

We strongly believe that resort areas in particular are well placed to test the benefits of casino led regeneration. In Torbay we have the needs and the mix of visitors to justify its selection as a location but crucially it's the right time for such an investment. A development in Torbay would add considerably to a range of regeneration projects which have included completed works at Torquay Harbour, new managed workspace developments in Torquay and Paignton and a large scale regeneration proposal for the town of Brixham.

Our economic strategy<sup>1</sup> sets out priorities based on competitive strengths and locational advantages for economic development. We have identified ways of capitalising on Torbay's environment and location in such a way that will enable it to compete in the modern economy. We believe that the development of a Large Casino in Torbay would add significantly to the impetus for regeneration within Torbay and would be a significant step forward in re-establishing Torbay as one of the pre-eminent resort destinations in the UK.

We feel there is a compelling case for Torbay's inclusion with the high national awareness of the English Riviera 'brand', the existing accommodation resource and the potential for development of the leisure tourism market complemented by the high quality environment and natural setting. Torbay Council also has extensive experience of managing the entertainment industry in the area with its partners and in selecting Torbay we have no doubt a successful casino development would be delivered.

### **How would benefits arising from casino development be directed to help alleviate concentrations of deprivation?**

Torbay is renowned as a great Victorian seaside resort. However our vision is that we continue to enjoy an excellent reputation as a strong, forward thinking contemporary resort which means that we want to offer the best to visitors and residents alike.

Everyone living or working in Torbay is entitled to a good quality of life. That is why all the statutory agencies, businesses, voluntary and community groups have committed themselves to work together to improve Torbay. We have one thing in common – to provide services to the people, who live, work and socialise in Torbay. With respect to this submission and gaming in general Torbay Council will act as a "corporate parent" to those using any gambling facilities and should help stop or reduce any gambling problems.

The Council's statutory responsibilities include preventing gambling from

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<sup>1</sup> Torbay Economic Regeneration Framework available from <http://www.torbay.gov.uk/torbayeconomicregenerationframework.htm>

being a source of crime or disorder, ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, and protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

We believe that while there will be general economic benefits accruing widely as a result of the casino development and would expect the operator to work closely with the Council and the JobCentre + on marketing jobs to local people, particularly longer term unemployed, so that the significant impact for residents is job creation which also applies to the following question.

We would expect that local contractors & suppliers be able to bid for business in both construction and future supplies to the establishment. South Devon College is working on hospitality and tourism training courses and we would anticipate that such training and development programmes could be developed in conjunction with the operator.

We would expect a partnership with the operator to offer support to community and voluntary groups and possibly other small scale regeneration & public realm projects either through a one off or ongoing sum. We would also look to work with the operator on sponsorship of maritime events (such as Powerboat Championships, Yachting Finals) or similar events where high level sponsorship is advantageous.

**You propose to locate a casino in a “recognised deprived area”. \*Is it a good idea to offer people in economic distress an attraction —a “quick fix” — which could make their position worse?**

It's essential that our belief that we can deliver a successful Casino is seen in a wider Torbay context. It is a dichotomy of Torbay and in particular Torquay that the focal area of the leisure economy is within a ward which ranks highly on indices of deprivation. Sitting alongside dwellings in multiple occupation and “problem” areas are a high concentration of hotels (including a 5 star hotel), restaurants, shops and properties that change hands for seven figure sums.

We understand from Gamcare and others that gambling problems are primarily associated with non casino forms of gaming and that in particular internet, telebetting, scratch cards and fruit machines offer more immediate access to those with addiction problems. A casino, contrastingly, because of entry criteria frequently laid down by the operators is a less immediate form of gambling and not a quick fix. We have sought to be mindful of the potential impact of a casino development on the vulnerable groups of the Torbay community and to that end we have been exploring how the Casino can be positioned, marketed and offered to potential users. Responsible gambling is vitally important to us and since our meeting with Gamcare Cllr Alan Faulkner,

who chairs the licensing committee, has met separately with Gamcare to understand addiction issues much more deeply and has taken on an advocacy role with that organisation.

