

PRESS RELEASE

## **Betting shop robberies down 46% as Safe Bet Alliance celebrates first birthday of Voluntary Code**

LONDON, United Kingdom (May 26th, 2011) – In May 2010 the Safe Bet Alliance, a collaborative initiative which includes the Association of British Bookmakers (ABB), Metropolitan Police, Community Union and the Institute of Conflict Management, launched its *Voluntary Code of Safety & Security National Standards for Bookmakers*. The result of more than 12 months discussion and negotiation within the Alliance, the Code had set out a single national standard for betting shop safety and security for the first time.

One year on, on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2011 representatives of the Alliance's member organisations met at the ABB's London headquarters to review progress in communicating the Voluntary Code to betting shop operators, Environmental Health Officers and other stakeholders across the UK.

Metropolitan Police Flying Squad Crime Prevention Co-ordinator DC Mark Beale of the told the meeting that during the 12 months from April 2010 to March 2011 there had been 217 commercial robberies of LBOs in the London area, a reduction of 46% on the previous period. The number of attacks on London's LBOs had increased in each of the 5 years from 2006-7 to 2009-10, from 248 to 403. However 2010-11 had seen a dramatic reversal in that long-term upward trend. The detection rate for LBO robberies during 2010-11 was 55%, compared with 50% for all commercial robbery.

DC Beale explained that bookmakers' adoption of the security measures and procedures - including staff training - recommended in the *Voluntary Code* was a major factor in explaining the fall in attacks and rise in detection rate.

He said: "Incidents where the Voluntary Code's recommendations have not been followed tend to be easy to distinguish from those where they have. One of the main indicators is size of cash loss. Quite simply, bookmakers who follow the Voluntary Code are much less likely to lose significant cash in the event of an attack."

Ladbrokes Director of Security Chris Cerroni said: "Ladbrokes has made a significant investment in communicating the *Voluntary Code* to our 14,000 shop-based staff, with training modules now including robbery, violence in the workplace, health & safety and Think21. Relevant data is gathered systematically and reviewed at staff council meetings and health & safety committee meetings."

Gala Coral's Director of Security Peter Meacock added: "Gala Coral's bingo business is already following the lead set by our betting business with respect to the *Voluntary Code*. The initiative has been positively received in staff consultation forums. We've made a substantial investment in physical shop infrastructure and will continue to do so."

Community Union's Matt Ball welcomed the progress that had been reported and the statistics that had been provided by DC Beale, adding: "It's important that stakeholders sustain the effort and review training on an on-going basis to ensure that betting shop staff are confident about being able to report incidents of violence."

William Hill's Director of Security Bill South acknowledged that the scope of the Voluntary Code went beyond acquisitive crime and also covered other forms of violence in the workplace. He said:

“Violence in the workplace has never been a widespread problem for William Hill. Nevertheless, we have reviewed our policy in the light of the *Voluntary Code* and we are actively monitoring relevant data. Staff should be in no doubt that violence in the workplace is an issue that William Hill takes extremely seriously.”

Peter Brown, HSE’s head of work environment, said:

“These encouraging statistics show major reductions in the incidence of violent assault and demonstrate what can be achieved when employers, staff and others involved with the industry, talk and work together to improve the situation.

“The betting industry has made great strides in reducing violence, but further improvement can be achieved if others in the industry use this code of practice to protect their staff.”

The ABB’s Tom Kenny described the ABB’s efforts to communicate the Voluntary Code to independent betting shops in paper copy and electronic formats. The ABB had worked alongside the police to publicise the Voluntary Code in urban areas with higher incidences of betting shop crime including London, Manchester, Northumberland and Strathclyde.

Sarah Simpson of the Institute of Conflict Management said: “A tremendous amount of hard work has gone into the development, communication and national adoption of the *Voluntary Code* over the past 2 years. It’s very satisfying now to see the first fruits of that labour in the form of a halving in the rate of betting shop robbery in London, and a testament to the quality of the Voluntary Code that it has been adopted as a template by other retail sectors including mobile phones and jewellery.”

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Notes to the editor:

1. About the Safe Bet Alliance Voluntary Code of Safety & Security National Standards for Bookmakers

The Voluntary Code benefits betting shop staff and their employers in 4 ways:

- a. It sets out a voluntary minimum level of safety and security measures that should be in place in all UK betting shops e.g. specifying and enforcing a maximum cash till limit;
- b. It explains how to conduct a shop-specific assessment of safety and security risk;

- c. It suggests additional measures that should be implemented based on the findings of the risk assessment e.g. if a shop is identified as higher risk then security screens might be fitted at the counter;
- d. While the 5 major UK betting shop operators operate nationally, their premises are subject to inspection by Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) working for individual local authorities. By setting a single national standard, the Code helps reduce the potential for confusion arising from variations between different local authorities and even different EHOs.

Download the Voluntary Code at: <http://www.abb.uk.com/social-responsibility/tackling-crime>

## 2. About the ABB

The ABB is the UK's leading trade association for operators of Licensed Betting Offices (LBOs). Its members include 4 of the 5 largest betting shop operators, and together operate some 7 100 of the nation's approximately 8 500 LBOs. The ABB is a member of the Safe Bet Alliance.

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## 3. Metropolitan Police

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## 4. About Community Union

Community is a diverse union that works to improve and protect the pay and working conditions of all members. Community also provides training to guarantee safe workplaces and offers opportunities to acquire new skills. Community is a member of the Safe Bet Alliance.

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## 5. About the Institute for Conflict Management (ICM)

The ICM is a not for profit, independent organisation incorporated to develop strategies and standards to help reduce, and where possible eliminate, the risk associated with incidents of challenging, aggressive and violent behaviours. The ICM works across all sectors and at all levels to achieve this aim. The ICM is a member of the Safe Bet Alliance.

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