Gordon Brown’s final decision on a gross profit tax for the bingo industry was a long time coming – 12 months, to be exact – and has not delivered what was expected. On 9 April the Chancellor concluded a process which he had started in his 2002 Spring Budget statement, announcing that he was considering extending the same tax benefits to the bingo industry as had been afforded to pools and betting. Betting had been lobbying hard to have its tax regime simplified and for the overall rate of tax to be reduced, backed up by the threat of many operators moving offshore. On 6 October 2001, General Betting Duty, a 6.75 per cent tax on total stakes, was replaced with a 15 per cent tax on bookmakers’ gross profits. The impact was swift, with Government evaluation showing that 2,000 jobs had been created and that turnover had risen by 46 per cent, benefiting operators, players and the Treasury. Having delivered positive results for all involved, Gordon Brown clearly wanted to repeat the success with bingo. The industry made clear that there were no obvious parallels between bingo and betting, and that a new system would need to reduce the tax burden for bingo and be carefully thought through. Despite months of consultation with the industry, the final ruling has not provided the promised win for players and operators. It has, instead, left us with players whose expectations of much higher prize levels cannot be delivered, and a number of operators concerned about higher tax bills.

The Bingo Association’s condemnation of the 9 April announcement, issued on the same day, highlighted the opportunity for growth that the Chancellor had missed. Newspapers reported the misleading nature of the Budget Statement announcement on bingo, revealing the real implications. A number of operators also wrote directly to their MPs registering their dissatisfaction. The BA strongly felt that the Government had not fully understood the cases it put to Customs and Excise and made this point in discussions with the Treasury. A briefing, entitled ‘A Fair Shout For Bingo’, was circulated to MPs ahead of the reading of the Finance Bill (the legislation implementing the measures announced in the Budget) in Parliament on 13 May. Stephen O’Brien, MP for Eddisbury, provided with detailed briefing by the Association, put forward three alternative amendments to the Bill. These reflected more accurately the discussions that had taken place with the industry and were more consistent with what had originally been

Gross profit tax update

The Bingo Association and National Bingo Game Annual General Meetings 2003

Moving to a new venue for 2003, this year’s AGMs reflected the growing recognition of bingo’s importance in society, with a number of high profile speakers appearing at the event. Among the guests who came to speak at the impressive Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London were two ministers, an opposition spokesperson and the chairman of the country’s gambling regulator. Perhaps the most eagerly awaited speaker at the event, following the disappointing tax announcement in the April Budget of a 15 per cent Gross Profit Tax and continued VAT charging, was the Treasury’s Economic Minister John Healey. Mr Healey indicated that the current strain on the public purse following the war against Iraq was a reason why the Chancellor had retained VAT on par fees, an explanation that failed to satisfy those attending. The Chairman of The Gaming Board, Peter Dean, also took the opportunity to address the Associations’ AGMs once again. Mr Dean brought members up to date with the current plans that the Board has for evolving into the Gambling Commission when the new Gambling Bill sees the light of day. He also tried to assure members worried about the threat of competition from casinos in the Government’s proposals by describing the bingo business as ‘remarkably robust’ during both good and bad trading conditions. Richard Caborn of the DCMS was the second minister of the day to speak. He told delegates that he wants the industry to thrive under new legislation and does not want to adversely affect the ‘significant business that clubs have built up during the years’. The minister in charge of gambling also stressed the importance of the role played by the Gambling Industry Charitable Trust in the new Gambling Bill, echoing the points raised by the Bingo Association’s Sir Peter Fry in his Chairman’s report at the start of the day, and urged
**The National Game**

Quarterly news and update from Chief Executive, Paul Talboys

Our last Big Game on 30 March was a great success, producing a £500,000 prize for a lucky player at Mecca, Talbot Road, Blackpool and regional prizes of over £2,000. The variable stake software performed well, despite teething problems, providing the National Game with much needed stake flexibility and better control over prizes. The current crucial issue is that of GPT. The Chancellor’s Budget announcement has been seen by many as a U-turn by the Government who have deceived and misled the industry in the run-up to this ruling being announced. There is a role for everyone in the industry in making sure that this matter is revisited and it is important that we work hard to keep the issue high profile.

