

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
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Gambling Commission publishes draft guidance for licensing authorities

Draft guidance for licensing authorities has been published for consultation today by the Gambling Commission.

Under the Gambling Act 2005, licensing authorities (Local Authorities in England and Wales and Licensing Boards in Scotland) will take over responsibility for granting premises licences and permits for gambling – a function which is currently mainly undertaken in England and Wales by magistrates courts.

The Act gives licensing authorities a number of important regulatory functions related to gambling. These include issuing premises licences for casinos, bingo halls, betting offices, adult gaming centres and licensed family entertainment centres; and granting permits for gaming and gaming machines in clubs, unlicensed family entertainment centres, and gaming machines in pubs and other alcohol licensed premises. The guidance published today covers the manner in which the authorities are to carry out these functions, and the principles they should apply.

In preparation for receiving applications for premises licences under the new Act, from the beginning of 2007, licensing authorities are required to publish a three-year licensing policy statement. This will set out how the authority will meet the licensing objectives of keeping crime out of gambling; ensuring that gambling is conducted fairly and openly; and protecting children and vulnerable people. Authorities must consult on their draft statements and local residents and businesses will have a chance to comment on their authority's proposed approach later next year.

Gambling Commission Chairman **Peter Dean** said:

“This draft guidance will help licensing authorities find their way around the Gambling Act and get to grips with their new responsibilities. We want to encourage consistency in the way that premises licence and permit applications are handled throughout Great Britain, while at the same time leaving licensing authorities discretion to decide what is appropriate in their area.

“This draft is primarily aimed at helping the authorities develop their three-year statements of licensing policy. Those statements, together with our guidance, will ensure that gambling operators understand the requirements of individual authorities and know what they must do to meet them.

“We want to work closely with licensing authorities to ensure a smooth transition to the new Gambling Act licensing arrangements.”

The Commission is seeking responses and feedback on the consultation draft of the guidance, and is sending a copy to all Local Authority Chief Executives in England, Scotland and Wales; to Chairs of Licensing Authorities and Clerks of Licensing Boards; to police forces, industry associations, major operators, regulators, and local and central government organisations.

Further copies are available to download from the Gambling Commission’s website at www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk.

The closing date for the consultation is 17 March 2006.

Notes to editors

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This is the first of three phases of guidance which the Commission will be issuing to licensing authorities. The second document, providing more detail on the responsibilities in relation to society lotteries, will be issued for consultation before Easter 2006, and the third, which will concentrate on compliance and enforcement issues, will be published in summer 2006.

www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk