

# Costcutter Comes Under Attack From The Inside

As retail units in Market Square lay empty and with more private finance initiatives planned, James Doughty investigates troubled times for campus retail

University Retail Manager Andrew Gilroy has come under fire after boasting about the 'success' of the Market Square complex on campus.

Up until now Gilroy has largely remained reluctant to comment on the beleaguered project, other than to shout out about its apparent success and the excellent service Costcutter provides for students.

But Gilroy's own staff and Costcutter employees have broken the silence to attack the "laughable" comments which have left him marginalised. It has also undermined the credibility of the University Private Partnership (PPP) scheme, used to finance the building of the complex.

A Costcutter insider told nous of the "sneaky" routines employed by the store. "Products are targeted everyday for price increases, especially the fruit and vegetables. I wouldn't shop there" the source revealed.

Gilroy refused to "enter into a dialogue" over the company's pricing policy. But did defend the actions of Costcutter by saying all profits were ploughed back into the University for students. However, the Costcutter leak has revealed that just in the past few months Costcutter has had to "let people go because they were making a loss", something Gilroy also strongly denies.

He maintains that students are getting a fair deal and Costcutter are, in fact, receptive to students' concerns, through their suggestion box. This has been described as a 'hollow' and 'pathetic' gesture to win students over. Many have complained that they were unaware of the customer response facility until brought to their attention by nous. The cards are tucked discreetly behind the entrance, and it is quite understandable why students did not know of the introduction of the service.

It's not just students who are increasingly disillusioned with the letting system. One of Gilroy's deputies, managing the Halifax store, stepped out of line last week to reveal that there were huge fundamental failings in the whole private partnership project. With sky high rents and just a thirty week student market, "nobody wants to know", she revealed. Services Officer, James Byron, also voiced his concern about how slow and cumbersome the process for let application has become, in light of the Union's own attempt to occupy a let in conjunction with Endsleigh Insurance.

This condemnation for the private finance initiative system comes as planning has begun to build another Market Square style project a stone's throw away in Alcuin College. However the question remains. Is there really an appetite for businesses to occupy the space, once the builders have left and the desperate search to find someone willing to move in begins?

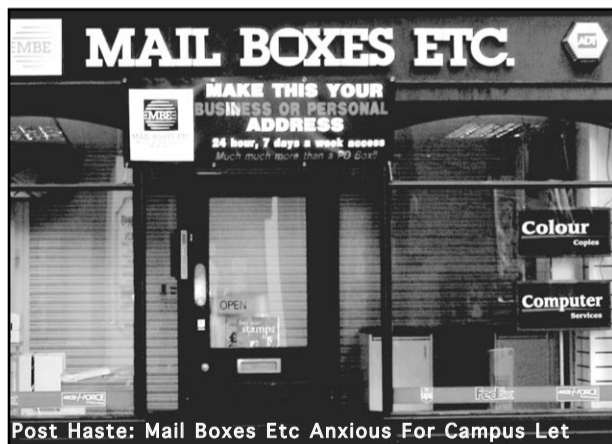
Steve Cook, owner of Mail Boxes etc. is itching to move in to one of the dusty lets. But stubborn University officials have not made it easy, and after months of negotiation his application has still not

been granted. His frustration is obvious, as is the mounting aggravation of students. The business would provide foreign students with a permanent mailing address. It would also provide a photocopying facility, that would be much cheaper than current University charges.

Incessant delays of this nature have stirred anger and resentment amongst students.

One disheartened shopper said he was "fed up" at being "taken for a ride" by the retail giants. "They don't have student's interests at heart, in fact, I think they'd do anything to get one over on us" he protested.

It seems nobody is willing to take responsibility for the mess the University now faces filling the empty lets. As squabbles over who is to blame continues, it is the students who are left with an overpriced and overly powerful retail service on campus.



# Halifax Knife Attack Foiled

**Clive Crouch** Y E A R

English student has revealed how he was attacked en route to Halifax College. The incident happened two weeks ago around 11pm, when he was returning home from Goodricke. A 5'9" male, thought to be in his early twenties pulled up on a bike asking for the time, then continued towards the college.

"I suddenly saw him heading back towards me. I knew something was up," the

student recounted.

Despite the assailant threatening to stab him, he refused demands to hand over his phone. "It was obvious he had not got a knife. He then tried a lame kickboxing routine, aiming to kick me in the head three times. I managed to block him. He did knock my glasses off. I then refused to give him anything until I got my glasses back."

The student subsequently suffered a blow to the face, but managed to make a break for it and ran towards the

Halifax porter's lodge, with phone intact. "Within a minute security were there and the police came and took a statement."

Steve Crouch, Senior Security Supervisor, told nous the attack was proving to have been "an isolated incident," but recommended that students remain vigilant. He added: "We've stepped up patrols down there and informed staff to be on the lookout."

Whilst acknowledging that someone else might have

reacted differently, the student was undeterred: "It sounds dreadful but I got out of it OK. I'm not physically or emotionally scarred in any way." He believes the would-be thief was opportunistic and inexperienced, and is not overly worried about crime on campus, in fact he took a dismissive line remarking "The graffiti's in Latin and the people who want to steal your phone don't know how to."

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