

Coalporters Northam Bridge Archway Development: Revitalising an old space

**Raised £15,511 from 211 supporters including
+£5,000 +Extra funding from Sport England**

With members ranging from eight years old to eighty years young, Coalporters Rowing Club is a thriving community organisation. When their existing boathouse started bursting at the seams, they set out on a mission to transform a nearby unused and neglected railway arch.

Originally formed by river and dock workers who used to row coal supply boats to the steam ships in Southampton's harbour, [Coalporters Rowing Club](#) has been enriching people's lives [since 1875](#).

Based next to Northam Bridge, the club has become the oldest and most established rowing club in the whole of Southampton. Since 1903, Coalporters has been part of the Hampshire & Dorset championship, hosting a regatta over the summer for every level of ability.



Well known for its health benefits which range from improved fitness to stress reduction, Coalporters boasts a strong community bond with people from all walks of life becoming part of a tight-knit and supportive family.

Though, with its popularity, came a problem.

Their boathouse became overcrowded and their biggest boats (the River Eights) had to be stored on a waste ground behind the club where they were vulnerable to vandalism and weather. They desperately needed somewhere where they could store their boats and keep them safe from harm, not needing to worry about the increasing club numbers.

The perfect opportunity for Coalporters Rowing Club

Beside their club is an old railway arch which has been neglected and is often used for anti-social behaviour and fly tipping. The club knew that if they took on the bridge and developed a new storage building, they would improve the area, benefiting the local community and beyond. Southampton City Council agreed that they could revitalize the area but it came with a catch.

They would have to fund the construction themselves.

As part of a new initiative between Sport England and Crowdfunder, the Coalporters Rowing Club was in with a chance of receiving match-funding from Sport England as long as they raised a large chunk through crowdfunding.

In November 2018, they set up their first crowdfunding campaign, hoping to raise £15,000. To start receiving match-funding from Sport England, they needed to raise a minimum of £5,000 from at least 50 supporters.

Members, club friends, and even friends of friends rallied around the club, helping them to create a dynamic and visually compelling video for their project page. They also utilised their crowdfunding rewards, offering social and full club memberships to their supporters along with invitations to their Thank You Ball.



David Gallagher, a member of Coalporters Rowing Club, said, *"Crowdfunding was a great opportunity to get word of our project out to Club members past and present, family and friends, as well as people locally. The actual crowdfunding campaign was a real roller coaster ride for the club as we had a very large target (£15K) and, crucially with Sport England's support, the opportunity to double it."*

On their crowdfunding page, over 130 members of the public left comments encouraging the coalporters team, showing just how much the community supported their crowdfunding venture.

One supporter wrote, *"Over 50 years ago I joined Coalporters and found a new family dedicated to the love of rowing. Although living away from Southampton now I still visit the club every time I am back. It has been great to see the club expand and improve the facilities and equipment for the members. Rowing is a great sport, not only for the physical benefits, but the enjoyment of teamwork, friendship and discipline needed to succeed as a crew. This project not only helps the Club, the community area is improved. I would encourage any local parents to bring their kids for a taste of rowing - as a coxswain or rower. Once tried, they could be hooked for life - as I am."*

A helping hand from Crowdfunder, Sport England, and the crowd!

Through the new Sport England initiative, the Coalporters team also received expert coaching from Crowdfunder Coach Sami Mauger. With the help of Sami, David—a self-proclaimed social media novice—learnt new skills and took part in the Facebook course. He explained, *"Straight away I got an email from Sami Mauger at Crowdfunder about going to a Facebook page and signing up. I am 53 years old and have deliberately avoided Facebook all my life, so had no idea how I would take part. At this point I was panicking a bit but thankfully I was able to email Sami on a 1 to 1 basis to ask how this would work. After that I muddled through Facebook and the course! The Guide Sheets & Videos etc were great."*

After just 28 days, [they had raised £15,511 from 211 supporters](#), showing just how much the community supported their plan to transform the old railway bridge. This also meant that Sport England would match-fund the amount raised, enabling Coalporters to truly grow their much-loved rowing club!

David continued, *"Unlocking Sport England's matching was a huge plus as it meant on paper we had reached the budget we had set for the project. Since crowdfunding, we have prepared by carrying out a ground radar survey, a topographical survey, an environmental survey, and we are in the progress of getting a flood risk survey."*

We have also applied for pre-planning permission, followed by actual planning permission, engaged an architect to oversee the project, a consulting engineer to produce drawings, and engaged with many departments of Southampton City Council (who own the bridge and arch) to get their cooperation. The Crowdfunder campaign allowed us to pay for architects & engineers fees, applications and surveys."

With the journey just beginning, the Coalporters Rowing Club have a lot to look forward to. "Once finished, it will secure a much better future for our Club and greatly improve the waterfront area around the bridge for local people. Our current boat shed is so full that we regularly damage boats getting them in and out, and the difficulties are putting off members new and existing."

Find out if you **could be eligible to unlock extra funding** for your business or great idea. What are you waiting for? **Start crowdfunding today!**