I hope to be able to write to you in the coming weeks confirming details of our next Big Game in October. An influencing factor will be the results of the consumer research that will be taking place shortly and will give us a clearer picture of who is playing, who is not playing, why and what might encourage them to try bingo or go more often. This research will also have an impact on the script of a new television commercial that is due to air in October.

I hope that you all have a good summer and enjoy any leave that you can manage to take.

**National Bingo Game: key statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total prize money since the game began</td>
<td>£738,549,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total prize money played for in 2002</td>
<td>£51,950,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total prize money played for in 2003 to date (May)</td>
<td>£20,147,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biggest single prize</td>
<td>£950,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Biggest games for 2002**

- Tuesday 30 April with ticket sales of 940,039
- Tuesday 28 May with ticket sales of 915,514

**Biggest games to date for 2003**

- Sunday 27 April with ticket sales of 825,523
- Sunday 26 January with ticket sales of 795,373

**Bingo in the news**

The last issue of Bingo Link was published at the end of March, giving details of media coverage obtained for January, February and March.

Unfortunately our news monitoring service was unable to give us details of coverage for the second quarter (April, May and June) at the time of going to press. However, it is clear to see that it has been a busy period for bingo.

April saw the Budget announcement made on bingo Gross Profit Tax (GPT) which stimulated a great deal of coverage in all daily national newspapers. There has also been follow-up coverage on this subject. The Bingo Association has brought pressure to bear on HM Treasury to review what was announced, as this is not what players and the industry had been led to believe in the 12 months running up to the April 2003 Budget. All UK Members of Parliament have been briefed on the subject and a number of local MPs are now coming forward to support clubs in their constituencies.

May was also a good month for coverage, which was firmly focused on women’s weekly magazines, with three key features appearing in Chat, Bella and Take a Break magazines. One of these was our £950,000 Big Game winner from December 2002. Local coverage has also been strong as a number of winners have been encouraged by their club managers to agree to publicity.

**Biker Bingo in Bournemouth**

Yukio Kagayama, of Team Rizla Suzuki paid a visit to Club Grand in Bournemouth on 14 March. The Superbike rider had always wanted to have a go at bingo and was joined at the club by a film crew for satellite and cable channel Men and Motors, who wanted to capture the experience.

Yukio, who lives locally in the Bournemouth area, will be taking part in the British Superbike Championships this year, riding a Suzuki GSX-R1000 at speeds of up to 200mph.

**Bingo Link** is published by the The Bingo Association, Lexham House, 75 High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1JF.

Tel: 01582 860921, Fax: 01582 860925.
Email: bingolink@bingo-association.co.uk
Editor Steven Baldwin

Produced by Axon Publishing Ltd, 11 Plough Yard, London EC2A 3LP.
Tel: 020 7684 7111, Email: mail@axonpublish.com

Reproduction in whole or part strictly prohibited without the permission of the publishers. Views expressed are not necessarily those of The Bingo Association or Axon Publishing Ltd. Prices and information correct at date of publication, but subject to change.

**Warner holiday winner**

Thank you to all who entered our competition for a Warner Holidays Classic Resort weekend break for two.

The lucky winner is Helena Donkin from Hearns Bingo, Jarrow, who we hope will enjoy her weekend away.
Dream night at Gala Bingo, Bognor Regis

It was a full house at Gala Bingo, Upper Bognor Road, on Monday, 17 March, as the Club opened the doors of its Butlins Bognor Regis site for the first time.

Coronation Street serial murderer Richard Hillman, (played by actor Brian Capron), was there to officially open the Club – and, to top it all off, one lucky lady won over £19,000 on the Dream Ticket!

The winner was 51-year-old Brenda Hegaty from Bognor Regis, who works on the switchboard at Butlins. She was at the Club with a crowd of workmates and says that she is still ‘on cloud nine’ since her big win. Brenda is going to treat herself to a holiday with her sister and also plans to send her son and his girlfriend on one too.

