

Tim Miller calls for pause in reforms as Gambling Commission directs its focus on black market

ILLEGAL GAMBLING

Gambling Commission executive director **Tim Miller** told attendees at the BGC AGM that the regulator remains dedicated to addressing the black market during a "period of change," with a £26m boost from DCMS due this April to help pursue and prosecute criminal activity.

Gambling Commission executive director **Tim Miller** has advocated for a pause in reforms to the UK gambling sector, as the regulator looks to let recent changes "bed in" while it pursues investigations into the illegal market with £26m funding allocated by DCMS.

Speaking at the Betting and Gaming Council AGM, Miller acknowledged the raft of sector-wide changes that have been implemented as a result of the White Paper, and expressed his support for "a period of some regulatory stability."

"To make the greatest progress in making gambling safe, fair and crime free we need to understand what actually works in practice," said Miller. "Getting into a position where we are on an endless treadmill of reform



will not take us any further forward in figuring out what works. And like a treadmill, we will risk expending a lot of energy just to go nowhere."

"That's not an outcome the Commission wants. So we will complete our work to implement the Gambling

Act Review. But we then think it's important that there is some time for these changes to bed in. A period of some regulatory stability. And I think that creates some opportunities."

One opportunity Miller focused on is "ramping up our efforts in tackling the

illegal market," addressing both supply and demand, while maintaining the appeal of the UK's regulated sector.

"As well as protecting consumers we need to protect the regulated market that has been created here. I am clear that if we are to win the

fight against the criminals that seek to exploit British consumers then we need to consider how we retain that same diversity, competitiveness and success in our domestic gambling industry in the years to come."

"I think now is the time for that conversation. To be clear, that is not me accepting that recent regulatory changes have been one of the top drivers to the illegal market. Our research does not provide evidence for that conclusion. The regulatory reforms of the last ten or so years were necessary."

However, acknowledging the need for innovation in the marketplace, Miller told attendees "if you have ideas, come and talk to us about them - show us your commitment to the licensing objectives and we'll show you our commitment to supporting innovation."

Gambling Business Group submits response to DCMS Cat D consultation

CONSULTATION

The Gambling Business Group has confirmed it submitted a response to the DCMS Consultations on Cat D gaming machines and bingo premises licensing, stating "regulation must be evidence-led, proportionate and aligned with the Government's Growth Agenda."

The consultation, which concerned changes to stakes and prizes as well as the creation of a new category of "slot-style" non-money prize machines, closed for entries last month with the department stating an outcome is due to be published "soon."

"We raised concerns around the lack of clear evidence behind several proposals, uncertainty over what issues the changes are designed to address, the risk of increased cost and complexity for operators and local authorities," stated the BGC.

"On bingo, we also highlighted its importance to local communities and the need to avoid stifling innovation. On Category D machines, we welcomed the review of stakes and prizes, while cautioning against adding further complexity through new sub-categories. Constructive engagement is key to ensuring regulation supports clarity, sustainability and growth."

Though DCMS has given no precise date for the publication of the consultation's findings, visitors to the consultation website are currently presented with the message "we are analysing your feedback."

"Visit this page again soon to download the outcome to this public feedback."



"This year things were a bit different": BGC AGM focuses on tackling the black market

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The focus was on tackling the illegal black market at this year's Betting and Gaming Council AGM, held on 26 February at 11 Cavendish Square, London, and attended by key stakeholders in national policymaking.

With concerns mounting among UK operators that tax increases will fuel the growth of the unregulated sector, the council brought representatives together to present its case for greater regulatory and legislative collaboration.

"This year things were a bit different," said CEO Grainne Hurst. "Perhaps inevitably, the focus of our AGM was on the harmful, illegal black market. Operating outside UK regulation, tax and consumer protections, this growing criminal market presents serious challenges for both customers and the regulated sector."

"There was clear consensus in the room that further policy changes - including last year's tax increases - will accelerate this shift away from the regulated



market. Illegal operators exploiting UK consumers must be tackled."

Both gambling minister Baroness Twycross and shadow culture secretary Nigel Huddleston MP were present at the AGM, as well as the Gambling Commission's Executive Director Tim Miller, with Hurst thanking attendees for provoking a "lively discussion."

"Despite the seriousness of the subject, the AGM remains an important opportunity for the industry to come together."