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Press Release

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£1.9 Billion Bingo Industry Petitions Government

The UK Bingo industry is this week facing crunch time, as the effects of Government policies are set to place over 200 bingo clubs under threat of closure. The Bingo Association is today launching a UK-wide petition, as part of a campaign that will force Government to rethink its treatment of the industry. The petition, aimed at the nation's bingo players, is part of a national campaign called "Stop Destroying My Bingo", that demonstrates how a range of measures including an unfair tax regime, increases in licence costs, legislative burdens and the impact of the smoking ban, is effectively sending clubs into meltdown.

The UK bingo industry employs over 22,000 people and pays in excess £270 million a year in tax to the Treasury. These are significant figures that impact on the economy, both locally and nationally and facts that the Government to date appear to have ignored. By putting a petition into bingo clubs throughout the UK, the industry is seeking to demonstrate the strength of public opinion in respect of bingo and further add to the robust arguments for positive change. While many of the clubs that are under threat are small independently operated venues, based in close communities, they all provide an essential social amenity. Larger industry operators such as Rank (owners of Mecca) and Gala also have severe concerns about the future commercial viability of venues under such an unfavourable regime of tax and legislation.

Speaking about the launch, Bingo Association Chairman, Sir Peter Fry said: "The future burden of operation facing clubs under such policies will be intolerable for many, forcing them to close. The Government must take action now to prevent the industry from being forced into drastic decline with resulting loss of social facilities, jobs and community."

Britain's three million predominantly female bingo players pay substantially more to the Treasury than their male counterparts at the bookies, as Bingo is one of the most highly taxed gambling activities. Since the introduction of the smoking ban in Scotland last year, which was supported by the Bingo Association, twelve clubs in the region have closed and others seen a severe downturn in business, with some smaller clubs already having moved into a loss making position and twenty clubs closed across the UK. The effect of a ban, due to be introduced later this year in England and Wales is expected to be substantially amplified.

Bingo players are adding their voice to the campaign and are calling on government to take action on these policies and stop destroying the game. With new gaming regulation set for introduction in September 2007 this interim period is crucial to ensure that communities retain a key social facility and that clubs survive.

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Notes to Editors

Pictures available

The industry campaign is being managed by the Bingo Association, which represents licensed Bingo operators throughout the UK, including Mecca, Gala, Buckingham and Carlton.

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 total burden of taxation by removal of VAT on participation fees, putting bingo in line with other gambling activities.

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