


Report from the Chief Executive

For Board approval	
For Board briefing	
For Board steer	
For Board information	

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Chief Executive

Date: 15 January 2015

Introduction

1. This paper is intended to provide an overview of how we have deployed our resources since the last report in delivery of the business plan. The report is structured around the key objectives agreed in the strategic narrative with individual workstreams grouped wherever possible. Workstreams that were identified as business plan priorities have been reported individually.

Key issues

2. The key issues preoccupying me at the moment are the inter-related issues of
 - bridging the gap between now and when we have recruited and got up to speed the significant number of new people we are currently recruiting at all levels but including three Commissioners and my successor
 - improving the pace and quality of our operational delivery while managing a significantly increased workload from the combination of remote implementation and external demands eg on machines research; advertising; lottery policy review; fourth AML directive; and turnover at DCMS (these are discussed in the paper 'The Year Ahead – Stocktake from Programmes' – GCP(15)05)
 - keeping the Commission's strategic approach to gambling regulation coherent and developing in the right direction by using events and issues (eg forthcoming election, advertising and lottery reviews, ICE, fees green paper) as opportunities to develop and secure more effective regulation. There is a risk of losing sight of what we are trying to achieve in the process of trying to cope with external pressures.

Events

3. The key events attended last month included:
 - Philip Graf, Graham Sharp, Ben Haden and Mark Harris attended the Prime Minister's Reception to celebrate 20 years of the National Lottery at No 10 Downing Street.
 - I joined Helen Grant in a session to give oral evidence on society lotteries.
 - New members of the DCMS Gambling team visited the Commission for introductory briefings from a range of Commission colleagues.

Other meetings and events are included under the relevant headings in this report.

Empowering consumers

Social responsibility (Business plan priority)

4. We sought the Board's views in January on our recommendations for the remaining issues arising from the LCCP consultation. Consistent with those recommendations, we have been preparing the response document for publication. Due to the time taken to

reach a settled position on some of the more challenging issues, we now expect to publish the response document on 5 February.

5. Philip Graf and Chris Rogers met Dr Stephen Creigh-Tyte of Durham University to discuss problem gambling issues.

Marketing and advertising

6. We had a meeting with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) on 17 December. The main purpose was to establish meaningful contact (with a focus on the ICO's responsibilities relating to direct marketing) and to consider information sharing arrangements and future collaboration. It was a very constructive meeting which will lead to much closer cooperation on a range of relevant issues in 2015.
7. We attended a meeting of the Gambling Advertising Monitoring Unit (GAMU) on 18 December to discuss and receive updates on the four-strand advertising review. The Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP) and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) have now published their respective review reports and the Industry Group for Responsible Gambling (IGRG) has submitted its final proposals to Ministers. Our contribution, which has involved a review of the 'Marketing' section of LCCP (with a focus on the marketing of 'free bet' offers), will be published as part of the LCCP response document in January.
8. DCMS had planned to publish its response to the review by 31 December. However, due to some disagreement within the industry about the IGRG's proposed voluntary ban on pre-9pm sign-up offers, we now expect DCMS to publish at the end of January.
9. We were asked to provide formal advice to ministers on the IGRG proposal, which we submitted (via the Chairman) on 7 January (see attached after Annex D). We have made it clear to DCMS that moves to control social media marketing of gambling to those under age would have a more direct impact than the ICRG's proposed ban on pre-watershed sign up bonuses, which will have little direct effect on those who are underage.

Complaints and disputes

10. We have taken further steps towards implementing the Directive on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). We have provided comments on the first set of draft regulations for UK implementation to DCMS and BIS. Further draft regulations and draft guidance is expected during January. We are supporting ADR entities in their preparations for implementation of the Directive and we are now in contact with some additional ADR entities expressing an interest in gaining approval to handle gambling disputes under the Directive. Internally, an assessment of the resource implications of the Commission's role as Competent Authority is underway and we have begun assessing the information reporting requirements of ADR entities to the Commission and our duties to provide reports to the single UK point of contact.
11. The House of Lords has returned the Consumer Rights Bill to the House of Commons with amendments. The amendments will be considered on the floor of the Commons on 12 January 2015. The Government has indicated that, although the Bill's progress has been slower than initially planned, it still intends to implement the Bill on 1 October 2015, with guidance for businesses to be issued in April 2015 and guidance to consumers in

October 2015. We are making plans to dovetail our own work on assessing compliance with the Commission's requirements on fair and open terms and conditions; and our planned work on consumer awareness (particularly on complaints and disputes) with the implementation of the Consumer Rights Bill.

