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Email your views: ks@sjc.co.uk

It was only two months ago that the Gambling Business Group warned of the dangers that false facts on gambling behaviour are having on the industry and impacting the reputation of the land based sector. That danger has already manifest itself in a series of local arcade applications which have been rejected by councillors on grounds that include false facts.

Since then, on the national stage, the usually well-informed Lord Foster has spoken in Parliament, once again repeating false figures on gambling related suicides - albeit not deliberately, but certainly incorrectly and, given that he was alerted to the inaccuracy during the Bacta AGM last year, one must say, carelessly too.

The latest, and probably more serious misrepresentation, came during stakeholder evidence given at the recent DCMS Select Committee where on numerous occasions, official data compiled by the Gambling Commission itself, was, according to the Gamblers Consumer Forum, misrepresented during testimonies. "On multiple occasions a misreporting of official statistics and a misinterpretation of data and clinical classifications lifted from various studies" were delivered into evidence it said.

The Forum has now challenged the Commission to protect, not just the credibility of its data and research findings, but also ensure adherence to the three pillars of the Code of Practice for Statistics: trustworthiness, quality and value.

In its letter to Commission chief Andrew Rhodes, and copied to Dame Caroline Dineage MP, Chair of the Culture, Media, and Sport Committee, the Forum argued that testimony given "continuously misinterpreted findings from research"; was "guilty of misreporting of official statistics"; "misinterpreted PGSI results by activity in order to inflate figures."

With forensic detail, the Forum highlighted various sections of testimony providing analysis and detail of misrepresentation.

And the Forum raised another interesting perspective, and one that will probably cause some discomfort for the Gambling Commission with regard to the parties the regulator is there to protect.

It wrote: "The Gambling Commission has a legal duty to stand up for each and every group of consumers, and therefore we hope you will take this letter of complaint ... extremely seriously."

The 20-30 million+ ordinary

gamblers in the country are finding a voice, it seems, small though it may be.

The bigger noise, though, may soon come in the shape of a call for an official fact checking system to ensure the credibility of data and findings on gambling.

Peter Hannibal, chief executive of the Gambling Business Group, believes this is fast becoming inevitable. He told Coinslot: "For some time, GBG has been calling for a check on some of the wilder false facts. But the situation is worsening; one false fact gets retweeted and then liked by a politician and before we know, it becomes an accepted narrative. But it's still a

false fact. This is having serious implications on people's jobs on the high street and the important role gambling businesses play in their local community."

He added: "What I find most disturbing is that someone in a responsible position in a high profile charity appears to have gone out of their way to intentionally distort facts and evidence in this calculated way - in order to mislead the CMS Select Committee. And all of this done 'under oath'. I've read the Gamblers Consumer Forum letter and it provides yet another record of misrepresentation of official facts. That does not move the safer gambling debate on, it takes it backwards. We

Searching for facts and acting on falsehoods

Peter Hannibal said...
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should be doing everything we can to genuinely help and support those in need, not use that need as a political football for our own ends."

Hannibal concluded: "We have completed some good work recently in calling out dishonesty and misrepresentation of facts and evidence, and it is encouraging to see others like the GCF having the courage to do the same.

We now need the Commission to look seriously at this issue and take some control of the narrative - and the GBG would be only too delighted to help and support them via a joint fact checking & calling out procedure."



"I can see this is going to be interesting testimony gentlemen..."

Commission under pressure to challenge false representation of official gambling data

DATA & ANALYSIS

The call for all gambling data and research findings to be subject to a mandatory fact checking process is growing following recent false findings provided during the recent evidence hearings to the DCMS Select Committee. The latest to complain is the **Gamblers Consumer Forum**, a body established to represent the interests of the ordinary punter, which has written to the Gambling Commission about the misrepresentation of official data.