Rank Group

News Release

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The Rank Group Plc

Response to Joint Committee's Second Report

The Rank Group Plc ("Rank") has noted the publication today of the second report to be issued by the Joint Committee on the Draft Gambling Bill (Regional Casinos) (the "Committee") and broadly welcomes its conclusions.

The recommendations set out in today's report take account of many of the issues raised by the UK industry following the publication of the Government's response to the Committee's first report. In particular, the Committee has responded to concerns that the relatively low threshold proposed for "regional casino" status would result in a larger number of regional casinos being built than had originally been envisaged, with a consequent proliferation of Category 'A' machines. In addition, the Committee has also recognised the need to ensure that existing gaming premises are able to compete with new entrants on a more equal footing.

The Committee's second report is another detailed and comprehensive document. Rank welcomes in particular the following recommendations:

- the minimum floor area for 'regional/leisure destination' casinos should be increased to 7,500 square metres (from 5,000 square metres as previously suggested) and they should be the subject of a separate planning class;
- 'regional/leisure destination' casinos should not be located in close proximity to residential properties;
- both 'small' and 'large' casinos, licensed before August 2003, should be allowed to offer a proportion of their gaming machines as Category 'A' machines. The exact number should be informed by the Government's Revised Regulatory Impact Assessment and Competition Assessment and should be reviewed after three years;
- reflecting the more restrictive regulatory environment, Category 'B' machines located in casinos, in comparison to those located in bingo clubs and betting shops, should be allowed greater flexibility on the range of stake and prize offered to customers; and
- the first formal review of the impact of the Bill should take place after three years, not after the second prevalence study, as originally envisaged.

Commenting on the Committee's latest report, Mike Smith, Rank's Chief Executive said:

"Once again, after a process a consultation with the industry, the Joint Scrutiny Committee has made a significant contribution to the reform of the UK's outdated gaming and gambling legislation. Rank very much hopes that the DCMS will accept the Committee's recommendations and work with the industry to secure new, workable legislation at the first possible opportunity."

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