Raising standards

Licensing of remote operators (Business plan priority)

12. The main areas we focused on during the period were:
- Processing of applications: Ten applications have been determined in full and licences issued. Two applicants have withdrawn their applications and their continuation licences have lapsed. Outstanding information has now been received from the bulk of applicants whose application or supporting evidence was incomplete at the time of submission and we are actively processing those applications.
 - All operators holding continuation licences were required to pay their first annual fee by the 30 November. 76 were outstanding at that date and were given ten days to pay or face revocation of the continuation licence. All but one operator paid in full by the revised deadline and that applicant withdrew their application and the continuation licence lapsed. No continuation licences were revoked due to non payment of the annual fee.
 - We sent a reminder on 15 December to identified software suppliers that may require a Commission licence from 31 March 2015 and also wrote to remote B2C operators that source software from these suppliers to remind them that they will be in breach of their licence if they use non-Commission licensed software suppliers from 31 March. To date, we have received 77 software applications (including 48 made as part of the 176 advance applications under transitional arrangements) and have determined twelve. We expect a possible further 40 applications to be made before month end.

High impact compliance (Business plan priority)

13. **[Exempt information under section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act]**
14. Preparatory work for these corporate evaluations is underway. Fieldwork will take place between late-February and early-March. A further six operators will be evaluated by August.
15. Alongside this, work has continued on quarterly updating in desk assessments and in planning the programme of HIO corporate evaluations. Development work has also been underway in developing a manual to ensure a consistent approach is taken to corporate evaluations, and in providing training for those involved in HIO work (both within compliance and with sector specialists).

Regulatory framework

16. We issued a consultation in December 2014 on the Commission's proposals for the timing and nature of regular customer funds reporting by remote gambling operators, with a closing date of 13 February 2015. The Commission's ratings system for disclosure of customer funds came into force on 31 December 2014 and as a result we have seen a large increase in unique views of our customer-facing webpages on customer funds – almost 14,000 unique views during December, compared to 155 during November. We continue to advise operators on the implementation of the new licence conditions relating to customer funds, handling queries in particular relating to technical details and the disclosure requirements to consumers. In December, we updated our advice note to operators on the implementation of these new licence conditions to reflect the substance of these ongoing discussions. We communicated the changes to operators via e-bulletin and the remote FAQ blog.
17. A decision was taken to delay the supplementary consultation on the Annual Assurance Statement proposal, in order to accommodate developments from discussions held with the consultation group focused on the topic of identifying problem and at-risk gamblers. The supplementary consultation will now launch at the end of January.

Regulation of lotteries

18. We are analysing the results of ELM assessments to identify compliance risks in the sector. The results are due to be completed in January and will determine whether further work is necessary.
19. We are preparing an internal briefing note on issues arising from our assessment of retail and online betting on lotteries, which we will circulate in January. This will include a draft advice note to the betting sector on how to offer betting on lottery products. We have engaged with the ASA and they have indicated their view that some of the marketing is not compliant with the CAP. They have agreed to give their input into the draft advice. We have proposed to the ASA that we issue the advice jointly. We will send the draft advice note to them in early January for their input.
20. DCMS has published a responses document and impact assessment related to the deregulation of certain classes of exempt lotteries. DCMS will seek to implement the changes through a Legislative Reform Order for some small exempt lotteries and they hope to lay this before the two scrutiny committees of Parliament during December and the Bill will be passed in March. The sector team is starting to prepare a review of advice documents.
21. **[Exempt information under section 30 of the Freedom of Information Act]**
22. The CMS Committee hearing on the lottery sector took place on 16 December and we await the report from the committee. We helped DCMS draft its call for evidence on the lottery and competing gambling products markets and will be working with DCMS to pick up any issues falling out of the hearing and following receipt of the committee's recommendations.

