

Annual General Meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Scottish Horseracing and Bloodstock Industries

Wednesday 13th November 2019 – 5.30pm

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Neil Bibby MSP
Richard Lyle MSP
Delly Innes, Scottish Racing
Donald Morrison, Betting & Gaming Council
John Hannah, William Hill
Andrew Jamieson, William Hill
Michelle Green, Ladbrokes Coral
Mick Malone, Ladbrokes Coral

APOLOGIES:

Miles Briggs MSP
Rachael Hamilton MSP

1. Election of Office Bearers

It was decided that the following will continue as office bearers for 2020.

Convener: Miles Briggs MSP

Dep. Convener: Neil Bibby MSP

Secretariat: Scottish Racing

Members of the Group: Alison Harris MSP; Rachael Hamilton MSP; Mark Griffin MSP; Richard Lyle MSP; John Scott MSP.

2. Introduction to the new Betting and Gaming Council (BGC)

Donald Morrison from the new Betting and Gaming Council introduced the new Betting and Gaming Council, its structure and its objectives.

The new Betting and Gaming Council has been formed following a merger with the Association of British Bookmakers, the Remote Gambling Association and the National Casino Forum.

The Betting and Gaming Council is the new industry association for betting and gaming, representing 90% of the betting and gaming industry (excluding lotteries). These include betting shops, casinos, online operators and game suppliers.

The Mission of the BGC is to champion industry standards in betting and gaming to ensure an enjoyable, fair and safe betting and gaming experience for all customers.

A new Chief Executive has yet to be recruited, but it has recently been announced that Brigid Simmons will act as Chair of the BGC. Ms Simmons was Chief Executive of the British Beer & Pub Association for ten years and is a former trustee of GambleAware, among many other roles.

The BGC's main objectives include:

- Collaboration with Government, Gambling Commission, stakeholders and customers
- Ensuring the appropriate use of advertising
- Protecting the vulnerable, including young people

- Maintaining the highest staff and training standards across the industry
- Championing the community value of betting and gaming across the UK

Gambling Industry

Gambling is a popular leisure activity, enjoyed by 46% of British adults who gamble at least once a month, this is compared to 63% of adults in Scotland who gamble on a regular basis. The vast majority of people who gamble, do so responsibly. In 2017, only 0.8% of gamblers in Scotland were classed as problem gamblers. Across the UK the level of problem gamblers has remained “statistically stable” over the past ten years.

Economic Contribution of Betting & Gaming

The industry supports 106,670 employees in the UK. Betting shops alone support 52,160 jobs, including around 5,000 employees across Scotland in around 1,000 betting shops. The industry contributes £3.2billion in tax annually.

The industry voluntarily contributes £9.6m every year to support Gamble Aware’s research, training and education programme, along with a further £9.7m to other charities and support groups in Britain tackling problem gambling.

The betting industry also contributes £350m to horseracing through the horseracing levy, media rights and sponsorship partnerships. Every betting shop in Scotland contributes around £30,000 through the levy.

Corporate & Social Responsibility (CSR)

The BGC recently published a CSR report which showcases an industry committed to its people and communities with a wealth of activity encompassing:

- responsible gambling
- health & well-being
- education and sport
- employee volunteering social inclusion
- sustainability

Scotland has been leading the way in working with the third sector.

Responsible Gambling Measures

The BGC’s Executive Committee are finding ways to improve the safeguards that are currently in place, such as:

- Self-exclusion across industry in online casinos and betting shops
- Deposit limits, cooling off periods for online customers
- Ability to set time/spend limits and mandatory alerts in betting shops
- Funding for GambleAware and other charities
- Technology to monitor player behaviour
- Trained staff
- Whistle to whistle ban on TV betting adverts
- Industry wide Responsible Gambling Week

Safer Gambling Commitments

The industry is committed to 22 new commitments, the highlights being:

- Preventing underage gambling and protecting young people
- Increasing support for treatment of gambling harm

- Strengthening and expanding codes of practice for advertising and marketing
- Protecting and empowering our customers
- Creating a culture of safer gambling

These are being rolled out this week, and include:

- £10 million four-year national programme to educate young people
- The roll out of Anonymous Player Aware Systems (APAS) to identify player behaviour which could indicate harmful playing
- Work with advertising bodies to prevent under 18s seeing gambling adverts online
- Work with banking industry to encourage all banks to offer blocking software
- Increased funding for research, education and treatment, and five major operators pledge to increase funding for RET, raising an extra £60m by 2023
- New Codes of Conduct governing sponsorship and responsible promotions
- Sharing data to improve how to identify at risk customers

Challenges

The impact of FOBT stake cuts is being felt across the betting sector, with the closure of 59 William Hill shops in Scotland and Ladbrokes Coral are set to announce closures in the New Year. Scotbet went into administration earlier this year, however 30 shops were not closed due to a management takeover. There will be an impact on smaller independent operators across the UK.

Conclusion

In conclusion, gambling remains a popular leisure activity and makes a significant economic contribution. It can provide a community hub in many smaller towns and villages where staff build relationships with local customers. The betting industry very much recognises the need to protect and safeguard at risk customers and the new BGC will champion new industry standards.

3. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed shortly.