

British government to outline Tote plans by end of April

A government spokesman said an investment bank would be installed as advisor on the sale in the next two weeks and would be asked to come up with a shortlist of the most lucrative options.

After years of deliberation, promises to the horse racing industry and a number of failed sale attempts, the government finally kick started an open auction of the Tote earlier this month. It now has three main options: selling the entire business, a piece-by-piece breakup or holding on to it until credit markets improve.

Having previously been valued at more than USD 803.3 million, analysts say the credit crunch and consumer spending worries have sapped the Tote's worth to anything from USD 401 million to us\$ 702 million.

Despite borrowing worries of its own, privately owned Gala Coral is expected to among the front runners. Horse racing industry players have also put forward a new plan while football pools firm Sportech has said it is keen to take on the Tote's pool betting operations.