

UK High Court rejects 'supercasino' challenge

London (Reuters) – Britain's high court dismissed a challenge to government plans to build a new wave of Las Vegas-style casinos in the UK on Monday, after a casino industry body claimed the plans were badly thought out.

The British Casinos Association (BCA), which represents 90 percent of Britain's casino operators, had sought a review of the government's new gambling policy, arguing plans for a 5,000 square-metre supercasino and 16 other large casinos were ill thought out and put the UK's existing casinos at a disadvantage.

Mr Justice Brian Langstaff, one of the country's senior judges, dismissed the challenge, ruling the government's plans to build the casinos had been „properly made“.

Casino operators such as GalaCoral, Rank and London Clubs have claimed opening the new Las Vegas-style casinos, and new rules forcing them to cut their number of slot machines could cost the industry 120 million pounds (USD 236.1 million) a year.

Sports minister Richard Caborn welcomed the decision.

„It is only right the new entitlement granted by the 2005 act should be limited to the 17 new casinos while we take time to assess them properly,“ he said.

„We have always put social protection and proper regulation above commercial interest and this judgement supports that approach.“

The government is gearing up to introduce sweeping changes to Britain's gambling laws in September when the 2005 Gambling Act comes into force.

Part of its plans were dealt a blow in March when the House of Lords, the upper house of Parliament, threw out proposals to build a supercasino in Manchester and 16 other large casinos across England, Scotland and Wales.

Outgoing Prime Minister Tony Blair has said the government will try again with the plans, but it has yet to say when it plans to do so or whether it will split the 16 smaller casinos from the Manchester venue.

Leeds, Hull, Great Yarmouth, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes, Southampton, Solihull and Newham have been earmarked as the locations for the 8 large casinos. The remaining 8 are planned for Bath, Dumfries and Galloway, East Lindsey, Luton, Scarborough, Swansea, Torbay and Wolverhampton.