

JERSEY GAMBLING COMMISSION

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1 August 2013

Gambling machine changes

Islanders are being asked whether Jersey should follow the UK in relaxing rules on gambling machines as the modernisation of the Island's gambling rules continues.

The Jersey Gambling Commission is asking Islanders for their views on changes to the rules on gambling machines that could see low-value machines with prizes of up to £100 allowed in pubs, doubling the existing maximum payout.

The low-value 'fruit machines' being considered for pubs are entirely different to the higher-value Fixed Odds Betting Terminal (or FOBT) machines that are currently only allowed in licensed betting offices. A separate issue in the consultation might see some higher-value fruit machines allowed in private members' clubs or require special cards for people who want to use the machines, but there are no plans to allow roulette-style FOBTs more widely.

The consultation – which closes on Monday 28 October – also raises the possibility of allowing machines to be used in commercial card clubs and commercial bingo premises when they are opened up in the Island. The commission is planning a full consultation on a licensing regime for card clubs and bingo at a later stage.

For the sake of clarity, there are no plans to reopen the 'casino debate' or to consider changing the current rules which ban a casino from operating in Jersey.

Jersey Gambling Commission chief executive Dr Jason Lane said: 'Modernising the Island's gambling rules is a major task for the commission, and we are keen to make sure that we consult as fully as we possibly can.'

'At most, the proposals in the consultation document would see us following the UK, so we're not talking about breaking new ground.'

'Gambling machines are already allowed in licenced premises, but we want to see what Islanders think about changing the rules. The kinds of machines that we are talking about are seen as "entertainment" rather than gambling – we want to be very clear that there is no consideration being given to allowing high-value gambling machines in pubs.'

'We hope that as many people as possible will take the opportunity to download the consultation document – or to contact us so that we can send them a copy directly.'

The consultation document is available online at the commission's website at www.jgc.je or by emailing info@jgc.je to request a copy.

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About the commission...

The Jersey Gambling Commission was established in September 2010 and is funded by licence fees, not the taxpayer. Its remit covers the regulation of gambling in the Island and advising the Economic Development Minister, Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel and the States on policy and legislation. It also operates a dedicated gambling therapy service for Jersey residents at www.gamblingtherapy.je. The commission works to three guiding principles enshrined in law, namely that gambling services should be conducted responsibly and with safeguards necessary to protect children and vulnerable people; that they should be regulated in accordance with generally accepted international standards to prevent fraud and money laundering, and should not be permitted to be a source of crime; and that they should be verifiably fair to consumers of those services.