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Casino Advisory Panel
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
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brochure 'Spending Time' can be
viewed on:

http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/economy/economic_unit/spending_time.jsp

Dear Sir

SUITABLE LOCATIONS FOR NEW CASINOS

Thank you for inviting the North East Assembly to respond to your letter dated 11 November 2005. The content of this response is based on a report that was endorsed by Assembly Members at a Plenary meeting on 15 December 2005.

The North East Assembly recognises the positive contribution casinos can make to the region's economic regeneration and development, particularly in relation to job creation, tourism and business development. This view is taken forward in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North East, which was submitted to the Secretary of State in June. Responding to the implications of the Gambling Act 2005, the RSS includes a specific policy on casino development indicating the preferred locations of where suitable regional, large and small casinos should be prioritised for development.

In terms of consistency and alignment with the overarching locational strategy of the RSS, the casino policy states that prioritisation of a regional casino should be located within the core area of either the Tees Valley or Tyne & Wear city regions. The Stockton/Middlesbrough area (more commonly known as the Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative) being the core area of the Tees Valley city region; and Newcastle/Gateshead and Sunderland being the core areas of the Tyne & Wear city region.

The policy also identifies that sustainable urban centres and coastal towns should be the locations for suitable large and small casinos.

In order for Local Development Frameworks to incorporate this locational policy, the RSS also identifies a list of criteria for all casino development. The criterion for casino development includes:

- establishing a need for development;
- ensuring any development is accessible by all modes of transport, particularly public transport;
- establishing the impact of any development on other existing centres within the region;
- the importance of developing on brownfield land and taking full advantage of existing infrastructure;
- maximising the regenerative spin-off benefits the casino development would bring; and
- optimising the net additional job opportunities that would arise locally.

The formulation of this policy has been a result of dialogue between the Assembly and One NorthEast, the Regional Development Agency; and also preliminary research undertaken, which investigated the economic impact of casino leisure complexes in the North East.

Discussions with local authorities have confirmed that Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough (in collaboration with Tees Valley Regeneration) councils will all be submitting expressions of interest for a regional casino. The councils' interest in housing a new regional casino is consistent with the policy approach contained in the Submission Draft RSS.

The Assembly is committed to continue to work closely with One NorthEast and local authorities on this very important policy issue; and a crucial milestone in the RSS process to develop this policy further will be the Examination in Public (EiP), which will be commencing in March 2006.

The outcomes of the EiP; revisions to the Draft RSS; the ongoing dialogue with regional colleagues; and outcomes of any additional research will all help to refine the North East's view and approach to the identification of appropriate locations for the development of new casinos.

I trust these comments are useful and assist you with your consultation. Should you require any further information; or have any additional queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on (0191) 261 3921 or by email at colin.blackburn@northeastassembly.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



Colin Blackburn
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