

# Cardiff casino a good thing, claims expert

A leading academic has concluded that a regional casino in Cardiff would be good for the city.

Professor Peter Collins, who is director at the Centre of Study of Gambling at the University of Salford, believes that a regional casino would have a positive effect on the Welsh capital.

He said: „There are significant benefits in terms of the public interest in licensing casinos, particularly regional casinos. In Cardiff it would bring about £120m of investment in facilities that would benefit non-gamblers.“

If the Government agrees to Cardiff as a site for a regional casino, it will bring forward early large scale investment into the GBP 700 million ISV project, ensuring funding for the sporting facilities come quicker, so it will be delivered by 2010 to support both UK and visiting international athletes for the 2012 Olympics.

The council recently named UK/Australian organisation Aspers as the operator it wants to work with to deliver a truly world class destination incorporating the regional casino.

Aspers remain committed to ensuring the casino is managed properly and as a responsible operator want to offer people with gambling problems the appropriate help.

As a result it has teamed up with local community leaders to launch a working group in Cardiff to promote responsible gaming.

The Community Action for Responsible Gaming (CARG) will be made up of a cross section of the community in Cardiff,

including representatives from churches, interfaith groups, the police and Cardiff Council to address the concerns of local people

Professor Collins, whose current teaching and research interests are on Gambling and Public Policy, with special reference to Ethics and Gambling, Problem Gambling and Internet Gambling, believes that initiatives like CARG are crucial in helping to reduce gambling problems.

„The evidence from around the world is quite clear – that introducing large casinos does not automatically lead to an increase in problem gambling or other negative social impacts. On the contrary, it can lead to a decline in problem gambling numbers provided the introduction of the casino is accompanied by an appropriate public awareness campaign.“

The development at the ISV appears to meet all known criteria currently outlined by both Government and the Casino Advisory Panel (CAP) for a regional casino

The Gambling Act, recently passed by Parliament, currently allows for only one regional casino but Cardiff Council, along with other local authorities, is calling for this to change.

Professor Collins said: „I don't know anyone in Parliament or, for that matter, outside who thinks that one regional casino is the right number. It doesn't make any sense whatsoever. All one does is deprive other local authorities from securing the economic benefits in areas where there are high levels of disadvantage.“

„I would say that a regional casino in Cardiff will not solve the problems of deprivation but you will find that it will give a very substantial kick-start to economic development in the area and the benefits would very substantially outweigh the cost.“

Cardiff Council leader Rodney Berman said: „I welcome the

comments of Professor Collins and they are further evidence of why a regional casino is the right way forward Cardiff."

„One of the reasons Aspers were chosen was because of its responsible attitude to gambling. The formation of CARG highlights Aspers commitment to help people with gambling problems which, as Professor Collins has highlighted, is very important if regional casinos are to work in the community."

He added: „We remain hopeful that a Cardiff can secure a regional casino the put the ISV on the map as a world class sporting and leisure destination, supporting the UK's ability to successfully host the Olympics of 2012."