



Evaluation of Engine Shed & Office Building

Final report

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Introduction

The new University campus was built upon what was formerly the United Kingdom's largest Brownfield site. On taking ownership of the property, the institution came into the possession of a Grade 2 Listed derelict Engine Shed built in 1873, which had last been actively used as a Welding School in 1998. An arson attack on the building in 2000 left it in a derelict state, with the roof having collapsed and weeds taking over to the point that an additional office building was discovered under the overgrown ivy once work on the site had started.

After 150 years of industrial use, the abandonment of the building had left it open to corrosion, vandalism and graffiti, with the building being in such a state that the inspection pits, thought to have been lost, were rediscovered upon the clearing of debris. With the decision being made to repair or replace as much of the historical architecture as possible, the University worked with Purcell and MCW architects to plan a redevelopment of the site with the goal of keeping as much of its character as possible. The building was stabilised, brickwork repaired and cleaned, the surviving roof trusses were restored, with others being replaced, and a ventilator roof was also created that matched the buildings original design. With the floor being made from reclaimed brick, the tracks were kept to add to the floor's design, along with a full restoration of the iron framed windows. More modern aspects were added to the final design, such as a free-standing office pod for the Students' Union office workers and a glass atrium along with large external wooden doors.

The early plan for the Engine Shed was to have it turned into a gym, with the Student Union taking up a position in part of the University's Learning Hub. The gym would have been set up in a similar manner to the Student Union today, with a café, offices and break out areas complimenting the exercise equipment, however, it was deemed that the area was too small for a business such as a gym to operate efficiently, so instead the building was offered to the Student Union.

The Student Union, for its part, was keen to move into the building.

Separated from the main campus, the Student Union would be able to foster its own unique identity from the University, with the building's design sitting outside the campus's style, as well as help support the perception of its independence from the University.

This is important as although the Student Union offers many different opportunities for the students to engage with them, from setting up sports societies, supporting entrepreneurship, and organising social events, it also operates as their representative when dealing with the University itself. The Union offers a variety of support services to students, including advice on Academic Misconduct, Mitigating

Circumstances, study breaks and appeals against termination, all of which are offered for free, both impartial and independent from the University. Had the Student Union remained inside the University proper, however, it may have put off students from approaching them with problems, whether because they saw the Student Union as less independent, or simply another department of the University, leading them to question whether advice given by the Union was truly impartial.

A Theory of Change

Cultural heritage is incredibly important, with the upkeep of historic buildings not only inspiring pride in local communities, but offering economic benefits to those same groups, with the heritage sector contributing £16.4 billion to the UK economy through domestic and international tourism and employing 278,000 people in 2017 (Heritage counts report, 2017). Castles, historically significant buildings and prehistoric sites, such as Stonehenge, are hugely popular attractions and can be made sustainable simply through visitors to the sites, direct donations, or attached businesses. However, in the case of the Engine Shed, its condition and location in the midst of one of the UK's largest Brownfield sites, away from the town centre, made its development as a heritage attraction unviable. There is a vibrant rail history within the town, however, with the old stations closest to the Engine Shed on Bridge Street and St Johns Street, being closed to the public in 1964 and 1939 respectively with the lines left to ruin, although the cultural significance of the building has remained the ability to develop it into an attraction in of itself presented significant challenges due to the difficulty of access and the state of the building.



Bridge Street Train Station, 1966



St Johns Street Station, 1920

This made the building a strong candidate for the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Enterprise Grant. The grant was set up by the HLF to help achieve economic growth through encouraging business investment in heritage. Each project that applies is evaluated on whether there is a 'Conservation Deficit', where the value of a heritage asset and the cost of bringing it back for a new, commercial, use would give it greater economic sustainability than standard renovation and upkeep work. The goal of the grant is to encourage private interests to develop and protect heritage sites, with the HLF helping companies invest in heritage sites across the country develop them for either new uses, as seen in with 'Belong', a Heritage Gallery and bistro that formerly operated as a pottery, or returning them to their former glory as was seen with the Hippodrome Cinema in Bo'ness, Scotland. The goal was therefore not to turn the Engine Shed into a monument to the town's rail history, but instead to use the heritage of the site to create business that

would reintegrate the building into the town's community. This would also be aided by the fact that the area the University's new Waterside Campus has been built on is also steeped in local heritage.



Eleanor's Cross, Northampton

Delapre Abbey, a former monastery, is located a short walk from the campus, as is the towns Eleanor Cross, a single part of the 12 decorated monuments erected between 1291 and 1294 by King Edward I, marking the resting places of his wife Eleanor of Castile when transporting her body from Lincoln to London and the battlefield where the Battle of Northampton took place, a major part of the War of the Roses where King Henry VI was captured in 1460. All have active community groups that seek to protect these historic places as budget cuts threaten their protection with the local councils going through a period of austerity, and, in one case, bankruptcy.

The community's engagement in these projects seems to have peaked their interest in the renovation of the Engine Shed, with articles on the Student Union website discussing the redevelopment reaching an average readership of 657 views, over the normal 300 mark that would be expected, the original news piece discussing the securing of the heritage funding has been read 1454 times itself. However, there is a risk that with other important heritage sites in the area having strong local involvement, and the development of the Engine Shed being part of the University's move, that there may be barriers involved in its integration if it is seen to only serve the student population (Murzyn-Kupisz and Dzialek, 2013). The site, as stated, is distant from the local population, and the risk of it being alienated from the community has been exasperated by the difficulties the area has faced since the University's move.

The University's move to Waterside had a big impact on the local community who, following the opening of the campus, saw a large increase in population with 13,000 students moving into the area. This has led to problems in the area with not only parking and a rise in HMO (House's with Multiple Occupancy) properties, but both noise and anti-social behaviour, with serious crimes also being reported to both the police and the University's on-site security.

Prior to the move, these problems had not impacted local residents as the University was situated away from the town centre, on a self-enclosed lot where there was not a lot of direct engagement with the local community, bar local student housing. With the move to the centre of town approaching, the University adopted a proactive strategy of outreach and integration, particularly the local communities of Cotton End, Far Cotton and Delapre, who were all invited to consultancies prior to the sites development, as it were they who were most likely to feel the impact of the move. The Student Union, for its part, held a 'Union Day' in the town centre to introduce the students to their new neighbours, with the goal of helping the new population integrate with the wider Northampton community, however, the issues within the local area has continued to put a strain on relations with the University being seen as a burden on the area, and the students as unwelcome.

The integration of the University with the local community does not fall squarely on the shoulders of the Student Union. However, with Heritage being shown to be a strong tool for both community engagement and increased wellbeing, the delivery of the project itself offers both challenges and opportunities.

