

Thomson secures Covid-19 funding package to keep Prestonfield and The Witchery open

The owner of Prestonfield House and The Witchery has secured borrowing from the Royal Bank of Scotland to keep the businesses going.

Trading as Castlegate Investments, James Thomson's company has received a combined £2.5 million in Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) funding from the bank.



James Thomson Prestonfield house,Edinburgh.11.20.Photograph David Cheskin.

As the youngest ever licensee when he opened The Witchery in 1978, James Thomson OBE was only 20 and had three members of staff. Since then he has grown the number of staff into the hundreds, and there are few people in Edinburgh who have not either been to or heard of his hotel and restaurants.

Decorated by HM The Queen for his work in hospitality he has also been named the UK Independent Restaurateur of the Year.

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James Thomson Prestonfield house, Edinburgh. 11.20. Photograph David Cheskin.

James said: "I began my business by taking out three loans, allowing me to establish The Witchery and purchase the freehold of the property. The company wouldn't be where it is today without the support of banks, and I'm lucky to have built up a strong relationship with Stephen at Royal Bank of Scotland over the years – it's essential when you come up against a crisis like Covid.

"Thankfully, the bank has helped me navigate through a very difficult time – the team there were in regular contact with me, and it was very reassuring to see how they stood by me... always available at the other side of a Zoom call as we reacted to the almost daily changes caused by the global pandemic.

"The hospitality sector supports a whole ecosystem of jobs, from taxi drivers to farmers, to joiners, gardeners, lawyers, accountants, cheesemakers, and breweries. It's vital that we do our utmost to keep things running, and this funding allows

us to do that. I'm hopeful we can see a return to normality soon now that we have several vaccines in production."

Stephen MacGregor, relationship director at Royal Bank of Scotland said: "It's been a difficult year for the hospitality sector as a whole, so it's positive to see landmark venues like The Witchery able to re-open their doors. Working with James has been terrific over the years, and we'll continue to support his business and his staff where possible."