It is with considerable discomfort and concern that the industry moves nervously into 2008. The issues that wrought such a hard, and in some cases fatal, trading environment in 2007 are very much present in 2008, as their impact continues to bite further. Having seen 33 clubs close at the end of 2006 and a further 36 clubs close in 2007, many wonder what the fatality rate will be in the new year.

The current blighted future of the industry has been brought about not through natural market forces, which all businesses must adapt to, but through legislative intervention on top of a punitive tax regime that has seen bingo unfairly treated for far too long. Add to this picture a substantial increase in bureaucracy and compliance, delivered by a new and far from liberating Gambling Act, and it becomes easy to understand how an industry that should have been ready for expansion has had the rug pulled out from under it. It is the combined effect of all these issues that sees Britain's licensed bingo industry put on the 'at risk' list.

The issue of an unfair tax regime is not something that operators have suddenly decided upon in order to offset adverse business conditions, but one that has been on the industry’s Treasury agenda for a great many years. Prior to a gross profit tax being introduced in 2005, in order to bring the industry more in line with other gambling activities, government was lobbied hard for the removal of value added tax (VAT) from participation fees.

Such a move would have seen bingo taxed in a way that was comparable to other gambling activities. Despite this, the government refused to remove VAT, leaving the industry with an annual added tax burden of some £84 million. The impact of other government policies that have come to bear in the past 18 months have made this burden increasingly difficult to carry for the majority of operators – and impossible for some.

In light of bingo’s unique position in the spectrum of gambling activities, due to the social context in which it takes place and the key role it plays in many communities in aiding social cohesion and integration, it is surprising that the industry should be treated so poorly under the new ‘one size’ fits all Gambling Act. A point that players who have lost their local club also find hard to understand (see the latest research on the impact of club closures on page 16).
Happy new year!

2007 proved to be one of the most tumultuous years the industry has ever seen. The high expectations created a few years ago around the new Gambling Act failed to materialise and saw in their place an Act that has left the industry disadvantaged in a significant number of key areas.

Hard lobbying by the Bingo Association throughout 2007 has very much raised the profile of the issues facing bingo further up both the media and political agendas, as attested by the coverage achieved and the number of MPs who have visited clubs and raised questions in Parliament (see cover story for full details).

The fight continues! The only opportunity afforded by the new Act has been the ability to retain stake. However, despite this being explored by many operators and the National Bingo Game through The BIG’N, the increased prize funds have not delivered the increased admissions and spend levels that were hoped for.

Players are increasingly feeling the ‘squeeze’ from the higher cost of living and cost of credit. As a result, they are reviewing their expectations regarding the desired size of prize and ‘win-ability’; two factors that are always at the forefront of players’ minds. It is becoming increasingly apparent that players desire one ‘life changing’ aspirational prize, supported by a scaleable range of lesser prizes, which offer proportionally increased win-ability. This is a request the industry can meet – and that changes to the prize structure and format of The BIG’N seek to address.

2008 is set to be another challenging year for the industry, with issues from 2007 rolling forward and increased competition in the broader leisure market, as all operators in the sector feel the effect of tighter consumer spending.

While each bingo operator faces its own individual challenges in a contracting market, it is important that the industry does not become fragmented. Such a position will weaken our ability to represent industry views to government and regulatory bodies. It will also diminish opportunities for the industry to collectively promote bingo in the broader leisure market.

The issues facing the industry in the coming year will not be resolved quickly or easily, but many will be addressed more effectively if we continue to confront them in a united manner.

**National Bingo Game: key statistics**

| Total prize money since the game began | £357,750,000 |
| Total prize money played for in 2007 until 31 July | £336,172,338 |

**Biggest games for 2006**

| Thursday 26 January with ticket sales of | 896,752 |
| Thursday 26 October with ticket sales of | 859,044 |

**Biggest game to date for 2007**

| Thursday 26 June with ticket sales of | 816,305 |

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Bingo in the media

The 2007 trend of increased media coverage continued into the third quarter, with July, August and September all showing considerable improvement on 2006 figures.

July saw coverage increase from 170 in 2006 to 231 in 2007, with the West Midlands (18 per cent) the top performing region. Seventy per cent of the audience coverage was achieved through regional daily and weekly publications.

