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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

BGC convenes all-comers seminar to update industry stakeholders on the creation of a gambling Ombudsman

REGULATION

The Betting and Gaming Council has invited members of the industry to attend a 19 July seminar to discuss the appointment of an **industry Ombudsman**, with bacta CEO John White stating it is “of huge importance” for members of the low-stakes sector to attend.

Having been appointed by the government to oversee creation of a gambling Ombudsman in the recent White Paper, the Betting and Gaming Council has organised a meeting this month to update stakeholders on how the role is to be established.

With a deadline for the appointment of an independent investigatory body set for summer 2024, the council has invited representatives from all sectors of the industry to attend the online seminar on 19 July in order to liaise on effective implementation.

“As you will know from the White Paper the Betting and Gaming Council is leading on the work to establish an industry Ombudsman by summer 2024,” said BGC general manager Charlotte Wells.

“Members are invited to attend a BGC meeting from 10am to 11am on Wednesday 19 July to hear, and input into, how this work is progressing.”

The BGC has long campaigned for the creation of an industry Ombudsman, with CEO Michael Dugher telling recently-appointed culture secretary Lucy Frazer earlier this year “we have already called for an Ombudsman to improve consumer redress and have engaged extensively with previous ministers.”

Alongside director of standards and innovation Wes Himes, Dugher reiterated the importance of the role at a DCMS committee hearing this week, telling MPs that the council supported the White Paper’s recommendation “very, very strongly.”

Speaking on the seminar announcement, bacta CEO John White encouraged members to attend in order to ensure the low-stakes industry



Covering all bases

John White said...
“It is vital that bacta members ensure that their voice is heard ... The last thing that we want is to have a structure that fails to recognise our needs both now and moving forward...”

is represented, stating “it is of huge importance that those outside of the BGC input to the thinking on this crucial issue.”

“I should stress that the Ombudsman is for the entire gambling sector - online, on-land, high and low stake - so it is vital that any proposals reflect the needs of bacta members.”

With key issues to be considered including the infrastructure and staffing required for the Ombudsman’s office, its scope, powers, and funding, as well as the reporting protocols, White added: “It is vital that bacta members ensure that their voice is heard and I would urge members to participate in the BGC video conference, hear about the current state of play, provide their insight and be part of the conversation.”

“The last thing that we want is to have a structure that fails to recognise our needs both now and moving forward.”

An Ombudsman for all seasons

So, the industry is finally going to get an Ombudsman.

Gambling Business Group CEO **Peter Hannibal** talks us through what its creation will mean.

Coinslot: Is the GBG working closely with the BGC on the Ombudsman project?

Peter Hannibal: The GBG has an excellent working relationship with the BGC and will be working closely with them in developing this initiative.

Coinslot: What is the GBG’s main criteria for the Ombudsman?

Peter Hannibal: That it’s formation, it’s governance and it’s outcomes are a credit to the industry and it’s reputation.

Coinslot: How is the Ombudsman going to deal with the differing elements of the industry - land-based, online etc?

Peter Hannibal: The Ombudsman is going to have to have access to knowledge and experience from ALL sectors and subsectors and Gambling PLC in

order to adjudicate effectively. This is inevitably going to have to include responsible/safer gambling knowledge as well as gambling activity and product knowledge.

Coinslot: Is the Ombudsman going to be empowered to challenge the work of the Gambling Commission?

Peter Hannibal: From the perspective of the general public, the Ombudsman is going to be receiving issues and disputes from all corners and types of gambling activity (other than for the National Lottery).

The outcomes of those deliberations will be new consumer intelligence and should therefore be available to inform decision making.

We expect that the results of the Ombudsman’s work could have an impact on any part of or organisation throughout the industry.

Coinslot: Is the BGC able to deliver an Ombudsman for all sectors of the industry?

Peter Hannibal: Yes they can, as long as they continue to work collaboratively and that the end result is genuinely ‘independent’.

The ethical challenge is how to create an organisation that is knowledgeable and effective in its work, without being subject to accusations that the industry is marking its own homework’.

This is another great opportunity to enhance the industry’s reputation and we must not let it go to waste.



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