# Quayside faces decline with 40% of retail units vacant



Salford's once-prominent shopping destination, the Quayside (formerly known as the Lowry Outlet Mall), is currently experiencing significant challenges, with reports indicating that nearly 40% of its retail units stand vacant. This decline follows the centre's rebranding and £26 million refurbishment completed in 2020, aimed at repositioning it as a modern waterside shopping area in Manchester's Central Bay.

Originally opened in 2001, the centre has witnessed a notable deterioration in its appeal, as evidenced by the alarming number of empty shops—36 units in total. Currently operational retailers include well-known brands such as M&S, Next, Clarkes, Cadbury, Vue, and several fast-food outlets like Burger King and Subway.

Feedback from visitors has been overwhelmingly negative, with many using terms like "ghost mall" and "waste of time" in their reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor. One user expressed frustration, stating, "What a disaster! The outlet was dead and dirty, hardly any shops and everywhere was freezing. No heating, nobody about, there were more people in Costa than the whole of the building." Another visitor echoed similar sentiments, saying, "Don't bother going... Empty shop after empty shop, freezing cold and none too clean what a waste of a trip and parking fee."

A recent on-site investigation revealed the centre's infrastructure issues, including malfunctioning lifts and broken doors, which contributed to an overall atmosphere of neglect. A journalist from the Manchester Evening News shared personal observations from a visit to the shopping centre, noting, "The broken doors... felt like yet another symptom of a shopping centre that is clearly in need of some drastic attention." Despite the operational M&S and other stores, the centre’s upper retail floor presented an unsettling scene of desolation, likened to an "empty gallery of nothingness."

Visitors have further complained about the confusing parking experience. The previous discount programme for parking validation stamped in shops has been replaced with a ticketless, barrier-free system, which some had difficulty navigating. Current parking rates at the Quayside mall are £2.30 for 0-2 hours and can escalate to £22 for a full day, a pricing structure described as reasonable, yet questionable in terms of the available shopping experience.

While foot traffic remains sporadic, areas like the Quayside Canteen food court and new attractions such as the Kargo.MKT independent food hall, which opened in 2023, draw visitors. These areas report healthier patronage, suggesting that food and leisure offerings may help sustain some level of consumer interest in the broader Quayside experience.

The mall's owners, Peel Retail & Leisure, acknowledge the need for change, stating that they are working on plans for future development aligned with the "Salford Quays 2030 vision," which aims to transform the area into a more viable town centre. They emphasised their commitment to enhancing the shopping experience, citing the success of recent developments like Kargo.MKT as a template for future initiatives.

In addressing customer concerns regarding the mall's atmosphere and temperature, a spokesperson commented, "We welcome customer feedback to help better the experience of Quayside for everybody and will be reviewing points raised in regards to temperature." They also encouraged patrons to familiarise themselves with the updated parking system to improve their visits.

As it stands, Quayside’s journey remains uncertain, with many questioning its rebirth in the competitive retail landscape of Greater Manchester amidst a broader strategy for regional development.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)