August saw coverage increase from 185 to 231, with the West Midlands (20 per cent) again taking top place. Regional daily and weekly publications delivered 78 per cent of the audience reach.

September saw coverage increase from 240 to 265, with the North East region (15 per cent) being the month’s top performer. Regional daily and weekly publications delivered 77 per cent of audience reach.

The continued industry lobbying over double taxation and government policies adversely affecting the industry is a key reason for the continued increase. The campaign began in March 2007 and has continued to attract regular media attention. The annual Bingo Caller of the Year competition also contributed to September’s impressive total.

**Number of press hits by month**

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**Quarter 3 total:** 727

**Year to date:** 1,937

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**National Bingo Game Regional Press Office:** 01438 718500

**National Bingo Game National Press Team:** 020 7553 3700
The National Bingo Game got a new look and feel in September 2006, through implementing a new corporate identity that aimed to reflect the modern nature of licensed bingo and the professionalism and integrity of the National Bingo Game Association (NBGA).

The NBGA appointed brand and design agency The Workroom to create and develop a professional and flexible corporate identity that could easily be used by member companies and other NBGA-appointed agencies across a range of media and applications. The result has now been in place for a little over a year – and it has been successfully applied to all NBGA materials.

The Workroom has been involved in a wide range of design, communication and branding projects over the past 15 years. However, it very much felt that the challenges presented by the National Bingo Game were unique. All companies have a corporate identity/logo, which in the majority of cases is reserved exclusively for their own use.

The NBGA logo, however, is used by a variety of parties across a broad range of functions and has to be appropriate for business to business use as well as consumer. In light of these challenges and the effectiveness of the solution in meeting a diverse range of needs, the project was submitted for the 2007 Benchmarks Awards, in the Sport, Leisure and Travel category – where it took first place.

The Benchmarks Awards are designed to set a standard in the recognition of excellence in brand communication. The awards differ subtly but significantly from traditional awards schemes, both in their scope and in their spirit, as they look at design creation and its application, relevant to a given sector.

The results were announced on 27 November at The Waldorf Hilton in London, at a gala dinner hosted by Ekow Eshun, the Artistic Director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts.
The 13th annual National Bingo Game Caller of the Year competition came to a successful close on Sunday 25 November, at Mecca in Wood Green, London.

Coaches of bingo fans from far and wide arrived at Mecca to cheer on their regional champions. Many of the players had travelled a long way to attend the event and they were wildly enthusiastic, wearing specially printed T-shirts and waving lots of banners and placards in support of their particular favourite.

All six finalists faced tough questions from the judges, who were 2006 champion Brett Hyrjak, National Bingo Game Chief Executive Paul Talboys and organiser Gloria Pattinson.

The questions tested finalists’ knowledge of the rules and regulations governing the game, as well as on the spot thinking regarding responses to problem situations that can arise during the playing of a game.

Having faced the panel of judges the finalists headed for the more familiar territory of being on stage, demonstrating their showmanship and calling skills. TV personality Lorraine Chase hosted the event, briefly interviewing each finalist as they arrived on stage.

Despite being a ‘bingo virgin’, Lorraine was game to play and experience the callers’ skills as a player. The experience left her with much admiration for both the callers and players, as the speed of the game came as quite a surprise.

There was a hush throughout the club as the announcement of the winner was made and Blake Robson from Mecca South Shields was declared National Bingo Game Caller of the Year 2007. Blake’s supporters let out a yell of triumph and a shower of confetti exploded across the club as everyone erupted into a huge round of applause for all of the contestants.

Outgoing champion Brett Hyrjak, now a caller on Gala TV, said: ‘I have had the most amazing year. It is something I will never forget and was a wonderful experience. I really enjoyed judging the competition. All of the contestants had something different to offer, but Blake’s great on-stage personality won through on the day and tipped the balance in his favour.’

Chairman of the judging panel Paul Talboys said: ‘It has been a tough year for the bingo industry, but the talent demonstrated by these six finalists certainly
showed us that bingo is great entertainment and the game still has what it takes to get that adrenalin flowing. Blake is a superb caller with a tremendous personality and I think he will be an excellent ambassador for the industry in the future.’

