

Casino firm Stanley Leisure says trading on track

London (Reuters) – British casino group Stanley Leisure Plc said on Wednesday its full-year performance had met expectations, helped by upmarket London sites recovering most of a first-half downturn seen after the July bombings.

Stanley also said business at its casinos in the provinces was still being boosted by the ending of a law which had prevented new members entering a casino for 24 hours.

Chief Executive Bob Wiper said second-half attendance in the provinces was up a sixth with more women – around 30 percent of players now versus 20 percent previously – and more gamblers aged under 40.

Stanley shares, which had performed in line with the index of other travel and leisure sector companies over the past 12 months, were up 1.4 percent at 722 pence by 0840 GMT to value the business at 516 million pounds (USD 948 million).

Other changes in Britain's gaming laws mean only 17 licences are now available for a new wave of casino and leisure venues, one of which will be a Las Vegas-style supercasino.

Those changes led to a flurry of new licence applications last week under the old rules before a Friday deadline.

Wiper said the underlying increase in casino numbers would be less than the number of new applications because relocating a casino required a new licence application.

Stanley has six new licence applications for relocations to bigger sites and five applications for new casinos.

Another changed law, a smoking ban in Scotland since March 26, had little effect on admissions so far „although there has

been a marginal reduction in win per admission," Wiper said, adding that some players were clearly popping out for a cigarette break.

Four of Stanley's 41 casinos are in London, including the exclusive Crockfords and The Colony Club. They „enjoyed a good second half and have recovered most of the shortfall experienced in the first half," Wiper said.

The London venues saw first-half profit fall 40 percent as the July bombings scared away tourists in its second quarter, August to October.