

Peter Hannibal, Chief Executive of the Gambling Business Group, has called for action to address the way that information and confirmation biased evidence are dressed-up as 'facts' and wants the introduction of an independent fact-checker before reports are published. His demands were made in the wake of the House of Lords debate undertaken by the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry Committee on Gambling Harm, which took place on Wednesday 27 April.

Explaining his misgivings Hannibal said: "Firstly the data that the House of Lords report draws on is well over two years old and in the dynamic world that we live in is way past its sell-by date. In terms of specifics, the executive report alleges that one third of a million people are problems gamblers a claim that is simply factually incorrect. The Gambling Commission's current numbers 'estimate' 0.3 percent of the

'Get your facts right!' Peter Hannibal tells House of Lords in light of misinformed debate

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

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population might be problem gamblers, which equates to less than half the number quoted. The Lords appear to disregard the fact that problem gambling rates are, according to the officially recognised statistics, declining."

According to the GBG chief executive the Lords are also out of touch with the British public, when they urge that horse racing, the sport of kings, should be afforded specific protections in a revised gambling act, but



other sports that are loved and enjoyed by many millions more should be subjected to advertising and sponsorship bans, which Peter Hannibal argues "Will have a huge impact on less-

elitist sporting clubs who rely on such revenues for their survival. Similarly, the Lords also seem to believe that the less affluent should be in some way be protected from themselves and that by imposing restrictions on new premises which they assert are in non-middle class urban areas ordinary people should not be able to choose how they spend their leisure time and money. Perhaps they should also be arguing in favour of closing pubs or introducing self-appointed

health Tsars at supermarket check-outs?"

He continued: "In arguably the most sensational part of the debate the Lords claim that, and I quote from the report 'On average, one problem gambler commits suicide every day.' Yet in the detail, their report goes on to explain how difficult it is to discern the causes of suicide because of a lack of available information and the co-morbidity of mental health issues. They even say that the Government has no

official figures or even estimates of the number of gambling-related suicides each year in the UK.

Thank goodness Baroness Fox and Lord Smith of Hindhead were in the debate to apply some common sense and cut through the seemingly elitist views of what working class gambling consumers should and shouldn't be allowed to do with their own money."

The Gambling Business Group is calling for a transparent approach to the way in which data is sourced and how it is used in political debates and official reports. Peter Hannibal confirmed: "The industry has become accustomed to the way in which some media outlets use outlandish and incorrect data as clickbait, but for that same erroneous and frankly dubious approach to 'inform' political debate in the House of Lords should be unacceptable and is highly dangerous - poor evidence will inevitably lead to poor legislation."