Following the announcement of his win, Blake faced his first duty as industry ambassador and went over to BBC Television Centre for his first live radio interview as champion. He settled into the role quickly and was back the following morning for a spot on the BBC Breakfast programme sofa.

Blake’s prize is a week for two in Los Angeles and Las Vegas, where he and his wife Denise will be able to take in the sights and hit the shops with £500 prize money. He will also have the opportunity to call bingo at the Suncoast Casino in Las Vegas – where he can expect a very warm welcome.

Could you be our next winner?

National Bingo Caller of the Year has been searching for, and highlighting, the talents of callers for more than 13 years – that’s a lot of callers! However, there are still a great many fantastic callers who do not enter and celebrate all that is great about bingo and being a caller. While there can only be one ultimate winner, the competition is not just about winning – it is about taking part, celebrating bingo regardless of which club you work for, and an opportunity to meet other callers.

There are many good callers out there who don’t come forward and show their talents through entering the competition, so why not give it some serious consideration next time around? To find out everything you ever wanted to know about National Caller of the Year, but were too afraid, shy or cynical to ask, keep a look out for the April issue of Bingo Link.
The ability to retain stake and create larger prizes is something that the industry has wanted to be able to do for many years. The advent of the lottery rollover made the industry’s pain at not being able to do the same all the more acute.

In September 2007 this long-standing inequality was addressed, with bingo operators being able to retain prize money and create jackpot prize funds.

This new opportunity, which had been so long in coming, was something that all operators were keen to take advantage of as soon as possible. The scope for offering headline grabbing prize funds potentially offered a means by which to grow the bingo market, through appealing to those who chase large cash prizes, such as lottery players, in addition to those who like bingo.

The first high profile games to market were Gala’s Hi5 and Mecca Millionaire, shortly followed by The Big’N, all of which offered life-changing sums of cash to be won. Other operators including Castle, Buckingham, Top Ten and Premier, also introduced jackpots, which were either added to an existing game, or offered as a new game.

The increased prize funds now available through jackpots have not substantially increased membership or frequency of visit, but have increased spend per head.

For existing players, who suddenly found themselves confronted by a plethora of new jackpots, operating at club level, link and even national level the choice seemed almost overwhelming. In deciding whether to play the new games or not, the old issues of prize size and win-ability came into play.

Five months on from the introduction of jackpots, research has indicated that players do not want a lot of exceedingly high value jackpots, with low perceived win-ability, but a range of jackpot prizes with varying degrees of win-ability.

In light of this a number of jackpot games have been revised, including The Big’N (see page 7).

In moving forward to meet player needs in an increasingly competitive leisure market, it is clear that a new type of bingo player is coming forward, one who wants variety in their leisure/bingo playing experience and for whom the win is an important part of the experience as much as the prize value.

£6 million won in bingo jackpots

The introduction of the new jackpot games has seen more than 400 bingo players across the country shared nearly £6 million in jackpot cash payouts between September and December.

There were three millionaires and further chunks of cash ranging from £1,000 to £874,208 – all in addition to the £1.3 billion paid out on regular bingo games in any year.

- A total of £3.5 million changed the lives of 16 players of Mecca’s Millionaire Game including three millionaires, two of them at the luckiest bingo club in the UK – the Mecca Forge in Glasgow.
- Nearly £1.7 million has also been paid out to 388 players of Gala’s Hi5 game including one woman from Fenton who scooped £874,208.
- £832,000 was won on the National Game’s The Big’N.
Bye Bye Big’N – Welcome new jackpot

The Big’N burst into the bingo firmament with a cheeky promotional campaign and the opportunity for some fun and big cash. Beset by technical gremlins, which knocked clubs out of the game, caused National Game Multimedia Workstations to have a seizure and played havoc with those pesky stampers, the game did not find great favour with club staff or players. It is to be no more!

After Saturday 19 January cast out all your Big’N paraphernalia and bid it a fond farewell, for from Sunday 20 January there’s a new National Bingo Game, with more prizes to be won!

On Saturday 19 January The Big’N will be played for the last time and on that night the Gold and Silver jackpot prizes will be rolled into one and all players participating in The Big’N who win their National Game club prize and have three or more Regional Prizes up for grabs every game (back by popular demand), a club jackpot unique to each club and a national jackpot, all at an inclusive price! Number 90 is the key to winning, with the National Jackpot being won by the winner of the National Prize who claims on the number 90.

