

Lord Gardiner of Kimble  
Government Whips' Office  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

17 February 2015

Dear Lord Gardiner,

I have recently read the transcript of the House of Lords oral question on 9 February 2015 on the subject of fixed-odds betting terminals during which you made a reference to the Responsible Gambling Trust. Specifically, in answer to a question from Lord Strasburger you said that *"The Responsible Gambling Trust has said that in its view it is, 'overtly naïve and massively premature', to suggest that reducing the maximum stake size would help to reduce problem gambling."*

I would like to take this opportunity to clarify that this is not the view of the Responsible Gambling Trust nor have those words appeared in any document published by us. The Responsible Gambling Trust does not have a view on the appropriate stake size for Category B2 gaming machines.

The words that you attribute to the Responsible Gambling Trust were in fact spoken by Dr Adrian Parke, an academic at the University of Lincoln, in an interview published by Betting Business Interactive magazine in January 2015. Adrian was the author of one of the seven research projects into gaming machines which the Responsible Gambling Trust published in December 2014 but he is not an employee of the Responsible Gambling Trust and does not speak on the charity's behalf.

That programme of research was commissioned by the Responsible Gambling Trust to build the knowledge base available to identify harmful machine play and to understand what measures might limit harmful play without impacting on those who do not exhibit harmful behaviours. The research has been conducted independently by leading experts in gambling behaviour and social research, and reviewed by a panel of international academics to ensure it meets the standards expected of high quality academic research.

In this context, it may be helpful to point out that the statement by Lord Strasburger *"given that four out of five of those staking just a quarter of the proposed new maximum limit show signs of problem gambling"* does not acknowledge the researcher's important caveat that *"the findings from this survey, however, should not be extrapolated to all machine players, as loyalty card customers represent only one segment of the player base"*.

I believe we have delivered a truly ground-breaking body of work which greatly enhances our understanding of these machines and the way people use them. The findings of the research have been provided to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Gambling Commission to inform policy decisions they may wish to make with regard to these machines. The research is complex, there is a lot of it and it requires careful thought and consideration by all concerned. The researchers are entitled to discuss their work and to form their own opinions about appropriate policy but the Responsible Gambling Trust has not made any policy recommendations and will not be doing so. We are a commissioning body with a duty to remain impartial and appearing to advocate for a particular policy outcome might risk undermining our ability to complete research projects such as this in the future.

I hope you will understand why I thought it was necessary to make our position clear. I have copied this letter to Helen Grant MP, Lord Strasburger and the four other Peers who took part in the debate. I will also place a copy on the Responsible Gambling Trust's website.

Yours sincerely,



**Neil Goulden**  
Chairman

cc. Helen Grant MP, Lord Strasburger, Lord Collins of Highbury, Lord Clement-Jones, Lord Dubs, Lord Berkeley