



For immediate release
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VAT To Remain as Government Ignores Bingo Industry's Plight

The Bingo industry today reacted angrily to Gordon Brown's failure to remove what it regards as an unfair tax on Britain's bingo players - VAT. Currently levied on the charge made to play, this sees bingo players paying a much higher rate of tax than most other gambling activities.

Association Chairman, Sir Peter Fry commented:

"It is simply ridiculous that bingo, one of the softest gaming activities, continues to pay this tax. The industry in Scotland is being decimated by the impact of the smoking ban, and clubs are closing all the time."

"The Chancellor had the chance to throw clubs a lifeline to get through the worst of the impact, giving them a long term future. His failure to act will condemn many small clubs to certain closure, with the loss of a valuable social amenity for many communities across Britain."

There have now been 19 club closures announced across the UK - the first of which was in Gordon Brown's own constituency – with more expected. When attending a CBI lunch in Scotland recently and questioned by a Bingo operator on the issue of unfair taxation the Prime Minister failed to give a response.

Sir Peter continues:

"The Chancellor is clearly not listening to the industry or people who have already signed a petition calling for the Government to 'Stop Destroying My Bingo'. Many of these players will lose the only place they feel comfortable going to on their own. The Government needs to act now, before it is too late."

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“Within a space of a week Bingo has been ignored by the Prime Minister personally, rejected by Gordon Brown in his budget and denied a voice by the Downing Street website petition team. It is hard to fathom that politicians can have failed to hear what Bingo players and the industry are asking for. It is clear they are just not listening.”

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

- ‘Stop Destroying My Bingo’ is a national petition launched by The Bingo Association on Monday 5 March 2007. The petition closes on Sunday 25 March, following which signatures will be counted and the petition delivered to Downing Street. Players and supporters can sign the petition up to Sunday 25 March by visiting their local club (you can find your nearest club by visiting www.nationalbingo.co.uk and going to the club search section), calling 01582 860 900 or going on-line to www.backbingo.co.uk where you can print a petition form off and send it Freepost to The Bingo Association.
- The Bingo Association is the trade association of the licensed bingo industry in Great Britain, representing the proprietors of bingo clubs licensed under the Gaming Act 1968.
- There are 109 proprietors in membership and between them they operate 548 bingo clubs. Membership profile ranges from the very large operators, including Mecca (108 clubs) and Gala (170 clubs), to smaller operators like Castle (9 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

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