To make doubly sure that plenty of winners are made, on the last Sunday of every month there will be a National Bingo Game play-off, where the winner of that evening’s National Prize also wins the national jackpot.
Continued from page 1

The Bingo Association has fought hard to make legislators aware of the issues facing bingo and their impact. As the responsibility for the key issues rests in two separate ministries – the Treasury and the Department for Culture Media and Sport – it has been all too easy for each to claim that the real issue resides with policies arising from the other: a game of political ping-pong.

The only means of appeal in order to break this deadlock, and hopefully move forward, would be to involve the Prime Minister directly – something which was finally achieved in November 2007, following 14 months of activity. Downing Street may be a very short road, but the journey there is not.

Having made a number of representations to various advisers and ministers it became increasingly apparent in the summer of 2006 that no action was likely to be taken. Up to this point the Association had used formal channels, rather than making the industry’s plight public through involving the media. This was a stance that changed in October 2006, as the Association and key members sought to involve the media in order to highlight the problems facing bingo in the UK and raise public awareness.

The media was, and remains, very interested in the issues and why little action seemed to have been taken by government – after all, bingo was and remains a popular leisure activity for a substantial number of people.

Media involvement led to renewed interest by government,
Scotland’s First Minister Alex Salmond has pledged his support to fight double taxation in the bingo industry. Current taxation rules require the industry to pay gross profits tax and VAT on participation fees. Other gaming industries are only subjected to gross profits tax.

Meeting players and staff at Carlton Bingo in Fraserburgh, which is Scotland’s largest independent bingo operator, and calling a game of bingo, Mr Salmond called ‘for an end to this discrimination and a fair deal for bingo in Scotland’.

Following the meeting, Brian King, who is operations director at Carlton Bingo, said: ‘Double taxation is a major issue for the bingo industry. We are calling for bingo to be on an equal footing with other gaming sectors and I am delighted that the First Minister has lent his support to this issue.’

Double taxation is one of a number of issues affecting the industry, which is also dealing with the impact of the smoking ban in public places and the implementation of the Gambling Act, as highlighted above.

First Minister backs bingo industry’s battle

Scottish’s First Minister Alex Salmond

George Carter, Alex Salmond and Brian King back the bingo industry

These generations of players – Heather Richards, Carly Richards and Iris McNeill – with Rank’s Ian Burke
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Bingo For Breakthrough

Bingo For Breakthrough Week 2007 was a huge success – with clubs across the UK joining forces in support of Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

The 2007 Bingo for Breakthrough event was a storming success. From 21 to 28 October, 420 bingo clubs nationwide joined forces for a week of pink-themed fun to raise money for Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

Highlights of the week included “I’m a bingo caller, get me out of here!” where callers camped on stage for a week; Gala clubs in the North East coming together to play ‘It’s a knockout’; sponsored slims, sky dives and singing competitions – the hidden creative talents of club staff and players are amazing.

During Bingo for Breakthrough, clubs offered free games for the chance to win ‘pink’ prizes, including Midge the Monkey – this year’s mascot. Players then donated their game fee to charity. Limited edition pink ribbon dabbers were also available, with a minimum 75p donation going to Breakthrough.

Since the launch of Bingo for Breakthrough in 2003, the campaign has raised more than £2.25 million, thanks to the support of bingo club staff, their customers – and a host of celebrities. Stars who have helped the campaign over the years with their dab-a-doodles include Radio 1 DJ Sara Cox, GMTV presenter Lorraine Kelly and Strictly Come Dancing contestant Penny Lancaster. Their designs have ranged from rainbows and cars through to homes, love, cakes and of course, breasts!

October’s event was no exception, as celebrities got behind the cause and, using dabbers, doodled the ‘Things that make them smile’.

The results were auctioned on eBay, with Lee Mead (who plays Joseph in the West End) penning the winning doodle – raising £200 alone. The auction raised more than £500, so let’s hope the doodling continues for 2008!

Despite a particularly tough year for the industry, it is still hoped that the money raised by 2007’s Bingo for Breakthrough campaign will reach £600,000.

