**Minutes of Meeting**

**Second Round of Inquiry Sessions of the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All Party Parliamentary Group’s Inquiry: “Assessing the Impact of a delayed implementation of a £2 stake”**

**Date:** Wednesday 5th September

**Time:** 1.00pm

**Location:** Room O, Portcullis House

**Chair:** Carolyn Harris MP

**Minutes taken by:** Tosin Adedayo, Interel UK

**Evidence Heard From:**

**Speaker**

Tracey Crouch MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Civil Society

**Members Present**

Ronnie Cowan MP

Iain Duncan Smith MP

Gerald Jones MP

Stuart McDonald MP

**Public Meeting – 1:00pm – 1:30pm**

* **Carolyn Harris MP (Chair)** began the evidence session of the APPG by welcoming and thanking the Minister for appearing before the group to give an update on the implementation of the gambling review. She expressed her thanks to the Minister for the support and help she has given the group to see the stakes reduced on FOBTs.
* **Tracey Crouch MP** began by stating thanking the Chair for the invitation. She said that the Gambling Review was a much wider than the issues around the B2 machine. However, it became apparent that FOBTs were a sensitive matter and it emerged to be the issue that got the most interest in the review.
* **Tracey Crouch MP** added that she recognises that this a very important issue for most people and that she is pleased to have been able to take forward the issues as part of the gambling. The Government made the announcement on the measures required to protect the vulnerable in society, on the 17th of May 2018. The department were struck by the evidence presented about the potential harm of FOBTs, in particular where the machines are placed in society. The evidence had previously been considered more anecdotal, however from the review it became apparent that the evidence was in fact indicative of a problem.
* The **Minister** further said that her department looked at all the evidence of harm, the risk of harm and came to a conclusion that the right thing to do is to reduce the stake to £2. She was struck by the number of people who were gambling addicts, the impact it had on them and their families.
* **Tracey Crouch MP** stated that currently the Department are in the final stages of preparing the Statutory Instrument which they intend to lay before Parliament, this quarter and its implementation will be within this financial year. She added that she has been open with her colleagues who know that the implementation lies with the Treasury. Her Department’s responsibility is to look at the legislative aspects. She added that she suspects that there will be an announcement in the Autumn Budget on the implementation of the FOBT stake. It was in the review that the changes would coincide with the increases in Remote Gaming Duties (RGD), which at the moment is not equivalent to the FOBT duty. The increase would lessen the impact of stake reduction on the Treasury.
* She added that the implementation date will be in the budget and nothing will be announced before the budget.
* **Carolyn Harris MP** thanked the Minister for her comments and asked If her Department are working towards an early implementation.
* **Tracey Crouch** said they were and had always maintained that the implementation would be in the next financial year.
* **Iain Duncan Smith MP** asked if DCMS had undertaken any research on the necessary technical changes required on the FOBT machines to reduce the stake.
* **Tracey Crouch** responded that her Department are currently undertaking this work. However, the announcement was made in May and therefore responsible members of the gambling industry would have started the preparatory work.
* **Iain Duncan Smith** asked if the Department is aware or has a sense of which organisations have already started carrying out work on the technical changes and which ones are yet to begin.
* The **Minister** said is not aware of any, the Department will find out and write to the group.
* **Ronnie Cowan MP** asked the Minister if there would be an early budget and if so, would this push the implementation date further back.
* The **Minister** responded that the was not aware of the speculations of an early budget.
* **Gerald Jones MP** asked if the Minister could clarify if the implementation date would be by April 2019 or within the financial year starting in April 2019.
* The **Minister** confirmed that it was the financial year starting in April 2019.
* **Gerald Jones MP** asked if the Minister’s Department had looked into the claims made by bookmakers on the number of job losses as a result of the reduction in FOBT stakes, as they seem to be overstated.
* The **Minister** said that she her Department is currently working with DWP to look at the potential impact on job losses. The gambling review did not look at the potential impact on jobs. That said, she added that there has been a drive from bookmakers to shift a lot of their business online, prior to the FOBT state reduction taking place. As a result, there has already been a number of shop closures over the past few years that are unrelated to FOBTs. The Minister is sure that there will be an impact on jobs and her Department are working with DWP and there will be support available.
* **Carolyn Harris MP** asked how optimistic the Minister is, that the £2 stake would be implemented by April 2020.
* The **Minister** responded that she is hopeful it will be implemented in 2019. She added that her Department are working hard to see the £2 stake implemented quickly, as they recognise the issues and the harm the machines have caused.
* **Carolyn Harris** asked if DCMS had undertaken any research or assessment on the potential harm a 2020 implementation might cause.
* The **Minister** said that there had not been any done specifically looking at FOBTs.
* **Iain Duncan Smith** asked the Minister if she thought the Gambling Commission should been more proactive and intervened to address the harm FOBTs are causing.
* The **Minister** said she disagreed with this view and that the Commission carried out its responsibilities by recommending a range of stakes FOBTs could be reduced to, to significantly reduce the harm caused, among which a £2 stake was mentioned.
* **Iain Duncan Smith** then asked if the Minister thought it would be a good idea for the Commission to carry out work looking at the impact of the level of harm caused by FOBTs would be over a set period of time.
* The **Minister** said that they may be able to draw figures based on the evidence they currently have and break it down on a 12 month cycle.
* **Carolyn Harris** then said this would be a golden opportunity for the Commission to have publicly called for an early implementation.
* The **Minister** then said she does agree that it is the Commission’s role to call for an early implementation. They are there to implement and regulate and it is not their role to express their view in that way.
* **Stuart McDonald MP** asked if the SI will include any other measures apart from the FOBT stake.
* The **Minister** responded no.
* **Stuart McDonald MP** asked the Minister if she would persuade her colleagues in the Treasury to appear before the group.
* **The Minister** said she would be unable to.
* **Carolyn Harris** said that herself, Ronnie Cowan and Iain Duncan Smith would write to the Treasury again.
* **Ronnie Cowan** said he wanted to bring to the Minister’s attention that Hamleys, the toy store were selling a toy slot machine promoted at children.
* The **Minister** said she would note it and look into it.
* The **Minister** said she was conscious that there were a number of people in the room who had played a role in the FOBT campaign and that she would be happy to take questions from the audience.
* The **Secretariat** of the Group asked the Minister to clarify if the implementation date would be set out in the Statutory Instrument(SI).
* **The Minister** responded not necessarily, it is dependent on timing – if the SI comes before or after the budget. An SI can be passed without having an implementation date defined.
* A **member of the audience** asked the Minister if she was be displeased to hear that the bookmakers had not began carrying out work ahead of the implementation.
* **The Minister** said she would not be surprised but as far as she was concerned, they were aware of the policy change so the changes should have been made.
* A **member of the audience** asked when the SI laid, are the operators of B2s going to be in breach of their Gambling Commission licenses by the third point in the Gaming Act, where they are not protecting the young and vulnerable by reducing the stake.
* **The Minister** said no, as it is her understanding that it will be tied in with the overall changes in the duty however, she will double check that.
* A **member of the audience** asked what arguments might be inhibiting the Treasury’s agreement to the earliest implementation.
* The Minister said she could not say exactly.
* A **member of the audience** said the correct assessment of harm caused is very important. Her son took his own life as a direct result of his FOBT addiction, however the coroner did not record this.
* **The Minister** said she did not know that Coroners did not record gambling related suicides. Almost every gambling addict she has met has told her that they had contemplated suicide which she finds shocking. She also added that for the first time the Health Select Committee held an inquiry on suicide they had a professor give evidence exclusively on gambling and their report recognised gambling related suicides as an increasing issue. She hopes that the suicide strategy the Government is looking at, will consider gambling related suicide as an issue.
* **Carolyn Harris** thanked the Minister for her time and for her commitment to the campaign.

