

THAMES GATEWAY

Ref: 02052006

Ext: 206

2 May 2006

Ms Jane Bransby
Secretary, Casino Advisory Panel
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
SW1Y 5DH

Dear Ms Bransby,

Regional Casino Application: Southend on Sea

I am writing in response to the Panel's statement that it is happy to receive written representations on this matter at any time.

The Thames Gateway is the government's national priority for regeneration and growth. Southend on Sea is one of its major settlements, and has a long, proud and successful history as a leisure destination and the home of 3 casinos.

However, in the past 30 years the prosperity of the town, like many other seaside resorts, has declined, and it has pockets of severe deprivation around the town centre which are the focus for regeneration activity.

The Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership was established in 2001 to coordinate and provide strategic leadership in delivering the regeneration and growth required in the area. Our members include all of the local authorities, from Thurrock to Southend, within the East of England region of the Gateway, together with the Regional Development Agency (EEDA), the Government office for the region, ODPM, Business Link, the Learning and Skills Council, the health trusts and local business and community representatives.

The Partnership published its framework for delivering regeneration in 2003, and since 2001 has consistently identified Southend as the centre for culture, leisure and higher education.

The Partnership fully supports the Southend application for the pilot Regional Casino licence, and endorsed the following statement at its Board meeting on 4 March 2005:

“Thames Gateway South Essex is the perfect location for a licence for a regional casino. With a substantial local catchment, a strong tradition as a leisure destination, and a selection of good quality sites, it also needs to create significant new employment opportunities to meet its regeneration needs. Its proximity to London and Europe, and an expanding local airport also offers the potential to serve a much wider area. It is also within the government’s **own** priority area for regeneration and growth.

The Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership is conscious of the concerns expressed by some people about the potential risks of addiction associated with gambling, and would expect any proposed development to work closely with partners, including health trusts, to address these concerns.

We will support any partner who wishes to develop in this area. We are aware however that one location in particular, Southend, has already attracted the interest of a number of major operators who could meet the licence requirements for a regional casino. Southend meets all of the Act’s requirements in respect of regeneration impact, experience of managing significant casino operations (with three already in the town) and a traditional seaside leisure destination for London and the region.”

The Partnership has worked closely with Southend and its consultants in the preparation of the proposal, and has become even more convinced of the power of the case for Southend. We have committed ourselves to working with Southend in order to delivery the maximum economic and regeneration benefit from the licence, once awarded.

We are confident that Southend provides the most appropriate pilot site for the regional casino licence.

Please feel free to contact us if you would like further information at any time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Spence', with a small mark to the left.

Mary Spence
Chief Executive