

2024.11.12

**3.9 Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier North of the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development regarding Remote Gambling Operator licences: (OQ.206/2024)**

Further to the publication of the Jersey Gambling Commission Annual Report 2023, will the Minister advise what consideration, if any, has been given to the decline in the number of Remote Gambling Operator licences and advise why the Social Responsibility Fund has remained unused?

**Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (The Minister for Sustainable Economic Development):**

I thank the Deputy for a question on a different subject. The decline in remote gambling operator licences in the past year is a direct result of the acquisition of the Jersey-based businesses by Entain and their transfer to Gibraltar, which is Entain's offshore headquarters. The move is not a reflection of their performance in Jersey, as far as we understand it, and is purely a business decision made by the new parent company for operational reasons. With regard to the Commission's Social Responsibility Fund, it has been building for a number of years and the Commission's intent was to use that money to fund the delivery by an independent third sector provider to deliver treatment and counselling services. Unfortunately, the board of that external provider took a strategic decision to pull away from its overseas work the same week that the contract was due to be signed, so the project has been temporarily paused. Nevertheless, the Commission continues to provide support to Islanders needing assistance and is liaising with Health and Community Services to see how the Commission can fund educational and promotional material, signposting a treatment service being developed within adult mental health.

**3.9.1 Deputy S.M. Ahier:**

The tiny jurisdiction of Alderney has 2,060 gaming licences, issuing 5 new licences in 2023 alone, reaping £4.4 million in fees. In contrast, Jersey has 4 remote gambling operators but this will decrease by 2 this year. What action is the Minister going to take to address this governance failure, remembering that the Jersey Gambling Commission not so long ago issued a licence to the disgraced Football Index, which was a Ponzi scheme?

**Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I think our Island has, over the last 20 years or so, had an interesting relationship with gambling. Certainly, I am sure States Members know, Alderney actually moved into the remote gambling space before Jersey did and in that sense got a head start. I speak regularly with the Gambling Commission and I thank them for all their hard work. I think they do a superb job. One of the things that I think has been difficult for the Gambling Commission is the way they were set up. It almost asks them to both, in one sense, make Jersey attractive as a place for remote operator licences but, at the same time, they have to regulate. It is not right to really build on to the regulator any sort of promotional element. I have spoken in the past informally with the Gambling Commission about this, because I do believe there is room for us to grow our remote operator licence business in the Island. I think it is important, though, that it is not particularly the regulator that is tasked with that.

[11:00]

I am looking to understand how we may develop a way of promoting the Island as a place for remote operator licences without compromising the Gambling Commission's integrity, because obviously, as the regulator, it has to regulate rather than promote. This is a current insight into my own thinking on the matter, because I do think Jersey can be more of a base for remote operator licences than it currently is.