Research has shown that where heritage sites function as community hubs, they increase the areas social networks and help harbour an identity. With the area already having historical significance a heritage network could help integrate the University's students into the area, allowing them to be turned from 'outsiders' into 'locals' as they develop their identities as students of the University of Northampton (Simon Jaquet consultancy Services, 2009). The local theme of the Engine Shed is also a useful tool for involving the local community through events available to both the local population and the students, allowing them to meet, build trust and develop cohesion within the community, along with a sense of pride (Murzyn-Kupisz, Dzialek, 2013). It's also important to involve and allow local groups to participate in the development of the site, and enable them to influence the presentation of their history (Saunders and Janes, 2007).

Research carried out on other Heritage Lottery Fund projects has shown that people employed, or volunteering, through project benefit from increased skills, improvements in health and social inclusion (Naylor et al 2009). The recent change in University and Student Union strategy, focusing on Wellbeing rather than Student entrepreneurship, should act as a conduit for this, with the Heritage team within the Union acting as an intermediary and seeking to involve both external and student community groups in its activities, setting up wellbeing walks and heritage trails. Wellbeing has moved to the top of the University's strategy after completing a large-scale research project that involved over 1,000 of the student population. Whilst the clear majority of students were happy with the time they have spent in Northampton, a quarter did not feel fulfilled in their experiences, with the same amount having considered dropping out. These students reported struggling with various parts of their university life, with one in three struggling with anxiety, stress and other mental health issues, and one in four of those saying they did not receive the help they needed. The Student Union's strategy has moved to tackle these problems head on, putting student support at the top of its values, and with the development of a new site opportunities may exist to use the heritage to help support this goal.

It should be considered, however, that the Engine Shed project is the culmination of three separate agendas, the HLF's heritage and community-based goals, the University's own objectives as an educational institution and the Student Unions role as a 'student-first' organisation. It therefore falls to the Student Unions Heritage team to act as a 'broker' between these agendas and offer the most appropriate way forward creating balance between the objectives of the HLF, the University and the Student Union and ensuring both students and the local community get the best value they can from the Engine Shed.

Methodology

This report uses a mixed methodology to infer the impact the redevelopment of the Engine Shed has had on heritage, communities and people. A series of interviews were carried out with a range of stakeholders; The Students Unions CEO, the Heritage Coordinator, both the current and former Graduate Interns, who were part of the University's Office of the Vice Chancellor supporting the project, the Marketing team, Membership Services Manager, The Heritage Mentor (part of the Heritage Lottery Fund) and the Student President. There is a gap in data collected from specific users as although interviews

were requested from student societies that used the site, as well as, those that hadn't, few responses to the requests were received. A survey carried out did include some members of the sought-after groups, and interviews were carried out with a small number of students. Heritage groups were also reached out to, with one attending the Student Unions steering group.

The survey itself was carried out in March 2019 and was targeted at students using the building, being positioned on the reception desk with the forms, with others being handed out to students ordering food and drink. The survey was 16 questions long and focused on the respondent's usage of the building, their knowledge of local historical sites and experiences with the café, with 29 students replying to the survey. Along with this, booking forms were looked at to study who the users were of the Student Union, as well as who was not.

The café is focused on due to its importance to the building becoming sustainable through its business. To study this, surveys were carried out to garner the customer experience, along with a detailed analysis of the financial records. A particular challenge with this is that the café has only been open six months, and although strengths and weaknesses can be highlighted, a year on year analysis would be more effective to ascertain the trends as the ebbs and flows of the new campus can be properly studied.

To expand on this research, it would be beneficial to do a longitudinal study as due to the move it's difficult to compare this year's Student Unions to last years, as the model for the business, as well as the Student Unions Strategy, has changed dramatically. Appropriate parallels can be drawn on certain subjects but the relocation and splitting of the Student Union Business into two parts should be taken into consideration when looking at any comparative analysis.

Impact of the Engine Shed on Communities

The general feeling surrounding the heritage team based at the Union is that the students do not engage with heritage as much as the local community, having more than likely come from further afield than Northampton, therefore having no intrinsic link to the town's history. The survey suggested this was the case with only 44% of the respondents being able to name another local heritage site, the heritage mentioned was the museum, which closed in 2017 for refurbishment, a local church, Delapre Abbey and the town's history as a manufacturer of shoes. The students will seek employment with the Union but the driving factor behind this decision is employability and CV building rather than a desire to be more involved with the towns heritage. The Student Union has picked up on this, and is working to build the Engine Shed more closely into the creation of a student identity, adding decorations around the building that talk about the history of the building, as well as a décor on the front glass doors which will allow visitors to 'look through' and see what the building would have looked like when it operated as a rail shed. This could also be seen in part as a response to criticism from a local heritage group that the internal design of the building could be part of any modern construct, and the aesthetic of the Engine Shed stops at the doors leading in. Regardless, the creation of a student identity based around a shared building that was there before them, and will continue to be there once they are gone, is seen as important to both the heritage team of the Student Union, and the Student representatives themselves, the President of the Union remarking that the creation of a Student Identity, based around the heritage of the Engine Shed, being a critical factor for them in the early stages of the campus move.

As part of the enterprise bid, the Student Union agreed to facilitate five Social Enterprises with the students, with four being agreed upon during the bidding stage, and another to be designed once the building was open.

The first group to be involved in one of these, the Dance Society, was quickly able to become self-sufficient by hosting competitions and inviting other University teams to compete, who would pay an entrance fee. These fees would not only fully fund the competitions they held, but cover the costs of the ones they would attend off campus. The others have unfortunately not fared as well, although a Green Energy Impact Project is still on the cards, the idea to create an on-site micro-brewery has been impossible to facilitate due to the licensing restrictions placed on the venue, and an enterprise based around allotments failed to engage with the students, staff members having to pick up the slack to keep it running. It is worth noting, however, the Student Union is still in its infancy and finding its feet in places, as things become more settled and the students begin to engage more with the site, the fate of any student-led enterprises may be more positive in the future. The Union is certainly keen to continue finding opportunities to create Student-Led Social Enterprises, seeing their success integral to offering the best student experience.

The construction of the Engine Shed has, however, presented other opportunities to involve the students and increase their knowledge within their academic studies. Every student on the construction course offer by the University of Northampton was offered an interview to join the construction team building the Engine Shed as part of a five-week placement, of which one week was based around the heritage of the site. five students were awarded the placement, three final year students and two second year students, but everyone who applied got feedback on their interviews and CVs so they could better design them for the future. The five students who got the role worked across the project, including a week helping oversee the project, and the three final year students were all offered a job on the completion of their studies, with one taking them up on the offer.

