

Climate change: The Gambling Business Group sees a warming between regulator and regulated

REGULATION

The **Gambling Business Group** has welcomed the regulator's publication of the Terms of Reference to the newly conceived Industry Forum. Happy with the Commission's commitment to transparency and obligations to the Regulators' Code, GBG chief Peter Hannibal and General Manager Charlotte Meller explore what the Forum could deliver.

“I think it's important that we both recognise and welcome this transformational approach to the industry by the regulator,” noted Gambling Business Group CEO Peter Hannibal, as his trade body sets about the task of assessing the Gambling Commission's Industry Forum and the role the GBG and its members might play in the new committee's discourse.

“The soundings from the Commission, particularly with regard to the Forum's Terms of Reference, show a responsibility to its obligations to the industry, far beyond anything we've seen before,” he explained. “References to the requirements of the Regulators' Code and enhancing its engagement with the industry - this is refreshing language from the Commission - and the Industry Forum shows action on these commitments as well. It's a hugely important step - and definitely in the right direction for the longevity of the sector.”

The Gambling Business Group has already seen this warming of the regulatory climate: just two months ago the Commission's Director of Strategy Brad Enright attended the trade body's Board Meeting and discussed issues of joint interest, including the development of a new Gambling Ombudsman.

At the time, the Industry Forum had only just been unveiled, but even at that early stage conversations on this innovation were already constructive.

“I know Coinslot has already raised the point on a number of occasions that an Industry Forum is



a very late in the day introduction, and I don't think anyone would disagree. It's over 15 years since the Commission was formed, so it's been a long time coming - especially when you see how far down the road the engagement with the Lived Experience initiative has moved. Realistically, the Industry Forum has a lot of catching up to do, both in re-establishing a sensible balance in the narrative surrounding gambling and conveying ideas and suggestions on better and more effective regulation,” Hannibal stated.

Whether he, or one of his Gambling Business Group members will throw their hat into the Industry Forum ring before the 18 December deadline is not yet known - but it would certainly be a welcome development should they decide to accept the mission.

Charlotte Meller, GBG General

Manager, was a little more cautious; for her, the Industry Forum needs as broad a representation as possible. “It has not been made explicit by the Commission whether they want licensed operators as opposed to trade associations on the Forum,” she observed. “Either way though, it's absolutely imperative that the land based sector is properly represented. And that's not just high street operations, but the motorway services, the holiday parks, the clubs etcetera - it's so important for the Commission not to make the same mistakes. We can't leave sectors out, and we can't flood it with one sector such as online. And equally important is making sure the smaller operators have a voice as well.”

Conscious of the role the Industry Forum would play, questions have already been asked of the Commis-

sion - will it have any influence?

The answer, as outlined in the Terms of Reference published by the Commission, suggests it will only shape understanding rather than decisions. Something which is very different, it seems, from the Lived Experience programme.

“The Forum has no decision-making role,” says the terms of reference, a point it re-emphasised with force: “The Forum is not a decision-making body and does not set the Commission's strategy. The Forum does, however, contribute to the Commission's understanding of the industry and the impact of the Commission's strategy on operators and the operating environment.”

Not overly encouraging, one has to say. But Hannibal is stoical.

“We can, and probably will, pick away at this like a scab,” he stated.

“But we can't lose sight of how important it is to have a voice at much closer range to the Commission - in fact, it's within its own corridors. So we need to work hard on the Industry Forum, and also take advantage of a Commission that is committed to transparency as it states in the Forum terms. This is an opportunity for a direct dialogue and to a certain degree, an opportunity for accountability from the Commission. That's of major importance to the industry,” he added.

It's the dawn of a new era for gambling operatives in the UK, certainly in terms of legislation and regulation, and there's a tiny stream of light shining through in regard to the accessibility of regulator to regulated - as Hannibal says, this is a transformational opportunity.

The commitments

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SGGP joined by ADIPS for Scottish government meeting

SAFETY

The Amusement Device Inspection Procedures Scheme joined a Showmen's Guild Cross-party group meeting at the Scottish Parliament last week for an “immensely encouraging” discussion on safety at fairgrounds.

Responsible operation was a “core consideration” of the meeting, convened by David Torrence,

with the Scottish Section of the guild inviting ADIPS to ensure best practice continues across the country.

“ADIPS is seen as an integral partner in the safe operation of fairgrounds across Scotland,” said a spokesperson. “Indeed, we have been invited by COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) to provide safety guidance to

authorities on amusement devices.

“So, it was great to be at Holyrood to meet with the Guild and MSPs.”

While at Holyrood, ADIPS general manager Carl Hagemann met Christina McKelvie MSP, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development, and shared the group's progress with its new



Your Ride Checker scheme.

The public-facing scheme launched on 1 August, and features stickers which carry QR codes enabling customers to scan and check that the owner or controller of that ride has the necessary ADIPS DOC.

“All in all, a very productive visit to Edinburgh and I look forward to returning soon,” said Hagemann.