

Statement

On behalf of Preston City Council in support of Blackpool Borough Council's bid for a Regional Casino for discussion at the Casino Advisory Panel's

Examination in Public , Imperial Hotel . Blackpool , 8 September 2006.

By Peter Kuit , Director of Environmental Services, Preston City Council.

(Representing Jim Carr, Chief Executive , Preston City Council)

1 On 22 March 2006 my Chief Executive wrote to the Panel Secretary saying that Preston City Council would not be submitting for a casino under the 2005 Gaming Act explaining that the opportunity had come too soon from the point of view of Preston's own regeneration programme and that *"we are also concerned about the impact a Preston bid would have on Blackpool's ambitions. We remain firmly of the opinion that the regional casino should be located in Blackpool as it is fundamental to its desperately needed regeneration."*

2 Later on 8 June 2006 as part of the formal Regional Spatial Strategy consultation process I wrote as Chair of the Joint Officer Working Group on behalf of Preston City Council, South Ribble and Chorley Councils to the North West Regional Assembly and gave our collective full support for plans and strategies that *"reflect Blackpool's position as the priority location for regional casino development in the North West..."*

3 I went on to say *"Tourism underpins the local economy in Blackpool. This is in contrast to the local economies of Manchester and Liverpool City regions, which have economic drivers other than tourism. In view of this the long-term economic regeneration of the resort needs to be protected to ensure that the significant contribution to the North West's economy of this potential world class destination is realized"*.

4 For the last two years the City Council has worked closely with Blackpool Council, and other Councils to develop a regeneration programme for the whole of the Central Lancashire City Region , as defined in the Government's Northern Way Initiative. This pioneering work requires all of the Councils to pull together and for each area to play to its strengths . Above all careful analysis has demonstrated that at this point in its illustrious history there is no realistic alternative to the regional casino for Blackpool.

5 If the Panel supports Blackpool then the regional casino will go ahead and unlock a much bigger regeneration package with all of the attendant benefits. As well as valuable new jobs on either side of the resort's tight boundary support will also be given for the growth of Blackpool Airport and improved national rail and road links , all of which are of mutual benefit.

6 There is all party support from the City Council for the proposed regional casino in Blackpool which is only 15miles from Preston The need for this is regularly reinforced by trips for business or pleasure when the resort's decay is sadly more and more evident. Preston City Council, therefore , agrees strongly with Blackpool Council that now is the time to press ahead with the regional casino.

7 Finally on a personal note I have struggled to think of an accessible analogy. If this was the first heart transplant opportunity there would be only one choice for recipient- Blackpool will die without the regional casino.