Another opportunity was forwarded to the design students. Upon redeveloping the building there was an amount of material that was unable to be used, so a brief was delivered to the University's design students asking that they designed sculptures with the help of an external blacksmith. The designs were evaluated on their feasibility, with feedback being given to the students, the winning design is now being created and will stand outside the Unions main entrance. Game design students were also able to involve themselves in the project, running up an animated video of the Engine Shed in action which plays on rotation throughout the day on one of the screens. Opportunities such as these are difficult to facilitate in a site which is up and running, with academic courses offering simulations of this type of work rather than direct involvement, however, the development of the Engine Shed has been taken full advantage of, and students have been given opportunities that they may have otherwise never had, particularly within a heritage site.



Screenshot from student produced 3D model of the Engine Shed



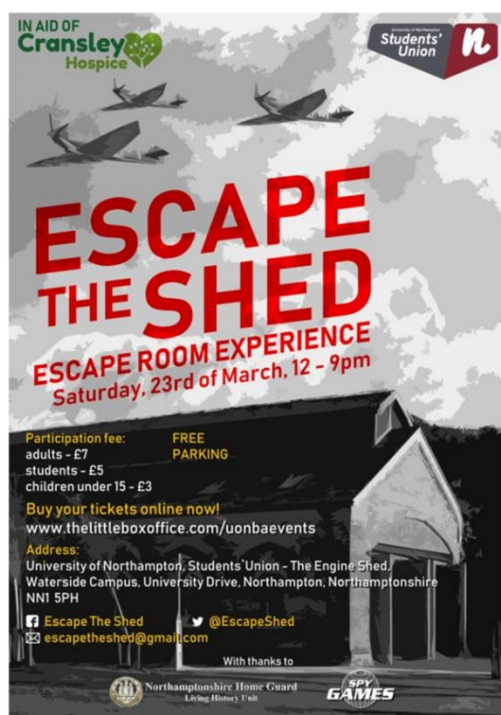
Salvaged scrapmetal awaiting development into outdoor furniture

To further promote the Engine Shed as a heritage site and engage with local schools, the Student Union team developed resource packs that were to be planned, designed and delivered by trainee teachers, however, it was not practical for the trainee teachers to design the packs due to how busy their schedules are. To solve this, the heritage team will develop the packs, with student teachers being able to edit them if they see fit. Other methods of delivery have been utilised in the meantime, in particular with the University's School Engagement teams who have regular interaction with local schools as part of their own projects. The packs were used with Primary School students in year 6, who had just finished their SATs, there being a gap in the curriculum between the end of the exams, and them moving on to secondary school. The team helped create a project that involved the history of the Engine Shed where students would do work at the school, then visit the Engine Shed for some talks and workshops to help them finish the project. The Schools Liaison team found working with the Heritage team not only effective, with a good amounts of support forthcoming from the Union, but felt it offered an experience that was otherwise hard for students to get. The Engine Shed's location on the University campus means it's easy for the Schools team to arrange transport and find places for them to eat and work without disturbing the public, it is the only Heritage site that is involved in the project due to these problems in other locations, adding value to the local schools' community. Not only has the project aided the schools' liaison team, the University's own students are being used to deliver the workshops and talks, adding value to their course, with the History department considering including the delivery of these sessions as part of the module.

The renovation and redevelopment of the Engine Shed has offered immeasurable opportunities for the student community to become involved in projects such as these. Although student enterprise has been at the heart of university strategy for a long time, the Engine Shed, and the associated team, have been quick to offer opportunities for students to up-skill themselves for the future, and this goes beyond the redevelopment stage of the project.

The Student Union offered two £1,000 pots for 2nd year event management students in order to support them in their events projects. Generally, the student projects have been set up around pubs and bars, with groups offering quizzes, comedy night or other activities that suit the nightlife model. The £1,000 pot, along with access to the Student Union building offers the students a much wider proposition for their projects, three groups came forward with an escape room, a cultural fair and a winter walk followed by a vintage fair. The latter received a full pot, with the other two projects splitting the other, with the

delivery of the projects being in March and April. The offering of the grants increased the viability of projects that would be restricted if offered on other venues who need to protect their business model, or remain open to the public. As part of the brief given to the students, the University's heritage team gave a presentation on the history of the Engine Shed and asked that any event be relatable to it, for their part the Escape room group chose to focus on World War 2, when the site was used to house the Local Home Guard. For the Escape Room group, the Engine Shed offered opportunities not available elsewhere, although other ideas were entertained when looking at external venues, an Escape room was seen as unviable, needing a large amount of space and time to practice the set up. The team wanted a theatrical element to the day as well, having members of the local Home Guard historical society walk the Escape Room participants in as well as give presentations about this particular part of the buildings history, which would have been next to impossible to facilitate in a private building open to the public.



Above: Escape the Shed on the day

Left: Escape the Shed Poster

Projects such as these work to fulfil the Student Development strategy promoted by the University where the focus on increasing entrepreneurship and community thinking would lead the alumni to creating a positive impact on society once they left university. Other facets of this strategy included offering them free sports activities and CV building events which would increase their employability. During the implementation of this strategy the University was incredibly successful, being the number one university in the country for employability, with 95.6% of full time degree leavers having a job within six months (HESA Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Survey 2010/11), and today it offers the Northampton Employment Promise, where students who completed a course with the Changemaker team, would be guaranteed a three to six month paid internship should they not have secured work within 12 months of leaving the University. With the Student Union being able to offer students opportunities to build their skills, particularly within a heritage site, this tradition of the University is certainly strengthened through having the Heritage of the Engine Shed on site.

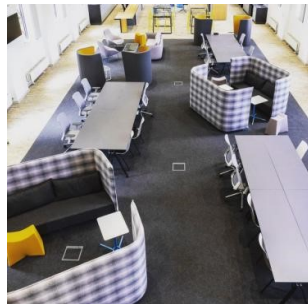
Impact of the Engine Shed on People

Although skill building is important for the student experience, in recent years, there has been more focus on Student Welfare, and supporting students in the present, with the move to a new town, the pressure of academia and new social groups putting a strain on the individual's mental health. Student Wellbeing has moved to become the top priority of the Student Union, with a post being created to lead the charge, a Vice President for Welfare. Previously the Union's role in the provision of welfare was to signpost students to the University's own provisions, however, in the last 12 months the SU has engaged with various awareness campaigns and has set out in its strategic plan that it intends to "develop and deliver a range of services [...] supporting students out of isolationist behaviours, supporting them in their transition to University life and addressing their mental well-being".

