

# Casino plan for pay out ahead of smoke ban

Bosses at a Leeds casino are staking GBP 6,000 on a smoking shed for customers ahead of the nationwide ban on smoking that comes into force in July.

The Grosvenor Casino in Merrion Way, has applied to build the 6m by 6m aluminium structure before the Government ban on smoking in enclosed public places from July 1.

From then on gamers will no longer be able to light up as they place their bets or even smoke a fag as they ponder their losses or celebrate their winnings at the bar.

They will have to leave the table and step outside into a purpose-built shed that will be used only by customers. Bosses plan to make other arrangements for staff.

A spokeswoman for The Rank Group, which owns Grosvenor Casinos, said it had consulted employees and customers at the 18-year-old casino on the impact of the ban.

She said: „We continually do customer research as well as seeking the views of our employees.

„This is why we are looking to introduce these covered smoking areas in preparation for the smoking ban.“

She added: „We want to ensure that we provide a covered area for those of our customers who want to smoke.

„We are looking to make separate arrangements for staff.“

At present there are designated smoking areas in which staff and customers can smoke throughout the casino, which has 10 slot machines, nine tables, a restaurant and a bar.

The spokeswoman said the percentage of smokers using the venue was slightly higher than the national average but she did not expect the ban to have a significant impact on business.

Grosvenor Casinos has more than 30 sites in major towns and cities across the UK, including a second in Leeds, on Harrogate Road, Moortown.

Henri Clapham, manager of the Moortown venue said it would also be providing some form of smoking shelter for customers but plans had not yet been drawn up.

He said it would be harder there than at the city-centre casino as it was a listed building so there were likely to be restrictions on what they could build.

The Rank spokeswoman said it intended to provide outdoor smoking facilities at as many of its casinos as possible but in some cases the location could mean it was not possible.

The smoking ban covers virtually all enclosed public places including offices, factories, pubs and bars, but not outdoors or in private homes.