

Sour beer dream grinds to halt at The Vault

A busy and popular Portobello bar is to shout “last orders” after brewery owners turned sour on the idea of having a tap room in the seaside town.

Shocked staff at The Porty Vault – owned by sour beer specialists Vault City Brewing – learned they were out of a job at a crisis meeting with co-founder Steven Smith-Hay.

They were told the High Street bar would shut on 31 December or as soon as they had found alternative jobs. Most have now moved on to other posts and closure is imminent.

The lease, which runs for another 17 years, is available at a leasehold price of £60,000 and an annual rent of £12,000, with rateable value estimated to be £25,000 per year.



Standing room only but Porty Vault is taking “last orders”

The marketing brochure states: “Our client’s primary business is going through a period of substantial growth and this growth sadly requires the sale of the tap room operation”, but Vault City blamed the closure on trading challenges in the hospitality sector.

In May the company announced it would move from its Portobello brewery to a new site in Easter Bush, Midlothian, after raising £330,000 in a crowdfunding campaign to buy the new site, where it aims to brew 10 million litres of beer a year.

The brewery said earlier that turnover this year had passed the £5 million mark, with exports up by 62% and deals had been secured with leading supermarkets including Tesco, Morrisons and Sainsbury’s to stock their beers.

A dedicated team at the Portobello venue worked hard to sell the sour beer vision to new converts but despite their best

efforts it was not enough to save their jobs.

A statement issued by Vault City Brewing, said: "Porty Vault is a venue we invested a great deal of time, energy, and passion into making work. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts and given the significant headwinds for the hospitality sector, coupled with the upcoming move of our brewery from Portobello to Midlothian, we've made the very difficult decision to close the bar down.



A busy Saturday night but not busy enough according to Vault City Brewing.

"The failure of Porty Vault as a viable business does not lie one bit with our amazing staff who have worked tirelessly to make the place a success. We will be very sad to close its doors, but we are incredibly grateful to everyone who has supported Porty Vault, from our loyal customers and the local community to our dedicated staff.

“The bar will remain open until such time we are no longer able to staff the venue, giving everyone the chance to enjoy it one last time, and giving our team time to find a new opportunity.”

One customer said: “Just three months ago Vault City made a big deal about paying all their staff the same rate as the higher London Living Wage, which is great, but they recruited four new bar staff just a few weeks before they announced the closure which has left a bit of a bad taste in the mouth.

“The staff were first class and worked hard to make it work but it seems sour beer is not everyone’s favourite tippie. It’s a great shame and a loss to the High Street and we’ve got to hope a mainstream operator can come in and succeed where Vault City failed.”



Porty Vault – soon to be shuttered. Pic Stephen Rafferty