Plenty of literature suggests that there needs to be a certain amount of mental health robustness for students to integrate into University life. In 2016, the Student Union at Northampton participated in research that would indicate 25% of students felt their mental health support was something that Unions should be campaigning on. However, at the Park Campus Student Union, it was hard to support these aspects of a student's life as the building presented additional challenges. The Union was split into two units, the main Student Union building, and the Pavilion Bar. The main building hosted the majority of the Student Unions operations, from pastoral and academic services to the social offering, a bar and nightclub, which acted as the financial underpin. The two sides of the business meant that the Union offered juxtaposed activities within its walls, and it certainly seemed to have an impact on how it operated and its ability to deliver on student care. It was felt by the staff that students were put off from asking for emotional or academic support in what was, essentially, a closed nightclub complete with sticky floors and a lack of natural light. This set up suited the Students Unions previous strategic plan of creating a commercially viable entity, focused around club nights, however, the venue did not suit the change in strategic focus toward student well-being.

The design of the Engine Shed is much more in line with the trends set with the Pavilion and the wider café-culture in the United Kingdom. The large windows let the natural light brighten the building, and although the layout open desk area is in flux as they try and find a way of making it more open for students to approach, the reception desk near the entrance acts as a first point of contact, staffed by Union personnel at all times who can help facilitate what is needed. The café is designed in line with recent trends, the exposed brickwork will be familiar to the students from high end coffee bars, however, there are concerns with the furniture, with students describing it as "uncomfortable", and "cluttered and disorganised". Getting figures on how many people have engaged with additional support programmes through the student union can be difficult, with a number of offered services being sensitive, such as welfare support and academic misconduct, as well as the confidentiality concerns. A student survey carried out indicated that of the students who had not used any of the unions additional services, 45.83% would feel comfortable asking in the Engine Shed, indicating that more work should be done. Concerns have been raised with the layout of the building, particularly on the positioning of the reception desk, with it running down a wall and overlooking the café, there is worry that it could impact how confident people would be to ask for help, one student suggesting the positioning of the student desk close to the café makes it feel unwelcoming for students to sit and eat, and it may well be the case that students are put off from asking for help in such a public space. Although private booths are available, if the goal is to have everyone feel comfortable asking for help, there seems to be some improvement still required. Although the improvements over the Park Campus building are significant, it should be noted wider issues

highlighted through a Changemaker survey, has indicated that students still feel disconnected from the Student Union, and are not sure what the Engine Shed is for.



Furniture layout in the Engine Shed

In prior decades, the consumption of alcohol was key to the operation of any Student Union, the nightclub and bar offering being seen as essential to the student experience, however, the trends have started to change. A National Union of Students (NUS) survey in 2018 saw one in five students say they didn't drink alcohol, with another 70% admitting to only drinking to fit in with their peers, there is also a rising demand for alcohol free events to be held on campus, and these changing attitudes have been echoed by the Student Union President, who felt that even if the licensing restrictions were lifted on the building, it should move towards bottled beers and wine as 'social lubricants', rather than serve the binge-drinking culture, somewhat associated with the traditional view students. This presumption may well be challenged as survey results suggest that for student societies to become more involved with the Engine Shed, the serving of alcohol is desired. Of the eight respondents to the surveys who are part of sports societies, four directly asked for alcohol to be served, whilst the other four said they held their usual meetings at locations which do have a licence, the Platform, the SU's club offering in town and another local bar. The other respondent was from a sports society that hasn't made any bookings with the Union so it could be assumed that they also hold their meetings elsewhere. A survey carried out by the Changemaker team has also highlighted these issues, with students questioning why there was no pool table in the Union to promote the more social side of the Union.

Impact of the Engine Shed on Heritage

As a Grade two listed building, The Engine Shed is considered to be of special interest, and although community groups will tend to have more specialist knowledge on the history of the area they live than a student population which has moved from out of town, the older members of the community, will also remember when the Engine Shed was in active use, as the Home Guard station during World War Two and as a Welding School in its later life. Supporting this, interviewed members of The Student Union have seen members of the public come to visit the site to have a look around and see what was done with the building they remember from their youth. The residents that have visited have actively asked questions and sat for coffee in the building where the students are, promoting the idea that the building has been designed in a manner that is welcoming and open to the local community to sit and socialise with campus residents. In order to support this move, the heritage team at the Student Union looked outwards with five Community heritage projects being set up to increase local engagement.

The first, a heritage film day, was carried out with the Engine Shed hosting an event with a local trust, in part supported by the British Film Institute, who showed films from independent producers in the area.

The event saw 40 guests attend the Engine Shed for the six hour event, though some issues were found with the sites parking which was not available to off-campus visitors, hampering the opportunity to attract visitors from further afield. The involvement of a third party in the film day has been shown to be beneficial to its promotion, a night carried out solely by the Student Union, a showing of the film 'The Railway Children', only attracted seven people to the event as it has not, yet, developed the networks to advertise to the wider Northampton Community.

Building on this, in May, as part of the national "Museums at Night" Programme, the Engine Shed is looking to host a series of evening talks, working alongside both the University's history department's lecturers and post graduate students. A plan also exists for a community open day, where local residents will be invited in to discuss their memories of the Engine Shed which will be recorded to create an Oral history. Alongside this, working with the charity Age UK, there are plans to create an interactive digital map of Northampton in 1872, the year the Engine Shed was built, the digitalisation of heritage has been a part of government policy since the New Labour government of 1997 as it only protects the data, but it allows fuller access to cultural material for members of the public. Students will work with pensioners to find newspaper articles from the year and plot events across the town, centralising, and making accessible, countless amounts of historic data. Not only should this help develop an important heritage tool and database, but it will allow the students to help mentor pensioners in using computer technology, one of the key services offered by Age UK across the country. It will also offer their clients increased social interaction, another of the charities objectives. Research carried out on the previous work of the Heritage Lottery Fund has shown that participation in projects helps volunteers and employees develop skills, improve health and gives them a chance to involve themselves in public life. An intergenerational exchange of experiences has also been shown to have a strong impact on the quality of life for pensioners (Naylor et al, 2009).

The heritage of the area on which the new campus is built, however, has much more history than the Engine Shed, being the former home of the Power Station, a Greyhound Track, Flour Mill and being close to the Northampton arm of the Grand Union Canal, as well as the area of the 1460 Battle of Northampton (itself a protected site), and the Heritage Team has gone to great lengths to expand its reach and promote the sites wider heritage.

