

<http://www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/calls-to-reopen-iconic-black-cap-pub-as-links-to-russian-billionaires-offshore-cash-revealed-1-4923200>

Calls to reopen iconic Black Cap pub as links to Russian billionaires' offshore cash revealed

PUBLISHED: 07:00 09 March 2017

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*Campaigners hold a 'We Are The Black Cap' vigil outside the Camden Town pub.
Picture: Polly Hancock*

An offshore company ultimately owned by two Russian billionaire steel magnates invested in one of London's most iconic gay pubs – that is facing an uncertain future.





Supporters at a Save

The Black Cap demonstration in April last year. Picture: Polly Hancock

Documents reveal the company owned by industrial titans Alexander Abramov and Alexander Frolov - joint heads of Russia's largest steel producer Evraz - lent money to The Black Cap pub in Camden Town in 2013.

The pub was bought by an offshore Jersey-based company in 2010. Its doors closed in 2015.

The offshore financing deal was made public by campaign group Transparency International (TI) this week.

It has led loyal regulars to renew their calls for The Black Cap to be re-opened as a dedicated lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) venue.

Ben Walters, of campaign group the Black Cap Foundation, said: “Knowing the details of deals like this exposes the colossal gulf between the people who love and use our historic community spaces and the wealthy people who decide their fate.

“That’s why we desperately need more protection for pubs, queer venues and all spaces that care about people, community and culture.”

Last year a *Ham&High* investigation revealed six of seven local pubs bought by offshore companies between 2010 and 2014 have since been closed down. The Black Cap was one.

Black Cap campaigner Nigel Harris said at the time that communication over the future of threatened pubs was almost impossible because of the anonymity surrounding offshore ownership.

TI were first alerted to the case of The Black Cap by the *Ham&High’s* reports and delved deeper into its financing after the Black Cap Foundation provided further information and documents.

Land Registry deeds show a British Virgin Islands (BVI) company called Vollin Holdings Limited took a mortgage in The Black Cap in October 2013.

Other documents released in the US show Vollin is wholly owned by another BVI company, Whiteclif Enterprises Ltd, whose ultimate owners are the Russian billionaires Mr Abramov and Mr Frolov.

The super-rich industrialists feature on the Forbes’ list of World Billionaires with combined fortunes of \$6.1billion, and Mr Abramov is a close business associate of Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich.

A letter from Vollin Holdings’ lawyers, Norton Rose Fulbright, reveals Vollin’s mortgage in The Black Cap was released in January 2016, meaning the Russians no longer have an interest in the property.

The Black Cap and two other pubs were bought by Jersey-based company Kicking Horse Ltd in 2010 in a £13.3million deal.

In March 2013 and March 2015 planning applications by Steve Cox, of the pub company Faucet Inn Ltd, to turn the upstairs floors of The Black Cap into flats were refused following heated opposition.

The pub was shut down in April 2015 and has remained closed ever since.

The decision has caused high levels of stress to the local LGBT community who hold vigils at The Black Cap regularly on Saturdays and have demanded it is re-opened as a dedicated LGBT venue.

Mr Cox, of Faucet Inn Ltd, did not comment when contacted by the *Ham&High*.

