

Why high street betting shops are the safest place to bet responsibly



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abbscotland
association of british bookmakers

Why betting shops are the safer bet



Alcohol free shops



No ATMs on premises



Think 21 verification policy



Limited Opening Hours



National multi operator self exclusion scheme

83%

of customers said self exclusion has been effective in reducing their gambling activity

(Source: Gamble Aware)



World leading technology to monitor player behaviour



Nationwide responsible gambling initiatives



Ability to set time and spend limits and new mandatory alerts on gaming machines



Ban on advertising gaming machines in shop windows



Binding Responsible Gambling Code



5,000 shop staff work hard to ensure customers gamble responsibly

Why a £2 stake is the wrong approach

There are growing calls to impose a £2 cap on fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) in bookmakers. This would make many betting shops in Scotland commercially unviable, with massive consequences for employment, the economy and the future of Scottish horseracing. But crucially, it would do nothing to tackle problem gambling because the issue is multifaceted and rarely linked to just one product. Over just three years, the result would be:



500
shops closed



2500
jobs lost



£130m
lost taxes and rates



£32m
less for horseracing

Problem gambling is low and falling

FOBTs have not led to an increase in problem gambling in Scotland. Gaming machines have been played in betting shops for more than 15 years; since then levels of problem gambling have remained static. In fact, the Scottish Government's own figures show that problem gambling in Scotland fell in 2015. By contrast, Scotland has a crippling problem with alcohol misuse and adult obesity:

0.7%
people identified
as problem
gamblers

26%
of adults drink
hazardous
levels of alcohol

29%
of adults
are obese

Low stake isn't low risk

Research by the Gambling Commission shows that gamblers risk losing more money and are playing for longer on low stake machines in arcades than on FOBTs in betting shops. These machines are up to eight times faster than FOBTs, with an average spin cycle every 2.5 seconds, and offer a significantly lower return to player than FOBTs. This combination of high-speed play and low return means that player losses can quickly stack up. Meanwhile, academics have warned that lower stakes can lead to riskier and more volatile behaviour, and greater losses among players, thereby increasing harm. These findings shatter the myth that FOBTs pose a greater risk to customers.

The hypocrisy of our opponents

34,000

FOBTs in
betting shops

310,000

machines in arcades, pubs
and service stations

Our competitors criticise FOBTs, yet they lobby for higher stakes and contactless payments in unsupervised service stations and pubs, and have previously called for FOBTs in gaming and amusement halls.

Problem gambling will move out of sight

Problem gamblers typically play multiple products – lottery, scratchcards, slots, casinos etc. So, narrowly targeting one product – FOBTs - would be meaningless since gamblers have an array of other products to choose from. And with half of retail betting shops forced to close, problem gamblers would simply be displaced from the safe, controlled environment of the local bookie into less regulated venues or even illegal gambling dens, out of reach of our professional, trained staff.

That's why gambling charities like Gamble Aware have warned that a narrow focus on FOBTs, potentially ignoring high speed gaming machines in pubs, amusement arcades and casinos, risks undermining efforts to tackle problem gambling.

Myths & Machines

If we are serious about tackling problem gambling, it's important to separate the myths from the facts. Here are the facts:



The term 'crack cocaine of gambling' was coined decades ago by Donald Trump about a product which rivalled his casino business. Opponents of betting shops now use it to describe FOBTs but it has absolutely no scientific basis.



FOBTs account for just 13% of gambling spend in the UK. Gamblers spend seven times more on other forms of gambling.



The average loss in a single session on a FOBT is £6.16 and a session typically lasts just over 8 minutes. New government regulations limit stakes to £50 unless customers accept closer supervision of play.



Despite perceptions, the number of betting shops – and FOBTs – is falling. Betting shop numbers are now the lowest since 2003. Each shop closure costs the public purse £114,000 in lost tax revenue.

The safer bet

Betting shops
have been part of
our high streets
for 55 years and
provide a safe
environment
where 650,000
people in Scotland
enjoy a flutter.

Championing Scotland's Bookmakers

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