

## **An unwise gamble**

Nick Mathiason's article on the possible effects mega-casinos in Britain was well argued (Think Tank, January 7).

Tessa Jowell, the minister responsible for the new gambling bill, has already gone on record saying that a 50% increase in gambling turnover will not lead to any increase in gambling problems. But evidence from around the world demonstrates that more accessibility to gambling increases not only the number of gamblers but the number of problem gamblers. A report by NERA Economic Consulting claims that the government's proposed gambling bill will result in up to a million problem gamblers in Britain - a three to fourfold increase.

The plan to develop casino resorts is likely to have two serious threats. First, such places will create pockets of problem gambling among the local population who will have increased access to gambling. Second, problem gambling will be "exported" back to other towns and cities by those who discover a new passion in their life as a result of visiting gambling resorts.

Some towns and cities will see large-scale regeneration on the back of Las Vegas-type casinos. However, there needs to be an infrastructure and requisite resources to help the many new individuals who will become the casualties of problem gambling, including free and local access to treatment services.

### **Mark Griffiths**

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