

Charlotte Meller: "The industry is in the mood to talk and examine how we can - and actually are - reviving the UK's high streets"

ARE PREVIEW : GAMBLING BUSINESS GROUP'S HIGH STREET HUB

The **GBG's High Street Hub** has moved to the north this year for another keynote event working in partnership with the Institute of Licensing. On Wednesday 30 April, the Hub will be dedicated to licensing officials from the local and police authorities at the ARE Expo in the Cotton Sheds, Manchester. It's a day of workshops, technology tours and debate as the Gambling Business Group furthers the industry's engagement with the country's Local Authorities. Charlotte Meller, the GBG's General Manager, explains all.

The Gambling Business Group will play host to local authority officials from across the north of England and down to the Midlands next week as members of the Institute of Licensing visit the trade body's High Street Hub at the ARE Expo in Manchester.

Following the success of last year's inaugural licence officers day at the GBG Hub during ICE London, the GBG has expanded its programme for attending local authorities and policing bodies on Wednesday 30 April to incorporate workshops, exhibitor tours and a panel of keynote speakers aimed at building greater understanding of the breadth of community, safe play and technological projects underway in the gambling sector.

Putting the IoL schedule together is Charlotte Meller, the GBG's General Manager, who spent nearly two decades working in the local authority arena prior to joining the trade body. And she sees the evolving relationship between the Gambling Business Group and the Institute of Licensing as a fundamental pillar of the industry's regulatory engagement.

"Licensing officials at local authorities are among the most important relationships our businesses have, and the High Street Hub was formed to build and strengthen that partnership," she noted. "Every one of our operations has a key and direct association with their LA authorities and it's vital to keep building the knowledge and understanding between the two parties."

Which explains the range of topics the IoL sessions will be featuring during the Cotton Sheds forum next week. The workshops will



cover developments on the Gambling Act Review; how Local Authorities should be aligning inspections to their Statement of Principles; Compliance data available to LAs when inspecting premises; gaming machine permits in pubs and clubs; Digital proof of Age; Staff and customer security in gambling premises; Positive Play and Martyn's Law.

And there's no shortage of expertise on hand. GBG members Louise Clarke (Betsmart), Howard Gant (Boomerang Digital), Elizabeth Varley (Poppleston Allen), Obi Udano (ACCs), Craig Murray (Link Integrated), Rob Mabbett and David Richardson (Better Change), Piers Warne (TLT) and Richard Dutton (ELIAS) will all be staging workshops on the morning of Wednesday 30 April.

And these will be followed by licensing officer tours to the stands of both Boomerang Digital and Innovative Technology in order to take a closer look at gaming



machine safer gambling tools and age estimation technology. And throughout the day too, bingo tablet technology and safer gambling tools will also be demonstrated on the High Street Hub floor.

"It's a great opportunity for the industry to explain its positive play programme and detail the direction of travel for safe gambling technology. There is so much pioneering work going on in the industry to deliver the best, safest and most entertaining offering on the high street, and the Hub will continue to



expand its reach in delivering this message," Meller added.

And there will be debate and discussion - and expect lively engagement at that. Chris Jones, Coinslot owner and marketing expert, will conduct the final session of the IoL day with observations on the relationship between local authorities and gambling operations.

With over 35 years working in the gambling sector, and twenty years service for all the major football bodies, Jones has a deep understanding of

how the industry plays a fundamental role in local communities and the high street economy.

And he will be in good company, not least with the welcome attendance of David Lucas, the Vice Chair of the IoL. Also Chair of the IoL's East Midlands Region and the 2019 recipient of the IoL's Jeremy Allen Award for excellence in licensing, Lucas will be adding his breadth of experience to proceedings which includes duties as a member of the national Board of Best Bar None and the Committee of National Pubwatch.

Meller concluded: "There's a lot of anticipation around the ARE Expo as it makes its debut next week. And this year's High Street Hub could not be more timely as the countdown to new regulation edges closer and the economic conditions get more pressing. The industry is in the mood to talk and examine how we can - and actually are - reviving the UK's high streets. We hope we can keep that debate moving forward."

The pioneers

Charlotte Meller said...

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