‘It was a fantastic event, in which all 600 guests thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Then, of course, we had the Dream Ticket winner, which really finished off the night perfectly,’ says Mike McStay, General Manager of Gala Bingo Bognor.

Martin Plummer, Resort Director at Butlins Bognor Regis adds: ‘It was a wonderful night and we’re pleased to be able to offer Gala Bingo to all our guests. The fact that one of the Butlins team won over £19,000 made the opening night even more special for us and we hope Brenda enjoys every penny of it!’
promised. He spoke at length on behalf of the industry and was joined by several other backbench MPs, a number of whom mentioned correspondence from their local clubs. However, the amendment failed, with 134 MPs for and 336 against. Following the debate Stephen O’Brien, in his capacity as Shadow Minister for the Treasury, said, ‘This week during proceedings on the Finance Bill, the Tories unsuccessfully tried to amend the planned changes to get rid of the VAT element. This would have put bingo in the same tax position as all other forms of gambling and, according to both the Tories and The Bingo Association, made sure that the Chancellor’s promise was honoured.’ He also pointed out that the Government’s position meant that the many women who play bingo would pay almost twice as much tax as men did at the betting shop. He said, ‘Labour and Lib Dem MPs will have some explaining to do if they go near their local bingo club.’ The brief circulated to MPs was also published on the home page of ePolitix, an online political community used by MPs, civil servants and those interested in government, on the day of the Finance Bill reading and received a direct response from the Treasury. John Healey, Economic Secretary, addressed the BA Annual General Meeting the day after the response. His speech on the day indicated that there was still room for manoeuvre, stating that ‘current changes were not necessarily a full stop’ and that operators should provide comment and feedback backed up by ‘sound argument and sound reason’.

As a result of intensive industry consultation, the Treasury has decided to amend one aspect of the new system, which would have introduced ‘double taxation’. This brings an extra £10m of tax relief to the industry and the total industry tax saving to more than £30 million a year. However, the underlying issue of VAT on par fees remains.

In order to try and avoid future misunderstandings the minister has suggested that a joint working party be set up between the Treasury and the BA. This will examine the plight of the smaller clubs and continue to monitor the impact of GPT and help provide a basis for further negotiations.

The BA feels that it has a continuing task and that the application of both GPT and VAT is unfair to the bingo sector and it will continue to work towards this being rectified, particularly as the industry could well face further taxation on machines. Having raised awareness of the issues facing the bingo industry with both political and broader communities, it is vital that we ensure they are constantly reminded of the consequences for players and the industry of not amending the new GPT regime further. All those involved with the industry will need to help ensure a ‘fair shout for bingo’.

For up-to-date news on GPT issues, please visit The Bingo Association’s website at www.bingo-association.co.uk.
Get set for Breakthrough

Things are well underway with arrangements for our first Bingo for Breakthrough Week (18-24 October) in aid of Breakthrough Breast Cancer. All Bingo Association member clubs will have already received information packs and commitment forms, which we hope have been completed and returned to Breakthrough already.

Exclusive items have been produced specifically for Bingo for Breakthrough 2003, including a pink dabber, T-shirt and Nelly the cuddly pink elephant. These items are produced to order in limited quantities and to ensure that you receive the items you want to use with your members, it is vital that order forms for all materials be returned on time. A limited quantity of promotional balloons, posters and other fundraising products are supplied by Breakthrough following your commitment and further items are available to order.

If you have any queries or would like further information, please contact either Leah Jeffries at Breakthrough on 020 7557 6693 or Donna Black at The Bingo Association on 01582 860921.

Don’t forget to order your exclusive Bingo for Breakthrough 2003 merchandise.

Town crier answers a different calling

Yeovil’s town crier used his vocal cords to good effect when he called a game of bingo – without the usual microphone – at the Welcome Club in Stars Lane, Yeovil.

Bruce Trigger popped into the club on Saturday evening, at the end of the annual championships of the Ancient and Honourable Town Criers’ Guild. He said: ‘It was an unusual experience for me and I think the older members really enjoyed it. I tried to remember some of the old bingo calls, like “doctor’s chum, number nine” and “six and nine, any way up”. I reckon I managed pretty well!’

