

Casino panel leaves questions for resort

The Government's advisory panel has asked a series of questions ahead of a public examination of the resort's bid for the UK's one-and-only regional gambling licence.

Casino Advisory Panel members were in Blackpool over the weekend to visit sites Blackpool Council hopes to transform with the opening of the super casino.

Prior to the visit they drew up 17 questions which they want answered before the key public meeting in Blackpool on September 8.

They include:

- „Why is it that you (the council) are confident the new casino will benefit the mass of economically inactive people in your council's area?“
- „Why do you believe the negative impact of the new casino on the present substantial tourism business would be minimal?“
- „What would happen to your regeneration plans if you are not successful in gaining the recommendation for the one regional casino licence?“

Other questions relate to the anti-casino lobby and views of some that the planned Las Vegas-style gambling mecca will merely take money away from existing businesses.

Blackpool Council's deputy leader Coun Eddie Collett said the authority was now working on its responses.

He said: „The panel asked that the original bids be no longer than 20 pages which meant we could not go into detail. This means that all eight councils bidding to be licensed to build

the UK's first regional casino are being asked relevant follow-up questions. We had always anticipated there would be additional questions and the 17 asked of us give the opportunity to expand on our bid and illustrate just how much work and research has gone into our decision to apply for this much sought-after, regeneration prize.

„We're absolutely convinced this will be good for Blackpool's economy, creating much-needed, better paid, all-year-round jobs. We now need to make sure that in answering these questions, and at the examination in public on September 8, we can convince the panel, too.“

All eight potential super casino sites – Blackpool, Brent (Wembley), Cardiff, Glasgow, Greenwich (Millennium Dome), Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield – have been asked to submit more information.

Glasgow has been asked for assurances about the progress on a number of proposed transport links including the Glasgow Airport Rail Link, the M74 development and improvement to the subway system.

Officials also asked organisers of the Greenwich bid whether there would be adequate transport links including easy access to the Stratford Eurostar terminal.

Prof Stephen Crow, the CAP chairman, said an examination in public into the Blackpool proposal would be held in the resort to allow interested parties to have their say.