

Coutts-Farage fall-out: Now all the UK's banks must fall into line and open their services to gaming and gambling businesses says GBG

Love him or loathe him, one thing is certain in the mother of all democracies: Nigel Farage must be entitled to hold a British bank account without prejudice.

And that principle, says the influential trade body the Gambling Business Group, must also be applied across the business customer spectrum where the mainstream high street banks have repeatedly refused to provide banking facilities to gaming and gambling businesses - and have been doing so for many years.

The body is calling on the government and financial ombudsman to force British banks to provide banking services to all businesses in the industry from the smallest high street FEC to the largest multi-media gaming groups - all of whom have been legitimately licensed by the Gambling Commission.

Chief executive Peter Hannibal stated: "The so-called principle of many banks not to accept banking applications from gaming and gambling businesses is fast becoming a restriction on trade for a broad based industry that drives somewhere in the region of £5-10 billion through the UK economy. The majority of high street banks have closed their doors on thousands of businesses in our sector - many citing ethical rather than economic reasons."

BANKING SERVICES

When Nigel Farage had his Coutts account closed on the grounds that the bank didn't like his politics - that decision pushed the door wide open to long-standing prejudice in the banking sector. The government didn't like it, the public didn't like it, and even the Farage-haters found it unacceptable. Banking facilities should be open to everyone in the UK - and that means those in the gaming and gambling sectors who have all been refused accounts by the high street banks. **The Gambling Business Group** insists this much change - and now.



He added: "The Farage affair highlights the unacceptable doctrine that drives this kind of prejudicial policy: the government has made it very clear that discrimination against legitimate and legal enterprises is not acceptable. These restrictions must be lifted and the government needs to ensure that Britain is open for business - all types of lawful businesses - and that

the financial sector must adhere to a banking access for all policy."

The call is not a new one; gaming and gambling trade bodies have been railing against what has been described as a banking ban on gambling for many years now. Banks such as Barclays, Co-operative Bank and RBS were among the first to refuse to open accounts to gambling

businesses, with the trend now extending to new banks - notably Monzo - who are following suit.

Hannibal noted: "From an ethical standpoint, many would place the banking sector's chequered governance over the last 20 years somewhat south of gambling's. The sanctimonious banking block has reached a point where change must be

Open our bank accounts

Peter Hannibal says...

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"Our own organisation - a trade body which represents some of the most respectable and socially responsible gaming and gambling businesses on Britain's high street - were in the past refused a bank account with numerous high profile banks, even though we don't trade in gambling per se. This is a restriction that should be challenged - not in the courts by businesses, but through government legislation."

He added: "Almost 25 million people in this country gamble regularly - and safely - as part of their leisure and entertainment experience. The banking system seems to think this pastime is immoral and illegal. It is neither and this financial blockade must be reversed."

The Gambling Business Group, which is actively involved in the current consultation process of the gambling review white paper, is planning to raise the issue further within the DCMS, the government department that oversees gambling policy, as well as the department for business and trade.

Former Bell-Fruit sales director John McLoughlin dies aged 69

OBITUARY

John McLoughlin, recognisable to many as the face of Bell-Fruit, has passed away aged 69, with the popular industry figure remembered by colleagues as "a gentleman and a true friend."

McLoughlin, who retired in 2018, began his career as a management trainee at Bell-Fruit in the 1970s, subsequently working for Allied Breweries, ACE, and JPM, before returning to the firm in which he started.



"My sincerest condolences go to John's widow, Carol, children James and Sarah and their grandchildren," said Bell-Fruit colleague John Austin, who described McLoughlin as "a gentleman and a true friend."

Veteran and former Coinslot editor David Snook added: "When Johnny Mac formed conclusions on any issue, everyone listened and took due note. He was another valuable asset to the industry that is now gone, but won't be forgotten."

Having initially worked as a teacher in

France, McLoughlin joined Bell-Fruit at a trainee level before being promoted to regional manager.

Stints as machine manager at Allied Breweries, and sales director at ACE followed, before JPM's acquisition of the latter saw him appointed sales manager of both brands.

He then rejoined Bell-Fruit, where he was "pivotal in the company's success."

His funeral will be held at 11am on 10 August at St Augustine's Church, Nottingham.