

Wigglesworth eyes E-primefinancial
By Richard Fletcher (Filed: 14/04/2002)

JACK WIGGLESWORTH, the former chairman of Liffe, the derivatives and futures exchange, has joined the battle for control of E-primefinancial, a shell company with a £17.5m cash pile.

Rebel shareholders, who are hoping to gain control of the business, have recruited Wigglesworth, who will join the E-primefinancial board as a non-executive director if the revolt is successful.

Recovery Partners, the corporate activist, has already secured the support of Gene Grant, the former chief executive of E-primefinancial and 15 per cent shareholder, who has already made two unsuccessful attempts to wind up the company.

The existing management of E-primefinancial believes that the company should push ahead with plans to develop an internet bank in the US. The company is still awaiting the outcome of a re-submitted application for a banking charter in the US.

Earlier this month Recovery Partners wrote to shareholders in E-primefinancial, setting out plans to use the company's £17.5m cash pile to develop a financial software business. The letter also proposed calling a shareholder meeting to seek boardroom changes if the company refused to agree.

This weekend shareholders in E-primefinancial received a letter from the directors urging them to reject Recovery Partner's proposals. Lance O'Neill, E-primefinancial's founding chairman, said the company's advisers, Seymour Pierce, had undertaken a detailed analysis of the proposal.

"Seymour Pierce concluded that neither the products nor the markets, referred to within the proposal, offer an attractive investment proposition for shareholders."