



**GBG Licensing Group
By Teams**

30 January 2024

Attendees:

Sam Moore (Buzz Bingo)	Debbie Bollard (Hough & Bollard)
Andrea McQueen (Inseinc)	Ewen Macgregor (TLT)
Imogen Moss (Poppleston Allen)	Peter Hannibal (GBG)
Samantha O'Driscoll (Buzz Bingo)	Charlotte Meller (GBG)

Apologies: Andrea Kiernan, David Lucas, Elizabeth Speed, Stuart Green

Welcome and introductions for two new members.

Item 1 Minutes from October 2023 meeting

1. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the discussions, and the actions are picked up under the relevant agenda items.

Item 2 GC consultation on financial penalties and reporting changes in ownership

2. Members of this Group are best placed to advise GBG Exec of any concerns to include in the GBG response to this consultation which closes on 15 March. **ACTION: GBG Licensing Group members,**

Item 3 Other White Paper updates

3. The current supplementary consultation on machine entitlements for AGCs and Bingo (closing date 31 March) has generated a range of views from GBG Members.
4. The Commission's autumn consultation closes on 21 February. To date views have been received from GBG Members regarding the quarterly regulatory returns proposal, with some welcoming it as it will be quicker and easier to collate data on a quarterly basis with others flagging concerns about the additional time and resources required.
5. The BGC has sent a second draft of their proposed Ombudsman Code of Conduct to DCMS and the Ombudsman Association. Many of the concerns that GBG Members raised before Christmas remain (i.e. the scope including a de minimis threshold and anonymised data sharing).

6. The BGC is holding a cross industry briefing on 14th February – the details have been circulated to GBG Members.

Item 4 Implications of GC's new gambling methodology

7. Regulus Partners has convened a cross industry Scrutiny Group to discuss the concerns regarding the Commission's new methodology. Whilst the survey is likely to produce more detailed and granular data there are serious concerns on the proposed selection criteria - it is likely to be more biased to problem gamblers than the current Health Survey selection criteria. This will result in a much higher figure of problem gamblers than the Health Survey.
8. Such figures will inevitably be used to influence policy, as evidence for LAs to refuse new premises applications and in the media.
9. Industry communication to DCMS and the Commission is planned along with engagement with the Office for National Statistics.

Item 5 Local Authority Issues

Planning

10. The Group discussed ongoing issues with planning permission. Since the last meeting GBG has proposed an article for inclusion in the IOL's Journal and has contacted the editor of the Planner publication – who has yet to respond.
11. An AGC in Blackpool recently got its GA05 licence before its change of use which the planning department refused. Following discussions with planning they were willing to grant an FEC with an over 18s area.
12. Lengthy discussions with planning teams and licensing teams in order to get a UFEC permit were discussed. Whilst LAs mellow once they understand more about a UFEC, it is a time-consuming process to de-bunk the anti-gambling rhetoric and educate them about the Gambling Act.

LGA Engagement

13. The Safer and Stronger Communities Board at the Local Government Association (LGA) has gambling within its remit. The GBG recently offered to address that Board and to facilitate visits to gambling premises but was advised that that Board tends to focus on taxis and alcohol and rarely discusses gambling issues.
14. It was noted that the IOL/LGA recently published training standard for [Licensing Committee members](#) which includes both gambling and licensing.
15. Whilst the GBG has a good working relationship with the Welsh LGA, the GBG Licensing Group agreed it would be good to explore other ways to engage with (English) LGA.

ACTION: EM to explore other avenues into the LGA

LA visits

16. Some Members had seen a recent increase in LA visits. LAs are likely to be undertaking visits before the end of the financial year so they can include them on their 20023/24 annual return to the Commission.
17. Noted that one operator had recently been the subject of joint GC/LA test purchasing exercise which had resulted in improved compliance without regulatory enforcement action being taken.

LA policy statements

18. LAs following the statutory timescales for Policy Statements should be consulting this year prior to publishing the next 3-year Policy Statement in January 2025. **ACTION: GBG to contact the Commission regarding the timescales for them updating the Guidance to Licensing Authorities (GLA)** as this is likely to dictate whether LAs do a light touch Policy Statement change for January 2025 with a fuller consultation once the White Paper changes have been implemented and the GLA updated.
19. It was noted that many LAs follow a similar, generic format with the larger cities having more detailed Policies which will be the ones to focus on when consultations start.

Item 6 Engagement with the IOL

20. The IOL is keen to have regular articles from GBG in both the LINK magazine and the more legalistic Journal. **ACTION: Members to suggest topics for the Journal.**
21. So far 25 licensing officers from the London area have signed up to attend the IOL/GBG joint session at ICE on Thursday 8th February
22. GBG has been invited to speak at the IOL's Gambling Conference for LAs in July.

Item 7 AOB/Future agenda items

23. It was noted that the timescales for the Commission processing applications varied by caseworker, with some taking over 25 weeks.
24. Changes of corporate control take a long time whilst the timescales for processing variations have improved.
25. Members raised the fact that the checklist for change of corporate control was not suited to all sizes of investment companies, and this often led to repeated requests for information.
26. Also noted that the Commission was now asking for business continuity plans (which is not proportionate, especially for seasonal operators).
27. Recent contradictory correspondence had been sent out to operators regarding late submission of regulatory returns.

28. ACTION: GBG to write to GC regarding consistency of approach to processing applications.

Date of Next Meeting: 30 April 10 – 11.30