The team is working with the local council for an app called HP Reveal (formerly Aurasma), where they are creating additional content for the "Ghosts of Northampton Past Trail". The app works as an interactive ghost tour, with specific locations enabling the user to see a 'ghost' talk about important parts of the town's history, ranging from composer Sir Malcolm Arnold appearing in the courtyard of the Guildhall, to historian Joan Wake outside Delapre Abbey which she helped save from destruction in the 1950's. With the Engine Shed being sat in a historic region of Northampton, there are plans to add five new hotspots to the app from around the campus, the now demolished Flour Mills, the Power Station, the former Greyhound track and the area where the Battle of Northampton was fought. The plan is for students to produce the videos, with a brief being due to be delivered to them in February 2019, with history students designing the content and film students putting the video together for the app. This historical engagement is important for the building as it allows the public to experience the area on their own schedule with the Union not being required to directly facilitate the walks for any potential visitors. The goal of recording the history of the area which is hidden below the construction of the University campus is important as these moments in history could well be forgotten, however, although low cost, therefore averting any

financial risk, only 46 individuals have subscribed to the Northampton ghost trail in total meaning its reach is low. This said, augmented reality through the use of social media is a relatively new technology, therefore a longitudinal evaluation after a marketing push by the union may well increase those numbers if it is introduced to community walkers and heritage groups.



"Ghosts of Northampton's Past" in action

The ghost trail wouldn't be the first heritage trail the team at the Student Union has put together, with a traditional walk being set up online at www.suengineshed.com. The website offers a substantial amount of information on the trail, with 22 stops on the walk each accompanied with historic photos of the area. The walk itself has been used by a variety of groups, both internal and external to the University, with wellbeing walks taking place with both students and staff members as well as educational walks, studying the biodiversity of the area, including both bird and plant surveys with a group called 'Project Awesome'. The heritage walks were designed with input from external volunteer groups, such as the Delapre and Becketts Park societies, which could provide information about the area. Heritage has long been associated with improvements in personal wellbeing, not only helping people exercise but also involving them in their local history and identity creation.

The Engine Shed is also looking outwards and the areas surrounding the campus to continue rejuvenating the heritage in the area. Across from the pedestrian entrance to the campus is the Northampton marina, part of the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union canal which opened in 1815. The canal has seen many changes over the years, notably a former rail bridge which connected the Engine Shed to the former Northampton-Bedford line was removed after the closure of the St Johns and Bridge Street Stations. The original brickwork supports for the bridge are still intact, but much like parts of the Engine Shed were covered in ivy, upon inspection one of the stands was found to have a painted mural. As part of the University's Student Volunteer week, the Heritage Team has decided to rejuvenate the brickwork, by first clearing the weeds before taking stock of the condition of the mural and, if required, renovating it. The mural faces on to Becketts Park and its protection will help promote the history of the Waterways in the area. In its 60th Anniversary report (2008) British Waterways reported that the countries canals saw 11 million visitors, and with walkways being open alongside the waterways, the heritage can also act as an advertisement for a historic area surrounded by new builds.

The construction of the site also provided opportunity for the heritage team to reach out to the local community, offering hard hat tours of the construction site to members of the local community and the trustees, local school-age students were originally forwarded the opportunity but the university was unable to get insurance so had to cancel the tours. The Hard Hat tours focused on the building work and the restorations, explaining to the visitors what was being done along with an overview of the building history, attendees to the tour included the Northamptonshire Industrial Archaeology Group who first wrote about the project in their newsletter in 2016 prior to the construction starting, with the plan of using the building in the future for its own events.

The work of the Heritage team is two-fold; the protection and rejuvenation of the sites history, and its promotion. For the first part, the heritage team is certainly working to fulfil its goals, having taken on additional work to ensure that the history of the new campus is preserved, for its promotion, however, there is a reliance on external groups. This isn't necessarily indicative of the team's work, the development of the new sites has caused disruptions in the local area, and this has perhaps made it difficult to engage with the local community directly, with the residents seeing the Engine Shed as part of the New Campus, rather than a rejuvenated part of the area. Although the sites primary focus is the student community, stronger outreach to the local community, particularly through events may help its sustainability as both a heritage site, and as a commercial entity.

Sustainability

Upon the Student Union moving into the building, the funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was already in place for the enterprise grant that suited the gyms business model. To protect its own objectives, the HLF has two rounds projects need to go through to obtain funding. The first round lays out the broad scope of the project and its costs, and if it is believed to be feasible, a small grant will be awarded to help with the funding of a full proposal which will go into the second round where a final decision will be made. Although there had been contact between the HLF and the University, the latter party entered straight into the second round, and although funding got approved, the skipping of the first round alienated the HLF from opportunities to guide the project or offer advice at the planning stage.

