

16 October 2008

GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND URGED TO TERMINATE THE TERMINALS

Gaming content company, Prime Table Games, has launched a national press campaign in its bid to urge the Government of Ireland to prohibit the use of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) in Ireland's high street bookmakers.

The campaign, which invites people to sign an online petition or download letters to Dermot Ahern TD, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, objects to the terminals as it believes they offer unfair odds for players and exploit vulnerable sections of the community.

In the UK, the terminals are offered to the customers of bookmakers nationwide - loaded with games such as Roulette, Blackjack and Three Card Poker™ - and according to Prime Table Games, when compared to the actual casino games they seek to replicate, they offer incredibly unfair odds.

Prime Table Games' Derek Webb, the man who actually invented the game Three Card Poker™, says of the machines:

"Gambling should be fun, open and fair - but these terminals offer players little hope. The theoretical amount per bet that players lose on many bets is higher, and the actual percentage of player cash-ins that players lose is higher.

"In addition, the probability that players will lose all their available cash on a session is much higher. Because Ireland is at the stage where there is public debate surrounding the introduction of the machines into its betting shops, it has the ability to learn from the mistakes made in the UK.

"Despite a powerful lobby in the form of the gambling industry, the Government of Ireland can implement correct gambling legislation from the outset."

Webb believes that the terminals are dangerously accessible to those vulnerable to gambling and those with gambling problems.

He continued: "The terminals exploit players in many ways, for example there is often no easily accessible 'cash out' button allowing players to quit and often the bet minimums and maximums are too high - with even gambling machines in Nevada having lower bet minimums."

Prime Table Games believes that the Government of Ireland, and in particular Dermot Ahern TD, should take heed of the problems and agree with a recent report from the Casino Committee, Regulating Gambling in Ireland, which opposed the introduction of FOBTs.

The report reads: "It is the opinion of the Committee that contemporary fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) are to be treated as gaming machines. Gaming machines should not be permitted in bookmakers' offices."

Mr Webb continued: "The committee has noted that the introduction of FOBTs would have a seriously detrimental social impact and therefore, should not be introduced.

"The Government of Ireland has indicated that the issue needs comprehensive examination, including a mechanism for the public to have their say. www.fairandopengamblingireland.net is such a mechanism."

People wishing to sign up to Prime Table Games' online petition or download a letter to send to the Government can do so by visiting its website at www.fairandopengamblingireland.net

This Irish campaign follows a similar UK national press campaign where Derek Webb urged everyone involved in the UK gambling industry to lobby the UK Government and the Gambling Commission to get FOBT's out of UK bookmakers.