



For Immediate Release – 23 June 2006

## **FAG FREE BINGO CLUBS UP IN SMOKE**

The creation of smoke free bingo clubs through the implementation of a ban on smoking in public spaces has hit the bingo business far harder than the 'worst case scenario' modelled by experts, as bingo players arrive later and leave earlier.

In the three full months since the ban came into effect (26 March) revenues at all clubs have been hit hard, with Scotland's independent bingo clubs feeling the greatest pressure. Five clubs have already closed, with many more wondering how long they can remain open in the current climate.

K. E. Entertainments, who operate clubs in Gordon Brown's constituency, have closed Premier Bingo in Denny and Rio Bingo in Kirkcaldy.

Operations Manager, Mike Lowe said:

"Within a four week period of the ban being introduced it was apparent that the business would in fact be devastated and extreme measures would need to be taken to lessen the impact. After six weeks I had identified two clubs that would need to close, Denny and Kirkcaldy. I have recorded as many as 47% of players leaving a session in order to smoke.

The coming months are a great concern and I do not feel that we have seen the worst effects of the smoking ban yet."

Other operators in Scotland have experienced similar declines, reporting a 17-27% drop in revenues.

Association Chairman, Sir Peter Fry said:

"It is clear that many clubs will not survive this difficult transition period, with a resulting closure of many clubs and the loss of jobs and social facilities for many local communities. The industry stands by its decision to support a total ban in England and Wales, but is asking what support can it expect during what is set to be a challenging time that may damage the bingo industry irrevocably, leaving players far less choice.

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As bingo clubs and players adapt to the new circumstances forced upon them, operators are required to invest in new facilities and equipment, placing a further strain on the business. When considered alongside the existing tax burden many smaller operators will find the added burden of increased facilities and reduced revenues makes it impossible to remain in business.”

**- Ends -**

For further press information please contact Steven Baldwin on 01582 860915 or 07946 597956.

[www.bingo-association.co.uk](http://www.bingo-association.co.uk)

**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 Gaming Act 1968.
- There are 110 proprietors in membership and between them they operate 553 bingo clubs. Membership profile ranges from the very large operators, including Mecca (118 clubs) and Gala (178 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
- There are 3.1 million regular bingo players in the UK.
- A ban on smoking in public places came into effect in Scotland on 26 March 2006. A similar ban is due to be implemented in England and Wales in summer 2007.
- Scottish Bingo operators are reporting down turns of 17-27% since 26 march 2006.
- 5 clubs have closed as a result of the ban in Scotland.

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