

Poker clubs bet on legal action

Tessa Jowell faces fresh embarrassment from her controversial Gambling Act as the UK's poker clubs join forces to challenge the new legislation.

They are considering taking legal action over the gaming law and, to boost their case, they will this week form a trade association. They have already hired top legal advice and Citigate as lobbyist. The UK Poker Clubs Association represents 72,000 members.

Poker clubs are furious that the Gambling Act, which comes into force this September, limits the daily membership fee they are allowed to charge to GBP3. This, they argue, restricts the prizes they can offer to players in tournaments and prevents them offering wider services to members. The act also places poker clubs in the same category as casinos, forcing them to obtain a casino licence.

Geoff Owen, chairman of the UKPCA, said: 'The imposition of casino licences on poker clubs is neither appropriate nor fair and could result in the closure of many clubs.

'In its current form, the Gambling Act could also result in a rise in online poker activity and unregulated „underground“ poker, as players seek venues away from a casino environment.'

A spokesman for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport said that the clubs should engage in a consultation process, rather than make legal threats.