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Sheffield City Council – Statement to Casino Advisory Panel

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Sheffield City Council welcomes the opportunity to explore the merits of Sheffield's case for a regional casino licence with the Casino Advisory Panel on 6th September 2006.

Unique characteristics

There are a number of important factors that make Sheffield the best possible location for a regional casino pilot. In summary:

- The regional casino has a clear role in our vision of how the city will move from economic recovery to transformation – from which all the community will benefit
- We are clear about how the casino will bring positive social and employment benefits, whilst at the same time mitigating any potentially damaging social effects. The regional casino will make a real contribution to our already strong neighbourhoods strategy
- We offer a range of brownfield locations which have exceptional fit with regional regeneration policy and land use strategy for the city
- We are well placed to run an open and competitive licence competition that will find the best possible solution for the city to maximise the potential benefits
- Our proposal has strong regional and local support, including public opinion.

In addition, Sheffield is uniquely placed to act as a national pilot for a regional casino as it offers the best possible location with which to test social impact. In particular;

- It has a population profile, ethnic mix and economic structure that matches the UK as a whole. Sheffield's skills profile and unemployment rates mirror national averages
- We have outstanding neighbourhood and social information systems that will enable rigorous evaluation of the impacts of a regional casino
- It offers a genuine balance of need and opportunity that can provide real lessons in both spheres
- It is centrally located within the UK and is a well-bounded regional city.

Critically, these factors mean that lessons learned by locating the pilot regional casino in Sheffield can be applied elsewhere with greater certainty than would be the case with the remainder of the shortlisted locations.

Social impact

Sheffield has a strong neighbourhoods agenda. Beneath this strategy lies genuine community involvement and a commitment to robust monitoring of change. We are able to clearly articulate how the benefits of a regional casino would be applied to support the achievement of this strategy and how that impact would be tracked over time.

Sheffield has developed sound local mechanisms for identifying the practical range of actions that will be required to maximise the beneficial effects of a regional casino whilst mitigating any negative impacts. Through the work of the Sheffield First Partnership Casino Task Group, proposals have been developed in the areas of economic, environmental and social impacts. For example, the local Primary Care Trusts are developing our response to problem gambling and Groundwork Sheffield has considered the likely environmental impacts.

Need for regeneration

The need for regeneration in Sheffield is significant, for example:

- Despite recent growth, GVA per head in Sheffield is the lowest of all the Core Cities
- Gross weekly earnings are 11% below the national average
- 23% of Sheffield's super output areas are in the nations most deprived decile

Sheffield's need for regeneration has been further highlighted since the Panel made their shortlisting decision with Darnall identified as having the lowest average income in Britain in the CACI Annual Wealth Survey, 2006.

Sheffield's is a highly polarised city – with some of the most affluent as well as some of the most deprived wards in the country. It is this characteristic that has led to the City's 'Successful Neighbourhoods' strategy which aims to close the gap between the best and worst performing neighbourhoods. Delivery against this challenging agenda is well underway and revenues generated through the regional casino licence will be directed to accelerate its achievement.

Critically however, Sheffield demonstrates not only the need for regeneration but also the opportunity to build on its success to date in turning its fortunes around.

A regional casino would bring transformational regeneration benefits to Sheffield and the wider city region. A momentum for growth has been building up in Sheffield and key areas of the former South Yorkshire Coalfields over recent years through a range of economic development initiatives. However this momentum has yet to reach a point of critical mass. Through the Lower Don Valley Masterplan, we are able to demonstrate the catalytic effect a regional casino would have.

The regional casino itself will have a major economic effect on the area and drive forward the destination leisure strategy that underpins the regeneration framework for the area. However, realising the full economic potential of the Lower Don Valley relies upon unlocking key infrastructure constraints such as removing flood risk from development land, further improving transport access and enhancing environmental quality. Application of capital funding contributions secured from a regional casino licence would be applied to enabling measures that will allow the wider Lower Don Valley to attract significant further levels investment in developments that can have a genuinely transformational impact on the city region and beyond.

Willingness to licence

Sheffield's willingness to licence is clear cut. The City Council formally resolved to promote the city as a location for a regional casino by full Council resolution and the local Labour, Liberal Democrats and Conservative parties support our proposal. This is underpinned by support from the Regional Development Agency, all spatial strategies, the business community and public opinion.

Sheffield City Council formally adopted the Lower Don Valley Masterplan in May 2005. It specifically maps how the impact a regional casino would have a catalytic effect on the wider area.

Probability of implementation

Probability of implementation in Sheffield is extremely high. The city has a clear vision for its ongoing regeneration, translated into the effective planning and spatial policy.

The Lower Don Valley Masterplan offers an established framework for delivery within which a regional casino has an important role. Operator interest in the city is already exceptionally high, reflecting the solid market fundamentals underpinning our proposal. The City Council has continued to evolve its thinking on any licence competition and is able to clearly articulate the benefits it would be seeking to obtain.

Regional context

Sheffield's proposal for a regional casino sits squarely with all regional strategies and policy frameworks. Reflecting Sheffield's priority regeneration status, work carried out for Yorkshire Forward has identified the city as the single location within the region most likely to benefit from a regional casino. The Regional Development Agency is fully supportive of Sheffield's proposal as is the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and European Objective 1 Single Programming Document.

The Lower Don Valley is readily accessible from the national motorway network and public transport allowing it to serve a regional market effectively.

Community benefits

One of Sheffield's key ambitions is to close the gap between the best and the worst performing neighbourhoods. Sheffield City Council will invest 50% of ongoing revenues generated from the regional casino licence in projects that support this aim. This will include increasing the already successful neighbourhood wardens programme, enhanced public health programmes and bespoke training and employment packages for target communities.

The remaining 50% of ongoing revenues will fund social impact measures that tackle problem gambling and related personal difficulties. We aim to ensure that there is no increase in problem gambling as a result of the regional casino as well as radically enhancing services for those who suffer harm as result of all forms of gambling addiction (internet etc). This will include increased measures to tackle financial exclusion and personal indebtedness by rolling out the Sheffield Moneyline project and delivering the very best response to problem gambling that encompasses wide spread public education programmes, advice and treatment services and the training of local counsellors.

Range of Areas

Our strongly preferred location for a regional casino is the Lower Don Valley area of Sheffield. The Lower Don Valley offers a number of significant locational advantages:

- **Excellent transport links**, both public and private
- **Exceptional strategic and policy fit:** The Lower Don Valley is a priority regeneration area for the region and the city and Sheffield's recognised area for destination leisure
- **A comprehensive leisure/entertainment based area regeneration strategy.** The Lower Don Valley Masterplan demonstrates how new investment in leisure and entertainment facilities with a regional and national pull will help the city reach critical mass as a unique leisure, sporting and recreational 'hub' for the region
- **Wide range of potential sites:** As a result of the previous industrial history of the valley, the large number of potential brownfield development sites means a competitive and expeditious licence competition could be held. The sites extend

to be large and are therefore capable of housing a large multi-faceted leisure facility such as a regional casino

- **Very low levels of housing:** It is significant that the Lower Don Valley does not contain residential communities. This means that, unlike other shortlisted areas, a regional casino in the Lower Don Valley area of Sheffield would not be located immediately next to or among residential areas, which evidence suggests is likely to result in higher instances of problem gambling.

We believe that Sheffield exceeds the Casino Advisory Panel criteria in every respect. Sheffield is exceptionally well placed to maximise the positive impacts of a regional casino, minimise the negative and offer an incomparable test-bed for piloting this important national initiative.

We look forward to expanding upon these areas with you on 6th September.

Sir Robert Kerslake

Chief Executive