We would expect operators to be mindful of our concerns and take steps within their premises and in their marketing to build awareness of problems such that it deters underage and problem gambling. More specifically the Council expects the management of licensed premises to ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way and take measures to train employees about possible problem gambling and how to identify it. We would also expect operators to comply with advertising codes of practice. These will prevent advertisements which: encourage irresponsible or excessive gambling; seeking to harm or exploit children, the young, or other vulnerable persons; directing ads at those under 18, and from featuring people who appear to be under 25;

Full details of Torbay Council's draft Gambling Policy are available from [http://www.torbay.gov.uk/gambling\\_policy\\_statement\\_a.pdf](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/gambling_policy_statement_a.pdf)

We are satisfied that in opting to site a casino in a deprived area we will not exacerbate problem gaming and we are not looking to target the activity so much as the positive outcomes such as the jobs at the area. We do not see our casino proposal as a "quick fix" to the problems in Torbay which require a holistic solution with a range of new jobs and investment attracted. We see a casino as complementing existing and planned initiatives to broaden the appeal of the area and helping raise the quality and value of the tourism sector in particular.

**Have you identified any other benefits from regeneration, in addition to those stated on employment, which would accrue from a casino?**

In addition to the creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities we believe that a casino would contribute in a number of ways. A casino development will strengthen the local economy by encouraging local spending within the supply chain, Torbay has a strong set of support businesses to the hospitality and leisure industry and would be well placed to take advantage of this.

Through developer contributions and high quality design a vastly improved public realm in the vicinity of the development, reinstating the splendor of the resort and adding to civic pride and a stronger sense of place. This will be achieved not simply through the development itself but also by the casino acting to stimulate further investment and high standards of design and service in the area around the casino as experienced though similar previous investments in the area.

The creation of a new entertainment hub will increase recreational options for residents and visitors and would be an asset for the area, perfectly in sync with the aspirations of residents and visitors. It would assist in attracting businesses and individuals motivated by quality of life, environment and leisure opportunities.

Increasingly tourism is driven by the activities open to the public as much as location with business and conference related tourism a growing driver for Torbay. Over recent years business tourism to Torbay has increased delivering some £12m into the local economy in 2005. However, both national and international competition grows and English seaside destinations have a challenging task to retain and grow their conference business.

Destinations have to offer a wide range of facilities to lure the Conference Buyer in the first place and subsequently the Delegates themselves. The magnificent setting, the surrounding areas of Dartmoor, the exceptional restaurants and hotels are not enough in themselves to set Torbay apart from overseas competition.

We view a casino development, incorporating a range of additional facilities, as a strong new attraction complementing Torbays existing natural and leisure attractions to improve the area's image so that it remains attractive to tourists, residents and businesses.

**You say that “research suggests that £12m of Gross Value Added and over 350 jobs would result from a large casino development in Torbay”. Please advise us as to the source and reliability of this research?**

Because of resource constraints we've not commissioned any specific research on the impact of a casino in Torbay, the figures we have used are based on the “Casino Market Demand Study” carried out by PION and commissioned by NWDA. We opted to use this as a guide because of its clear methodology for estimating the impacts of a casino development.

Following further research and discussions with operators we'd anticipate approximately 175 FTE posts as a direct impact with a “multiplier effect” on other sectors of the local economy resulting in a further 60-70 jobs using English Partnerships recreation multiplier. It is our aspiration to include a casino as part of a wider leisure development also incorporating a hotel (up to 100 rooms) which would add an estimated 70 further direct jobs. Information from operators on staffing levels and floor areas elsewhere in the UK also suggest this figure is realistic.

The GVA assumption is also based on the PION research and the wage levels set out in that report. A significant part of the problem with Torbay's GVA is the heavy incidence of part time and seasonal employment and we are responding to that by creating the conditions for higher value full time employment in the Bay but also by taking steps to lengthen the visitor season. This has included identifying new niche markets and types of visitor who will come out of the traditional summer season and is motivated as much by the activities open to them as the location. A casino, with the associated leisure facilities would be another significant step along that path.

**To what extent do you regard poor economic activity rates as common to most seaside resorts?**

Low rates of economic activity are broadly common to seaside resorts however Torbay typically exhibits poorer performance than the average as indicated below.

