

Labour Donor Open to Talks with Reform UK on Gambling Tax Policy

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Labour donor Derek Webb has signaled a willingness to engage with Reform UK over potential reforms to the UK's gambling tax system, highlighting growing concern over offshore operators avoiding domestic taxation. Webb, a former professional poker player and long-time campaigner for gambling reform, said that despite his financial support

for Labour, he remains open to cross-party dialogue on curbing harmful industry practices.

Speaking in a recent interview, Webb said he believed Reform UK likely shares his aim of preventing offshore gambling companies from operating in the UK without paying appropriate levels of tax. He emphasised that gambling regulation should be treated as a cross-party issue and expressed hope that more political groups would align on principles of fairness, harm reduction, and fiscal responsibility.

Webb has donated over £1.3 million to Labour causes but declined to say whether future donations would depend on the party's action on gambling. He warned, however, that failure to take a clear position on gambling reform could alienate parts of Labour's voter base, particularly older or disillusioned voters who might be drawn to Reform UK if it appeared more credible on the issue.

While Reform UK has criticised Labour's proposed levy on gambling firms, calling it heavy-handed and a threat to personal freedoms, Webb believes there may still be common ground when it comes to regulating online casinos and tackling the tax avoidance practices of offshore operators.

The situation reflects a wider debate within Labour about how to manage donor influence, address public health concerns, and raise revenue. The party has floated the idea of increasing taxes on online gambling to generate up to £3 billion, but it faces strong pushback from within the industry.

Meanwhile, lobbying efforts by the Betting and Gaming Council have intensified. The council has hosted informal gatherings with Labour advisers and presented economic arguments against the proposed tax hike, warning of job losses in sectors such as horseracing and a potential rise in unregulated gambling activity.

As Labour continues to shape its policy on gambling, Webb's comments suggest that cross-party cooperation could emerge as a potential path forward. Any formal dialogue between Reform UK and figures like Webb could influence the direction of future regulation and reshape the broader political consensus on the issue.