

By CRAIG JACKSON and JOHN BULLOCK

MORECAMBE'S Midland Hotel was closed today after it was hit by a cash crisis.

Guests were told to leave the hotel on the resort's promenade and people arriving to book in were turned away.

They were told that the hotel's managers Jared Brooke and Lincoln Fraser had left and the building had been stripped of bed linen.

A winding up order on the hotel's management company has now been issued at Preston County Court.

But today, Mr Fraser, director of Progressive Leisure, denied allegations that he and his partner Jared Brooke had left the hotel with huge debts and claimed he knew nothing of the winding up order.

He said that the company had pulled out of the resort after their business deal with hotel owner Les Whittingham broke down.

Mr Fraser this week offered to enter into a £7.2m project with Lancaster Council to redevelop the hotel and nearby Bubbles leisure complex. It was turned down.

He said: "As far as the future goes with Morecambe, we are leaving everything in the hands of our solicitors.

"If there is a winding up order out against us then I am certainly not aware of it."

NOTICE

The hotel's owner Mr Les Whittingham was unavailable for comment today.

He was believed to be away on business, unaware of the proceedings in Morecambe.

His 84-year-old mother Cora, however, is still believed to be in the family's flat inside the hotel.

One woman arriving to book a function at the hotel was met with a locked door.

After a brief conversation with one of the staff, she said: "They told me that the company has folded and that the two managers had left."



CLOSE

Former owner of the Midland Anne Greenham, who ran the hotel from 1980-81 until she went bankrupt, said she was very distressed at news of the closure.

Mrs Greenham, a close friend of Mr Whittingham, said: "Les is away right now but I'm sure he is not aware that the two managers have walked out.

"They had a management contract agreement with Les. I just don't know what he will do now."

A spokeswoman for Preston County Court today confirmed that a winding up order had been issued against the Progressive Leisure Corporation, the company owned by Jared Brooke and Lincoln Fraser.

The order had been applied for on an undisclosed date by Heckford Printers in Preston.

Anthony Smith of Preston-based Heckford Printers today confirmed that their company had successfully applied for a winding up order against Progressive Leisure Corporation.

He said the notice had been placed in the London Gazette and proceedings were now in the hands of Heckford's solicitors.



TIME



Owner Les Whittingham

SE 16
AGE 2
AGE 2
AGE 4
AGE 8
AGE 12
24-26

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Rail lines silent as drivers' strike bites

LANCASHIRE'S railway lines lay silent today as the train drivers' strike bit hard in the county.

By ANGELA HOUGHTON

Some train services between Salford, Bury and Millers and to Lancaster

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