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Chief Executive: Dennis Taylor

Ms Kate Rounce  
Casino Advisory Panel Secretariat  
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Dear Ms Rounce

## **EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC OF BLACKPOOL COUNCIL'S PROPOSAL FOR A REGIONAL CASINO**

I write to apply to participate at the Examination in Public for Blackpool's application for the regional casino license, which is taking place in Blackpool on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2006. This letter is supplementary to an earlier response that was written with my consent whilst on annual leave.

As Chief Executive of Lancashire Economic Partnership (LEP) I believe I am ideally placed to contribute to an informed debate on Blackpool's application to host the single regional casino. LEP is the Sub Regional Economic Partnership for the whole of Lancashire, representing the public, private and voluntary sectors. We serve 12 district councils, two unitary authorities and Lancashire County Council; also a third of our board is drawn from leading representatives of the private sector in the county. LEP is charged with the responsibility of overseeing delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) in Lancashire by the North West Development Agency (NWDA).

LEP's overarching objective is to ensure the economic prosperity of Lancashire and its citizens. It is for this reason that over the last five years we have been heavily involved in Blackpool's efforts to secure a super-casino in order to reverse decline and kick-start the transformation of the resort into a 21<sup>st</sup> century destination of choice. I am extremely keen to explain to the panel why we believe Blackpool is the right and logical place to host the first regional casino. The benefits will be felt throughout Lancashire, as well as tackling the acute

need for regeneration in Blackpool itself.

Please allow me to introduce our principal arguments:

***Extent of need and opportunity: regional and sub-regional support***

Casino-led regeneration of Blackpool has unprecedented support throughout the region. This is a reflection of the acknowledged level of need in the town, its suitability for this type of development, and the extent to which a regional casino would deliver the catalytic form of investment needed to become a year-round sustainable economy, thereby reversing decades of decline.

The North West RES was recently endorsed by the DTI as the most strategically focused of all regional economic strategies. Implementation of the casino-led Masterplan in Blackpool is one of the four transformational regeneration priorities.

The success of Blackpool's application is critical in terms of the development of Lancashire's economy. Indeed, LEP recently produced an economic strategy and action plan for Lancashire, designed to deliver the RES in the sub-region. Proposals for casino-led regeneration of Blackpool are at the apex of both the strategy and the action plan. Again, this is testament to the level of need in the town and the delivery expectations within the Masterplan. Of course, we will be unable to deliver on this key aspect of our strategy unless Blackpool secures the regional casino license.

With more than 20 years of experience at Chief Officer level in Local Authorities and Economic Partnerships, I have been fortunate to witness the recent progression in areas of the North West economy. Given this context I am absolutely convinced that Blackpool is the right location for this development; Blackpool has not benefited from post-industrial diversification in the way that our cities have, and I cannot conceive of any alternative future for Blackpool than the one that partners locally, sub-regionally and regionally are trying to realise via the casino-led regeneration of the resort. Blackpool's competitors in both the North West and elsewhere have many alternate options.

At a pan-Northern level, LEP is playing a full part in the Government's flagship economic development strategy for the North – the Northern Way. Lancashire hosts one of the North's eight 'city regions', which are viewed by government as having the necessary attributes to accelerate economic growth in order to meet PSA targets on reducing regional economic disparities. Blackpool is one of three key urban centres in the Central Lancashire City Region, along with Preston and Blackburn. Delivery of the Blackpool Masterplan – which hinges on securing the regional casino license – is one of only two priorities of Northern significance in our first City Region Development Programme (CRDP). Following publication last year, our CRDP was welcomed and backed by both NWDA, the Northern Way Secretariat, and Central Government.

***Catalytic value of locating the casino in Blackpool: anticipated sub-regional economic impact***

LEP has devoted significant effort over the last five years to understanding the likely impacts of casino-led Masterplan proposals for the regeneration of Blackpool. This work has not only sought to quantify the value of these developments to the sub-regional economy in terms of jobs and spend, but also to prepare the sub-region in areas such as skills and supply chains in order to maximise the opportunities created via this catalytic development.

All research conducted by independent economic development consultants and professionals, reinforces the view that casino-led regeneration in Blackpool will create a step-change in the sub-regional economy. The award of the regional casino license alone will result in the creation of approximately 3,500 jobs as a part of the conference leisure quarter, and several independent forecasts anticipate that the totality of Masterplan developments over the 15 year transformational programme – engendered by the award of the regional casino license – will deliver circa 20,000 net additional jobs to the sub-regional economy.

LEP is working with local partners to ensure that we are ready to maximise the benefit of this once in a generation opportunity. As part of this we have developed an action plan designed to capture the benefits for local residents and business. Taking one example – skills – we have undertaken a full assessment of the skills requirements of a regional casino, and compared this against the current sub-regional skills profile. In cooperation with partners including the LSC, NWDA and local colleges and universities, we have enacted policies and developments designed not only to deliver appropriately qualified numbers of local employees into the opportunities created, but to embed a vocational ethic in the catchment workforce which reflects the range of likely career opportunities.

A Casino Training Alliance (CTA) has been established is to ensure an effective, collective response to equip local people with the skills to take advantage of casino-led job creation; this takes in opportunities created directly through construction and operation, plus indirect job creation in other sectors of the sub-regional economy.

Another example involves infrastructure, with sub regional partners working together to enhance our understanding of changes required to enable successful casino-led regeneration. As part of this, LEP have recently commissioned and received a sub regional Economic and Social Impact Study for Blackpool International Airport.

I request the opportunity to attend the session on the 8<sup>th</sup> September in order to expand upon the above and answer any other questions the panel may have.

Yours sincerely

Dennis Taylor  
Chief Executive