

✓  
oec

**ReBlackpool**

Urban Regeneration Company

The Wellington Building  
Blackpool Airport  
Squires Gate Lane  
Blackpool, FY4 2QY

t: +44(0)1253 478909  
f: +44(0)1253 408860  
e: info@reblackpool.co.uk  
w: www.reblackpool.com

Our Ref:  
08 August 2006

Ms Kate Rounce *oec 9/8/06*  
Casino Advisory Panel Secretariat  
DCMS  
2-4 Cockspur Street,  
London  
SW1Y 5DH

Dear Ms Rounce

**EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC FOLLOWING BLACKPOOL'S SHORTLISTING FOR A REGIONAL CASINO**

ReBlackpool, the Blackpool Urban Regeneration Company, would like to participate in the EiP in Blackpool on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2006, represented by Professor Sir Peter Hall (Chair) and Mr Douglas Garrett (CEO).

We regard our attendance as important to the Panel's Examination since ReBlackpool is the agency directly charged with delivery of a Regional Casino as an integral part of the Conference and Leisure Quarter (CLQ) identified in the Blackpool Masterplan and Statutory Development Plan.

The summary of our case is set out in the attached statement.

Please let us know if you would like any further information.

Yours sincerely

*Professor Hall*

Professor Sir Peter Hall  
Chair

*tp Douglas Garrett*

Douglas Garrett  
CEO

Blackpool is uniquely placed to be the location for regional casino: only here:

- Can the social impact of a regional casino be tested through destination gambling in a location which does not target locally vulnerable populations
- Is a regional casino the *only* opportunity for a town's vital regeneration including some of the UK's most deprived communities
- Has there been a consistent strong majority of local support over the past five years
- Has a recent national poll<sup>1</sup> voted for Blackpool as the nation's preferred location, with almost three times as many people preferring Blackpool over our nearest rival.

#### 1. Type of Area

Blackpool's demographic and socio-economic characteristics are similar to other major urban areas; however Blackpool exhibits greater average deprivation<sup>2</sup> than other locations including Sheffield, Brent and Greenwich. Blackpool is the 24th most deprived English LA with almost 40% of working age people economically inactive and the fourth highest proportion of benefits claimants in the North West. Blackpool had only 1.6% BME population in 2001 (similar to many northern towns); however, Blackpool's 'destination resort' gambling scenario is specifically designed to protect vulnerable groups in the local population, by encouraging 90% of gambling visits from the wider region or beyond. Thus Blackpool is the ideal location to test the social impact of a regional casino without impacting upon locally vulnerable populations. Blackpool is already a permitted area with casino gambling, without any increase in gambling amongst the general population<sup>3</sup>.

#### 2. Social Impact

We recognise that increasing gambling opportunities can potentially increase social impacts including the risks of problem gambling. Our approach to social impact is pro-active and multi-faceted: we have taken initiatives to:

- understand and quantify gambling behaviours, including a recent research study by IPSOS/MORI which included a DSM VI assessment of problem gambling
- commission Lancaster University to carry out a specific social impact assessment<sup>4</sup> as part of an ongoing dialogue with experts in social impact and gambling located there and at Salford University<sup>5</sup>
- produce a *Licensing Policy Statement* (currently out to consultation) setting out our aims to minimise impacts on vulnerable people through proactive education and awareness raising
- Develop, with Gamcare, first-wave services for problem gambling in the resort as part of our strategy for *Gambling Harm Reduction*<sup>6</sup>, including evidence-based education, preventative and treatment programmes linked to

---

<sup>1</sup> Populus poll July 2006 for Blackpool Council: asked to choose their preferred location for a regional casino from the shortlist 38% said Blackpool; 14% Greenwich; 10% Manchester; 7% Brent; 6% Glasgow; 4% Sheffield; 4% Newcastle; 3% Cardiff; 10% none of these)

<sup>2</sup> on the English Indices of Deprivation 2004

<sup>3</sup> IPSOS/MORI 2006

<sup>4</sup> Lancaster University SIA

<sup>5</sup> We have been advised throughout our bid process by Prof Peter Collins at the Centre for the Study of Gambling at Salford University

<sup>6</sup> PCT Gambling Harm Reduction strategy

mainstream services and based on a tiered approach to treatment, dovetailing with voluntary, community and self-help groups.

- Utilise our pioneering multi-agency *Local Area Agreement* in our most deprived neighbourhoods, adjacent to the proposed casino site, to offer support and pathways to vulnerable people and families via opportunities stemming from the casino and other regeneration programmes.
- Combine the resources of the Regional Gaming Academy, based in Blackpool and Fylde College, and the New Blackpool Enterprise Centre (currently under construction), in partnership with local and regional agencies, to deliver and enhance job opportunities, particularly for those in our deprived inner neighbourhoods.
- establish a Community Regeneration Fund, using approximately £1-2 million per annum for community based projects to help offer opportunities to local people and mitigate any problems caused by the Regional Casino.

### *3. Need for Regeneration:*

Blackpool's Masterplan, already underway, aims to develop a high-quality, year-round, resort-style entertainment centre, using a regional casino as core of a new Conference-Leisure Quarter (CLQ). The CLQ has been deliberately located in the resort core, not only because this is the optimal location to attract visitors approaching from motorway or airport, but also because here it will most readily serve the social regeneration of the immediately-surrounding deeply-deprived wards.