**Conclusions**

* **Carolyn Harris** concluded the session by thanking those who had attended .

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the group will be on 12th September, and will seek to hear from academics, local government and B2 machine operators.

**Meeting** **concluded at 10.50am**

**External Guests**

* Tosin Adedayo, Interel UK (Secretariat)
* Katherine Morgan, Interel UK (Secretariat)
* Holly Ramsey, Interel UK (Secretariat)
* Edward Tomlinson, Interel UK (Secretatriat)
* Sam Hunt, (Newham Council)
* Lauren Beadle, (Lord Chadlington's Office)
* Jo Lloyd, (Carolyn Harris MP’s Office)
* Iain Fraser, (Ronnie Cowan MP’s Office)
* Eleanor Campion (DCMS)
* Jack Eddy, (London Councils)
* Catarina Paul, (Local Government Association)
* Alan Harris, (Local Government Association)
* Carl Altaner, (Gambling Compliance)
* Jo Holloway, (Gambling with Lives)
* Peter Holloway, (Gambling with Lives)
* Simon Thomas (Hippodrome Casino)
* John White, (BACTA)
* Derek Webb, (CFG)
* Elizabeth Speed, (Novomatic)
* Gabi Steridges, (Bacta)
* Jason Frost, (Euromat)
* Jimmy Thomas, (Hippodrome Casino)
* Leslie Macleod Miller, (LMM Associates)
* Ross Hamilton, (British Horseracing Association)
* Caity Marsh, (DCMS)
* Eleanor Campion (DCMS)