Licensing and online applications

23. Our programmatic work included¹ the following:

	OL Lifecycle (Dec)	PL Lifecycle (Dec)
Applications received	26	173
Applications determined	31 (SSD* 52%) YTD 75%	212 (SSD 73%) YTD 80%
Variations received	39	7
Variations determined	42 (SSD 79%) YTD (84%)	8 (SSD 38%) YTD (74%)
Change of corporate control received	7	N/A
Changes of corporate control determined	11 (SSD 27%) YTD (84%)	N/A
Sign-up to e-services	2016	4960
Payments made on line since launch of e services:	451 (410 are Annual fees)	202

* SSD service standards – 80-% within six weeks from receipt to determination

24. Licensing colleagues were severely impacted by sickness during December with over 25% of resource absent during week commencing 15 December. This hindered workflow and achievement of service standards over the month.
25. The new Contact Centre CCom system went live on 16 December. The new telephone system allows for more effective use of resource by filtering calls on a priority basis and providing an automatic secondary line of support during peak periods, resulting in fewer calls lost. In addition, the reporting capability is greatly improved which will allow for better analysis of the enquiries received and more accurate performance data.
26. The impact of the implementation of the Gambling (Licensing and Advertising) Act 2014 is starting to bite with the Contact Centre receiving 2,581 enquiries in December 2014 compared to 1,309 in December 2013. 74% were resolved within target timescales. Of the calls received the main areas of interest were queries over licensing applications; regulatory returns and complaints and disputes about operators either regulated by the Commission or co-regulated by the Commission and overseas regulators.

Proactive compliance

27. Proactive compliance assessment activity in respect of non-HIO operators is planned, delivered and reported quarterly. 819 assessments were planned for completion by 31 December. Despite sickness and the festive season reducing the number of assessment days available to the industry and the Commission, planned assessment activity continued to progress. As of 5 January:
- 791 were completed

¹ This table **excludes** continuation licence applications from remote operators

- 19 had been planned ready for a site visit this month
- Nine remained to be progressed.

28. In this period 729 lottery submissions were received, all of which complied with the minimum return to good causes.
29. The new regulatory return E-Portal was launched on 23 December 2014, which licensed operators are learning to navigate. 82 regulatory returns were received on time out of the 165 that were due. Some of the 83 outstanding returns are due to changes in reporting requirements, (particularly for remote licensees), and others are subject to licensing escalation including one penalty being issued for late submission. A further 68 returns were submitted early. A total of nine returns were resubmitted due to data quality issues.

Complex cases, enhanced compliance and criminal enforcement activity

30. Our revised Statement of Principles and Licensing, Compliance and Enforcement Policy Statement will be published at end of January.
31. Ways of improving and capturing our lessons learned activity, case manager capacity and skills base have been considered and plans put in place to address these. We are currently recruiting two specialist investigator posts to provide additional financial and remote capability.
32. Details of individual cases are at Annex A .

Reactive compliance (non-complex)

33. Reactive compliance activity covering non-complex cases was as follows:
- Three new Section 116 reviews were allocated for investigation, two for personal function licence holders (PFL), and the third for an operator.
 - Two reviews on PFL holders were closed. One surrendered their licence prior to completion of the investigation and in the other case following completion of the review it was decided to take no further action.
 - We are currently engaging with five remote operators who have not submitted security audits; none have yet progressed to licence review.

Betting integrity

34. Colleagues attended the Council of Europe Seminar on Match Fixing and Network of Regulators meeting in The Hague. We met the new CEO of Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA) to discuss future engagement and the role of the SRA and the Sports Betting Group within the Sports Betting Integrity Forum (SBIF). The UK anti-corruption plan was launched by the Home Office, bringing together all of the UK's activity against corruption, including betting integrity and match fixing, with specific actions for DCMS and the Commission which have been incorporated into the betting integrity programme.

First draft of the UK National Action Plan circulated to SBIF members, delivery of which is on the agenda of the next meeting of the Forum in late January.

35. Discussions have been initiated with DCMS as to national priorities and resource, and with the IOC regarding financial contribution for support provided as we approach the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The job description for new post to support betting integrity programme has been agreed, with the recruitment process to start January 2015.

