

## Written submission from Dundee City Council

The need for greater powers for local authorities to control the proliferation of gambling establishments and the fixed odds betting terminals which they all incorporate is something on which Dundee City Council has previously expressed concern.

*In relation to Question 1 “What would be the benefits and disadvantages for you as a consequence of the UK Government’s proposed provisions in the Scotland Bill 2015?” -*

In 2014, the Council approved and adopted a report on problem gambling and submitted it to both the Scottish and Westminster Governments, making a number of recommendations as to action they could take. (A copy of report 52-2014 on Problem Gambling can be viewed via the following link - <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/reports/reports/52-2014.pdf> ).

The need for greater controls is evidenced by findings in the British Gambling Prevalence Survey which shows a significant co-relation of problem gambling with household income, with those in the lowest income categories nearly three times as likely as the average to be defined as a problem gambler. Those not in paid work and those in manual and those in other lower paid occupations were also significantly more likely to be problem gamblers.

The Scottish Health Survey 2012 also found that disadvantaged social groups who experience poverty, unemployment, dependence on welfare and low levels of education and household income are most likely to suffer the consequences of problem gambling.

The same research showed that availability and convenience are strongly associated with problem gambling. Electronic Gaming Machines located in bars, hotels and clubs can encourage impulse gambling and are the fastest growing sector of gambling markets. The Fixed Odds Betting Terminals located in casinos, Bingo Halls and Betting Shops have become associated with reports of problems gambling (Research on the Social Impacts of Gambling - Scottish Executive Social Research 2006).

For all these reasons there is an urgent need for greater powers of control to be devolved to Scottish Ministers. Dundee City Council agrees with the Scottish Government that Clause 45 of the Scotland Bill does not fully deliver what was intended by recommendation 74 of the Smith Commission - “The Scottish Parliament will have the power to prevent the proliferations of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals”.

The maps attached to Dundee City Council’s report 52-2014 on Problem Gambling showed that the alcohol and gambling industries are targeting vulnerable people. The clear correlation between gambling licences and Dundee’s 15% Most Deprived data zones in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation underlines that fact.

Large numbers of these FOBT’s already exist in the gambling establishments in these areas and they are already so well established and widespread that there has

been little or no requirement or movement on the part of the gambling industry to open new ones.

The proposed limitation of powers to future applications only is therefore insufficient. The limitation to betting premises only is a further unhelpful proposal as vulnerable people in deprived communities will still be surrounded by these machines in bingo halls. As a result, people and families may still experience the attendant financial and social problems caused when access to FOTBs is too easy.

The Scottish Government should therefore continue to press strongly for powers in relation to both existing and future licenses.

*In relation to question 4 "Are there any changes in this area of law you would like to see which are not covered by either proposal, and why?" –*

An advantage of the extended power sought by the Scottish Government is that local Licensing Boards could be given powers to develop over provision policies similar to those currently available in relation to alcohol licensing.

The Scottish Government could also develop policies at a national level limiting the number of FOBTs permitted within all licensing gambling establishments. So for example, a decision to limit them to one per licence would remove three quarters of these machines at a stroke, in turn limiting the access and convenience which are among the causes of people becoming addicted to their use.

**Dundee City Council**

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