

How Blackpool will replace lost casino

Shopping, museums and housing are viable alternatives to a supercasino, the Government claimed today.

But it freely admits none of these alone would bring the same economic boost as Las Vegas-style gambling.

The admission comes in a report compiled for communities minister Hazel Blears after Prime Minister Gordon Brown called for alternative forms of regeneration to be examined for Blackpool and east Manchester.

However, the report fails to find a single viable alternative saying „given the unique nature of a regional casino, it would be challenging for alternative projects to deliver the same amount of direct benefit to the area, without additional public sector support“.

The other alternatives listed in the document include pursuing different leisure and tourism attractions.

„Options include new sports arenas, concert venues, entertainment complexes or general leisure developments“ but the report concedes „given the uniqueness of a regional casino project as a cash-rich, private sector-led development, it is unlikely that an alternative leisure attraction would be able to generate the same scale of benefits.“

It adds that a package of measures is preferable – which is what it is hoped the response to the Blackpool Task Force represents.

Museums, such as the National Theatre Museum, are considered as unlikely to have the same job creation value, while retail-led regeneration may not attract enough new customers to be

viable.

Commercial development in the form of office, manufacturing or distribution, has the potential for job creation, but the report admits they „do not attract visitors to the area and so are less likely to increase the demand for supporting services that leisure and tourism attractions would have.“

Housing-led regeneration can attract new people in and have a positive impact on neighbourhoods, but again also lacks the job creation factor.

Other options are provision of training and education while better transport links are suggested although they „alone will not necessarily generate demand and tackle the problems of deprived areas.“