

Backing for pub poker

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The commission has produced the leaflet titled *Poker in pubs: advice on allowing poker in alcohol licensed premises* as part of a campaign to educate the licensed alcohol trade about the law on equal chance gaming.

Low stakes poker is permitted in pubs as long as stakes are kept below £5 a head and £100 per premises per day. A significant number of poker leagues operate legitimate low stakes poker around the country but there is some evidence of restrictions being breached.

The commission has already written to poker league operators reminding them of the legal position. The leaflet, which has the backing of the BBPA, is designed to help landlords ensure the limits on stakes and prizes are not breached on their premises. It has also been highlighted to the large pub operators.

The new leaflet has also received the support of the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services. Local authorities may take action against holders of alcohol premises licences who breach the limits. Licensees who persist in offering illegal poker risk prosecution under the Gambling Act 2005.

The commission's director of regulation, Nick Tofiluk said: 'Any landlord or pub manager considering offering a poker night should read this leaflet.'

'The commission has written to poker league operators reminding them of the law and this leaflet will help designated premises supervisors in pubs to stick to the rules.'

Rita King, deputy director of pub & leisure at the British Beer and Pub Association: 'This leaflet gives welcome clarification of the law around what has become a popular game in Britain's pubs. Poker in pubs is a low-stakes game played largely for fun. When it comes to keeping prizes within the legal limits, it will help pubs to have the rules set out clearly.'

Emily Scantlebury, licensing and gambling policy officer at LACORS said: 'We welcome the Gambling Commission's clarification of this issue as Local Authorities often receive queries about poker tournaments in pubs.'

THE POKER RULES

There is a maximum value to both the amount that can be staked and the prize that can be offered when playing poker in a pub.

The maximum stake per player is £5 per game, and the combined stakes for a premises should not exceed £100 per day.

The maximum prize is £100 per game. This maximum includes money, payments in-kind, vouchers, goods, donated items, goody bags, buy-ins at other poker tournaments and other items which have a value.

A participation fee cannot be charged, including for example by having entrants pay a compulsory charge for a meal. A breach of the regulations could lead to action by a local licensing authority or the Gambling Commission under the Gambling Act 2005.

<http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/pdf/Poker%20in%20pubs%20-%20July%202009.pdf>