Club Manager, Barry Richardson-Smith, said: ‘When we heard the town criers were going to be out in force we thought it would be fun to invite the winner in to call a game. Unfortunately he had to leave before our evening session began, so Bruce stepped in and did a brilliant job.’

Bruce, who was born and bred in Yeovil, has been the local town crier for nearly six years. He helped to organise the event on Saturday and, earlier in May, competed against nearly 100 other town criers in the world championships in Newquay, Cornwall.

CALLING ALL BINGO OPERATORS

Edward Symmons Hotel & Leisure are retained by Top Ten Bingo to acquire new clubs on their behalf. If you want to sell call:

COLIN WHITE OR PAUL GRATTON
Tel: 020 7344 4500
email: colin.white@edwardsymmons.com
Annual General Meetings 2003
Continued from Page 1

everyone to get behind the organisation. A splendid buffet lunch, courtesy of ECM Systems and NRMi, also brought some levity to the proceedings via the thoughts and reminiscences of Roy Ramm, Compliance and Security Director at London Clubs International. He entertained members with some far-fetched anecdotes about his time with the Metropolitan Police and even composed a rhyme with a bingo theme before it was time to return to the strikingly stylish hall to listen to Shadow Minister for Sport & Tourism John Greenway MP.

Mr Greenway reflected the displeasure felt by members over the botched handling of bingo tax reform and detailed the way he believed Gordon Brown had gone back on his word. The Conservative spokesperson also appealed to club owners to tell their members that Labour and Lib Dem MPs voted against a fairer tax deal for bingo proposed by his Party. The day was fittingly rounded off by Martin Hayward, the Chairman of research and strategic marketing firm The Henley Centre, who informed members of the future market for bingo. He suggested that the ageing of the population as a whole and the increased methods of supplying bingo products to customers mean that there are a lot of opportunities for members of the industry in the future gaming regime and beyond.

The random experience

Leading games manufacturer Vivid Gaming is urging the bingo market to recognise the commercial importance of random gaming machines, which despite having been on the scene for some time have passed some club owners by.

The key attraction of a random machine is that it appeals to both casual as well as core players. Because the machine is completely random, the chances of winning the jackpot are the same in any game, even if it has just been won. This makes it really appealing to the casual player and deters the opportunist who watch others in anticipation of stepping in when they think a machine is ready to pay out. Random means every player has a fair and equal chance of winning the prizes. Players who responded to a survey carried out by Barcrest Group were also delighted by the increased chances of winning, commenting, ‘I know I have as much chance of winning a big prize as the more knowledgeable players’ and ‘the excitement comes from knowing that the jackpot could be won at any time, regardless of what has just been won on the same machine’. Ian McIntosh, Machine Controller at Carlton Clubs, which is already enjoying success with random machines, says, ‘Random club machines are going down a treat with players, so much so that Golden Roll is currently our top performing machine. By fixing a high percentage payout and potentially paying out more wins from the net retained cash, the machines have actually produced the highest cashbox returns. The higher return given to players means that they are able to spend more time on the machines and as a consequence reinvest their winnings. We are now considering reviewing our mix of machines in light of this success.’

Vivid Gaming Director of Sales, Nik Novak, says, ‘Vivid’s new random casino-style games – Winning Ways, Spectrum and Golden Roll – provide three different presentations to offer players a bigger choice. Random games have the ability to reach a wider audience and, as a consequence, allow bingo clubs to boost revenues and enhance visitors’ experience. Random games can also improve a club’s reputation as the idea of fair play generated by random machines is well received by the players. Owners who lack a selection of random machines are missing out on a golden opportunity to boost their profits and please their players at the same time.’

Vivid Gaming 01283 500066.
The search has already begun to find this year’s Bingo Caller of the Year, and the 50 callers who have made it through the initial entry stage are now being asked to prepare their video entries, in which they will endeavour to portray that special blend of charm, friendliness and professionalism that the judges are looking for.

