

Fixed Odds Betting Terminals

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

In his Budget statement, the Chancellor referred specifically to wanting to reduce the tragedy of lives being lost to suicide. This is clearly a measure that could be taken; the industry has had ample time to prepare for it. May I urge the Secretary of State to reconsider and to bring forward the date on which remote gambling duty is brought in, so that it can cover the costs that he has mentioned in relation to protecting public services? The tragedy of lives being lost to suicide has to be our absolute priority here, and there is good evidence for this measure. I urge him to think again and to bring it in.

Jeremy Wright The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

I have huge respect for my hon. Friend's passion on this subject, and for the approach that she takes to issues such as this. I hope she will accept that there is no lack of enthusiasm on my part for countering the harms that she has described. The reason that we are making this decision is not because we believe it is important to pacify the betting lobby. Had that been the case, we would not have made this change at all. We have made this change because we believe that it is necessary to make it, but it is also necessary to make this decision in the most rational way that we can and to balance out a number of factors that we have no choice but to properly consider in order to achieve the objective that she and I share.

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