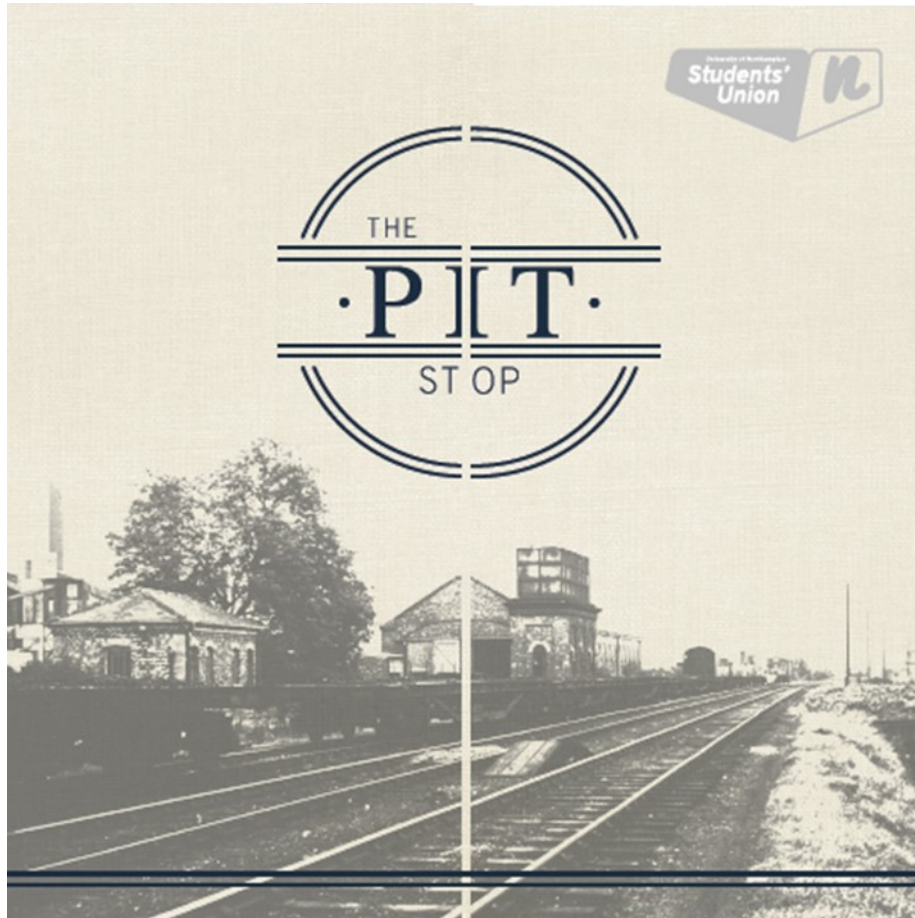
One specific issue was that the HLF would have recommended against having the renovation work carried out by the same contractors building the University who worked on a "Design and Build" basis, where once plans and drawings are finalised, any changes a client wants to make comes at an additional cost. For this reason, the HLF prefers to work with Architect-led contracts, where the contractor will complete a survey of the property, and if they miss something, within reason, any changes to the plans will come at their own cost. As the University had agreed to a 'Design and Build' contract, when the contractors came across the previously missed repair pits significant costs were incurred, believed by the HLF to be around £100,000. Upon being discovered, the repair pits were found in a very good state, leading the Local Authorities planning officer to ask that they be protected. Many options were discussed, including them being covered with strengthened glass so they could be seen, but the costs, mixed with the risk of damaging the pits when trying to put in lighting caused these plans to be scrapped, and instead the pits were covered and filled. The feeling of the HLF is that the additional costs associated with redoing the plans, could have been avoided, had they been involved in the first round and been able to make their recommendations on how best to proceed.

Replacing the gym as the occupier of the building, the next hurdle was to give the HLF a wider understanding of what a Student Union was, as although the mentor the Heritage group provided the Union to help guide them through the process had experience working with similar businesses to a Student Union, this was prior to their work with the HLF and operating in a different context. The HLF needed to know how the Union operated in comparison to a regular business, with the funders not wanting to put money into a project that would be completed and then left to ruin due to the lack of financial resources to complete any necessary repairs, which can be substantial within heritage sites. Because of this, the sustainability of the project was important to the HLF, and with the Student Union being in a weaker financial position than most applicants, instead completed a joint bid with the University,

The Engine Shed is part of a two-pronged Student Union, with a second location in the Town Centre, called the Platform, which hosts the social side of the business, with club nights and a bar. The splitting of the Student Union into two parts and the restriction on alcohol sales at the Engine Shed, however, does put the sites sustainability at risk, as does some of the strategy following the University's move.

As stated, when offering events and community outreach thus far, parking has been a problem with the university restricting who can use it, possibly putting off those who are looking to drive in. Although the local communities are certainly within walking distance, the relationship between the local residents and the university has been strained since the move, so they, at least in the short term, are unlikely to attend events on a campus where they perceive their problems to come from. The community outreach has to therefore come from other areas such as special interest communities, for example, the Northamptonshire Industrial Archaeology Group, but there is no guarantee members live within walking distance, and should they choose to drive, and then park in the local residential estates, it only further exasperates the problems the community is having.

Other restrictions on the Student Union building also risks its sustainability, with conferencing being restricted to the main university campus, removing it as a possible revenue stream for the Engine Shed. This leaves the only café as a cash generating business which has presented its own challenges. Without extraction and a kitchen set up, it is limited to offering the same meals as the other restaurants/cafes on campus, of which there are six located closer to where the students study with no Unique Selling Point (USP) existing to encourage students to walk the additional distance to the union café. The customer experience of the café is also weak, of the customers surveyed only 24.13% gave the café the top score for experience. For context, in the private sector, only top scores are considered when measuring the success of a site, with the theory being any negative is a reason for a customer to not return, therefore the difference between a four and a five, is just as significant as between a two and a five in creating a loyal customer base. This is supported by the fact not one of the non-workers, suggested they spent time in the Engine Shed more than twice a week, inclusive of workers, only one said they visited three or more times a week. Six months is a short time frame to properly evaluate the café and its long-term potential, however, the evidence that has be gathered suggests work is needed. Although the daily average sales and number of transactions per day has seen a slight drop.