<b>Economic activity rate - working age</b>			
	<b>number</b>	<b>denominator</b>	<b>percent</b>
Bournemouth	78,100	98,300	79.5
Poole	66,500	83,600	79.6
Restormel	46,900	58,300	80.4
Torbay	56,600	73,200	77.3
Blackpool	62,800	82,400	76.2
Sefton	123,100	160,800	76.5
Hastings	38,400	49,900	77.1
Isle of Wight	59,100	73,600	80.2
Scarborough	48,600	61,000	79.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>580,000</b>	<b>741,100</b>	<b>78.3</b>

<b>Unemployment rate - working age</b>			
	<b>number</b>	<b>denominator</b>	<b>percent</b>
Bournemouth	2,700	78,100	3.4
Poole	2,000	66,500	3.0
Restormel	1,800	46,900	3.8
Torbay	3,100	56,600	5.5
Blackpool	3,900	62,800	6.2
Sefton	6,500	123,100	5.3
Hastings	2,000	38,400	5.1
Isle of Wight	2,500	59,100	4.2
Scarborough	1,700	48,600	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,100</b>	<b>580,000</b>	<b>4.5</b>

Source: Annual Population Survey Sept 2006, NOMIS

These tables give a further indication of the issues facing the local economy and it is increasingly recognised that while many of the principal urban areas

in the South West need high value jobs Torbay needs more jobs particularly full time positions.

**Has any further resolution been passed by the Council to support the proposal?**

No further formal resolutions have been passed by the Council however the aspiration to have a large Casino license for Torbay remains a key element of the directly elected Mayor's priorities for economic regeneration. The Mayor and his Cabinet are fully behind the proposal and have received updates on the progress of the proposal and meetings with potential operators. There is cross party support for this bid with both major parties behind the proposal.

Economic regeneration is the key priority for both members and the local strategic partnership that support the proposal. The elected Mayor welcomes the different, higher spending, visitors a casino is likely to attract with obvious benefit to our hotels, restaurants, shops and other attractions.

Outside of the Council there remains particularly strong support from the business community. At its September 2006 meeting the Torbay Business Forum recorded its near unanimous support for the proposal with only two abstentions and no opposition. The hospitality industry is fully behind this submission particularly because a casino fits with how the local tourism industry evolves and we've commented elsewhere with specific regard to conference tourism.

As noted above the Council is also moving forward with its new Gambling Policy which makes reference to the potential for a casino in Torbay.

**Has the Council undertaken any steps to ascertain public opinion about the proposal since it was submitted?**

No formal steps to reevaluate public opinion have been taken since the proposal was submitted. Subsequently a number of objections have been made through the local press by some correspondents to the letters page concerned either at rumours of a location or with a fundamental objection to gambling. Our position remains that such views must be taken into account and we have been consistent in preliminary meetings with operators that in light of concerns such as these the quality of the overall offer and the protection of vulnerable groups are vital to the Bay.

Recently a series of consultation events have taken place across the three towns with mixed comments on the acceptability of a casino. Where meetings have been held with groups and complete presentations on the possibilities of

this type of development are explained there is strong support. This has been borne out by meetings with the Torbay Business Forum, as noted above, and with the Mayor's Tourism Forum. The local business community has been very strong in its support of this proposal and have emphasised that it is precisely this type of investment and evolution that Torbay and its leisure offer requires moving it forward and ensuring that it develops as envisaged.

**Can you provide any further evidence of probability of implementation?**

We have hosted meetings with a number of operators that have expressed an interest in the potential of Torbay. Within those meetings we have been impressed with the degree to which operators have grasped our vision for the future development of the area's tourism and leisure economy and the contribution we would see from a casino. These meetings have given us confidence in the ability of this development to achieve the objective we want.

There are a number of possible sites within Council ownership and in private ownership where a large casino development would be possible. Following the meetings with operators Cabinet members will be asked to consider the question of the site in a meeting in December or January with Council asked to consider if the bid is successful.

There is very strong policy support for a casino in Torbay at a local and regional level. The economic regeneration strategy for Torbay sets 5 key priorities for Torbay

- Improve economic performance of key sectors
- Diversify the economic base by identifying and developing new growth opportunities.
- Raise GVA per head by encouraging economic growth, especially in higher value activities
- Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Ensure population as a whole benefits

Under these priorities a number of critical sectors are identified and amongst them is tourism and leisure as a sector where Torbay has a competitive advantage. Tourism and leisure remains critical because of the visitor numbers and wealth it already brings but also because future growth is forecast and there is significant under exploited potential. . In maximising that potential it is recognised that there is a need to improve on the range and quality of our visitor attractions and make the resort more attractive to a broader range of visitors. This is further reinforced under the development of the Local Development Framework where the Torquay Harbour Area Action Plan includes a specific reference for a casino site.

