- She thanked everyone for attending and ended the meeting.
- **The meeting closed at 3.28pm.**