Our PION model estimates that the GVA contribution arising directly from development of our CLQ, including a regional casino and conference centre, will fall within the range £62.0m to £96.4m, representing an increase of between 3.8% and 5.8% in annual GVA (2003 figures). Development of the CLQ will also trigger investment elsewhere in the resort economy.

### *4. Willingness to licence*

The Council and its partners have actively pursued casino development longer than any other area in the UK. Consequently there is broad-based support which has consistently shown a strong majority of the public in favour in polls over the past five years.

The proposals for casino-based regeneration have been approved by Council four times - most recently in March, when Councillors endorsed Blackpool's bid with all-party support and no votes cast against. All three party leaders on the Council have re-stated their support for the proposal<sup>7</sup>.

The Blackpool bid is the product of a multi-agency Casino Steering Group, established in September 2005 and comprising LSP partners, including Regional (NWDA and GONW) and Sub-Regional agencies (Lancashire Economic Partnership) and local public and private sector interests including the PCT, Police and City Hopper Airports. The Blackpool LSP Executive has endorsed the bid.

### *5. Probability of implementation*

Blackpool has prepared longer and more thoroughly for its CLQ development than any other location in Britain, and is certain of its physical and financial feasibility.

---

<sup>7</sup> One Councillor, Stephen Bate, has been a vocal opponent of the casino proposals and co-ordinates a National Campaign Against Super-Casino Expansion (CASE), launched in April 2006. He abstained on the Council resolution. An online petition on the organisation's website (<http://www.thecase.org.uk/about.php>) has 111 signatures - only one from Blackpool.

Our proposed regional casino site is a 23-acre (9-hectare) brownfield site already identified for casino development in the Blackpool Masterplan and designated in the Blackpool Local Plan. It occupies a superb location in the heart of the resort core, on the Golden Mile, adjacent to the town centre, the Tower, and dense concentrations of holiday accommodation. 10m adults live within a 2-hour drive time, 16m within a 3-hour drive time. It has a direct high-level connection to the M55 and national motorway network. There has been no commercial interest in this site for thirty years and it now largely consists of a temporary car park. Most existing structures are dilapidated and life-expired.

Blackpool has complied with the requirements of the Ministerial statement issued on December 16, 2005 and has deliberately not selected a preferred casino operator. It has maintained regular dialogue with interested parties and has obtained letters reconfirming their interest. Major UK-based, US operators and South African operators have lodged formal interest.

ReBlackpool, Blackpool's Urban Regeneration Company, has been set up specifically to deliver a Regional Casino as centrepiece of the CLQ which forms a key element of the resort's Masterplan.

Our strategy is based on the fact that our locally-remote, regionally-accessible location will allow it to minimise displacement impacts locally. PION Economics' impact model suggests that 7% of customers will be generated locally, 33% within the region and 60% from outside the region; that non-gambling visits to the casino will account for 20% of all visits and that the proportion of visits made by new visitors could be between 55%-70% of all visits.

#### *6. Regional Context*

Blackpool is the only shortlisted location that forms a key element in regional, sub-regional and local strategies – the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), Regional Economic Strategy (RES), Central Lancashire City Region Development Programme (CRDP - Northern Way) and Local Development Framework (LDF). *The Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2009*, submitted for Ministerial approval, identifies Blackpool as a key Transformational Action and a regional asset in urgent need of regeneration. The draft *Regional Spatial Strategy policy W8*, submitted to Government in January 2006, identifies Blackpool as the regional priority for casino-led regeneration over other areas who have other opportunities for regeneration.

#### *7. Community benefits*

Regional casino development will take place on land which is 65% in public ownership and control. In addition, by deliberately refraining from choosing a developer or operator partner until it has secured the license, Blackpool will obtain the maximum public benefit from the development. Blackpool will use the resources flowing from this proposal to develop specific initiatives, negotiated with the successful operator as part of the competitive scheme appraisal and operator selection process, to target assistance on to vulnerable local neighbourhoods and populations.

#### *8. Unique characteristics*

- Only in Blackpool is the casino the central focus and catalyst for desperately needed regeneration of an entire town.

- Blackpool excels in mass tourism and mass entertainment, and a resort casino fits superbly. This view is supported by the public who, in a recent national opinion poll, see Blackpool as the right location.
- Blackpool provides urban characteristics in a destination gambling setting and therefore provides the best and most socially-responsible test of social impact.
- Blackpool is able to mitigate social impact since 93% of casino users are expected to be destination gamblers from outside the local area. Benefits will be maximised through a unique range of intervention community and social regeneration.
- Blackpool's new Regional Gaming Academy and Casino Training Alliance constitute a unique national centre of excellence for education and training.
- Blackpool has huge and unparalleled public and organisational support, built over six years of consultation, discussion and debate around these proposals. It has deliberately avoided linkage to a casino operator.
- The North West Development Agency and North West Regional Assembly unambiguously support development of a regional casino in Blackpool.
- ReBlackpool, Blackpool's Urban Regeneration Company, uniquely exists for the purpose of delivering a Regional Casino as centrepiece of the new Conference and Leisure Quarter.