

Another pub lost as deal called off

Bid for premises ends in disappointment

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Two licensees who believed they had secured the freehold of a closed pub have been left frustrated after it was unexpectedly sold to a law firm.

Phil Burns and Michelle Thomas, who have spent 20 years in the trade, were on the hunt for a pub, and put an offer in for Admiral Taverns-owned Waterloo Arms in Abermule in Powys mid Wales, in February.

"Our offer was accepted by Admiral Taverns and we celebrated that we had saved a British pub," Burns said.

They said they were informed the deal was set to go ahead and should transfer funds, but were later unexpectedly told the deal was off as another offer had been accepted.

The pair said they were "frustrated and disappointed", especially given they were cash buyers offering above the asking price, but assumed the buyer would be another licensee who would keep the venue as a pub.



Lost the survival battle: the Waterloo Arms in Abermule

"You can imagine our reaction when we found out the premises are being turned into offices. People are saying pubs should be saved from closing, but we are finding it more frustrating trying to find a closed pub to buy and keep as a pub! This should be an easy task with on average 27 pubs closing a week," Burns said.

The licensees claim the pub was a viable business, particularly as they would not have to struggle with high rent or mortgage payments as cash buyers.

But the building is now owned by Auxilium Legal, which plans to convert the

building into an office, with accommodation above.

Burns and Thomas said they were given no reason as to why the deal was called off, but Admiral Taverns claimed the sale to Auxilium was in its final stages when they received their offer.

A spokesman for the pubco said: "At Admiral our preference will always be to maintain a pub as a pub, providing it has a long term viable future. Unfortunately in this instance the pub had been on the market for three years and an offer had already been accepted and was in the very final stages of exchange."

Anger over hoax St George's cross call

A licensee was left outraged when a supposed call from the local council ordered her to remove a giant painted St George's cross on the front of her pub.

Tess Simms of the Royal

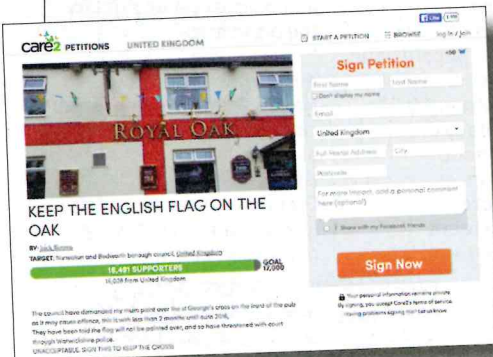
Oak claims a caller threatened legal action if the pub didn't cover up the flag, which she hopes will drive trade during the Euro 2016 football tournament.

Following the call, the

pub set up a petition to keep the flag which, as the time of going to press has gained almost 17,000 signatures. However Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council claims the call must have been a hoax, as it never contacted the pub. Warwickshire Police backed up the council's response, claiming they had received no complaints and had not issued any warnings.

According to a council spokesman, there is no problem with the flag, no need for planning permission and no laws have been broken.

Patriotism: the cross of St George was added to the Royal Oak for Euro 2016



Digest

Child-sized portions a plus in pub



◆ Pubs are leading the way when it comes to eating out for families with young children, new research has revealed. Nearly three-quarters feel pubs are doing enough to appeal to families, according to a survey by HospitalityGEM. However, despite just over half preferring a separate children's menu, 36% would prefer smaller portions from the full menu.

Help for tax credit claimants



◆ The Licensed Trade Charity has launched new guidance on tax credit. Employed or self-employed people may be entitled to them, and the new guide has a wealth of information that will help people understand their entitlement and the claims process. Visit www.supportandcare.org/tax-credits or call 0808 801 0550.

Brexit would give greater freedom



◆ Leaving the EU would benefit the UK hospitality sector, according to employment minister Priti Patel. Speaking at last week's ALMR conference, she said a Brexit would reduce red tape for employers allowing for greater investment in jobs and expansion. "Just think of the freedom you would have to innovate she told delegates.

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