

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012

Graham Farrant  
Chief Executive  
Thurrock Council  
[gfarrant@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:gfarrant@thurrock.gov.uk)

Dear Mr Farrant,

### **Select Committee Report and the Opportunities for Local Authorities**

I am writing to you as Chairman on behalf of the National Casino Industry Forum (NCiF) the body that represents over 90% of UK land based casino operators.

We are conscious that in 2007 your Council applied to be considered for a 2005 Gambling Act casino, but unfortunately was not successful in its bid.

We would like to draw to your attention to a recent development that means that there may well be a further opportunity for your Council to explore whether it might wish to host a casino in its district.

Firstly, may I just put this into its historical context. The number of casino premises licences is fixed in law. Under the Gaming Act 1968 there are 186 licences in existence. The Gambling Act 2005 added 16 new casinos to this number making a total of 202 licences. As you know these 16 '2005 Act' licences are already allocated to specific locations. There is no move by the Government or NCiF to increase this finite number.

However, there is an anomaly in the current legislation. The 186 '1968 Act' licences were allocated to 53 'Permitted Areas'. These Areas have not changed in the intervening 40 years. However, population and demographic shifts over the last four decades have rendered the operation of a number of these '1968 Act' licences uneconomic. At the same time a number of Local Authorities have sought to attract a casino to their area, but have been unable to as they are not 'Permitted Areas' under the 1968 Act.

The current position is that there are 38 casino licences not being used - dormant. This is not the situation that the casino industry wishes, nor, as illustrated by the number of applications for 2005 licences (and continuing enquiries) what Local Authorities want either. We would welcome the freeing up of this situation; the ability for casino operators and Local Authorities to explore the possibilities of hosting a casino, without a 40 year old artificial constraint on both parties.

We wish to bring to your attention that on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012, the Culture, Media and Sport Committee produced a report, entitled '[The Gambling Act 2005: A bet worth taking?](#)'. This Report scrutinised the operation of the Gambling Act 2005. Regarding casinos, it concluded (at Para. 165):

*"Both the 1968 and 2005 Act provisions successfully prevented casinos from proliferating or clustering. However, there is no evidence that allowing local authorities to decide independently whether or not they wish to have a casino would lead to a significant increase in the total number of casinos. We believe that the decision as to whether a casino would be of benefit to a local area should be made by local authorities rather than central diktat.*

*We recommend that any local authority be able to make the decision as to whether or not they want a casino. As a step towards this, we recommend that existing 1968 Act Casino licences are made portable, allowing operators to relocate to any local authority provided that they have the consent of that local authority. The portability of these licences would be constrained by the existing 'triple lock' contained in the Gambling Act: the need to obtain local authority approval, a premises licence and planning permission."*

It is clear that the CMS Committee's view is that Local Authorities are best placed to decide whether they do or do not wish to host a casino in their area, rather than retaining the current position.

We are asking you to consider the proposition that your Authority *is* the proper body (rather than central government) to decide if it wishes to have a casino in its area. Now is the time to come forward. This is, arguably, a 'second bite at the cherry' for those Authorities that were unable to secure a 2005 Act casino.

If the CMS proposition above is adopted by the Government it would allow those businesses seeking to relocate and those Local Authorities seeking the inward investment to speak freely.

We are collating responses from all Local Authorities across England, Scotland and Wales but are particularly interested in those Authorities that were clearly interested in hosting a casino, but sadly were unsuccessful in their bid five years ago. We would really appreciate your Authority's views on this local decision-making issue.

We would also invite you to take a positive view in your Gambling Act Statement of Principles, perhaps stating in that document that you would "Welcome the ability to host a casino in our district". This would send a clear message and re-enforce the CMS committee's findings.

Furthermore, should your Authority take the view that it would, on the freeing up of the position, actively seek to host a casino we would be pleased to hear from you.

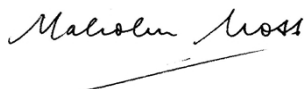
Could we ask that, after due consideration, you either reply with your Authority's views to this letter by email to my colleague Jim Ratchford [jim@nci-forum.co.uk](mailto:jim@nci-forum.co.uk) or contact him by phone should you wish to discuss any of the information above and he will be happy to assist:

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Website [www.nci-forum.co.uk](http://www.nci-forum.co.uk)

Yours sincerely



**Malcolm Moss**  
**Chairman**