

William Hill boss steps down early

William Hill boss David Harding is stepping down at the end of this week, three months earlier than planned.

Shares in the bookmaker dropped 10.5p to 637.5p today following the announcement that Mr Harding was leaving before his permanent replacement had been appointed.

Chairman Charles Scott will take on an executive role, working three days a week, until a new chief executive is found.

William Hill had previously announced that Mr Harding, 51, would be leaving by the end of the year, after seven years at the helm. A spokeswoman explained that interim arrangements were in place, leaving the group in good shape and enabling the chief executive to stand down now.

Mr Harding said in June that he was leaving the company in search of a new challenge and to spend more time with his two-year-old son. He said then he had received a number of offers, „so the question has been whether to finish my career as a bookmaker or try one more thing“. He has not secured a new job yet and will stay on at William Hill in a consultancy role for up to six months.

Mr Harding turned William Hill into Britain's largest bookmaker in 2005 by acquiring rival chain Stanley Leisure for GBP 505m.