

# Come clean on casino, Brown told

Calls were today made for the Government to show its hand amid claims Blackpool's long-awaited casino dream was dead and buried.

Reports strongly suggest it is only days before Prime Minister Gordon Brown kills off plans the UK's first supercasino for good.

It is rumoured letters sent to ministers in Scotland and Wales confirm the Government will press ahead with licences for 16 small casinos and scrap the supercasino.

Blackpool had spent years chasing the coveted licence, before Manchester appeared to win the race last year.

However, while Manchester is expected to challenge the matter in the courts, Blackpool continues to wait for feedback on the GBP 2.4bn Action Plan of its regeneration Task Force.

It was unveiled by the multi-agency group last August and includes such things as a new state-of-the-art conference centre.

But apart from last week's confirmation of the GBP 85m funding to revamp the resort's tram system there has been no other response.

Blackpool Council leader, Coun Peter Callow, said: „I'm calling on Gordon Brown to honour his pledge and give us the money we've been promised through regeneration when we lost the casino bid.

„What we need now is something to replace the lost revenue to help Blackpool's economy along.“

Blackpool Council spent almost GBP 250,000 on compiling its ill-fated supercasino bid.

But it is estimated to have channelled millions of pounds more into investigating casino-led regeneration since the idea was first put forward a decade ago.

But those behind the bid are keen to stress not all the work has been wasted.

Doug Garrett, chief executive of Blackpool's regeneration company ReBlackpool, said work to bring forward the Central Station site for leisure use would still be used to attract other development.

He said: „It did look at where a casino could go, but it was not solely around that.“

He added the outline planning approval which exists for Central Station demonstrated the „massive development possibilities“ on the site and said he expected further responses to the Task Force report imminently.