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Gambling Affordability Checks:

Horse racing is our country's second largest sport, generating more than £4 billion a year and supporting thousands of jobs. The future of racing needs to be protected for generations to come.

I am aware that concerns have been raised over the plans to introduce affordability checks. The Gambling Commission has proposed a 'light touch check' to initially identify customers who may be vulnerable, using publicly available data, at £125 net losses within a 30-day period. An 'enhanced financial risk assessment' would take place at unusually high loss levels and be informed by credit data. The Gambling Commission, alongside holding a consultation on this issue, has estimated that enhanced assessments would take place for 0.3% of account holders.

I believe that we urgently need a modernised, robust system that is fit for the future of online gambling. While affordability checks can form an important part of that, they must be set independently, rather than by the industry. I recognise that many people enjoy betting safely and without harm, and the Government must ensure that checks are frictionless for customers. These checks should also be accompanied by online stake limits, data sharing between gambling firms and a crackdown on black market betting. Proportionality is important for the gambling industry, and to ensure that customers do not leave the regulated market and turn to the black market.

In my view, updated gambling regulation is long overdue. The most recent legislation is from 2005, long before the huge rise and growth in online and mobile gambling opportunities. The law should protect children and vulnerable adults with more effective regulation while allowing others to gamble safely. I have long supported calls for urgent action for those concerned — the families who have lost loved ones, those waiting for research and preventive reports, and the industry itself, which wants regulatory certainty.

The consultations on these checks have now closed and feedback is being analysed. Constituents can be assured that I will continue to follow developments on this issue closely and await the consultation responses.

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