



UK Government consultation on proposals for changes to Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures

Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership response – 22nd January 2018

In 2016, the UK Government launched a review of gaming machines and social responsibility measures which began with a call for evidence. The Government's objective in initiating this review was to ensure we have the right balance between a sector that can grow and contribute to the economy, while also ensuring it is socially responsible and doing all it should to protect consumers and communities, including those who are just about managing.

The consultation covered proposals relating to:

- Maximum stakes and prizes for all categories of gaming machines permitted under the Gambling Act 2005;
- Social responsibility measures for the industry as a whole to minimise the risk of gambling-related harm, including on gambling advertising, online gambling, gaming machines and research, education and treatment (RET).

Those given the opportunity to contribute to the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership response included:

- Community Planning Partnership Board and Executive members
- Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategy Group contacts
- Aberdeenshire Council's Heads of Service

1. Do you agree that the maximum stake of £100 on B2 machines (Fixed-Odds Betting Terminals) should be reduced? If yes, what alternative maximum stake for B2 machines do you support?

Yes. A much lower maximum stake of between £2 and £10. One of our partners suggested that there could be a different maximum stake for slots and for notes, and that the latter could be of a maximum of £20.

2. Do you agree with the government's proposals to maintain the status quo on category B3 (machines allowed in arcades, betting premises, bingo premises, casinos)?

Yes. These are places where people go specifically to gamble and not machines that people stumble upon accidentally. There would be less opportunity for financial harm than with an increased stake.

3. Do you agree with the government's proposals to maintain the status quo on category B3A (allowed in members clubs and commercial clubs only)?

Our partners' responses were mainly "Yes". Comment was, as above, that there would be less opportunity for financial harm than with an increased stake.

4. Do you agree with the government's proposals to maintain the status quo on category B4 (allowed in arcades, betting premises, bingo premises, casinos, members and commercial clubs)?

Our partners' responses were mainly "Yes". Comment was, as above, that there would be less opportunity for financial harm than with an increased stake.

5. Do you agree with the government's proposals to maintain the status quo on category C (traditional fruit machines - also allowed in licensed premises and family entertainment centres)?

There were varying views from our partners. The presence of machines in family entertainment centres could normalise the use of such machines

at an earlier age and could encourage people of a young age to witness gambling and potentially set them up for having a gambling problem in the future. However, as commented in responses above, there is less opportunity for financial harm than with an increased stake.

6. Do you agree with the government's proposals to maintain the status quo on category D (e.g. crane grabbers and coin pushers in family entertainment centres)?

The majority of responses from our partners agreed with continuation of current legislation. There is less opportunity for financial harm than with an increased stake. These kind of machines can be viewed as relatively low stake and can be fun to do as part of a family day out with relatively low dangers of inflicting gambling habits on people.

However, comment has also been made that the Crane Grab machine at £1 stake appears expensive given it will mainly be attractive to children, and as in a previous answer, this could normalise early gambling behaviours in children. Any increase in young players exhibiting problem gambling needs to be noted and reported in future discussions.

7. Do you agree with the government's proposals to increase the stake and prize for prize gaming, in line with industry proposals (increasing stake from £1 to £2, and prizes from £70 to £100)?

Comment was made that if the stake is doubling then the prize amount should double too. Increased stakes allow people to lose more money and can exacerbate addiction-driven issues.

Caution should be taken with any change from the status quo that could result in negative impacts for individuals or families.

8. Do you agree with the government's proposals to maintain the status quo on allocations for casinos, arcades and pubs?

There were varying responses from our partners, including "don't knows". Comment was made that increased numbers wouldn't necessarily increase harm providing other measures remained in place.

9. Do you agree with the government's proposals to bar contactless payments as a direct form of payment to gaming machines?

Yes. This will protect users from heavy losses due to having ready access to more funds. Contactless is too easy, having to insert the pin number gives the opportunity for pause for thought. Seeing physical money being entered into a machine helps deter people from putting in as much money as they would should they be using a card for payment.

10. Do you support this package of measures to improve player protection measures on gaming machines?

The majority of responses from our partners were "Yes". Comments received were that the measures seem fair and have the best interests of players; they were common sense and would hopefully prevent vulnerable people from overspending.

However, compulsory rather than voluntary monetary limits would be preferable.

For all player protection measures, any movement which would reduce problem gambling and individual vulnerability in this regard would be seen as positive.

11. Do you support this package of measures to improve player protection measures for the online sector?

The majority of responses from our partners were "Yes". Some partners noted they see too many debt clients whose main expenditure each month is online gaming, more than their rent or mortgage payment or food bill. Gambling is a growing market and any measures put in place to reduce the amount that people can lose is positive.

However, the measures could be stronger in order to adequately address the changes that have happened in online gambling in the past few years. For example, by banning direct communications (e-mails) offering promotions, free bets etc.

It might also be worth analysing how online gambling sites manage to identify young people and vulnerable people in order to comply.

12. Do you support this package of measures to address concerns about gambling advertising?

Yes. If vulnerable people are not faced with attractive gambling advertising every time they watch television, go to the cinema, watch a DVD, open a newspaper or magazine, or on social media, they may avoid the triggers to respond by gambling. Any increased focus to identify and support problem gambling is welcomed.

Some of our partners focussed on advertising that arises from sponsorship. We would like to see greater debate on this – for example football clubs. If under 25s, particularly sportspeople, should not be promoting/advertising gambling, then the sponsorship of sports kits needs to be reviewed. The tobacco industry proved the power of advertising with motor sports etc. This is an insidious part of popular consciousness with widely supported football teams promoting this activity. The use of big stars to promote the activity is also an area of harmful influence, the “hard man, no nonsense” image of the likes of Ray Winstone, can make gambling seem appealing if Ray is promoting it.

13. Do you agree the Government should consider alternative options including a mandatory levy if industry does not provide adequate funding for Research, Education and Treatment?

Yes. The gambling industry has to be aware that they have a responsibility.

Comment was made that voluntary codes are always breached at some point leaving the rest of the industry to pay for their integrity.

14. Do you agree with our assessment of the current powers available to local authorities? (The assessment is that existing powers and mechanisms are already adequate to allow effective control of gambling at a local level, including in Scotland)

Existing powers need to be used effectively. The fact that gambling is on the rise shows that existing powers available to local authorities may not continue to be adequate or should at least be kept under review.

Effective partnership working, for example with the Police, is key in providing support to vulnerable individuals and families when required.