

July 2008

New Independent Member for the Levy Board

Gerry Sutcliffe, Minister for Sport, has appointed Paul Darling QC as the Independent Member of the Horserace Betting Levy Board (known as the Levy Board). His appointment runs from 14 July 2008 to 13 July 2011.

Paul Darling QC

A barrister at Keating Chambers since 1985, and a Queen's Counsel since 1999, Mr Darling's practice ranges across construction and engineering law. He was the Chairman of the Technology and Construction Bar Association between 2003 and 2007. He is currently a Bencher of Middle temple, a Trustee of the Free Representation Unit and Chairman of the Bar Council Access to the Bar Committee. He is also a director of a family-owned pharmaceutical company. His sporting passions are horseracing, as an owner and racegoer, and Newcastle United Football Club. He is a Member of the Horserace Totalisator Board from 2006 until 31 July 2008.

Background

The Levy Board is a statutory body established by the Betting Levy Act 1961 and now operating in accordance with the provisions of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (as amended). It is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Its role is to assess and collect monetary contributions from bookmakers via a percentage levy on gross profits from betting on British horse races. The Levy Board distributes levy proceeds on projects to improve horseracing and breeds of horses, and to advance equine veterinary science and education.

A group comprised of representatives of the betting and racing industries is currently considering how the Levy process might be modernised. This could result in changes being made to the Board's structure and mechanisms. The Government has undertaken to retain the Levy and the Levy Board until such time as a viable commercial alternative is agreed between the betting and racing industries.

Appointments to the Levy Board are made by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and follow the OCPA Code of Practice. All public appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for political activity (if any declared) to be made public. Mr Darling has declared that he undertook no political activity in the UK in the last five years.