

June 2011

Horserace Betting Levy Board – renewal of Government Appointed Member

John Penrose, the Minister for Tourism and Heritage, has reappointed Paul Darling QC as the Independent Member of the Levy Board, for the three years commencing 14 July 2011.

Paul Darling QC

A barrister since 1985, and a Queen's Counsel since 1999, Mr Darling's practice ranges across construction and engineering law. He is currently a Bencher of Middle Temple, a Trustee of the Free Representation Unit and Head of Keating Chambers. He is also a director of a family-owned pharmaceutical company. He is the Chairman of the Football Licensing Authority, appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, for which he receives £18,130 in return for approximately 4 days per month. He holds no other public appointments.

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. The Independent Member role attracts £19,470 per year in return for 2-3 days per month on average. In the event an alternative is agreed which obviates the need for the Levy Board, the roles of Government Appointed Members will be terminated.

Appointments to the Levy Board are made by the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, 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, upon appointment and also upon reappointment. Mr Darling has declared no political activity in the UK in the last five years.