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**Open letter to The Guardian**

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**Independence of the Responsible Gambling Trust’s research**

Your article ([Bookmakers must hand over gambling machine for testing, say ministers](#), The Guardian, 30 January 2014) incorrectly lends to the impression that the Responsible Gambling Trust's research programme is being frustrated by an unco-operative gambling industry and is not independent of the industry.

It's fair to say that some elements of the gambling industry have been slow to accept the role they could play in facilitating research into the way people behave when playing gaming machines but it is completely false to argue that the industry is now frustrating our research programme. The research the article mentions was commissioned by a now defunct body and inherited by the RGT when the charity was established in 2012. It is a matter of regret that no bookmaker was persuaded to participate in that project. However, we also published in December research commissioned by the RGT to systematically assess how the data held by machine operators can help us understand how people behave when playing on those gaming machines offering the highest stakes and prizes in Britain, and what helps people to stay in control and play responsibly.

This was a first step in a major research project that has the full co-operation of 13 machine operators, including the five largest bookmakers. Together these businesses operate 80% of the market for gaming machines with the highest stakes and prizes in Britain. Specifically, operators have offered to provide category B2 gaming machines (those found in bookmakers) for research purposes, which is an opportunity the RGT will ensure is taken up in the next phase of its research.

I am proud the RGT has secured the co-operation of the gambling industry, which is greatly assisted by having trustees who work in the industry, only one of whom is a bookmaker.

I am equally proud of our governance arrangements, including having trustees independent of the industry as well as government observers, to ensure that all research that we commission is independent, peer-reviewed and published.

**Marc Etches**  
*Chief executive, Responsible Gambling Trust*

**-ENDS-**

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- The Responsible Gambling Trust is the leading charity in the UK committed to minimising gambling-related harm. As an independent national charity funded by donations from the gambling industry, the Responsible Gambling Trust funds education, prevention and treatment services and commissions research to broaden public understanding of gambling-related harm. The aim is to stop people getting into problems with their gambling, and ensure that those that do develop problems receive fast and effective treatment and support. ([www.responsiblegamblingtrust.org.uk](http://www.responsiblegamblingtrust.org.uk)).
- The Responsible Gambling Trust raises a minimum of £5million each year from the gambling industry operating in Britain within a voluntary (donation based) system and funds research, education, prevention and treatment services. Funding priorities are guided by the national strategy advised by the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) and endorsed by the Gambling Commission.