

RGA calls for Government to introduce a Statutory Levy

The Remote Gambling Association (RGA) today announced that it would urge the Government to introduce a statutory levy to replace the current system of voluntary funding for research, education, and treatment of problem gambling; and to ensure that the National Responsible Gambling Strategy is properly funded.

The current voluntary funding system, which is overseen by GambleAware, was originally established by the gambling industry to provide finances for a range of social responsibility projects, and full credit should be given to all those companies who have contributed to it regularly over the years. Without this support there would have been few or no specialist treatment services in Great Britain and less resource available for research and education.

However, it has become increasingly clear that this system is no longer fit for purpose and this concern is presumably why DCMS in its Consultation on proposals for changes to Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures (October 2017) posed a specific question about the future of the funding of research, education and treatment.

The RGA's previous position was that it was not opposed in principle to the introduction of a statutory levy. After careful consideration it has now taken the decision that it should instead proactively seek the introduction of such a levy for which there is already a reserve power in the Gambling Act 2005. When it responds in January to the DCMS consultation it will adopt this line and propose ways in which an equitable and effective levy system could be implemented sooner rather than later.

Commenting on the proposal, the RGA's Chief Executive, Clive Hawkswood, said:

,There has been much to commend in the voluntary funding system, but if we are to combat problem gambling to the best of our ability and to minimise gambling related harm, then now is the time for change and for a fresh start. We are all disappointed that the current system has been the subject of so much criticism and has struggled with fundraising, but we need to put that behind us.

We have acknowledged the problem and put forward a long-term solution. We believe everyone's efforts should now be focussed on bringing this change about. For the industry this should be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat. More funding is needed if we are to fulfil our responsibilities to everyone in this country who gambles, and especially those who are affected by problem gambling. A statutory levy will ensure the right funds are raised in a fair and open process and, crucially, that they are allocated in a way that is transparent, independent, and achieves measurable benefits.'