Anti-money laundering

36. The AML workstream continues to make progress against the objectives set out in the workstream's two-year plan agreed in May 2014, this includes the following:
 37. Within the **Influence & Learn** strand of activity:
 - We organised and chaired Casino and Remote AML Forums including wide-ranging representation from the industry, and the FIU. Agenda items included the Fourth ML Directive; identified weaknesses in AML controls (customer due diligence and monitoring); National (ML) Risk Assessment; SAR reporting.
 - We addressed a lottery sector meeting, setting out the nature and implications of the EU 4th ML Directive.
 - We met four operators on bilateral basis to build relationships while we develop our understanding of the industry issues and experience.
 - We reviewed the progress of the AML Environment Scan which now includes 30 individual assessments including junkets, crowd funding, China Union Pay, the Proceeds of Crime Act and the use of professionals in licence applications. These are published via the Commission intranet.
 - We refreshed our understanding of Bitcoin, and the Commission's stance towards the use of this potential means of payment – drawing on contact with the industry, open source research, and information from other regulators.
 38. Within the **Apply** strand of activity:
 - We continue to develop the network of AML champions including establishing a programme of external speakers to raise awareness and understanding of AML issues. The first presentation from the Director, Investigation at the Solicitors Regulation Authority focused on the AML challenges they face, and their regulatory response.
 - We reviewed and updated the quick guide – 'Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 – Information for Small Businesses'.
 - We anticipate adoption of the EU 4th ML Directive in the next months and have prepared a plan to drive and focus our activity in response. This is fully aligned to and integrated within the AML workstream two-year plan, and considers communication; industry engagement; ML risk assessment; DCMS, HMT and wider engagement; administration and governance.
 39. Within the **Assure** strand:
 - We are presently focussing on AML policies and procedures within the casino sector where we are undertaking 50 compliance inspections between January and March 2015.

Building partnerships and understanding

Providing advice (Business plan priority)

40. We are liaising with HMRC to assist their understanding of the gambling experience in its various guises. This relates to a tax challenge from an operator in relation to tax differentials for various machines. We will not be commenting on the tax aspect but will be providing an overview of the framework of the 2005 Gambling Act, the products and how they may be operated plus provide a description of the gambling on offer.

Gathering and sharing evidence (Business plan priority)

41. The Memex upgrade was delivered during the week of 8 December 2014, and is working well with a few minor issues to be resolved by supplier. The weeding process has still not yet been completed but is being addressed.
42. In support of workstreams we have continued to provide documents and analytical products. In particular we have been supporting the identification of websites offering illegal gaming.
43. We have continued to promote internal awareness of intelligence capabilities by conducting induction presentations, and during workstream meetings.
44. Stakeholder engagement has continued, with the Commission hosting the national Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) meeting.

Gambling statistics

45. The Scottish Health Survey 2013 results relating to participation were published late in December 2014. The results show a fall in past year participation in gambling overall from 70% in 2012 to 66% in 2013. The fall was driven by a drop in National Lottery draw participation.
46. The evidence and analysis and remote teams have been working together on the content and methodology of the online tracker.
47. In December, the Board noted on a new structure for participation survey reporting, which is due to commence in January 2015.
48. We are publishing in January the pocket version of Gambling Facts and Figures, having published the full industry statistics on 27 November.

RGSB

49. RGSB and Commission Board members attended the Trust's research conference on 10 December at which researchers presented the findings from the machines research programme. A closed session with researchers took place for RGSB and Commission staff on 11 December. RGSB is now drafting advice to the Commission on what we can learn from the research. It will discuss and sign this off at the RGSB Board meeting on 27 January 2015.
50. Plans are being put in place to recruit new RGSB Board members in 2015.

51. Philip Graf and I, together with three Commissioners (Walter Merricks, Rachel Lampard and Robin Dahlberg), attended the Responsible Gambling Trust harm minimisation conference at which Matthew Hill took part in the panel session.
52. Philip attended the RET Chairs Meeting on 2 December 2014.

Work with LAs and other regulators

53. We attended a meeting of SOLAR (Scottish licensing officers' forum) which allowed a useful exchange of views on the matters of powers in Scotland and an update for the group on current Commission priorities including the forthcoming GLA consultation. We also provided informal advice to the Department regarding the Smith Commission as it relates to gambling.
54. We formally signed-off on the first two primary authority (PA) agreements (Paddy Power and Ladbrokes) with BRDO and publicity has been prepared for the launch.
55. Matthew Hill delivered a presentation on the new social responsibility codes to the LGA Licensing Conference on 15 January.
56. We are leading a cross-departmental team to resolve the nationwide issue of the misuse of FEC permits and related illegal machine categorisations. Ongoing investigation of the issues includes work with individual operators, BACTA and over 50 LAs.
57. East Lindsay District Council and Brighton and Hove Council both completed their reviews of premises licences where licensees had failed, on two occasions, to challenge underage test purchasers before they gambled. The tests and the licence reviews were supported by the Commission. In East Lindsay, the council added conditions to a family entertainment centre licence to arrange for test purchasing to be conducted on a monthly basis, and the licensee also agreed outside of conditions to re-position the age-restricted area to provide better supervision and introduce an audio alert for that area.
58. Brighton added conditions to a betting licence to require a Maglock to be used on the door, and for regular test purchasing to be conducted by their trade body. The licensee also agreed outside of conditions to move gaming machines away from the entrance to areas of better supervision. Brighton required an adult gaming centre operator by condition to submit plans altering the layout of its premises, to introduce an infrared beam that triggers an alert when customers cross it, and to conduct regular test purchasing.