A huge thank you to all the clubs who took part, and to staff and players for their commitment and enthusiasm. You are to be praised for coming up with ideas

Top fundraisers

As in previous years, several clubs raised phenomenal amounts of money for Bingo for Breakthrough – and their exceptional efforts are recognised through the Top Fundraiser Awards 2007.

This year’s award-winning clubs will be announced in the next issue of Bingo Link. Congratulations go to the top performers, but every club that took part is a star for helping in the fight against breast cancer.
to raise funds for charity

Players are pretty in pink

Players and staff at Carlton Bingo, Stirling were unrecognisable when they dressed in pink for a themed party to raise money for Breakthrough Breast Cancer. Staff and players raised more than £1,800. In addition to the pink-themed evening, Carlton Bingo players also donated generously towards a free game to be in with a chance of winning one of this year’s must-haves, Midge the pink Breakthrough Breast Cancer monkey.

Speaking after the charity week, Carlton Bingo Stirling’s manager, Carole Sherriff, said: ‘Charity week is always a great excuse for some fun and this year was no different. Everyone got into the spirit of things and we raised a substantial amount of money for Breakthrough Breast Cancer.’

In Scotland alone, one woman is diagnosed with breast cancer every three hours and one woman dies from the disease every nine hours. With a mainly female audience it is vital that we raise awareness among our players and help combat these shocking statistics by supporting charities like Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

‘Carlton Bingo is a strong supporter of charity week so we’re hoping that with events like this we can smash that total and make a real difference to those living with breast cancer.’
Looking to the future

The 2008 Amusement Trades Exhibition International (ATEI) is a chance for the industry to showcase its latest products and services.

Another year has rolled by and ATEI is nearly upon us. Now in its 64th successful year, the show goes from strength to strength, and gaming shows in the world – and an event certainly not to be missed for all UK-based operators.

From slot machines to SWAG, and cash handling to security, the show offers a great platform from which exhibitors can show the latest and best products and services they have to offer.

The 2007 show saw a record number of exhibitors and visitors and 2008 looks set to continue that trend, with a total of 212 exhibitors from 31 countries, covering 113,000 square feet of space over two floors.

The show provides visitors with the opportunity to review industry offerings in one central location. Since last year’s show the business environment has changed substantially for UK-based operators, with the introduction of the new Gambling Act and its attendant issues in September 2007.

For many bingo operators the removal of Section 21 games, with no increase in entitlement to jackpot machines, has created an income vacuum, which serves only to exacerbate the already difficult trading conditions and negative impact of the smoking ban.

Under new legislation, bingo clubs are only entitled to three mixes for operators.

The latest games

Mazooma

- Casino Royale – this is the centerpiece, designed to offer a real-life casino experience with its massive 42in screen used to play a lifelike roulette game. Four or more players can sit in their own chair, with the base machine’s touch screen video reels offering added attraction to players familiar with this style of up to the minute game presentation.

  Wins on the base game can be staked on the roulette table, where a spin of the wheel determines the big winners. Casino Royale has the potential to be set up as Cat C £35 or Cat B £500, or a mix of both categories.

- Triple Fruit Crazy – this lends some familiar sounds and graphics to its new dual-stake £35 Cat C game. It’s the first triple incarnation of the game where ‘the keys’ offer a tic-tac-toe entry into the Big Top Box Streak. A 50p play awards bigger value wins, which, together with its mix of the familiar and the new, is designed to attract potential players. A single player version – Casino Fruit Crazy – is also available.

- Monopoly Wheel of Wealth – this is available in single and three player versions. Its dual-stake, low-tech video base game displays three ‘reels’, there are three of a kind wins and three Uncle Moneysbags in view, awarding a top box streak feature. Two wheels display winning values; the outer wheel with higher values is for a 50p stake, the inner wheel is for a lower stake win. The Top Box feature may also be awarded at random following a normal win. Extra nudges are available when a hidden win is displayed in the ‘secret panel’ during the normal game.

- Mazooma can be found on stand 820 and Barcrest on stand 710.

Barcrest

- The Barcrest Group, which has Barcrest, Vivid and Red in its stable, will be unveiling an outstanding portfolio of gaming and amusement products at the show, including Triple 7 (right). The Triple 7 cabinet, with its extensive collection of games, will be shown together with Iconicsb – Barcrest Group’s comprehensive, fully-integrated, server-based gaming solution.

