

Odds on for casino

The Region has been given the clearest signal yet that a casino development is still on the cards.

According to MP Russell Brown it came from the prime minister.

The Dumfries and Galloway MP met Gordon Brown to discuss the implications of last week's announcement that the award of a super casino licence to Manchester was to be reviewed.

The surprise move only increased uncertainty over the future of the licence for Stranraer.

Council officials have been trying to clarify the situation since government plans for the Manchester licence were stalled by the House of Lords several months ago.

But according to Mr Brown the Prime Minister gave an assurance that the Government still intends to grant small casino licenses to those local authorities which were recommended by the Casinos Advisory Panel.

Dumfries and Galloway was one of the successful councils.

The plan is to create a small casino in Stranraer as part of the waterfront complex development of the town into a top tourist attract.

However, the move is not without its critics and there are fears a casino could create problems such as fueling gambling addiction.

Mr Brown believes a local decision on whether to go ahead should be made soon.

He said: "We have continually been denied the opportunity to take a local decision on a casino as a direct result of the unelected House of Lords' rejection of the Government's casino

proposals earlier this year.

“But the prime minister has assured me that the government still intends to grant Stranraer a licence for a small casino despite the delay caused by the Lords.

“The important thing is that we move forward and get this licence in place, so that the decision can be made locally, as to whether a casino development could be a much-needed boost to the local economy.

“It is in no-one’s interests whether they back the Stranraer casino proposal or not that this continues to be held up.”