Menu from the "Pit Stop" cafe

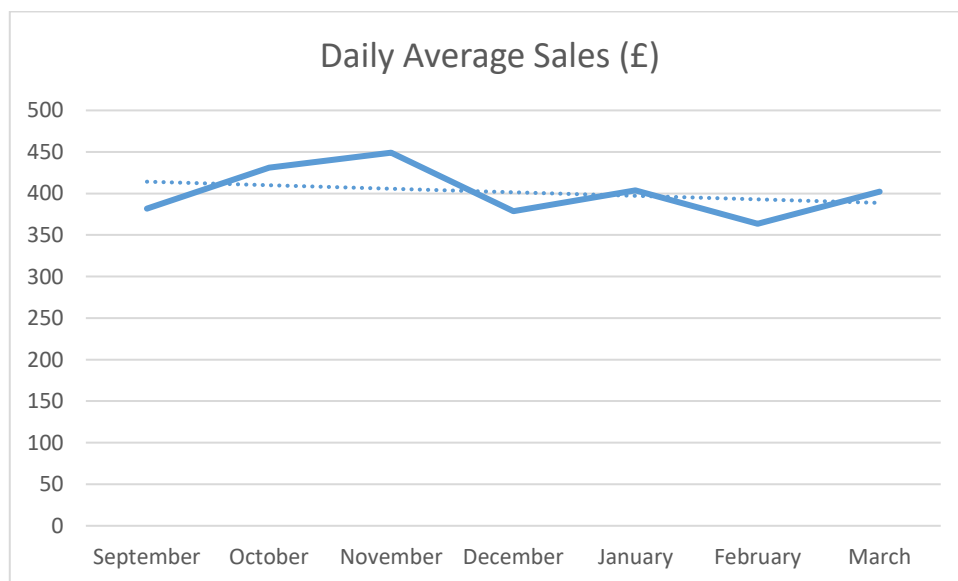


Figure 1 – A graph showing the Total Average Sales from September to March

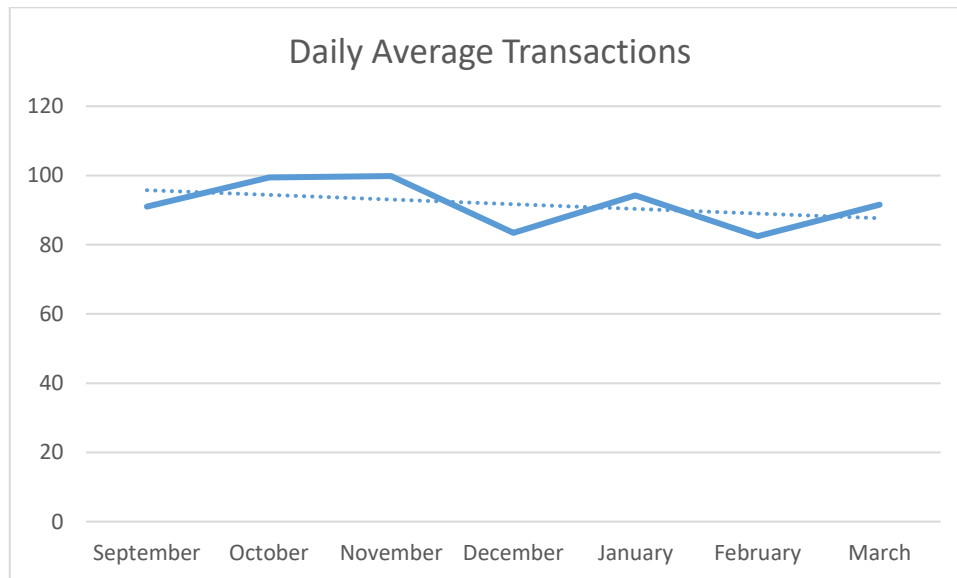


Figure 2 – A graph showing the amount of transaction on average per day each month

The average sale per transaction has seen a more significant trend, indicating people are less willing to spend their money when they do visit, spend seeing a 6% drop between September and March with no price changes over this period.

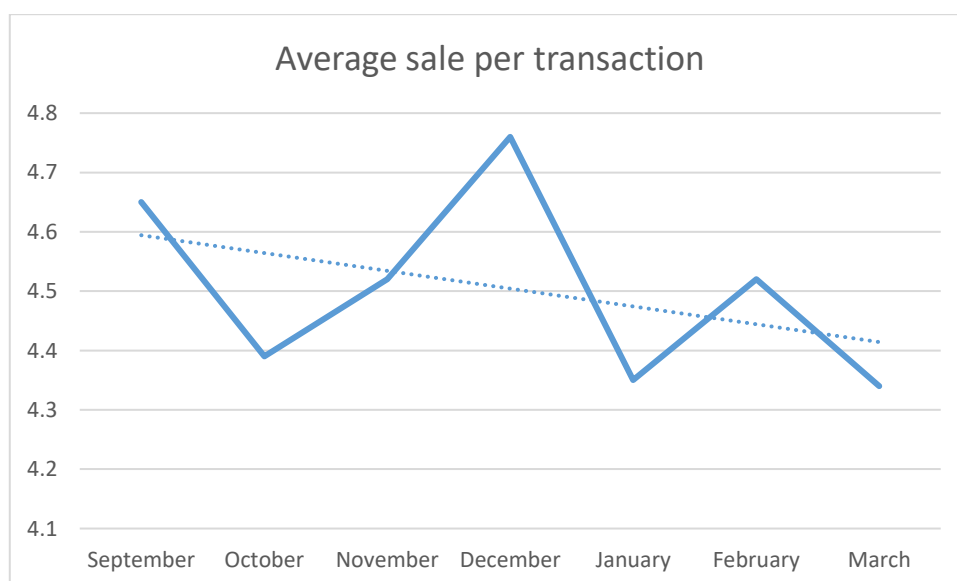


Figure 3 – A graph showing the average value per sale from September to March

This is backed up by survey responses, with 27% of those who visited the café to eat, making a complaint on the survey related to the food business, and only three, non-employed, respondents giving the cafe top marks. The environment of the café was also a subject the respondents brought up, asking for music, longer serving times, alcohol and games (pool tables etc) in line with what would be expected from a traditional student union.

What this has led to is a decline in the money the Engine Shed Café is bringing in. Of the full trading months of 24 days (October, November, January and February) there has been a decline in income.

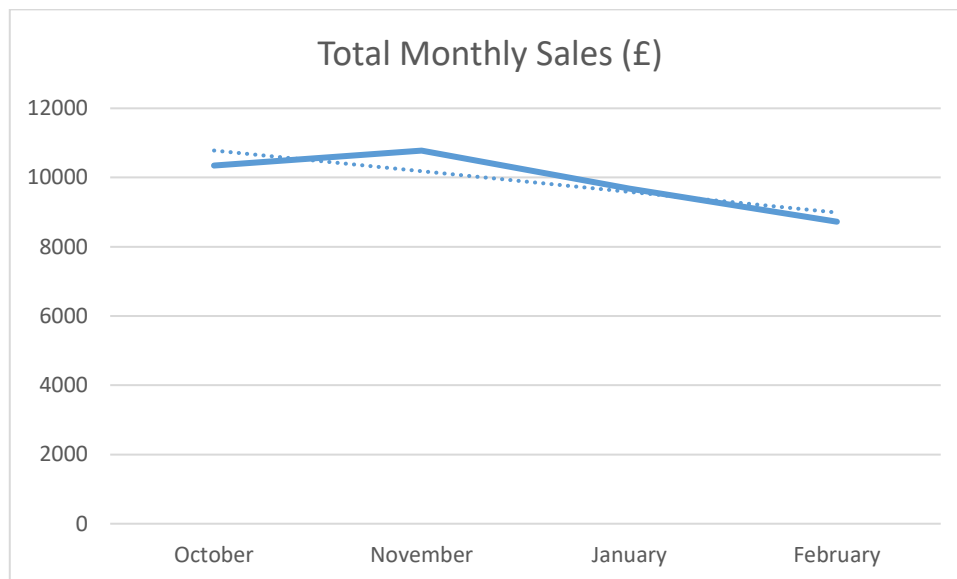


Figure 4 – A graph showing the total sales made per month from September to March

Having the café as the lynchpin of the Engine Shed's financial stability may cause further issues as the restrictions on conferencing and taking money from bookings means that the only monetisation from these events is food and drink.

