



23 March 2004

Chris Ruane MP
House of Commons
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Dear Chris

Proposed Gambling Bill

Thank you for your help to date in supporting our industry during the debates and discussions concerning the proposed Gambling Bill, which I am sure you are aware, was recently published by DCMS. Further, the All Party Scrutiny Committee is due to deliver their recommendations to the Government by 7 April 2004.

In a report commissioned by BACTA and produced by the Henley Centre; the economic and social impact of the proposed new Gambling Bill is analysed and a number of serious concerns are raised.

The Report indicates that the Bill in its proposed form fails to achieve the balance of necessary safeguards both socially and economically. Whilst the Bill benefits two new sectors, Vegas style casinos and new media, the traditional UK market is hugely disadvantaged. New style 'Vegas' type casinos will form a significant part of the UK market, with an increase in internet, interactive and mobile phone gambling. However, the Bill does not allow the UK's traditional gaming market the opportunity to compete on an equal footing, resulting in the disappearance of thousands of family owned businesses and the decline of social clubs, pubs, bingo halls, seaside and inland arcades. Any employment gains in the new sectors will be offset against redundancies in community based established businesses.

Another concern highlighted by the Report, is the rise in the numbers of problem gamblers to in excess of 700,000 by 2010. Most of this growth will follow the introduction of the Vegas style casinos, where the Bill being proposed imposes insufficient restrictions on their numbers and locations and allows virtually unlimited numbers of gaming machines offering much higher prizes than anything seen in the UK to date.



Whilst we are in favour of a Bill that recognises new technologies and creates a competitive market environment with greater consumer choice; we are strongly opposed to a Bill that gives new market entrants (many of whom are foreign companies entering the UK for the first time) unfair advantages over existing traditional UK businesses and fails to address the associated potential rise in problem gamblers.

If possible, I would very much like the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss these concerns further, but in any event hope for your continued support and ask you to make representation to the Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP, Cabinet Minister ultimately responsible, Lord McIntosh of Haringey, the Minister with responsibility for the Bill and John Greenway MP, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

I do hope that you are able to help and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely



Tim Batstone
Executive Chairman

PS - I enclose some recent press cuttings for your information

Good to see you yesterday.
You should have now had the
BAT-DA invite for dinner on
the 26th April the you
able to come ?