

Moderate success declared for YUSU 'Save the Bars' campaign

By Heidi Blake
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

THE HIGH profile SU "Save the Bars" campaign met with moderate success at the end last term, when the University agreed not to take any action to reduce opening times before October.

However, the apparent intransigence of the University during recent negotiations with the SU has caused concerns that college bars are still under threat of partial closure.

Talks between University staff, the SU and the GSA are currently underway with a view to finding a way of making college bars more marketable, though relations between the parties involved appear strained.

SU President Mickey Armstrong said in a recent interview that the SU had "met with quite a lot of resistance" during negotiations, adding "I got very angry...we may need to take serious action".

SU Services Officer, Nat Thwaites McGowan, said in an interview last week that he did not "know what direction the University is going to go

in...the ball is in their court", but added that they seem "intent on following the same plan as they had previously" to cut the opening hours of college bars. He added "Certain people in the meeting did not respect the Students' Union".

The possibility of attributing a different theme, such as sports or cocktails, to each bar is one of several options that have been mooted during the talks.

Thwaites McGowan claims that this might remedy a situation in which, at present, "every bar tries to be everything to all its students".

However, a proposal by the University to convert the Langwith facility into a juice bar, has caused concerns among residents that alcohol provision will be withdrawn.

Of this, Micky Armstrong said last week "I see the need for a non-alcoholic space on campus, but not at the expense of a bar. I'd support the idea of a juice bar, as long as Langwith can keep its alcohol provision."

Neither the Bars and Catering Manager Andy Summers or Deputy Vice

Chancellor Felicity Riddy, both of whom have recently played a key part in negotiations, were available for comment.

Speaking for the University last week, Press Officer David Garner said: "Discussions with the SU and the GSA are ongoing. We intend to consult colleges on a range of options over the coming year."

Despite the apparent impasse in negotiations, the SU insist that their "Save the Bars" campaign was "very successful" and claim that it "shocked the university". During the week-long boycott organised by the SU last term, all but two of the campus bars were closed by the university.

Armstrong said last week "We would still like to remind students that if they want to keep their bars they need to use them." The SU will continue to encourage students to use their bars as much as possible.

To this end, a new 'feeder' ticketing system has been implemented, by which tickets for campus events are sold in the bar of a separate college, in order to encourage students to drink there before going on to the main event of the evening.



The SU's 'Save the Bars' campaign posters were put up all over the university

Porters fear negative fallout from ongoing negotiations over hours and rates of pay

By Heidi Blake
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PORTERS AT THE University have reacted with concern to talks over the restructuring of their role, hours and pay under the Framework Agreement.

The process of negotiation, which is taking place behind closed doors between Unison and senior managers at the University, has led to fears of redundancies and pay cuts.

There has also been controversy over a proposal to pool porters centrally rather than allocating them to specific colleges.

Phil Crampton, a Derwent porter, said on Saturday "We seem to be arguing with fresh air at the moment. Nobody knows



UNISON is currently representing the porters

exactly what we're being offered because they won't tell us.

"There are a lot of arguments now because what they're proposing is that we're losing our time and a half and double time for Saturday and Sunday; we're losing out enhance-

ments for bank holiday weekends and we're losing our enhancement for shift work. We're being screwed basically."

An Alcuin porter who declined to be named said last week "I'm concerned that my job's possibly on the line".

Both porters and students have expressed concerns about the idea of centralised pooling of porters. One student, who did not wish to be named, said "I love the porters in my college. They all know who I am when I come to collect my mail and we have a good chat. If they pool the porters that kind of relationship won't exist anymore."

The ongoing negotiations are in preparation for the implementation of the Framework Agreement, a new grading and pay structure for all University staff that is due to be implemented from August 2006.

According to York University, the Agreement aims to "ensure equal pay for work of equal value, improve the recruitment

and retention of staff, reward the contributions of individuals, provide opportunities for career and organisational development [and] harmonise working hours and conditions so that there is more equality."

The Agreement is part of the nationwide Higher Education Roles Analysis scheme, which grades roles within Higher Education on a points scale and awards salaries accordingly. Speaking for the University on Friday, Press Officer David Garner said "There is no suggestion of redundancies - if anything, the University may need to recruit more staff."

He explained that while working hours for porters will be reduced from 38 to 37 per week, an

increase in their hourly rate will mean that there will be no pay loss.

Of concerns about the possibility of the centralised pooling of porters, Garner said "a smaller total number of staff hours to cover the same amount of work [will mean] that working arrangements will have to be more flexible and a number of options are under discussion. But nothing has yet been settled and negotiations are ongoing."

Ken Batten, Manager of Security and Support Services, refused to comment on the talks on Friday, saying "All discussions are being done in confidence between unions and senior managers. Until they are concluded nothing can be said."