

Casino (Amendment) Bill 2012
Third Reading approved

1. Mr Lowey to move:

That the Casino (Amendment) Bill 2012 be now read a third time.

The President: We move to Item 1 on our Order Paper. I call on Mr Lowey to take the Third Reading of the Casino (Amendment) Bill 2012.

Mr Lowey: Thank you, Madam President.

Hon. Members, as I said at the First Reading, this Bill is promoted by the Treasury, on behalf of the Gambling Supervision Commission, to make provision for a more flexible regime for an Isle of Man casino licence holder that allows premises other than its own to be used for the purposes of gaming.

The main purpose of the Bill is to amend the Casino Act 1986 by adding in an entirely new part which introduces temporary premises certificates. Such certificates will allow a casino to operate outside its traditional venue for a short period of time. Temporary premises certificates will allow an Isle of Man casino to host events which cannot be practically accommodated in their existing facilities – most likely large gambling tournaments which see the gathering of players in one place for the purpose of determining an overall winner. Such tournaments are commonplace in the world of gambling, apparently, and attract significant interest from the gambling community. A typical tournament consists of a series of rounds which are staged over a number of days, culminating in a final which may be televised.

The Bill also amends the Gaming, Betting and Lotteries Act and makes consequential amendments to the Gaming (Amendment) Act, the Value Added Tax Act and the Proceeds of Crime Act 2008 and the codes of that Act relating to money laundering and terrorist financing.

That is the Bill in a nutshell. I have tried to explain how the machinery will work, and if Hon. Members will recall, there were two points of interest in both Bills that I took, so I will take the opportunity now, if I may, Madam President, to... on the two matters that were raised with me during the Second Reading and clauses, and that was a check on the side notes that I think my friend, Mr Turner, wanted. Was it Mr Turner? (**A Member:** Mr Callister.) Mr Callister on the side notes.

Having checked with the Attorney General's office, the side notes now are simply referred to at the bottom of the page or at the headings at the beginning of the clause. Apparently it is something to do with more people looking at the Acts on computer screens and it is for ease of use of the consumer of the Bills, that is why it is done, and apparently now they are even checking the Bills on telephones. So it is an administrative easement for the people who are using the Acts. It is there, but it is at the top and the bottom and not the side we have been used to in the past.

I thank Mr Callister for raising it because it is an omission that a lot of people, old people like me, who learned in the old way, find it strange when we refer to it.

The other query, and I think it was raised maybe in the other Act, but I will mention it now because it is of relevance. The Appointments Commission, who are independently set up to appoint people to the Gambling Commission, for example, do not have to have the approval of Tynwald because it is a bit like saying the terms of reference will be drawn up by the Gaming Commission and handed the independent panel. They will then select the people independently and you cannot have an independent Commission and then have the power to veto their decisions, but having said that, that is the reason why we moved to an independent Commission in the first place, to take it away from the appointment by the Council of Ministers to an independent Commission. So that is the reason for that.

So with those explanations, and with the purposes of the Bill spelt out for the Third Reading, I beg to move the Third Reading of the Casino (Amendment) Bill be read a third time.

Mr Braidwood: I beg to second, Madam President, and reserve my remarks.

The President: The Hon. Member, Mr Butt.

Mr Butt: Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to support the passage of this Bill. We have discussed the moral argument about the extension of casinos into temporary premises and I think really, when you look at it carefully, the moral argument on this was probably won or lost, depending on your point of view, in about 1962 when the casino was set up in the first place.

I think this Bill really is about premises, rather than the concept of gambling and merely an extension of where the gambling can take place. I think it is not a great change to what we already do at the moment, so I will

support the Bill.

The President: The Hon. Member, Mr Turner.

Mr Turner: Thank you, Madam President.

Just to build on Mr Butt's comments, of course, this will be available for existing licence holders, so it is not as if anybody can come along and have a gambling tournament next week. So it very much is to echo the words of the Hon. Member, Mr Butt, in that it enables the existing operators to hold more appropriate venues for such tournaments, and I support the provisions in this Bill.

The President: Mr Downie.

Mr Downie: Yes, Madam President, likewise I can support the Bill. I think it will give the gaming industry on the Isle of Man much more flexibility. It will enable us to promote larger events on the Isle of Man, attract people here for these tournaments, many of which are televised. It will raise our profile and I think the industry is very well regulated. I do not think we have anything to fear from that particular aspect of things.

I think that, as we are in the gaming industry, we have got to move with the times and we have got to allow provisions to enable large tournaments and events like this to happen on the Isle of Man, rather than see that business go somewhere else to another jurisdiction, where they have the facilities available.

So, I fully support the Third Reading of the Bill.

The President: Mr Wild.

Mr Wild: Madam President, thank you.

Just to add my own support to the comments already made by Hon. Members around the table, there are some moral concerns, which I think we all acknowledge, but on the basis this is, I think, modernising and practical legislation that evolves what we already have to make it competitive, it has my support.

Thank you.

The President: Mr Lowey to reply, please.

Mr Lowey: Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to thank Members for the interest that they have shown in this particular piece of legislation. As I pointed out, the other place seemed to nod it through without a vowel, a verb or an adjective being spoken about it. I think Hon. Members here have shown, first of all, their support for the purposes of the Bill and why it should go ahead in the way it is.

I would also like to re-echo those... that existing casino holders organise tournaments in other parts of the world already. They have already organised huge events, as I said, in South America, the Far East and in America, so they have the experience to do it. This enables them to put that experience to their home base here in the Isle of Man in new premises. I think it is a reasonable one. I do not guarantee. I am informed that at least one major international player wishes to do that, and once the legislation is in place I would look forward to seeing that put into place. I think Mr Butt put the argument and I think it is right that there is a moral argument about gambling. As I said at the First Reading, I, in 1962, was against the casino. However, I have changed my mind because of the regulation, the way we regulate gambling now. I think the Rubicon was crossed in 1962. I think our experience over that period of time has made us the effective force we are in international gaming on the Isle of Man. So to that extent, I think we are building on success. I commend Members for their interest shown in the Bill and I beg that the Bill do pass.

The President: The motion is that the Bill be read a third time. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.