

# US fund Knighthood lodges fresh bid to join Wolseley's top table

A US-based fund is trying to break an impasse over the future of some of London's top restaurants by tabling a fresh offer to extract it from insolvency proceedings.

Sky News has learnt that Knighthood Capital Management, which has seen a number of proposals rebuffed by administrators to Corbin & King and its biggest shareholder, is offering to refinance the group's individual restaurants, which include The Wolseley and The Delaunay.

City sources said that Knighthood and its advisers had changed tack after bids to refinance Corbin & King's £38m of parent company debt had foundered.

One insider pointed out that the US fund's latest proposal, which was lodged this week, would solvently refinance the entire group and enable its exit from administration.

It was unclear, they added, on what basis the proposal would not be attractive to the administrators and the majority-owner.

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Corbin & King was forced into insolvency last month by Minor International, the company's majority shareholder and biggest secured lender, amid a dispute with the co-founder, Jeremy King, about its strategy.

The group's sites continue to trade, with Knighthood understood to be committed to paying suppliers, employees and landlords.

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The London-based group was founded by Mr King and Chris Corbin, two of the capital's most celebrated restaurateurs whose sites are known for their mixture of influential customers from the worlds of business, the arts and politics.

They saw trade badly hit by COVID-19 lockdowns, with that pressure exacerbating a row with Minor, which has been a shareholder in and lender to Corbin & King since 2017.

Richard Caring, the owner of The Ivy and J Sheekey – two other fixtures of London’s upmarket dining scene – was reported last weekend to have dropped his interest in acquiring Corbin & King.

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The administrators are understood to have told interested parties that they have had dozens of expressions of interest.

Minor has separately gone to court to have the advisory firm Teneo Restructuring removed as an independent monitor, a status that temporarily protects Corbin & King’s operating subsidiaries from being placed into bankruptcy.

The monitor role is designed to facilitate a company’s solvent rescue similar to that being proposed by Knighthead.

Mr King said last month: “We have a legal dispute with one of our shareholders and we hope to sort that out soon.

“The good news is the restaurants are doing well and we are looking forward to a good 2022.”

The administration proceedings are being played out against the backdrop of a separate legal case that involves Corbin & King suing Axa for refusing to pay out a claim for loss of business during COVID-19 lockdowns.

None of those involved in the insolvency, which is being handled by FRP Advisory, could be reached for comment.