

These notes refer to the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (c.14) which received Royal Assent on 26 April 2022

Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

3. Northern Ireland law in respect of gambling is contained in the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (the 1985 Order). The 1985 Order is broadly modelled on much older law from Great Britain (the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963, the Gaming Act 1968 and the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976).
4. The 1985 Order regulates a wide range of betting, gaming, lotteries and amusement activity in Northern Ireland. This includes:- betting in bookmaking offices and on tracks; the use, supply and maintenance of gaming machines; gaming in bingo clubs; small scale amusements with prizes; and lotteries other than the National Lottery.
5. The 1985 Order also sets out the procedures for the licensing and certification of betting, gaming, lottery and amusement activities and the offences and penalties for breaches of associated licensing and other conditions. The courts and district councils license and certify most of these activities. The Department is responsible for issuing track-betting licences. Responsibility for enforcement of gambling law lies with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).
6. The 1985 Order has remained largely unchanged since it was first enacted. As a result, gambling legislation in Northern Ireland has not kept pace with industry and technological changes. As well as being outdated, the current law is complex and inflexible, with even minor amendments requiring changes to primary legislation.
7. The objective of the Act is to address concerns surrounding the level of gambling harm in Northern Ireland and to respond to numerous public calls for strengthened regulatory controls on the industry, particularly to better protect young people and those who may be vulnerable to gambling harm. Its aim is to create a balanced package of measures that update the law in respect of land based betting, gaming, lottery and amusement activities. It also seeks to address certain anomalies in the existing legislation (the 1985 Order) affecting the conduct of these activities.