

Conservative leader calls for casinos statement

Conservative leader David Cameron has called for a Government statement on supercasinos after Prime Minister Gordon Brown seemed to back away from the concept.

Brown outraged supporters of the massive gambling venues on Wednesday when he announced a review of whether they are the best way to revive run-down areas.

Manchester was the surprise winning bidder to host the casino and had been expecting us\$ 405 million investment and 2,700 jobs for the city's highly-deprived east end. But the scheme is now said by Whitehall sources to be „pretty much dead in the water“.

Cameron said of Brown's intervention on GMTV on Thursday: „I think that was an extraordinary thing yesterday, because he told us, you know, we want Cabinet government, everything is going to be carefully discussed, and suddenly the Government's policy is torn up on the sort of whim of an answer at Prime Minister's questions.“

„I think we need a Government statement, because there's the supercasino, which they were saying should go to Manchester. We were saying, the decision was very much flawed and they needed a proper review of that.“

Cameron said the Conservatives had congratulated Manchester at the time, but then had doubts about the process. „We congratulated Manchester, because we thought the review had been conducted properly, but then we found out that the decision to put it in Manchester, they hadn't looked at really important issues, like will this encourage problem gambling, should it be a destination casino, ie somewhere people actually have to go to in order to gamble rather than just

being in the centre of a big city.“

Brown's comments on Wednesday angered Labour MPs such as Graham Stringer (Manchester Blackley), who said it was „quite frankly insulting“ to think the city council had not examined the other possibilities for regenerating the area.

The plan had been stalled by the House of Lords which voted it down by just three votes after it was approved in the Commons by a margin of 24.

Asked at Question Time in the Commons what the next move would be, Brown said there would be „reflection over the next few months“ before a report on the social effects of gambling. „I hope that during these summer months we can look at whether regeneration in the areas for the supercasinos may be a better way of meeting their economic and social needs,“ he said.