

# We are a Better Bet than most for Casino

An angry councillor has blasted government bosses for throwing out Paisley's bid to win backing for a Las Vegas-style casino.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport rejected the proposals which would have pumped GBP 5 million into the local economy and created 100 jobs after deciding Renfrewshire wasn't as well placed as other areas across the UK to house the new gambling venue.

Councillor John McDowell, who heads up Renfrewshire's Licensing Board said Buddies had missed out on a "great boost".

"For Paisley to move out of the shadows of Glasgow when we have so much going for us, we have to do things on our own merit and in our own vision – we have to mark out our own identity," added the former provost.

"We have been held back for years and while the casino may not be everyone's cup of tea, it would have improved our economy to the tune of GBP 5 million."

Some 30 towns and cities across Britain will now compete for eight licences for large casinos with as many permits for smaller venues also available.

But Mr McDowell blasted the decision to drop Paisley while keeping smaller towns in the game.

"Stranraer is still on the short list but they have nothing close to the population we have as the largest town in Scotland," raged the Labour man.

This latest blow is the second time council leaders have thrown their lot in to win the jackpot prize and come away

disappointed – despite winning over experts on gambling addiction.

Renfrewshire Council thought they were in the running for a licence earlier this year only to be given no dice in May when they were again cut from the short list by Westminster kingpins.

The knock-back came just as bosses from the Renfrewshire Council on Alcohol Trust gave their backing. Its chief executive Dr Alex Crawford said: “As the lead agency in Scotland offering gambling counselling we are keen to ensure that casino bids are responsible in the way they propose to deal with gambling problems.

“Renfrewshire Council took a balanced position between the economic benefits and social costs of a casino and we were happy to support them.”