



Northwest

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Steven Broomhead
Chief Executive

Mrs J Bransby
Secretary to Casino Advisory Panel
Department for Culture, Media & Sport
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SB/KA
NG/JW/2206.01
26 June 2006

Dear Jane

Casino Advisory Panel – Further Consultation

Following the Casino Advisory Panel's publication of the shortlist of successful proposals, and your e-mail to Nick Gerrard of 8 June 2006.

I last wrote to you on 23 December 2005, in which I set out the Agency's position in respect of the single regional casino and our priority support for Blackpool.

I can confirm that since that letter was written the Northwest Regional Economic Strategy (RES) was published in March 2006, following ministerial endorsement, and the policies contained within it in respect of Blackpool are unchanged. I enclose a copy of the published RES.

We welcome the inclusion of both Blackpool and Manchester on the shortlist of locations for the regional casino, and Sefton on the shortlist of large/small category casino locations.

The Agency's Board considered the latest position at its meeting on 15th June 2006 and made the following additional comments:-

The RES makes clear the Agency's preference for Blackpool as the location for the region's first regional casino, drawing on the evidence base prepared by PION Economics (RES action 48 on page 35). In addition, the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) has been submitted to Government by the NWRA. The RSS includes a policy on regional casinos, which states that Blackpool is the priority location and that other locations should not be promoted in the region "pending the implementation of a regional casino in Blackpool". The Agency has supported this policy in its response to consultation on RSS.

The RES also identifies the need to capitalise on the strength of Southport as a "Classic Resort" (RES action 102 on page 46).



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In 2003 the Agency commissioned a study from Locum Consulting: "A New Vision for Northwest Coastal Resorts" – copy enclosed. Their report said that Southport needed to develop a strong conference business, and to support this would benefit from new investment in a destination casino, spa and top quality hotel (ref page 65 onwards)

As a consequence of this the Board confirmed its support for Blackpool as the preferred location for the Northwest's first regional casino, and for Southport as the Northwest's preferred location for a casino in the large/small category. This was confirmed again at the Agency's Board meeting on 15 June 2006.

In respect of Manchester, the PION evidence clearly identifies Manchester as the second location in the region which would benefit most from a regional casino. The PION report states that "if economic, tourist and deprived groups are weighted equally, Manchester and Blackpool are ranked at roughly the same level, with Liverpool in third position, then Trafford, and then Salford". As only one preferred candidate location can be identified for the regional casino pilot, it follows that the only possible contenders are Blackpool and Manchester. The justification for each can be offered in terms of regeneration. In Manchester a regional casino would generate localised regeneration, in the context of a diversified and generally buoyant economy. In Blackpool a regional casino would help to restructure a much less diversified and weaker economy, which in the consultants view is continuing to struggle against the entrenched decline. The consultants conclude that in these terms it is difficult not to assign a higher priority to Blackpool. As a consequence of this, and on the basis of the evidence used for supporting Blackpool as the first location in the Northwest, the Board resolved that if there were to be a second regional casino, then Manchester would be the choice, but only in the context of the policy framework provided by the policy in RSS referred to above.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Steven Broomhead
Chief Executive

Cc Steve Weaver
Anil Ruia
Bryan Gray
Nick Gerrard