



For Immediate Release – 23 June 2006

## **Smoking Ban puts £1.9 billion industry in jeopardy**

The creation of smoke free bingo clubs through the implementation of a ban on smoking in public places is set to cripple the bingo industry.

A ban on smoking in public places in Scotland came into effect on Sunday 26 March this year. The impact of which has hit the bingo business far harder than the 'worst case scenario' modelled by experts, as bingo players arrive later, leave earlier and in many cases cease attending all together.

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

Association Chairman, Sir Peter Fry said:

"In exploring the impact of a ban on smoking in public places, with both Government and industry experts, the industry had expected to see a decline in revenues and admissions. However, the severity and speed of impact that the industry is currently experiencing in Scotland is alarming and sounding loud warning bells for the industry in England and Wales, which faces the implementation of a ban next year.

With venues that each have a customer base where the majority of customers smoke and on average accommodate 750 people, change into a welcoming smoke free environment is going to take some time and a considerable amount of investment. Funding this investment will prove challenging for larger operators and almost impossible for many smaller ones, especially if the effects of a ban are as extreme as they have been in Scotland.

It is clear that many clubs will not survive this difficult transition period without some concession to their drastically altered trading conditions. Based on the experience in Scotland many clubs will be forced to close with a resulting loss of jobs and social facilities for many local communities.

**- 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
- 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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