Innovation

59. Details of cases in hand under this workstream are attached at Annex B

Publications and external communications

60. Details of our communications activity is attached at Annex C

The National Lottery

61. Key activity, in addition to normal programmatic work on compliance, licensing, vetting, consumer protection and enforcement, focused during the period since the last report on:
- **[Exempt information under section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act]**
 - **[Exempt information under section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act]**
 - Liaison meetings were held with Camelot and DCMS. DCMS, in particular, covered issues around distributor engagement and the 'call for evidence' on the lottery sector and the ensuing attendance at the CMS Select Committee. There was also a pre-meeting ahead of the Committee with Helen Grant. Input was considerable in the lead up to that.
 - Ben Haden and I also attended a 'lottery family' meeting of CE's hosted by DCMS with the purpose of engaging and informing distributors about future likely performance.
62. A copy of the Director's Report to the National Lottery Committee in January is attached at Annex D.

Enabling activities

Fees development (Business plan priority)

63. The consulting firm Deloitte has been appointed to provide support for the preparation of the Green Paper informal consultation document on options for the forthcoming fees review, and their work is now underway with an initial workshop scoping the exercise.
64. On the original timetable, agreed by Board in July 2014, the final Green Paper would have been presented for approval at the February Board meeting; this will now slip to the March meeting with a view to starting the consultation process immediately afterwards.²

HR policies, guidance and consultations (Business plan priority)

65. Planning has started for the next employee conference on 12 May 2015 at a new venue taking into account feedback from the conference on 25 November 2014. Only a small number of 2013/14 performance review documents and 2014/15 objective setting documents remain outstanding. DMs and employees are being contacted and any documents which remain outstanding in the next period will be escalated to BPPB.
66. The revised development manager and supply manager arrangements are now in place and a process to consider the requirements when a current development manager leaves has been agreed.

² The overall timetable for the fees review remains unchanged with the next key stages being phase two of the consultancy work (July-December, but only if required), and preparation of the draft consultation document (autumn-winter 2015/16) for consideration by Board in March 2016

67. Small working groups have been identified to review the lone worker policy and the performance management moderation process and guidance. A number of draft policies, including grievances; flexible working; underperformance (capability); and appeals, have been completed and are being circulated for comment.

HR support to management

68. As of 9 January 2015, we were recruiting to four vacant posts. Executive Group considered the business cases for a further 31 roles on 13 January 2015. Several of these roles are new and will require evaluating and significant recruitment work will be required once the actual numbers are finalised and job descriptions agreed.
69. The management of case work covering disciplinary, grievance, absence, and performance management continues. There are currently two complex cases and eleven informal cases being handled.
70. Work continues to prepare for the 2015 pension changes. The options exercise packs have been distributed. Employees have been informed of changes to pension contributions effective from 1 April 2015. As part of the new pension scheme, all employees have been asked to inform HR of their previous pension history.
71. Work on aligning the pay year and PMR arrangements for certain employees within the NL programme continues and a draft paper with proposed solutions and timescales will be considered week commencing 12 January 2015.
72. January is the first month for 'go live' payroll automation. Manual payroll notifications will only be completed for those out of scope of the automation. Next steps are to ensure any historic processes are reviewed and to roll out the Snowdrop sickness self service.

Business planning

73. All of the initial meetings with Programme Directors and Executive Directors were concluded during the reporting period regarding business plan progress and the environment scan of their programmes. These, together with the outcomes of the Board discussion in December, will feed into the refresh of the published business plan, which remains on track to be finalised by the start of the next financial year. The work is being closely coordinated with the work of the Finance team on the preparation of the budget and associated resourcing requirements.
74. Work continues on the refresh of workstreams and programme management arrangements. This will be discussed at the next BPPB meeting and will be implemented in time for the start of the new financial year, at the latest.
75. Programme Directors have undertaken an exercise to look ahead 12 months to identify the main challenges, deliverables and potential stresses, so identifying the overall shape of what we have to do over the coming year and overall context in which we are working. This was discussed at BPPB and Executive Group and the outcomes are covered in a separate Board paper.