Last year’s winner, Peter Lewis from Castle Bingo Club in Newport Road, Cardiff, is looking forward to taking his place on the judging panel in the search for this year’s winner, and he certainly knows what the judges are looking for: ‘You need to have the respect of your fellow industry members; display a warm and interesting personality; be in possession of a good calling voice; have the charm to keep the audience entertained should anything go wrong and, most importantly, have a good basic knowledge of the rules and regulations of the game.’ Peter has represented the bingo industry both here and abroad and taken part in several radio and television programmes in his role as ambassador for the bingo industry. His performance in Las Vegas was a huge success, and although he will be sad to hand over his title, he is looking forward to seeing how the judging procedure works from the other side.

The regional final stage of the competition will take place during September and October, with the National Final being held in London on the last weekend in November. On Saturday the 29th the five finalists, with their partners, will be invited to the luxurious Thistle Tower hotel, which looks out directly on to the River Thames and Tower Bridge. After a welcoming dinner with the judging panel and spending a pleasant evening getting to know each other, they will be off the following morning to Gala Bingo in Surrey Quays, south-east London, where the final is being held. As well as taking on the role of spokesperson and ambassador for the bingo industry, for which they will receive media training, the winner will also receive a fantastic week-long trip for two to the USA, taking in the glittering cities of Los Angeles and Las Vegas, plus £500 spending money and the chance to join the select band of on-screen callers of the Sunday evening National Game!

Regional finals

Scotland
26 September, Premier Bingo, Kirkcaldy, Fife, Scotland

Northern
2 October, Buckingham Bingo, Bradford

Midlands
3 October, Mecca, Acocks Green, Birmingham

Wales
9 October, Castle Bingo Club, Newport Road, Cardiff

South
10 October, Shipley’s Bingo, Reading

Fifty contestants will battle it out at the regional heats before the final five compete for the coveted title at November’s big finale, where judges will include 2002 winner Peter Lewis.

Address & Membership Services

Q Services provide highly effective computer solutions to help your business not only save money but dramatically increase your customer base. Q-Services have been providing address related services and software to the Bingo industry for the past 7 years. With our underlying knowledge of membership requirements, we have created products that focus on the core values of your business; Helping you to retain, improve and attract new members.

- **Address cleaning** - Validates post codes, produces consistent & accurate addresses, maximises mailsort discounts & confirms the name details at an address.
- **De-Dupe** - Identifies duplicates and close-matches, using the address, name and date of birth.
- **Post-code mailing** - You select the post code you wish to target and we obtain voters roll information to match. By using the de-Dupe service we can remove your current customers from this post code and then process the mailing to those remaining.
- **Mailing** - Mail your customers for free. Postage discounts on mailsort can equal the cost of handling!
- **Database Profiling** - Analysis using postcodes, Mosaic, Financial Mosaic & Touchpoint profile codes.
- **Swipe based membership system** - Comprehensive analysis of visits and member’s information.
- **Stock control** - Ideal for club stock requirements. Easy to install, setup and use.

For more information on how Q-Services can help you, contact Simon Kemp on: 07850 333987 or E-mail simonk@qservices.co.uk

“Business solutions to your business problems”
New GamblerTrack survey findings

In the last issue of Bingo Link we heard from ORC International what its GamblerTrack survey had revealed about current bingo trends. The survey covers all gaming and gambling activities in the UK, including slots, and has been running for seven years.

The most recent wave took place in September 2002 among a representative sample of UK adults, and the findings revealed a wealth of information. Particularly interesting was the fact that slot activity is experiencing a downturn, while other gaming activities – bingo and betting – are becoming more popular.

What are the facts?

Young males account for a disproportionately high number of slot activity players. More than 70 per cent are male, and more than half (55 per cent) of these are aged 18-34, with just one in 10 (12 per cent) aged over 55.

In 2002 the number of people playing fruit machines decreased by a fifth (21.9 per cent) and the number of those playing jackpot machines decreased by 3.8 per cent. To find out what motivates players, the GamblerTrack study investigates the reasons why people stop or start participating in each activity. This revealed that the main reason people moved away from slot activity in 2002 was because they simply couldn’t afford to keep playing. A fifth (21 per cent) of players who stopped playing fruit machines cited this as the main reason, as did a third (31 per cent) of people who stopped playing jackpot machines. Despite the decline in players, both fruit and jackpot machines have experienced an increase in the average number of playing occasions per person per annum. This indicates that more occasional players have been lost than regular players. The average number of playing occasions for fruit machines in 2002 rose to 45.2 from 38.3 in 2001. For jackpot machines the average number of playing occasions jumped to 43 from 32.8 in 2001.

