

# THE VIEW FROM THE RVT

## THE ROYAL VAUXHALL TAVERN

OPEN EVERY DAY



LAST WEEK THE RVT WAS AWARDED THE STATUS OF A GRADE 2 LISTED BUILDING FOLLOWING A CAMPAIGN BY AN UNOFFICIAL GROUP. JAMES LINDSAY, THE RVT'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EXPLAINS TO US EXACTLY WHY THIS MAY NOT BE SUCH GREAT NEWS.



**Hi James, can you explain why you are not happy about this Grade 2 listing?**

I'm making these comments on behalf of my company Royal

Vauxhall Tavern and not on behalf of the owners. I believe that Immovate, the owners, remain the best option for The RVT to survive and to support me in my aim to make it a vibrant entertainment destination.

The Heritage Listing report clearly states that The RVT would not merit listing on its architectural merit alone, but more because of its use. A listing cannot guarantee what happens inside, merely protect the bricks and mortar. What is more astonishing is that a Grade 2 listed building can still be demolished. So what has this campaign achieved?

I also need to be satisfied that the Grade 2 listing process that was carried out has been carried out in a proper and transparent manner and that people who have been the catalyst in this campaign have acted with integrity and beyond reproach. Until I have these assurances, I will continue to protect The RVT and question how this decision was reached.

Gay venues across the UK have recently been closing at an alarming rate and there is a reason for this. The culture in gay society has changed somewhat, there is less need to come to gay venues and socialise. Contact through Grindr and other apps is now the norm. The RVT is a pub and an entertainment venue with a diverse entertainment programme with the best club nights in London and a business which needs to be commercially viable. We are not a national theatre or a fringe theatre and never will be.

**What impact will the listing have on the future of The RVT?**

What has been quite concerning in following the social media campaign and the comments people make about the listing status and about The RVT in general, are that the majority of people with face pictures making comments on social media do not come to the venue. How can you support such a fundamental decision which affects the future of an iconic London venue and not even go there? It really is quite astonishing the insulting social media comments that have been posted. Without doubt this campaign has divided and embarrassed our community beyond belief and this concerns me. The impact in time will be measured and changing times at The RVT are inevitable. Customers and promoters all have to pay their way to ensure we remain commercially viable. People have been in touch with me privately to offer their support and at the same time they were supporting the other campaign. Friendships that were there will now be lost thanks to this campaign.

**What is the best way that Boyz readers can help support and ensure the future of The RVT?**

The best way to ensure the venue's future is for Boyz readers to come and enjoy the amazing range of club nights, cabaret and live shows that we have every week.

The statements about The RVT being a loss-making business are genuine, my new management company has stabilised The RVT since the sale took place and I will do everything that I can to ensure it continues to trade and that is what Immovate, the new owners want as well. I'd please ask Boyz readers, to sign up to The RVT newsletter to see what is on and to take advantage of the membership programme and genuinely support us. This is now the only way to have reduced entry to the venue and full details are on the website [www.vauxhalltavern.com/membership](http://www.vauxhalltavern.com/membership).

The venue has enjoyed a 12 month rent free period from Immovate. Our operating costs are high with entertainment, staff costs, VAT, maintenance and more. Next year the London minimum wage is introduced which we will honour in two stages from next month, insurance premiums since the listing occurred have now increased by 65% and keeping The RVT to a Grade 2 listed building standard may very well cause the RVT to close its doors. We have to remain current with the entertainment programme and we have to seek profit-making shows. Last Thursday Toyah Wilcox provided a fantastic performance and generated a fabulous atmosphere and this may very well be the minimum level of artist we need to move forward with. The RVT is diverse with both its entertainment and club nights and we need to keep that to attract people to make it commercially viable and open up new markets.

It is regrettable but this is what this campaign has caused. My major concern in factoring all the operating costs associated with running The RVT is that we will price ourselves out of the market in continuing to make it affordable. This will have an effect on door entry charge and prices at the bar. We may well become an unaffordable venue as these costs have to be passed on when operating.

**What was the impact of the RVT Future campaign?**

The RVT Future campaign is a self appointed group and for total clarity they will have no influence or input

into my company or any management decisions or the future direction that The RVT might take. I ask myself what this campaign has been about? I suspect The RVT as a venue is being used as a political stepping stone to inflate potential political ambitions and I won't allow this. I have never seen any of the RVT Future campaigners or promoters come to The RVT and support events, other than those they have been directly involved in. It will be interesting to see if the high profile names involved in this campaign come forward and support the venue now that the Grade 2 listing status has been granted, there is no point in publicly speaking out and supporting the campaign then turning your back and showing no interest in our culture or events.

**Is there anything else you want to tell us?**

Great play has been made by the RVT Future campaign for the current owners to sell the venue to them. There are two significant points to make here: The RVT is not for sale and I am the current incumbent with the lease and I have no intention of handing The RVT over to anybody. My company and the owners will reflect on the listing decision and decide on strategy and approach. We are the only two parties that will decide on the future position of this much loved venue.

■ **The Royal Vauxhall Tavern, 372 Kennington Lane, Vauxhall, SE11.**

■ [www.vauxhalltavern.com](http://www.vauxhalltavern.com)

