



Press release - for immediate release

25 June 2008

Bingo industry warmly welcomes Government announcement on machines

- Response to Gerry Sutcliffe statement -

The Bingo Association has today warmly welcomed the Government's proposal to amend the rules on the number of B3 machines permitted in UK licensed bingo clubs. The announcement, made today by Minister for Sport Gerry Sutcliffe in a Written Ministerial Statement to the House of Commons, makes provision for an additional four machines per club and follows a period of intense consultation with the Department for Media Culture and Sport.

This much needed revision to the Gambling Act will address the loss of machines that bingo clubs suffered when it was implemented in September 2007 and restores bingo clubs' machine entitlement to levels operating prior to the Act taking effect.

The proposed measures will provide all bingo clubs – large and small – with the opportunity to restore to customers the range of machines they have previously enjoyed, enabling clubs to more readily respond to the challenging trading environment and the inequity of the double tax burden that remains in place for bingo and continues to threaten the future of clubs in the UK.

Speaking on behalf of The Bingo Association, Chief Executive Paul Talboys said:

“Today's announcement marks the end of a long and frustrating wait, but the Minister has been supportive and sympathetic to the industry's situation throughout, and we are grateful for the fact that he has clearly listened to the case we put forward. He has recognised the valuable role bingo clubs play and taken steps to help secure their future. We believe today's announcement will go some way to addressing the adverse position bingo operates under and will help ensure that bingo remains part of the social and leisure landscape in the UK. The Minister and his team at the DCMS have demonstrated that the Government does listen and are prepared to act when presented with a convincing argument.

Naturally, our hope is that this can be implemented as soon as practicably possible, as the future of many clubs depends upon it.”

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Notes to editors

- 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.
- 8.5 million people played bingo in 2007. Nearly half of all players are under the age of 45.
- The bingo industry provides jobs for more than 17,000 people.
- Despite its undoubted popularity, the UK bingo industry faces a number of challenges at present, particularly those relating to the imposition of both VAT and Gross Profits Tax on participation fees. The Bingo Association ran a high profile campaign in advance of this year's Budget to draw the Government's attention to the issue but, despite constructive discussions with the Treasury and support from backbench MPs across all three political parties, no reform of the taxation regime was made. The Bingo Association will continue making an evidence-based case for the removal of VAT on bingo products.
- The Bingo Association supports responsible gambling, through www.gamblingaware.co.uk and is a member of The Responsibility in Gambling Trust (RIGT.)
- The full text of today's announcement is as follows:

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