Why the downturn?

It is interesting that the main reason people have been moving away from slot activity is because of a lack of funds. ORC International’s interpretation of this is that with so much choice, consumers are participating in a variety of gaming activities. This will mean that not all players can afford to stay faithful to every game they have ever shown an interest in.

Also of critical importance is the fact that the profile of the typical player is so narrow. Young males are a relatively fickle market as their preferences are increasingly veering towards online gambling. Changes in regulation may go some way to ensuring that the profile of the typical player evolves to embrace both genders and all age groups, helping to sustain the popularity of slot machine activity.

To purchase the report, contact Sayrian Connell on 020 7675 1153 or visit the website www.orc.co.uk.
Global Gaming Expo G2E last year featured 616 companies exhibiting in 190,400 square feet with 8,183 visitors. The 2002 event also saw the introduction of an area exclusively for bingo, which has been retained for 2003.

The Bingo Pavilion has all the leading manufacturers and suppliers of bingo paper, Class II electronic games, dabbers, printed tickets and other products related to the bingo and charitable gaming industries. G2E has over 6,000 square feet of electronic/Class II bingo (in and out of the Pavilion), with exhibiters including Arrow International, Bettina Corp, BK Entertainment, Edward Thompson, Electronic Game Solutions, Planet Bingo, GameTech International, Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, Multimedia Games and Cadillac Jack.

There is plenty to keep delegates interested over the course of the three days. In addition to the main exhibition a variety of seminars, addresses and organised visits are available.

New Product Showcase features the latest products and technologies from around the world in one location. Discover the premier online gaming suppliers of software and website products and technologies at the Interactive Gaming Pavilion. Sponsored by ASIS International, the Security & Surveillance Pavilion showcases world-class suppliers of security services and devices such as CCTV, facial recognition, coin wrappers, multi-plexers, alarms and voucher bags.

Visit the largest slot machine manufacturing facility in Las Vegas. Bally Gaming & Systems is a 150,000 square-foot area offering an insider’s view of a full line of reel-spinning and video slot products as they are produced for global distribution. Behind-the-Scene Tours take place on 16 and 17 September, or observe surveillance operators as they patrol the Stratosphere Casino, Hotel & Tower and see how sensitive areas are protected.

The State of the Industry Keynote Address is on 17 September at 11:30am; Signature Series, 18 September, 11:30am. The Signature Series provides attendees with an opportunity to hear noted speakers explore specific industry issues of public concern in a smaller, more focused setting than that offered in a traditional keynote address. This year’s series will focus on responsible gaming.

The Attendee Lounge is located in the centre of the G2E trade show floor, making it an excellent place to network with your colleagues from around the globe, hold meetings, meet new business contacts or simply take a moment to sit and plan your day.

The Keynote Address on 16 September is by Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper columnist George F Will of The Washington Post.

For further details visit www.globalgamingexpo.com.

Getting ready for the Big One!

G2E Global Gaming Expo 2003 16–18 September, Las Vegas Convention Center
Proud suppliers of
The National Game ticket.

Freephone: 0800 246060
Facsimile: 01473 748303

FOR THE VERY BEST IN:
- Bingo Tickets & Books
- Dabbers & Pens
- Promotional Tickets
- Stage Games
- Special Link Perms
- Popp-Open Tickets
- Promotional Games
- Ancillary Equipment

Helping You To Accomplish Great Things
Remote gambling in Britain is getting closer

By Phil Fraser, i-Ludus Consulting

The future regulation of online gaming was glimpsed when the DCMS revealed its position paper The Future Regulation of Remote Gambling.

