

Regulars band together in bid to save village pub

REGULARS at a Sidbury pub are concerned a potential new owner could call time on their local and hope the community will help them secure its future.

Owners Punch Taverns have put the Red Lion up for sale, but a group called The Pub in the Village (TPV) are worried the £295,000 price tag will be out of reach for many individuals.

They want input from residents on how to save it – or even if they want to retain it – and hope for a wide array of ideas.

There will be an open forum to discuss the Red Lion's future in the pub on Sunday (May 19) from 12.30pm.

Member John Loudoun said: "We need to keep the pub in the village for a whole range of reasons – there is absolutely the opportunity for investment there to make it even more successful."

"It's been done before, it can happen again."

John said he and his fellow drinkers had often talked about what they would do if the pub ever went up for sale, and now the moment has come.

Punch Taverns has recorded a debt of £2.4 billion, and TPV fear this will put more pressure on the company to sell properties such as the Red Lion that are already on the market.

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The regulars are worried that someone will buy the property and change its use.

John said it could become a community-run pub, and a number of established examples have been running for 'many, many years'.

"Some are thriving," added John, who has been drinking at the Red Lion for 15 years.

"But the best thing would be if it was bought by another pub company and we didn't have to do anything."

TPV are holding an open forum at the pub to find out what interest there is and what ideas other people have.

The Fore Street building is used by Sidbury into Drama (SIDS), the badminton club and the allotment association, among others.

John Rush is a member of all three, and said: "It's a village facility, we wouldn't wish to see it closed."

He said SIDS has been using it for meetings for the last decade, and have even used it as a rehearsal space.

A Punch Taverns spokesman said the company always prefers that pubs are retained as pubs, but it regularly reviews its portfolio and has put the Red Lion on the open market.



▲ Sidbury into Drama group outside the Red Lion Inn. Photo by Terry Iff ref shb 2344-20-13T

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