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Southampton Police Delay Forces Restaurateur to Investigate Break-In Alone

August 9, 2025

— Categories: Crime



Ankit Vaghela, owner of the popular vegetarian restaurant Padharo in Southampton, was left to investigate a burglary after police delayed attending the scene. The late-night break-in resulted in stolen cash and expensive alcohol, along with significant damage to the premises.

This burglary is the second in just under a year. A similar break-in last year saw an intruder flee after sustaining self-inflicted injuries. Vaghela expressed concerns about ongoing safety risks for businesses in Southampton's city centre, which have faced a number of

similar incidents. “It is extremely worrying and a safety concern as other businesses in the city centre have been similarly targeted. But we have to trust the process and hope for justice,” he added.

When thieves forced their way into the East Street restaurant on July 31, CCTV footage captured three suspects smashing windows and fleeing. Despite clear evidence, police did not arrive immediately, leaving Vaghela to assess the damage on his own. He recovered the broken cash register, though the cash inside was missing.

“It was very heartbreaking to be told that officers will be able to review the damage in three to five working days and that no forensics was available at the time,” Vaghela said. The restaurant, which is approaching its fourth anniversary, now faces operational challenges without a functioning cash register.

Vaghela explained the urgency of reopening despite the damage. “As a business, we can’t afford to remain closed and had to get things cleaned up and the glass fixed. We are still struggling to operate smoothly without a proper cash register, but are determined to welcome our guests with the same level of service we are known for in the city.”

The incident occurred shortly after Padharo hosted members of the Indian women’s cricket team, including captain Harmanpreet Kaur, who visited the city for a One-Day International (ODI) match against England.

Since the burglary, local residents and customers have shown strong support. Padharo’s social media appeal urged vigilance: “Please be extra vigilant. We would hate for anyone else to go through this. But we are determined. We’ve spent the time cleaning up the mess, and we are back open. We refuse to let this define us. Now, more than ever, we’re relying on our wonderful community.”

Hampshire Police confirmed they are investigating the burglary but explained the delay in attendance. The force stated they prioritise incidents based on immediate threat or ongoing criminal activity. “On this occasion, based on the initial information we were given regarding the offenders no longer being at the scene, our investigation could get underway without any immediate attendance,” a spokesperson said.