

## Play the Game Vejen 2011

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Nick Hawkins, Barrister, Consultant and until May 2011 Legal Director and Company Secretary,

Danoptra Ltd. (£165 Million UK Leisure, Sport and Gaming Group)

Former Shadow Minister for Sport, (Conservative Party UK) and former Shadow Minister for Gambling and Shadow Solicitor-General

Danoptra Ltd are owners of-among other companies-Leisure Connection Limited – operators of sports centres and other leisure facilities for UK Government and UK Local Authorities; Bell Fruit Games (major UK machine manufacturers and Mazooma Interactive Games Ltd, suppliers of internet gaming content) Gamestec Leisure Ltd. (major suppliers, especially to UK pubcos.) RLMS Sales (distributors) On Board Leisure (casinos on cruise ships, machines on ferries, suppliers to UK Defence Services) etc

## My Background

Corporate Barrister

Called to the Bar 1979

Practised as a Barrister from Chambers 1979-86

In politics, contested first General Election (in safe Labour seat) 1987

Corporate in-house Counsel 1987-92 in Banking, credit cards, financial services and insurance with Access credit cards and Lloyds Abbey Life plc

Started lobbying Parliament, writing and contributing to advice to Government from 1987

Professor Jack's Review of Banking Services Law for Government – contributor

Advice on Financial Services Regulation, and the EU "1992" process on insurance

Elected to Parliament 1992 as Tory M.P. for Blackpool South

Throughout all that, always interested in sports policy-writing pamphlets on it for Party organisations, and playing lots of sport.

## In Parliament 1992-2005 - 1

3 years as a Backbencher to begin with – but served on interesting legislation – including Sports issues

Appointed to first very junior Government role 1995 Parliamentary Priv. Secretary, Ministry of Defence – saw at close hand all the lobbying on Defence Procurement issues

After a year, promoted and moved to be Sec of State's Parl. Priv. Sec, Dept. of National Heritage  
That meant working on Sports policy

So – 2 public spending rounds, in one of most powerful and then in one of least powerful (but most interesting) Government Departments.

Then, in 1997, we lost the Election....

## In Opposition – but still seeking to influence events

1997-8 working for the Environment team, which included issues on sports playing fields

Lesson-DO NOT LET THESE BE SOLD OFF!

1999 – appointed Shadow Minister, Lord Chancellor's Department, and then asked to become, in addition, Shadow Home Office Minister, Dec 1999.

Working as one of a team of Shadow Ministers – and had responsibility for the first time for Gambling, as a Shadow Home office Minister, 2000-01.

A heavy legislative programme to respond to.

Never underestimate what Opposition MPs can influence, even out of power...

We lost another Election.....

## In Opposition – stages 2 and 3 2001 onwards

Remained as Shadow Home Office and Shadow Legal Minister 2001-2003, Most senior role, 2003, promoted to Shadow Solicitor-General.

When Party Leadership changed, continued as Shadow Home Office Minister, but became Shadow Sports Spokesman in Shadow DCMS team as well, and working for a second time as Shadow Minister for Gambling

Decided not to contest next Election, but to return to the law –

concluding months in Parliament taken up largely with Committee Stage of Gambling Bill – Opposition amendments etc

For thirteen years, spoke in every debate there was on Sport

In addition-still taking part ....

Competitive swimming till age 47

Rugby till age 48

Still playing League Cricket in Yorkshire

## Return to the Law

2005-07 With Law firms, overseas and in the City, including specialist niche Gambling and Licensing Law firm Harris Hagan – then Consultant Head of Gambling Law for Halliwells, national Law firm, based in their City of London office – return to lobbying Government again – and overseas Governments too, and even writing draft legislation for offshore jurisdictions.

2007 joined Danoptra Ltd as Legal Director

## The lessons from the UK experience - and my own experience

I'm here because of my experience of both sides of the Government/industry divide

I've been a politician trying to create the right conditions for a system in which business can bid successfully to Government to build and to run sports facilities for the benefit of the public-to get the benefits of competition....

And I've also been a senior executive in a Group trying to make bids and being stymied by anti-competitive procedures which stack the deck against the private sector

Hopefully, I can give you some pointers as to what would make a sensible system

Firstly-let me stress – I am personally passionate about sport – and about the best-possible sports facilities being available to the public as cheaply as possible – especially for children

Its been one consistent thread running through my own career so far; an involvement in sport and the leisure industries, in the law, in politics, in Government and in business.

Examples:

Seek to make/win friends all the time – in 'times of peace' – you will need them in "times of war" for this industry.

## What did my company do, which is relevant to this Conference?

Leisure Connection Ltd

Details:

Now profitable

Other UK companies :

DC Leisure, Parkwood, Serco

Utility prices are crucial – must get the commercial aspects right.

Long-term loss-making contracts are a killer to a provider company

The legislative structure must allow for sensible profits to be made

Key to monitor everything with great care, constantly



# Lobbying

What do you want to achieve?

Keep the objective firmly in mind at all times

- Make sure you really *know* who you need to persuade, who you need to see/get access to/get to read and note your concerns, to achieve that objective.

-- Ignorance and misinformation bedevils this field – don't believe all you are told (especially by those with a vested interest in persuading you to part with large fees) and don't fall into the trap of accepting received wisdom.

--- Companies and organisations are also often ripped off .....!

Politicians will have to be responsive

A new generation –

A completely fresh opportunity

Don't waste it

Make the contacts and friendships in “times of peace” – for this industry, we can be absolutely certain that there will be “times of war”

## Sport will always have Political and Governmental issues

### The Health issues

However much you might dislike politics and politicians, in this industry above all, throughout the developed world, politics and politicians, (and the government civil servants who report to them and are supposedly doing their bidding), have far too much power over our industry ever to be ignored

We need to try to be ahead of the game – try to get informed as to what is going to be next on the agenda for Government and civil servants.

Have to seek to persuade any relevant officials or regulators to the industry's point of view too.

