

OPENING A CARIBBEAN PARADISE

THE Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) are truly an unspoilt gem in the Caribbean.

Home to Trip Advisor's 2014 second-best beach in the world, the string of 40 different islands and cays sit to the south of the Bahamas, close to the Dominican Republic and an 11-hour direct flight from London or one hour 45 minutes from Miami.

Only eight of the islands are inhabited, with Providenciales housing the majority of the 31,500 population. Summertime temperatures rarely exceed 33°C and winter night-time temperatures rarely fall below 18°C.

A British possession (now known as a British Overseas Territory) since the turn of the 19th century, the islands were originally one of the Caribbean's biggest salt exporters and now have their growing economy based on tourism and financial services.

In 2009 the Governor rescinded the constitution and suspended the government after allegations of corruption. For three years the islands were ruled from London as every aspect of the running of the country was overhauled and updated. Elections were held again in November 2012 and Dr Rufus Ewing of the Progressive National Party was elected Premier.

As part of the ongoing programme of improvements in governance and regulation, a tender competition was launched for consultancy advice on how to upgrade the islands' gambling laws. In September 2013, veterans of the gambling industry Steve Donoughue and Graham White started a 100-day consultancy project that has culminated in new legislation being drafted, as reported by *InterGaming* in July.

/// "THE GAMBLING INDUSTRY ON THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS IS CURRENTLY QUITE SMALL" ///

The gambling industry on the Turks and Caicos Islands is currently quite small. There is a national lottery that is not much more than an online numbers game, one casino, the Casablanca, with 12 tables and 85 slots, four slot parlours and 69 route operations with 451 slots in total.

The slots are all second-hand because of crippling import duties and the regulation is "light touch" because of 1970s legislation that focused on revenue collection and little else and was "not fit for purpose." This has meant that the eight-person gambling inspectorate, while doing their best, are not adequately trained or resourced to provide modern levels of oversight.

The primary objective of the consultancy project was to provide the TCI with new legislation and regulations that would be of the highest international standards and make the islands attractive for foreign investment. This was done by a process of meetings with all the relevant stakeholders, assessment of the



Graham White (left) and Steve Donoughue (right) with the Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands, Dr Rufus Ewing

market and existing regulatory environment and identification of the problem areas and then finding the solutions based on extensive knowledge and experience of what makes for a world class gambling regulatory environment. From this a comprehensive report was produced, first in interim form so that feedback could be received and then in a final version that was presented to the Premier in April 2014.

The report recommended the setting up of an independent Gambling Commission free of political interference, the expanding of the gambling inspectorate to incorporate a bigger proposed industry, which would include sports betting, online gambling and more casino resorts including an integrated resort licence for a designated site on the island of Grand Turk that already services nearly 1,000,000 cruise ship passengers and has an international length runway for its underutilised airport.

Training and processes were put in place for anti-money laundering, due diligence on licence applicants, strategies for integrating gambling policy into a broader tourism strategy and, for the first time, plans for a comprehensive responsible gambling programme.

While we wait to hear the outcome of the legislative process, the consultancy project is almost certain to have provided a step change in the way gambling is regulated on the TCI and

the potential for a new integrated casino resort will hopefully bring much needed jobs and investment to this tropical idyll.

● *Steve Donoughue has been a management consultant specialising in the gambling industry for 20 years. In this time he has provided business and political strategic advice to many of the world's biggest operators, suppliers and quite a few governments. He was recently the special adviser to the British Parliament Culture Media and Sport Select Committee's inquiry into the Gambling Act 2005 and is the secretariat to the Parliamentary All Party Betting and Gaming Group. He runs a successful gambling consultancy.*

Graham White OBE is one of the world's leading gambling regulators, having been the chief inspector of the Gaming Board for Great Britain from 1996-2006 and has been the chairman of the Jersey Gambling Commission in the British Channel Islands since 2010. He is a member of the International Association of Gaming Regulators and the Gaming Regulators European Forum, where he has held various appointments in both organisations. In addition he is a board member of the European Association for the Study of Gambling, the Society for the Study of Gambling (UK) and the International Masters of Gaming Law. □