

'A 1 percent statutory levy would simply be the death knell for many gambling businesses in town and city centres'

As speculation mounts surrounding the introduction of a 1 percent statutory levy to replace the current RET contributions, Peter Hannibal, chief executive of the cross-sector strategic body the Gambling Business Group, has questioned both the need for a levy and the unfairness of applying such a proposal equally across every gambling vertical.

He told Coinslot: "I think the entire debate is divorced from the reality. Regulators and pressure groups should be reminded that problem gambling rates in the UK are declining and according to the Commission's own figures sit at an historic low of 0.2 percent. Hardly a backdrop that justifies spending more money on RET especially when the industry is paying an eye-watering £3bn in tax already?"

On top of this we have GambleAware with far more funding committed to them for Research Education and Treatment in the coming years than ever before.

The need for accountability and transparency for all of the past spending underpins the logic. "I don't think it's unreasonable for the industry, which after all is a key stakeholder, to ask to see a detailed evaluation of the millions of pounds that have been channelled through GambleAware" he stated. "There should be complete transparency regarding the impact of the commissioning decisions made, and an evidential

GAMBLING LEVY

With problem gambling rates at a record 0.2 percent low and the industry already paying £3bn in tax, the **Gambling Business Group** calls for the salvo on the industry to stop.

case needs to be presented that demonstrates how spending more will have a further positive impact on problem and/or disordered gambling: until that happens it looks remarkably like a case of insatiable academics and research bodies sitting underneath what they perceive to be an evergreen money tree.

"The Betting and Gaming Council members have conscientiously committed to spending £100m on RET over the next five-years, which is far in excess of anything that has been seen before in the history of Gambling Research Education and Treatment. Surely, any responsible organisation would want to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of

what's already been spent and committed before demanding even more?"

Accepting that the concept of a statutory levy is at best misguided, any proposals to apply a flat rate across every vertical belies a total lack of awareness and insight: "The land-based gambling sector was the first to close due to Covid restrictions and among the very last to return to business" he stated. "With diminished reserves land-based operators are now facing wage inflation, unfair business rates, astronomic utility bills and are struggling to keep their fiscal heads above water. A 1 percent levy on turnover might not sound a lot to those

who don't understand, but it has a massively disproportionate impact on small margin of profitability and would therefore be the death knell for many gambling businesses in towns and city centres, undermining high street rejuvenation and the Government's levelling-up agenda.

"Applying a tiered levy system would appear to be the only way for this to work without unfairly impacting some Licence types over others. But in the end, isn't this just another tax on doing business at a time when overheads are spiralling out of control making large numbers of Licenced Gambling businesses simply unviable?"