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A New Strategy for Sport consultation – Submission by the Sports Betting Group

The Sports Betting Group

The Sports Betting Group (SBG) brings together the governing bodies of the major sports and player associations to consider threats to the integrity of sporting competition and to promote best practice in tackling betting-related match-fixing. The SBG was formed in 2010 following the report of the Sports Betting Integrity Panel chaired by Rick Parry. We work closely with others who have an interest in preserving sports betting integrity including the Gambling Commission, betting operators and law enforcement. Further information on the SBG can be found at: www.sportsbettinggroup.org.

Comments on the proposed new strategy

The Sports Betting Group welcomes the launch of a new sports strategy and the opportunity to respond to the consultation. This response focuses on a specific question set out in the governance section of Chapter Five of the consultation document:

Government would welcome views on:

- (i) How to ensure that governance models in sport represent participants and follow industry standard best practice; and**
- (ii) How this continued push can ensure that integrity, transparency and the fight against corruption in sport remains a top priority.**

In response to the second part of this question in particular, the SBG would make the following key points:

- Protecting the integrity of sports and preventing betting corruption must continue to be a key priority for government and its arm's length bodies, notably the Gambling Commission and law enforcement agencies. Sports governing bodies and player associations have achieved a significant amount to date by putting in place frameworks to prevent, detect and punish breaches of sports rules but wider government support is vital to ensure this good work is built upon. The establishment of the Sports Betting Integrity Forum is a welcome step and we would urge the government to ensure that DCMS, the Gambling Commission and other relevant bodies such as the National Crime Agency have sufficient resources and a clear mandate to support their continued involvement in this important area.
- We believe that further changes to the legislative and regulatory regime are necessary to ensure comprehensive protection against sports betting corruption. These changes fall into three distinct parts:
 - Firstly, it should be explicit within Licence Condition 15.1.2 of betting operators' licence conditions that they must report any suspicious betting activity on sporting events to the relevant sports governing body directly and as soon as soon as possible. This will ensure that

suspicious betting information is passed to sports bodies in a timely manner and, where possible, can be used to take preventative action to stop a corrupt incident occurring at a match or fixture. The Gambling Commission has indicated it will consider this change and we believe this should be taken forward at the earliest opportunity.

- Secondly, the Gambling Commission should provide 24/7 out-of-hours coverage to ensure that any suspicious betting information reported to them via their reporting lines is picked up and acted upon immediately. This is particularly important because timeliness of information is critical if steps are to be taken in advance of a game or event taking place. All major sports already provide this 24/7 out-of-hours coverage and we firmly believe the Gambling Commission should offer this also. It is important to note this capability could be delivered remotely by an on-call rota/duty officer. We are aware that the Gambling Commission can and does offer 24/7 out-of-hours coverage for specific events, including the Rugby World Cup 2015, and in this context we see no reason why it should not be put on a formal and consistent footing to ensure all sports are afforded the same level of coverage. We are currently engaging the Gambling Commission on this particular issue and are hopeful of reaching a positive outcome but a clear direction from the government which recognises the importance of this would be very welcome.
- Thirdly, Schedule 6 of the Gambling Act 2005 should be amended to ensure that the Gambling Commission and betting operators can share suspicious betting information with an appropriate range of sports governing bodies. The existing Schedule 6, while useful, is becoming increasingly outdated because it lists only a relatively small number of sports. The growth of media interest in a wider range of sports means that an increasing number of governing bodies need to manage betting interest in their sport and ensuring the legislation enables them easy access to suspicious information is crucial. We have had some initial engagement with the Gambling Commission and DCMS on this issue and would encourage government to help facilitate amendments to Schedule 6 at the earliest possible opportunity and ensure that, going forward, it can be updated more easily than is currently possible.

The members of the Sports Betting Group recognise the role they play in supporting the wider sector and for example this year ran an information sharing/awareness event, in partnership with one of the betting operators, to which a number of other sports were invited.

More broadly, the Sports Betting Group will continue to work with other sports bodies to share best practice and knowledge and to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to protect sports from potential betting corruption.

**Sports Betting Group
September 2015**

