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“Im really sorry, but you are going to have to start paying business rates...”

## Peter Hannibal: “It’s simply self-defeating to add to the tax burden at a time when footfall on high streets is decreasing”

**Peter Hannibal**, CEO of the Gambling Business Group, is looking carefully at the Chancellor’s options to grow the economy. And it isn’t through a rise in business rates. That, he argues, could set the high street recovery back a decade.

“ This is a crucial Autumn Statement for the Chancellor, especially with respect to his fiscal strategy for growing business on the high street.

As we all know, the hospitality sector is in a very precarious position; pubs falling to below 100,000 for the first time, small business insolvencies at their highest and land-based gaming and gambling operations still falling shy of their pre Covid levels of performance.

What we need to avoid is imposing further tax increases on those businesses that are investing heavily to revive high streets up and down the country.

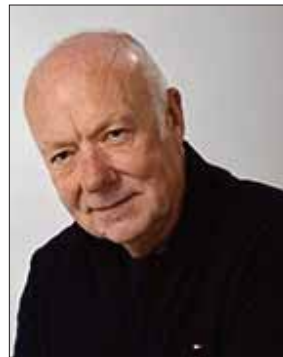
Current talk of a multi-billion pound business rates grab by the Treasury will undermine any progress made and could set the UK high street economy back another decade.

It’s an unpalatable call for the

chancellor, we all accept that, but we simply cannot afford a business rates rise going into 2024; in fact, we would encourage the Treasury to be bold and ambitious and reduce or at least freeze business rates to allow businesses to continue investing on the high street.

Gambling Business Group has members who are, and want to continue investing literally hundreds of thousands of pounds to renovate new high street operations - and they are doing this throughout the UK. It’s simply self-defeating to add to their tax burden at a time when footfall on high streets is decreasing and borrowing those funds to invest is increasing.

We have to start looking at hospitality as the central force for the regeneration of our high streets and avoid restricting that investment with a tax, that quite frankly everyone recognises needs scrapping



and restructuring.

At the same time, it’s also important to put into play more targeted and nuanced considerations that the chancellor should be considering particularly for the gaming and gambling sector.

Next year, the land-based sector will have the added burden of a statutory levy which will take a four to five figure sum out of the annual revenues of small bingo hall, LBO and amusement arcade operators - and significantly more from the larger operators.

For these businesses to survive - and more importantly for local communities - thrive on the high street, concessions on the likes of Machine Games Duty and Bingo Duty would provide a crucial saviour. For some, it could mean the difference between staying open or shutting shop, keeping staff on or laying them off - while for others, it will keep crucial investment on the high street flowing.

We cannot keep talking seriously about the regeneration of our high streets if we continue to keep taking from those businesses that we rely upon to breathe life back into them”