

London Borough of Hackney's submission to the consultation on proposals for changes to Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures

The London Borough of Hackney (LBH) welcomes this consultation and the recognition by the Government of the need to reduce the current stakes for class B2 Gaming machines.

Since 2013 LBH has consistently, under different administrations, argued for a stake reduction to £2 and signed with 92 local authorities supporting the Sustainable Communities Act proposal to amend the Gambling Act, to reintroduce the demand test or to give councils the statutory right to create cumulative impact zones in areas with a high number of betting shops, in order to reduce clustering retrospectively.

The Borough has 51 Betting Shops where in each up to four terminals can be sited. In some instances we have betting shops of the same company near to each other on the same street. It is an established fact that users of these machines can spend up to £100 in 18 seconds and that betting shops are often located in high concentrations in areas of high unemployment and deprivation.

We have read the detailed well researched response by the London Borough of Newham (LBN's) response and are in complete accord with it and support its proposals especially, that the stakes for B2 machines should be reduced to £2.

We believe that there is widespread public support for reducing maximum B2 stakes to £2 in line with other gambling machines. In a local consultation conducted by LBN 84% of residents who responded agreed that the amount that can be bet on B2 Machines should be reduced.

Q1. Do you agree that the maximum stake of £100 on B2 machines (FOBTs) should be reduced? If yes, what alternative maximum stake for B2 machines (FOBTs) do you support?

Yes, LBH agrees that the maximum stake on FOBTs should be reduced and that this stake should be £2, bringing them in line with other machines available on the high street.

Q10. Do you agree with the government's proposals to bar contactless payments as a direct form of payment to gaming machines?

Yes, LBH agrees with the Government that the use of credit or debit cards as a direct form of payment to gaming machines would be a backward step in the protection of vulnerable players.

Q.11 Do you support this package of measures to improve player protection measures on gaming machines?

Yes, LBH supports the improvement of player protection measures on gaming machines. However LBH agrees with LBN that there should be greater transparency and availability of data on how gaming machines are played for the purposes of monitoring, evaluation and research.

We also agree with LBN that the primary socially responsible, player protection measure in respect of FOBT's is to reduce the stakes which carry consequently higher risks and costs to the consumer and the community.