Finance

76. Working closely with the Programme Office, the business planning and budgeting process for 2015/16 is well under way and a draft corporate budget and business plan will be presented to the Board for its steer in February.
77. Interim financial accounts for the first nine months of the year are currently being prepared ahead of external audit review by KPMG at the end of January.

Accommodation management

78. After considerable effort on the Commission's part, the GPU has approved the business case to renew the lease for Victoria Square House and this is being progressed with the landlord.

IT infrastructure management

79. The new call centre software; Memex upgrade; and the office phone software upgrade all went live with all old hardware removed and decommissioned in December. The Great Plains (finance system) upgrade is now at the user acceptance testing stage.
80. We have been working on the business case and options for dealing with the demise of the police network

Internal communications

81. We have collated and provided a summary of the feedback from the employee conference and the session on improving email habits. Jenny's Christmas round-up went out on 19 December before most employees started their Christmas break. We are pushing the corporate style guide again as we have noticed an increase in common errors within publications, reports and emails. The strategic narrative is now on the intranet under [our work>business plan](#). We are working on induction plans for the new Commissioners including the new CEO.

E-communications

Websites/Hive

82. An away day was held in December, attended by the Corporate Affairs and IT teams, to identify priorities for development over the next 12-24 months. The key development issues identified were:
 - a design refresh to facilitate a) mobile optimisation and b) integration of RGSB and NL content onto the gambling commission's main website
 - in-house training to facilitate template building in-house

- transfer of RGSB and NL content onto gamblingcommission.gov.uk
- provision of writing for the web training to all content owners
- development of the employee directory on Hive.

83. An updated GovMetric snippet is being implemented to improve access for mobile users, and to allow access to additional functionality via the reporting system (such as comments by specific URL).

Facebook

84. Email addresses and cover/profile photographs have been created in preparation for the creation of a Commission Facebook page. The page will be used for compliance correspondence via email, and to secure the brand (Facebook URL) for the Commission.

Annex A - Complex cases update

[Exempt information under section 30 and 31 of the Freedom of Information Act]

Annex B – Gaming machines / innovation issues

[Exempt information under section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act]

Annex C – Communications report

1. Media

A total of 13 media calls were handled, with 31% concerning remote queries and a further 15% each about betting, lotteries and problem gambling.

The Commission was mentioned in the media 50 times.

- Positive coverage included:
 - coverage of Philip Graf speaking at the BACTA conference looking forward to further collaborative work with the trade body.
 - police with the support of the Commission raiding a members club in Kingston which was not complying with poker rules.
 - research carried out by Ipsos MORI for the Commission into underage gambling has found no rise and no evidence of a rise in problem gambling.
- Neutral coverage included:
 - the Responsible Gambling Trust publishing research into FOBT play in betting offices which showed it was possible to distinguish between problem and non-problem gambling behaviour. This was welcomed in many quarters, however the Campaign for Fairer Gambling criticised it for not asking the right questions.
 - stories relating to the publication of the Commission's industry statistics document.
- Negative coverage included
 - local and trade press covered the story of Greene Kings successful appeal against the Commission's refusal to grant it a bingo operating licence. Following the appeal further coverage then appeared of Green King promising to trial new commercial bingo games with its customers. We have since released a news item indicating that we plan to appeal the decision which appears to handicap the Commission in doing what it was set up to do.

2. Website

During December the website had 77,313 user sessions, representing a 73.7% increase on the average last year (44,493 visits – 2013) (please see ecommunications report for further information on the increase).

On average, visitors spent under two minutes on the site and looked at two pages per visit. Feedback showed that 55% of visitors gave positive feedback on the pages they commented on, 20% gave neutral feedback and 25% were unhappy (from 1313 respondents).

3. Social media

Of the 425 mentions of Gambling Commission in September, 4% were positive (showed us in a good light or reinforced our messages), 12% were negative and 84% were neutral.

