Dear Secretary of State

As an employee of Paddy Power, I wanted to write to you as part of the current consultation into the 2005 Gambling Act and Gaming Machines and urge you to “Back your Local Bookie” and maintain the current levels of stakes and prizes on electronic gaming machines.

Betting is a popular British pastime and our shops serve tens of thousands of customers every year. In the UK, over 8 million people visit their local bookie each year.

At Paddy Power, we take pride in our shops and our customers’ experience. Shops are fitted out to provide an attractive, clean, modern, air conditioned environment and have their own special atmosphere reflecting Paddy Power’s fun ethos and our passion to provide our customers with a friendly and entertaining experience.

Our customers come to our shops to bet on a variety of things, whether horse racing or the X-Factor or playing games on our machines. Electronic gaming machines have in shops for over a decade and have become very popular. Being able to offer a different range of games and experience on machines have bought us new customers and given existing customers a new product to enjoy. Any restrictions to the experience customers have come to expect will have a major impact on our ability to operate.

I and all Paddy Power’s staff take their responsibility to the local communities in which they operate very seriously. We want to attract customers and can only do this by offering them a safe and responsible leisure experience. We work closely with local councils and law enforcement to ensure this. Operators require two licenses: an operator’s licence from the Gambling Commission and a premises licence from a local licensing committee. A License will not be granted if it can be proved that a betting shop would cause crime or have a negative impact on young and vulnerable people.

The vast majority of our machines are played responsibility by thousands of customers. However we recognise that we have a responsibility to all our customers and train our staff to spot signs of problem gambling and provide appropriate support. For example customers have the ability to exclude themselves from shops if their gambling becomes a problem.

Paddy Power also works in conjunction with Gamcare, the UK’s National centre for information, advice and practical help regarding the social impact of gambling. Gamcare literature is available in all of our shops at all times.

Like many other shops that have age-restricted products. Paddy Power enforces these age restrictions fully and in addition operates a Think 21 policy, making sure that no-one under 18 is allowed onto the premises, let alone gamble. We carry out independent age verification tests to ensure our policies are being implemented, and these sit alongside ones carried out by local authorities and the Gambling Commission.

We now have 220 Paddy Power shops across the UK. Opening a new Paddy Power betting shop is a major local investment averaging around £254,000 per shop. Of the 149 shops Paddy Power has opened from 2009, 42% have been in premises returned to use after a period of void or vacancy, or in some cases, more serious dereliction. A typical new betting shop also delivers five new retail job opportunities. We now employ nearly 1000 people in the UK and expect to create at least a further 750 jobs over the next four years.

We very much hope that you will continue to support us and the industry and enable us to grow and continue to deliver the products and entertainment that our customers demand.

Very best