



STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 5 March 2007

Press Release

5 March 2007

**'STOP DESTROYING BINGO!' SAYS LINDA ROBSON
BRITAINS 3 MILLION REGULAR PLAYERS CALLED TO ACT NOW**

Bingo players across the UK will join together from today, 5 March 2007, to urge the Government to stop destroying bingo led by bingo playing star, Linda Robson and The Bingo Association. With over 200 clubs under threat of closure as a result of too much tax and legislation, including the smoking ban, clubs and players are launching a national campaign calling on the government to "Stop Destroying My Bingo".

With millions of people playing Bingo every year and many small independent operators under threat, Linda Robson, playing this week with her mum and daughter, has called on players and supporters to act now! Speaking at the Gala Bingo Club Surrey Quays, Linda said: "Bingo is a key part of many communities and closing clubs will have a devastating effect on community spirit nationwide. Tell me another activity where three different generations can go out together and have an equal amount of enjoyment, excitement and success. We have all been playing Bingo for years, we love it and look forward to meeting up with the regulars every week for a natter. I see players as young as 20 to those in their late 80s having a great time together. I'm even a Bingo caller for the Hopes and Dreams charity in Essex and I know how much it means to them to get together with their friends, offering them a safe, stimulating and fun environment."

Bingo clubs are not getting a fair deal, as bingo is taxed harder than other gaming and the burden is hitting the clubs. In Scotland, where the smoking ban was introduced last year, clubs have seen a severe downturn in business of up to 120%, with some smaller clubs already losing money. Twenty clubs across the UK have now closed and predictions are that things will get worse.

Linda Robson commented further: “Bingo is facing its toughest year ever because of a number of policies imposed on it by this government. To keep Bingo alive for future generations we need everyone to act NOW and get down to their local Bingo club and sign the petition.”

Players and supporters can sign the petition by visiting their local club (you can find your nearest club by visiting www.nationbingo.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.

ENDS

For more information contact:

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Notes to Editors

Pictures available

The Bingo Association is the trade association that represents the licensed bingo industry in the UK and includes membership of large clubs such as Gala and Mecca, as well as small independent operators.

Bingo is taxed harder than other gaming:

Taxation Comparison

Gaming	Taxation	VAT
Bingo	15 % GPT	17.5%
Bookmakers	15 % GPT	0
Casinos, taxed on Gross Gaming Yield	Minimum 2.5%, on a sliding scale	0

The Bingo Association is calling on the Treasury to reduce the taxation on the industry by creating a level playing field with VAT zero rated.

Interviews Available with:

- *Steve Baldwin, Marketing and Communications Manager The Bingo Association*
- *Brett Hyrjak, Bingo Caller of the Year*

BINGO QUICK FACTS

- There are over 600 licensed bingo clubs in the UK

- Around 500 clubs link together to play the National Game twice a day, everyday, except Christmas day.
- Over 3 million people play bingo regularly in the UK (at least twice a week).
- 8% of the UK population play bingo - 10% of all women and 5% of all men, with ages ranges from their early 20s to late 80s.
- Most common reasons for playing bingo are because it's fun and offers the chance to socialise and win big money.
- Bingo has been given the royal thumbs up since Prince Williams played at his local club in Reading with his pals from Sandhurst. Her Majesty the Queen, another bingo fan, apparently chooses to call 'Palace' rather than 'house'.
- Celebs love bingo! Catherine Zeta Jones can thank bingo for her career after her dad won enough to afford to send her to theatre school; Robbie Williams went to his local bingo club in Stoke and played bingo with Daryl Hannah in his music video for Feel. Other celebrity fans include Denise Van Outen and Scott Mills.
- A number of celebrities also started their careers in bingo calling including boy band members Simon from Blue and Kian from Westlife, whilst Shane Richie called games in a red coat and Russell Crowe finally swapped his bingo outfit for a gladiator get up.
- Approximately £1m is played for every week in prize money on the National Bingo Game and over £35m in bingo over all.
- The bingo industry supports Breakthrough Breast Cancer on an annual basis through its campaign Bingo for Breakthrough, which has been awarded a Big Tick, the scheme that acknowledges companies' social responsibility, run by Business in the Community.
- To register for email and text alerts on bingo news register online at www.nationalbingo.co.uk.