Positive sentiment (4%) in July and August can be attributed to the following:

- The upcoming introduction of Alternate Dispute Resolution to the Commission's remit
- The Commission's report on the gambling industry (Industry Statistics)

Negative sentiment (12%) for the same period can be attributed to the following:

- Twitter comments regarding licence fees for smaller operators
- Twitter comments that are general attacks on the commissions effectiveness

In September, 105 visits to our website came from Twitter. We increased our Twitter follower numbers from 1505 to 1558 – an increase of 3.5%.

On LinkedIn we increased our company page followers from 1150 to 1199 – a rise of 4.2%.

4. Publications

Two [e-bulletins](#) and one [licensing authority bulletin](#) were published.

5. Press releases

[Alternative Dispute Resolution \(ADR\) directive update](#)

[Commission licence needed by software suppliers](#)

[Customer funds disclosure to customers – clarification for non-remote operators](#)

[Underage gambling figures remain low](#)

[Gambling Commission granted permission to appeal](#)

6. Parliamentary questions

Parliament was in Christmas recess from 18 December; however there were still eight written parliamentary questions of direct relevance to the Commission over this period.

Graham Jones: If he will commission research on the effects on consumers of fixed odds betting terminals which is based on analysis of the operation of a live terminal.

Mrs Helen Grant: The government is committed to following an evidence based approach towards gambling legislation. The Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT) has recently carried out a significant programme of research into gaming machine usage, which was published on Monday 1st December. We now want to consider carefully the depth of findings and are taking advice from key organisations such as the Gambling Commission before thinking about next steps. I look forward to seeing the industry taking full advantage of the information provided by this research to bear down hard on the harm that gambling can cause.

Lord Clement-Jones: What plans they have to introduce further regulations on B2 gaming machines.

Lord Gardiner Of Kimble: Draft regulations have been drawn up and have been submitted to the European Commission for comment under the terms of the Technical Standards Directive. These regulations will end unsupervised stakes above £50 by requiring customers to interact with betting shop staff or open an account before being permitted to proceed. We intend for these to come into force on the April 2015 common commencement date.

Kelvin Hopkins: Britain is suffering from major problems with addiction: there has been another report this week about the problems of gambling machines and addictive gambling; there are reports today about addiction to prescription drugs; and we have serious problems with alcohol, illegal drugs and even food. Is it not time that the Government gave time for a substantial debate on all of those issues and how the Government are going to address our major problems with addiction?

Mr Hague: Those are very important issues—I absolutely acknowledge that and agree with the hon. Gentleman. Most of them have been debated in the House at one stage or another, but they remain very serious problems here and, of course, in many other nations as well. I cannot offer a debate in Government time, given that the time allocated for such debates is generally controlled by the Backbench Business Committee, but the hon. Gentleman has made his case and I am sure he will continue to do so.

Lord Lipsey: What is the current status of their consultation on the reform of the Horserace Betting Levy in the light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement announcement of the introduction of a racing right.

Lord Gardiner Of Kimble: As a result of our analysis of the responses to the two consultations it is clear that more detail is required as to how a replacement for the Levy would work. In order to enable a fair comparison between reform and replacement we will work up the "racing right" proposal and engage constructively with stakeholders so that a fully informed decision can be made. We will consult early in the New Year.

Clive Efford: Pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2014 to Question 211606, whether he has met the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills or UKRep to discuss progress on extending the Horseracing Betting Levy to online companies; and if he will make a statement.

Clive Efford: With reference to paragraph 2.113 of the Autumn Statement 2014, by what date he expects the consultation on the horse racing betting levy to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Clive Efford: When he expects negotiations between his Department, UKRep and the European Commission on extending the horse racing betting levy to online companies to conclude; and if he will make a statement.

Clive Efford: With reference to paragraph 2.113 of the Autumn Statement 2014, what assessment he has made of the consultation on the introduction of a horse racing betting levy for negotiations between his Department, UKRep and the European Commission on extending the existing horse racing betting levy to online companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Helen Grant: I have not held any discussions with the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills or UKRep on this issue. I am determined to extend the Horserace Betting Levy to offshore operators. However simply extending the existing arrangements has proven more difficult than envisaged. Extension is now bound up with wider reform and we will seek to bring about extension either by reforming the Levy or replacing it with a racing right. A consultation on a racing right will allow us to make a full comparison between reform and replacement. The consultation will be launched early in the New Year. Once we have a preferred option we will discuss that with the European Commission.