In addition to the draft economic strategy our proposal is strengthened by wide regional recognition of the needs of Torbay expressed in the Region's draft economic and spatial strategies. The Economic Strategy identifies that Torbay is an area in need of "significant, co-ordinated regeneration work". The Spatial Strategy recognises Torbay as a strategically significant area and has a clear priority to support regeneration in Torbay. Torbay offers the best fit in the region with policy CA1 on location of a casino being a major regional tourism destination, a strategically significant area and an area named as being in need of regeneration. This is further supported by the fact that a casino development would complement further regeneration measures in the resort.

**Please advise the Panel on the outcome of any further market research and study of economic impact?**

We have tested the market to gauge interest in Torbay as a casino location by meeting with the operators which has helped to refine our position of being determined not to compromise on the quality of the offer and the need for a development to complement what we do well.

We have noted above that in the process of developing the bid our appreciation of the likely economic impacts has evolved to a more informed position. We have not however conducted any specific research.

**Do you think that your proposal would increase the number of visitors coming to Torbay from overseas?**

Yes, a casino would add to the attraction of Torbay where the growing cafe culture, and recently the success in a number of restaurants achieving coveted Michelin Stars and AA 3 Rosettes, is indicative of the potential of the top end of the market to thrive and expand. Torquay's Imperial Hotel is the only 5 star hotel on the entire South West peninsula. There remains a strong affection for Agatha Christie (born in Torquay) particularly in the far east and that is another asset in overseas promotion. Together these factors have significant value in terms of attracting overseas markets.

Torbay already has a growing overseas market partly influenced by cruises. Destination South West, the organisation responsible for promoting SW ports as cruise stopovers, believes a casino would encourage additional overnight stays rather than day visits. Supporting a general comparison between the English and French Riviera Destination South West further note that when ships call in at Monte Carlo a large number head for the Casino in the evening.

Because of our demand for quality in what we offer we see a casino as being a significant element of that product mix in further developing the overseas visitor market.

**Please provide more specific information on how the Casino might assist in terms of community benefit by providing a range of new facilities.**

We would not want a facility that was perceived by locals as purely a centre for gaming. We would expect that the development would include other forms of leisure including dining, entertainment and possibly retail. There is currently a poor balance in the night time economy in parts of the Bay with insufficient general facilities away from the bars and clubs. A casino development as envisaged would assist in redressing that balance and is one of the attractions for the local Police.

The creation of a new entertainment hub will result in improved economic performance in particular new jobs, more year round employment and visitors. As a result of the jobs and new opportunities for local suppliers there will be a multiplier effect generating wide ranging favourable economic changes.

Through developer contributions and high quality design a vastly improved public realm in the vicinity of the development, reinstating the splendor of the resort and adding to civic pride and a stronger sense of place. This will be achieved not simply through the development itself but also by the casino acting to stimulate further investment and high standards of design and service in the area around the casino as experienced through similar previous investments.

**What could you do that would make your area more uniquely positioned compared with other similar areas wanting a casino?**

The English Riviera is often compared to the French Riviera and therefore the potential to offer something unique within the UK market is strong. Thriving marinas, the highest rated hotel on the SW peninsula, the strong brand and the potential for growth in the already strong overseas market are all factors that together combine to make Torbay a prime location for casino investment. Exploiting factors like these and unashamedly seeking the highest quality of facilities will mean that Torbay's offer is different to that of other seaside areas.

**How do you consider that the development of a large or small casino will help reinforce the distinctiveness of the area ?**

Torbay is the three towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham. Branded as The English Riviera there is a distinct holiday market and product mix which a casino development will add to. With the style of the waterfronts, marinas, wine-bars, restaurants, theatres, shops and a fabulously rich natural environment visitors already enjoy a range of facilities required by a contemporary resort. There is a high awareness of Torbay as a visitor destination and of the English Riviera brand which is trusted by customers and visitors, residents and businesses who appreciate the package of place, environment, quality of life and leisure opportunities. A casino complements this very strongly and fits well with the future aspirations of the area to regain some of its hey-day glamour.

Torbay, despite being a strong destination, is however at risk of falling behind the South West region economically and with this in mind would be an excellent location to test the holistic regeneration impacts of a casino which would also add significant impetus to recent developments in the area. With this existing strong tourism base and with the broad appeal of the maritime, cultural and heritage offer a casino development with a strong focus on high quality entertainment offers real potential to reposition, modernise and update the tourism and leisure sector of the local economy to take advantage of growth and add value to this important sector.