  Available as a stand-alone unit or networked for Server Based Gaming, Triple 7 is a multi-game platform, which allows customers to refine and enhance their offer as Barcrest Group creates more great games.

  Built to the highest standards in a metal cabinet with hard chrome finish and long-life components, every aspect of Triple 7 is designed for longevity and it can be relied on to look stunning and perform consistently for years to come.

Next generation gaming

A selection of new products for traditional markets in the UK and continental Europe will make their debut at the show. For the first time, the Barcrest Group will showcase a range of games designed for the remote gaming market – such as Iconicsb.

Server-based gaming heralds a new era in gaming technology, with centralised management of gaming terminals enabling operators to maximise their machine income. The Iconicsb system is a bespoke design, created specifically for the gaming machine environment. Products have been developed with one goal – to create a sustainable competitive advantage for all gaming customers.

An extensive collection of category B3, C and D games designed for the Triple 7 cabinet include top performing favourites, such as Rainbow Riches, Monty Python and Cashino. These will be at the show alongside a collection of brand new games, providing the optimum mix for operators.

Here’s a preview of some of the latest games showing at ATEI
jackpot machines – a situation that regularly sees players in a great many clubs queuing to play, despite the availability of other types of machine. This situation creates a huge problem for bingo operators, who will be looking for new machines that can offer excitement and variety to players, within existing limits.

Following close consultation with BACTA members, exhibitors and visitors, the organisers of ATEI have introduced new regulations for attendance. These requirements have been introduced in order to address concerns that too many non-trade visitors were gaining entry to the show and preventing genuine buyers from obtaining access to stands and products.

UK-based visitors to this year’s show, the vast majority of whom pre-register online, will be required to provide their company or employer’s VAT number in order to secure entry. Karen Cooke, who is head of exhibitions, said: ‘Our post-show customer contact revealed a problem with non-trade visitors hindering business at ATEI, with genuine buyers on occasions being unable to access games. ‘We have looked at a range of initiatives,’ added Karen, ‘and without creating an airport security-style operation that would create huge queues and log jams, we felt this represented the most practical alternative.’

The organisers will review the situation after the 2008 show.
standard game, all surrounding the first 15 balls, itsonline bingo games sincemid-2007 and the offer players several choices to augment the interest among its player base. The side bets added dimension seems to have found a niche on the game outcome? First three numbers out, about other types of bets that might be made in the sequence of numbers called. But what bet on the side.

Virtue Fusion offers bets on bingo when a player buys a bingo ticket they are, in effect, buying the chance that the combination of numbers on their ticket matches the sequence of numbers called. But what about other types of bets that might be made on the game outcome? First three numbers out, winning number, first five out, etc?

Gala has been offering side bets on each of its online bingo games since mid-2007 and the added dimension seems to have found a niche interest among its player base. The side bets offer players several choices to augment the standard game, all surrounding the first 15 balls, such as high or low values, colours, odds or evens. The bets can be made as many times as the player likes, as long as they are confirmed before the bingo game in question has started. The option to place a variety of side bets also provides players with an alternative to slots and mini games. By offering this added feature/dimension in the first phase of each game (15 numbers), it provides extra excitement. Towards the end of each game, when players are one ball away from winning the house, there is no need for distraction, as players are likely to be fully engaged in the main bingo game. Virtue Fusion has launched its own set of side bets on its bingo game called Crystal Balls. The game offers players a variety of bet options, which have been tempered by the ease with which they can be placed. It is similar to roulette, but uses 90 balls instead of 37 and the player can place bets on as many numbers or combinations as they want with ease. Clearing bets or ‘unpicking’ them is also easily done.

Crystal Balls offers games on the first ball, 15th ball, one line, two lines and house, through an easy to use tab system that automatically moves from left to right as the game of bingo plays out. Additionally, there is a tab to allow players to bet their favourite combination on all the above results. During the game the bingo balls appear on the top right hand side of the screen as always, but if you have Crystal Balls open, the ball will then bounce into the correct area of the board, tying the bingo game neatly together with the side bets.
online bingo?

