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The Champion of the West



Banned circus in hunt for private venue

By Jonathan Shorney

CIRCUS boss Gerry Cottle yesterday pledged to help banned 'sex' circus Archaos find a venue in Bristol to save it from possible closure.

French Archaos's two-week September booking on Bristol's Durdham Downs was revoked by the city council's Downs committee on Thursday.

It was alarmed at publicity that the circus, soon to perform at the Edinburgh festival, included simulated homosexual and rape acts.

Mr Cottle, whose own circus was banned by the council five years ago because it included performing animals, has since used privately-owned land in Brislington.

Last night, he said: "I admire Archaos. It's a rough and ready show but very clever.

"Why should a bunch of 12 people tell 500,000 people what they should or shouldn't see? It's a wild show, but what's wrong with that?"

Archaos publicist Mark Borkowski, whose press release sparked the storm, said the circus was now in danger of folding.

"We are rocked. The French press went crazy at the decision.

The Downs committee — four Labour and two Tory councillors and seven members of the Society of Merchant Venturers — voted seven-three for a ban.

Downs committee Tory Councillor Peter Abraham said: "I was against it because they misled us. We were first told it was a family show."