Remote gambling? Is that the new bingo hall in The Outer Hebrides? No, it’s the term that the DCMS is now using to pull together the concept of online gaming and all its other monikers (i-gambling/e-gaming/wireless gambling etc). The document, running to 28 pages, gives a ‘snapshot of the government’s view’ to date as well as many pointers to the legislative structure that is being proposed for a British-based remote gambling industry. The majority of the document confirms much of what has been expected, but the thinking and understanding that is contained in it are refreshing. Contrast this with the ‘head-in-the-sand’, prohibitionist attitude of our transatlantic friends and you’ll see what I mean.

The key point to the proposed remote gambling legislation will be that the Gambling Commission will deal with the detailed regulatory measures and procedures, while the Gambling Bill itself will only create a framework within which the rules will be set. The Gambling Commission will be expected to issue codes of practice (with the ability to revise them quickly to reflect technological changes), will issue operator and personal licences (there will be three lists of approved games and software approval) it’s confirmed the Gambling Commission will have powers of entry, search and seizure from licensees. Licence costs have been expected, but the thinking and understanding that is contained in it are refreshing. Contrast this with the ‘head-in-the-sand’, prohibitionist attitude of our transatlantic friends and you’ll see what I mean.

Let’s hope that the DCMS work bodes well for the establishment of a world-leading, British-based remote gambling industry

The DCMS has come to the right conclusion on attempting to regulate and police international, online gaming. Explaining the background and the thought process behind the decision, the DCMS has opted for the totally free market approach, meaning that there will be no country blacklists. On the desirability or practicality of prohibition, and with a jibe at the USA, it says ‘[it flies] in the face of the reality of international banking and the inherently international nature of 21st century telecommunications.’

The section on cross border gambling also contains a clear statement from the DCMS on the always ambiguous question of where online gambling takes place. The DCMS has taken the stance that the regulated activity takes place where the operator is based.

On advertising, the DCMS says that the Gambling Commission will monitor the rules but will follow the E-commerce Directive, as well as take advice from industry bodies like the ITC and the ASA. Only licensed operators will be allowed to advertise in the UK. Finally, the document covers unlicensed premises being used ‘primarily’ for remote gambling. The only disappointment in the document is the area of taxes. Again, although the DCMS acknowledges how important this will be to the success or failure of a British-based remote gambling industry, Customs and Excise still cannot say what the appropriate level of taxation for remote gambling will be.

Until very recently it was expected that a Gambling Bill, including legislation on remote gambling, would be introduced in the 2003/2004 session, with royal assent in Summer 2004. However, the full Bill has been put back ‘12 months at the most’ because of ‘the congested legislative programme’. Let’s hope that the work of the DCMS bodes well for the establishment of a world-leading, British-based remote gambling industry.

Leading industry supplier up for awards

PMS International has been nominated for Gift of the Year and Best Gift for Kids. The Basildon-based company produces 1,500 different soft toys as well as 4,500 other lines. PMS caused a stir when its controversial Dirty Bertie figurine featured in an episode of cult TV comedy The Office. Soft toy buyer Steve Beverley says, ‘We are honoured to be chosen for this award. This is the second time we have been nominated and last time we won with a selection of toys that raised money for the National Society for the Protection of Children.’

The winner will be chosen in late July, when comedienne Ruby Wax will present the prizes at a gala dinner at London’s Savoy Hotel, organised by competition sponsors The Giftware Association.

Candid camera

PMS has kindly provided 10 mini digital cameras for lucky readers to win. Attach it to a key ring then capture friends and colleagues unawares!

To enter the competition please send your name and address, either on the form sent with Bingo Link, or on a postcard:

PMS Competition, Bingo Link
Lexham House, 75 High Street North, Dunstable, Beds LU6 1JF.
feature

Cutting-edge technology

Many believe that bingo is one of the UK’s best kept secrets and those who are not ‘in on it’ have all manner of misconceived ideas as to what it is really like, the vast majority of which are very out of date. The most commonly held belief is that bingo is only for women of a certain age, with a certain hairstyle, who sit in gloomy surroundings, watching numbers printed on ping-pong balls being drawn out of a wire basket with air blowing through it – very outdated!

Bingo lingo and blowers have long since departed the main stages of licensed bingo clubs, having been replaced by professional callers and computer based random number generators. The impact of computer technology has not passed the bingo industry by but, instead, has delivered real changes and benefits for players and operators.

