

The reality of football

Published: January 13, 2026, 5:47 am

This was in the [Guardian yesterday](#), by Richard Williams on the state of Premier League football:

Even those few who start each season in the legitimate hope of ending it with a trophy are mortgaged up to the eyeballs. So now skirts are lifted to any passing oil sheikh, while more and more clubs are willing to tie their destinies to a web of holding companies with tax-haven addresses, behind which the "ultimate beneficial owners" can safely preserve their anonymity, like the customers of exclusive brothels.

What use is a fit-and-proper-person test for incoming owners who cannot be identified? And when they can be pinned down, recent history suggests that no meaningful action is taken. Your father is accused of arms dealing? You acquired your fortune through hoovering up the rights to natural resources that were supposed to become the property of your humble compatriots? You are accused by Amnesty International of sanctioning human-rights violations? Come right in and take that upholstered seat in the directors' box.

[Sven-Goran Eriksson](#) summed it up in Sunday's interview with the Observer. Asked the source of the funding behind his new project to revive [Notts County](#), he replied: "Where exactly [the money] is coming from, who could care as long as it's legal?" Dear disingenuous Sven, if you don't know where it's coming from, how can you assess its legality?

This is what secrecy jurisdictions are doing to British life.

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