

Small business supported by Dragons' Den star Steven Bartlett and eBay announces closure

A small business that has received support from Dragons' Den star Steven Bartlett and eBay has announced its closure.

The Chocolate Café in Ramsbottom is closing down after 15 years.

The Bolton Street café had undergone a total refurbishment in 2020, but the cost of living and rising energy bills has forced owner Philip Hargreaves to pull the plug on the business.

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The move comes after the café [won an eBay competition last year](#) to have Dragons' Den star Steven Bartlett join its staff as an intern for the day.

The company had shared a 30-second video on TikTok detailing how the Social Chain co-founder could help step the business up to the next level.

The Chocolate Café also received a £5,000 cash grant through the competition.

Mr Hargreaves said: "I've been avoiding writing this post, as it means the end and I've been unsure if I've had the strength.

"But with the heaviest of hearts and tears rolling in my eyes, we must announce we are closing. It's not news that

hospitality is on the brink of collapse and despite every effort we just can't continue.

"The cost of living crisis is hitting us at both ends, our much-loved customers have less in their pockets and goods and energy have increased by 40 per cent, and in some cases doubled. It's just not sustainable.

"Our team have done some wonderful things and I'm so proud of what you have done and despite our online business growing at an incredible rate, it is just not enough to support the hospitality side of our business.

"We are exploring ways to keep the chocolate business alive but for now it's goodbye. I'd like to thank the wonderful staff. I'm heartbroken for you and our suppliers, and our amazing customers."

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