

Candys buy mining stake

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THE Candy brothers have been revealed as the secret owners of a stake in Metals Exploration, the London-listed mining firm, in a radical drive by the luxury designers to diversify from property.

Christian and Nick Candy, who are better known for their ambitious luxury property developments, including 1 Hyde Park in London, are the owners of Solomon Capital, which bought a 29.9pc stake in Metals Ex on Monday.

Solomon Capital is part of a new private equity group called CC1, set-up by the Candy brothers to invest in companies around the world.

Christian Candy said: "The Metals Ex transaction is our first significant investment. With more than £200m in liquid funds, CC1 is in a strong cash position and we are therefore looking for opportunities outside, as well as inside, the property sector."

The vehicle is in addition to the brothers' plans to launch a boutique hotel chain, a range of branded luxury home furnishing and fashion items to sell on the high street, and bespoke designs for helicopters and yachts.

The move follows a turbulent

£200m

The liquidity of the Candy brothers' private equity group, CC1, which was established to enable the entrepreneurs to invest in new ventures around the world

few months for the entrepreneurial brothers as tumbling property markets have strained their finances and their relationships with billionaire backers in the Middle East.

The Candys were also hit by the implosion of Iceland's financial system, as they had several joint

ventures with Kaupthing, the collapsed bank.

In October, the brothers had to quit the former Middlesex Hospital site – one of the most high-profile property developments in Britain – which they jointly owned with Kaupthing.

They swapped part-ownership in the re-development of the central London site for full control of 9900 Wilshire, their jointly-owned apartment complex in Beverly Hills.

Meanwhile the Candys' other big London property development, Chelsea Barracks, may also be renegotiated after the Qatari ruling family told the brothers that they want to take full control of the 13-acre development in central London, which they bought jointly in 2007 in one of Britain's most expensive property deals.

The Qataris plan to buy the brothers' stake and retain them only as marketing managers and interior designers.