Bingo Link spoke to two of the UK’s best known gaming technology operators to find out what’s new.

Pi-oneering with Coincheck

Coincheck Electronics has been promoting System-C to the UK bingo industry for a little while now and the company is establishing itself in the marketplace with a comprehensive suite of products including MCB, ticket bingo, book sales, stage display, membership etc.

Coincheck has now added to this range with the introduction of Pi Link, an alternative to linked bingo. Coincheck designed Pi Link, which is a brand new call bridge, from the ground up. The call bridge is at the centre of the link and is what connects the clubs together. By using the latest call conferencing technology, Coincheck has been able to create a link with more flexibility and speed than traditional link systems. With Pi Link you are able to set up a single game or a whole linked session in no time at all, connecting at your convenience to play games when it suits you.

The grouping of clubs is not restricted by geographical location or by physical connection to the bridge and link groups of any size can be set up or modified at any time.

We asked Chris Shipley, Coincheck’s Sales Manager, what were the key benefits of the system. ‘Pi Link is able to operate MCB and ticket bingo with equal flexibility and simplicity. Linked MCB games can be run entirely from the calling club, or slave clubs can optionally check their own claims if desired. The calling club can also be changed in just a couple of seconds and the system copes seamlessly if a club should disconnect mid-game.’

Chris continues, ‘Of course, you’ll need System-C equipment in your club [MCB only or MCB plus ticket bingo] to take advantage of this new link, although linked ticket bingo in non-System-C clubs is planned for the future.’

There are two ways that clubs can be part of Pi Link: join or form a link group on an existing call bridge, or own a complete call bridge outright. Whichever method is chosen, the ongoing costs should be significantly lower than with traditional link systems. Chris summed up his view on Pi by saying, ‘All in all, lower running costs, greater control and more flexibility add up to a bright future for linked bingo when Pi is part of the equation!’

The future of bingo technology

ECM Systems has been a significant component of the bingo industry for 30 years. At the forefront of innovative technological solutions for the bingo industry, the company has played a key part in the major developments that have taken place over the past 10 years. Six years ago, link groups of more than 10 or 12 clubs were virtually unheard of. Now, routinely, clubs link in groups of more than 200 for live audio and data-conferenced games. Ten years ago an MCB system of more than 400 positions was considered enormous. In 2003 new systems with well over 1,000, positions, providing two or more cards per player, are commonplace.

Regulatory changes have also been a significant factor in the rate of technological change. Changes such as Transparency, Link Game Prize Limits and frequency of Multiple Games have contributed to the pressure for technology to deliver effective and reliable solutions, allowing the operator to develop the bingo product and enhance the customer experience.

Latest innovations build on the existing high levels of technology now commonly in use in the bingo sector. Almost without exception, clubs use electronic random number generators, automatic ticket validation systems, ISDN link technology and a host of other administrative and back-office tools to ensure the smooth running of every session. New developments currently being introduced use these existing platforms as a basis for their

Pi Link, a new call bridge developed by Coincheck Electronics, enables you to set up a single game or a whole linked session in no time at all.
Wireless Interactive Gaming
Where's it going?...

...Anywhere!

gaming on the move from nrmI

01482 441142
sales@nrmi.co.uk
The future of electronic gaming

Ebox™ Gaming Platform

Touchscreen Gaming
Networked Applications
Custom & Third-Party Content
Flexible and Extendable

Content Management
Software Download
Player Tracking
Coin or Cashless

Linked MCB

Big Money Games
Coin-in-the-Slot Fun
Increased Participation & Attendances
Powerful New Game Format
Simplicity of Operation
Take Full Advantage of Link Prize Money

Main Stage Prompt

Avoid Missed Claims
Check Rapidly & Accurately
Improve Presentation
Save Valuable Time
Increase Security
Tidy Up Link Games

Experience the Difference

ECM Systems Ltd
Elliboot Park
Burwick
Hull
East Yorkshire
HU12 9DZ

T: 01964 672000
sales@ecmsys.co.uk
www.ecmsys.co.uk