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For immediate release

**Another one bites the dust -
Brown remains deaf to bingo's plight**

One of the UK's largest independent bingo operators, Carlton Bingo has today announced the planned closure of its Murton club in County Durham, resulting in the loss of 13 jobs and bringing the total number of clubs to close this year to 23.

The club, bought by Carlton in 1994, will close its doors for good after the final Sunday night session on 21 September. The venue was built in the early 1940s as a cinema and started to offer bingo to the local community in the 1970's, since when the club has been a cornerstone of the local community.

Peter Perrins, Managing Director of Carlton Bingo said
"It is with profound regret that Carlton Bingo has been forced to close our Murton bingo club. Unfortunately the club has not been able to overcome the hostile trading environment currently imposed on the bingo industry, due to the unfair tax regime, the impact of the smoking ban and the Gambling Act."

"Carlton bought the venue in 1994 however the club has been at the heart of the local community for many decades. I want to express my gratitude to the members and staff who have supported us throughout this time."

"I am deeply angry that the industry I love is being slowly forced out of existence by a Government unable and unwilling to do what is necessary to protect community bingo."

"I can only conclude that Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling don't care about the bingo or the communities that have come to rely upon it."

The issues facing the bingo industry have been much debated with Government particularly the inequality of the tax regime under which it operates. Despite evidence indicating that addressing this issue would be likely to prove revenue neutral for the Treasury and that legal opinion holds that the current inconsistency in application of VAT breaches European law, the Government has made no move on this matter.

Paul Talboys, Chief Executive of The Bingo Association said
“The industry has long been at pains to work with Government to explore possible solutions that would benefit all concerned, namely the Treasury, club operators and players. Government’s stubborn refusal to accept that correction of this error in VAT is both fair and a viable solution beggars belief. All the time that this issue remains un-addressed clubs continue to close, jobs continue to be lost and communities lose an important part of the local social landscape.”

“Here is an opportunity for Government to implement a solution that could deliver a win for all involved, the price of failing to act on this issue has become an intolerable one for bingo players, employees and operators”

Ends

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Notes to editors

- In recent years Bingo has faced a number of external threats and challenges including the level of tax the industry pays which causes a structural problem for the industry.
- The industry has been campaigning for 5 years for the Government to recognise that Bingo is Different. Last year 290,000 bingo players signed a petition which was presented to the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, making the case for the game.
- One of the first clubs to close was in Gordon Brown’s own constituency.
- Club Closures:

2006	21
2007	37
2008	23 (inc. Carlton Bingo in Murton)
- The Bingo Association is the trade association of the licensed bingo industry in Great Britain, representing the proprietors of bingo clubs licensed under the Gambling Act 2005.
- There are 83 proprietors in membership. Membership profile ranges from the very large operators, including Mecca (103 clubs) and Gala (164

- clubs), to smaller operators like Carlton (15 clubs) and many single unit businesses.
- Around 70% of all Bingo players are women and overall, 10% of all women in the UK play bingo
 - There are 3.1 million regular bingo players in the UK.

Gambling Taxation:

	Gaming Duty (GPT)	VAT	AML (Machine licence duty)
<u>Pari-mutuel</u>			
Bingo	15%	17.5%	-
Casino poker	-	17.5%	-
Betting exchanges	15%	-	-
Tote	15%	-	-
<u>Other Gambling</u>			
Gaming machines	-	17.5%	£0-£2,500
FOBTs	-	17.5%	£1,965
Casino games	15% to 50%	-	-
Sports betting	15%	-	-
Online gambling	15%	-	-

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