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<td>ProWager Systems</td>
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<td>Bingo UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun Bingo</td>
<td>Tombola</td>
<td>Sun/News of the World Network*</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOTW Bingo</td>
<td>Tombola</td>
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<td>Bingo Loopy.co.uk</td>
<td>Virtue Fusion</td>
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<td>Crazy Bingo</td>
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<td>Crown Bingo.co.uk</td>
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<td>Bingo Addict</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Square Bingo</td>
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</table>

The game’s background soundtrack adds suspense and a sense of tension that is lacking in many other products. Win results are posted clearly to inform the player of the amount that is due to them.

Crystal Balls offers a prescriptive range of bets that has purposefully been restricted in order to make bet selection easier and faster. Its visual integration with the main game, when open, ensures that there is a bingo feel to the game, adding entertainment. As such its appeal should be broader than might be expected from a numbers game.

The game will be available across all Virtue Fusion Networks and offered to all clients including Mecca, Buckingham, Carlton, Bonanza Bingo and William Hill.

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KEY COMPANIES IN ONLINE BINGO

virtuelfusion.com Virtue Fusion
Bingo Networks Bingo Networks Alderney
Stmbrinver.com St Minver
thegamingnetwork.com The Gaming Network
playtech.com Playtech
chartwellgames.com Chartwell Technology Inc
bingotek.com Bingtectrical and Microgaming
Gameseycorporate.com Gamsey UK
aquagaming.com Aqua Gaming UK

This guide is not a definitive list of bingo sites but aims to show key sites and indicate the software on which they operate. Information is correct to the best of our knowledge but please notify us of any omissions or errors.
The real impact of bingo club closures

Bingo clubs play an important role in the local community — and their loss has a wide-ranging impact on people’s lives, as the latest research shows. 

All those working in or with the bingo industry will be very much aware of the strong sense of community that clubs create for members and staff, both inside the club and in the broader community. 

Bingo has always held a unique position in both the gambling and leisure markets due to the unique social context in which the game takes place. With the demise of many local facilities that help to create a community feel and assist with local cohesion, bingo clubs become increasingly important in providing a means for social interaction.

The impact of a club closing is not just felt by its members, but by the broader community as a whole. Leading research company Henley Centre – Headlight Vision has recently researched this issue and has published its report ‘The Social Role of Bingo Clubs and the Impact of Club Closures’, written by Denise Hicks and Ray Stone.

The report explores the role of bingo clubs in communities and the social role they fulfil for players and employees by assessing the impact when clubs close. Researchers spoke to members and employees from four recently closed clubs in the Midlands and Scotland. Discussions within the study generated a number of key insights relating to the social nature of bingo clubs:

● For regular members, going to bingo is the primary, and sometimes only, leisure pursuit out of the house;
● While money is a key trigger to begin playing – and remains an important motivation – the drive to play bingo regularly is largely orientated around a need for social interaction and belonging;
● The bingo club does not only act as a venue for a bingo game, but moreover enables a unique social support network for both members and club employees;
● There is a strong belief that bingo aids the wellbeing of the older generation, and it is perceived by members and experts alike that, for the older 60-plus audience especially, there are few alternatives that aid mental agility to such a great extent;
● When faced with club closure, some members find alternative clubs and a minority give up bingo altogether. Among both groups, the negative implications of closure are considered to strongly outweigh the only outcome that was seen to be positive – which was saving money.

To those not involved with bingo many of the findings and comments are likely to be surprising, as they demonstrate just how significant bingo is in people’s lives and their community. For further details, please visit www.bingo-association.co.uk
CONSULTATIONS ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

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ABBREVIATIONS FOR TABLE ABOVE

Greener pastures for Bill

After nearly 10 years with The Bingo Association and more years than he would care to remember in the gambling industry, Bill Andrews retired on 14 December of last year. Originally due to retire prior to the implementation of the new Gambling Act, Bill kindly agreed to stay on.

Bill has been a steady and constant influence at The Association over the past years and a source of excellent jokes – though not many of those could be printed here! He will be greatly missed by those who worked with him, both as part of The Association and by the team in Dunstable.

Bill and his wife will be relocating to Spain later this month, where he will have the opportunity to pursue his passions for golf and fine wines, probably in that order. We wish him well in a long and happy retirement.

For further information, visit the Bingo Association website at www.bingo-association.co.uk
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