

## Cardboard campaigns and the environment

By [Kate Marshall](#)

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Image: Kate Marshall

Unless you've been living under a rock this week – or in Halifax – you can't have failed to notice that cardboard season has begun again. Plastered across campuses and beyond are signs calling your attention to a long series of puns, buzzwords and hashtags. Few of these signs will tell you what the candidate is running for, let alone their policies. For most, cardboard season is about 'raising awareness', as if they were a stigmatised disease. Does this really justify the huge amounts of paper?

Most appeals are painted onto cardboard, which is usually nabbed from recycling points, and very little of it will go back there. While it is mandatory that you remove your surviving signs at the end of elections, how many candidates will recycle? It takes effort to separate tape and twine from paper products, instead of tossing the lot in the bin, and that's not even counting what is lost to the weather. At least Ollie Rowley, whose manifesto mentions recycling, has very few signs out, showing admirable consistency.

It also rained last week, and many candidates regretted their decision to skimp on effort and print their posters on paper. Lists of policies sink from their twine ties and get trodden underfoot, and nobody's picking them up. Others collapse in on themselves and are left unreadable. Worse still, if one gets loose, it's imperative to catch it before it flies into the lake. We share campus with the birds, and I doubt they appreciate the litter. I don't think anybody has studied what happens if a duck eats cardboard, but it can't be good.

All of these concerns are valid, if a little far-fetched in places, but my real question is: does cardboard really help? The majority of students vote based on manifestoes or personal connections, and only a

minority of signs state any policies. While stunts like the six-foot 3D 'G' from a few years ago can be impressive, they give very little information. Puns are fun and memorable, but only somewhere between a third and half of students vote at all. Shouldn't we campaign for that first?

Of course, sometimes your cardboard campaign does more harm than good. Having too many signs becomes annoying, and nobody can be expected to read them all, let alone remember the barrage of names. Sometimes even your message is counterproductive: we're told we'd be 'balmy' not to vote for George Balmford, that's actually a good thing. Similar problem with Sam Bourne's campaign to see 'YUSU ReBourne': call me a nitpicker, but for something to be reborn, you have to kill it first.

Ultimately, I can't help but wonder if candidates participate in the poster campaigning simply because everyone else does. I don't doubt that it's useful for people to know you're there, and to recognise your name when voting opens. But if nobody did it, campus would be clear, the environment would be better off, and perhaps a more meaningful platform would be required.

(By which I do not mean a 'Let It Go' parody.)



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