

Camelot Social Report Summary 2005

Responsible gambling?

By Aleksandra Dobkowski-Joy

Camelot argues the case for responsible gambling while offering readers an informative short-format report

As the operator of the UK's National Lottery, Camelot Group finds itself in the odd situation of having to define and defend responsible gambling. Camelot's official purpose is to raise as much money as possible to support national "good causes", yet this money is drawn from citizens' pockets via games of chance that offer remote odds of hitting a payoff. The dubious transformation of vice into nice poses an inherent challenge for corporate responsibility reporting, one that Camelot meets head on, starting with a frank and unapologetic letter from the chief executive.

Rather than shy away from delicate questions of gambling addiction, youth gaming and the perception that the National Lottery is a de-facto "tax on the poor", Camelot systematically and effectively addresses each issue in turn. The summary report is organised into sections based on these issues as defined by sample questions from concerned stakeholders. Each section provides brief background information, presents achievements and future goals, and includes illustrative case studies, such as a description of Operation Child, a programme to test whether retailers are selling lottery tickets to underage players.

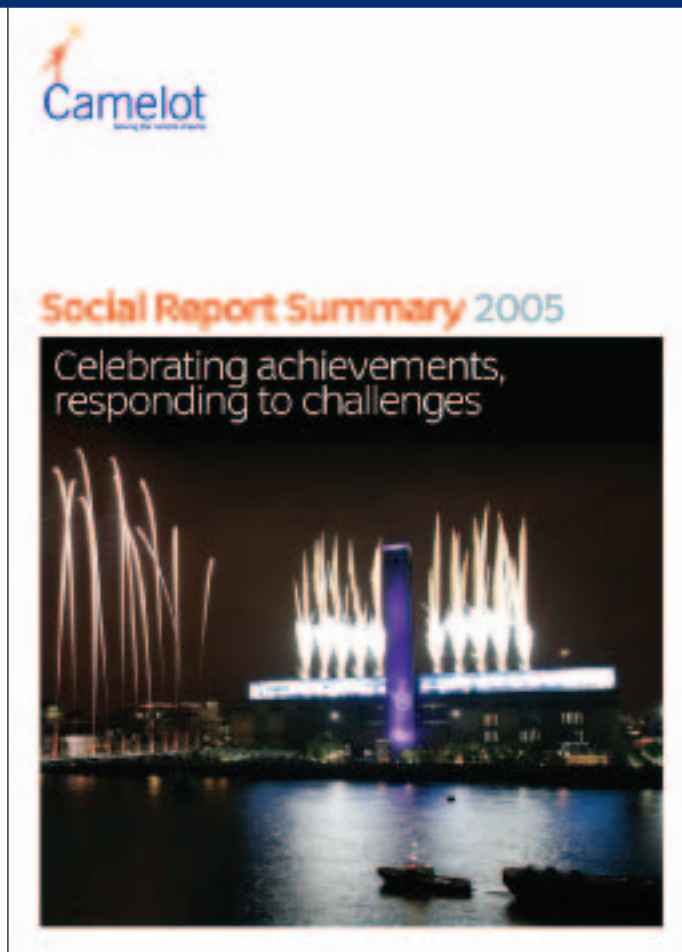
Camelot links these abbreviated descriptions to a full-length online report through web addresses in each section header. For those readers trained to process corporate responsibility matters only through the lens of the Global Reporting Initiative, Camelot has also assembled a comprehensive GRI indicator table on its website to document its in-accordance reporting status.

Throughout the report summary, Camelot works aggressively to burnish its image of responsibility. The company rolls out example after example of how its operations provide value to society, from funding its so-called "good causes", to facilitating low-cost entertainment for millions of players and helping lottery retailers lure more customers to their stores. Camelot also has an effective graphic illustration of the allocation of each pound spent by lottery players, which depicts company profits equal to a paltry 0.5 pence per pound.

Goals set

To further bolster its claim of responsibility, Camelot presents goals such as keeping per-player spend among the lowest in the world (at about £3 per week), and improving access to gaming as the preferred way to build future revenues. The company devotes several pages to describing efforts to limit addictive behaviour and youth access to games, especially its new online offerings.

Yet despite Camelot's achievements and ambitions, it remains unclear how Camelot measures certain indicators and whether



the company has much control over its ability to reach some goals. For example, how is it tracking per-player spend, and could such tracking be an invasion of privacy? And despite Camelot's efforts to limit gambling addiction, are high-rolling players ever barred from buying tickets? More broadly, is ever-increasing access to a panoply of games a good thing, and, if not, at what point should a responsible lottery company limit its own growth?

Camelot's social report summary closes with target values and trend data for key indicators such as money raised for good causes; player, employee, and retailer satisfaction levels; and pre-tax profit spent on community investment. Camelot also includes a list of company commitments for the coming year, some more tangible than others, but all presumably described in more detail in the full, online report. Topping things off, an assurance statement attests to the reliability of the data presented.

In short, Camelot's 18-page summary handily substitutes for the 117-page online version, cutting through to core issues in a clear and readable format. As more and more businesses gravitate toward online reports, printed summaries such as Camelot's can bridge the accessibility gap for stakeholders lacking either internet access or the requisite powers of concentration to scroll through endless screens of data. ■

Useful links:

www.camelotgroup.co.uk
www.camelotgroup.co.uk/socialreport2005/
www.national-lottery.co.uk

Ethicalcorp.com keyword searches:

Camelot, National Lottery, responsible gambling