Bookings at the Student Union have steadily dropped over the three months bookings were available, from 105 in January to 87 in March. Of the 339 bookings made in this time, 147 (43.36%) were for one off events with 32 other groups having multiple bookings. There are a wide variety of reasons a room booking may occur, many may be one offs but some rooms seem more effective at maintaining the business than others. Of the 46 bookings in the Mezzanine, overlooking the Student Union saw, only 17% were for one off bookings the rest being repeat business compared to 54.7% of bookings in the café being one offs, the other successful room at maintaining repeat customer, Meeting Room 1, has now been closed to bookings, operating as a staff office. When open 39.2% of the business was one off, with the rest repeating. The other areas up for booking, the Student Engagement Area and Meeting Room 3, also seemed to struggle to return bookings, 45% single uses of the Student Engagement Area and 50% for Meeting Room 3. A wider concern may be that of the bookings for rooms at the Engine Shed, very few are for student groups, with only four groups making bookings, Zumba, First Love NUCC, PENSEA and Creative Craft Society, although other groups have said they use the Engine Shed as a meet up. It should be taken into consideration, however, that the booking sheets and records used are written out by hand at the time of the booking so they may be inaccurate, as the research found a variety of groups that had alternative spellings or were shortened making them difficult to link, it may be appropriate to update these methods in order to keep a better record of usage.

An interview with a student part of a society not currently using the Engine Shed for its meet ups, offered no particular reason why they chose to meet elsewhere in the University, suggesting they just looked for a place that could hold a set amount of people, perhaps indicative of the struggles the Engine Shed has had to create a USP for the student societies.

Conclusion

All in all, the marrying up of the business model and strategy of a Student Union with the Heritage Lottery Funds own goals has presented a variety of challenges. The Student Union relies on its 'Student First' approach to maintain its charitable status and has been forthcoming in working with the local community to accommodate their own interest in the areas heritage, however, there does still seem to be gap between the two communities that has remained stressed since the campus opened. With the Engine Shed not being open on weekends, and the restrictions on parking stopping communities from driving in there are less opportunities for the two to interact. This is not for lack of trying, the Student Union has held Union days in the town centre over Fresher's week and the Heritage team has done a lot of outreach, but this has been most effective through working with already established community groups, such as Project Awesome, Age UK and other interest groups, such as Northamptonshire Industrial Archaeological Group. The team at the Student Union intends to continue this moving forward, in April the site is hosting a Heritage Forum workshop day, where local heritage and community groups come together to learn new skills, or technologies, to better the protection and delivery of the sites they are charged with looking after. This will allow them to link with other local groups and expand their network.

What has been a big success, however, is both the protection, and promotion, of local heritage. The Heritage team has not only worked to promote the Engine Shed's history, but has expanded its remit to include other areas in its location, from the mural on the Canal which is lined up for refurbishment, to the promotion of the sites heritage through the creation of walks and the use of technology to build on the towns ghost trail. Student involvement in these projects has also been positive, though there will always be an element of CV-building, projects being carried out by the student population are linked heavily to the heritage of the site, showing a growing understanding of the area and its history. The Union has also run clean up days, as part of the Great British Spring Clean, working with both students and other local groups, such as Olympus Care, who provide services to people with special needs, clearing out 100kg of rubbish from one of the local walkways leading into the town, with further events planned for Becketts Park, a local green area named for Henry II's adversarial Archbishop of Canterbury. The design and renovation of the building has also been very positive, not only creating a welcoming environment that matches the change in University strategy and the importance of student well-being but in creating an atmosphere in line with the expectations of modern students.

The delivery of the project itself has had challenges, the avoidance of the first round of evaluation alienated the HLF from some decision-making processes which would have been beneficial to the project, particular in cost saving, though there is general happiness in how the restoration of the project has been carried out. The entrepreneurship part of the funding has also struggled with two of the four plans failing to materialise, but with it still being early doors for the project, and if the Union can encourage more students to involve themselves it may well be the case that a multitude of new projects take root.

Thus far, the biggest challenge to the sustainability of the site is the Café, which starting to show signs of decline, with the quality of the food seemingly leading to a reduction in spend. Restrictions on licencing, conferencing and money for bookings has increased reliance on the Café, yet in its current state it doesn't differentiate itself enough from the rest of the food offerings on campus to attract business, and only serves 9-5, meaning it always operates in competition to the rest of the campus food outlets.

The refurbishment has, however, been a big bonus for the students. The heritage of the Engine Shed has offered opportunities to students that would have been impossible to facilitate at the former site, whether it be involvement during the design and rebuild of the site, through work experience, or design briefs linked heavily to the heritage of the site. The wellbeing of the students has also seen a boon, with the design of the building being more in tune with the change in University and Student Union strategy with 66% of students feeling comfortable asking for additional support from the student desk at the Union.

Lessons Learnt and Next Steps

Throughout its full first year of operation, the team running the Engine Shed have been able to take stock and learn much from the challenges that have been presented to the project.

With the original plan being created five years ago, as an adaptation of the gym model, issues have arisen regarding the layout of the building. The reception desk for student services runs along a wall and the feeling within the team is that due to it overlooking the café area, students may be uncomfortable eating there. Having the office workers situated in the open space work area has also created an atmosphere of the Engine Shed being a workplace rather than a student union. To combat this, union staff members are going to be moved into the office pods, with sabbatical officers taking their place in the open area. Soft furnishings are going to be brought in, along with a pool table, to encourage students to use the building more regularly, particularly those who live on campus. The team is aware of the importance of striking the right balance between being a student-friendly Engine Shed and ensuring that the services and support it offers are still advertised and available for all students, without excluding those not attracted to a 'young' skewing student union. In line with this, the team at the Engine Shed are looking to increase the amount of branding in the building to better signal to students what the building is for.

With the building being situated away from the main campus effort is being put in to better understand the geography of the site. The previous student elections saw a low turnout as the teams found it difficult to find the best places to advertise and conduct outreach as the campus was still new to both the staff and the students. Moving forward, with a better understanding of the campus, the union is working to better deliver this part of the offer to students. This is being aided by the university during Fresher's week as they intend to ensure that the Student Union is included as part of the welcome weekend with students collecting items from the building.

Many lessons have also been learnt from the issues surrounding the Engine Shed being a small part of a much larger project within the building of the University's Waterside Campus. The commercialisation of the building was impacted by the restriction of branded coffee and alcohol, with both instructions being received with little notice prior to opening, as well as the university not allowing the Engine Shed to charge for conferencing. Competition from the campus catering contractors has also been stiff, with six coffee shops and restaurants located closer to the student's classes and study areas. To combat this, the café has reduced its overheads to keep it profitable, which is important as it acts as the only additional source of income for the Engine Shed.

Local community relations have improved significantly over the course of the year, with local residents being significantly impacted by the university's move to the area. The Student Union continues to involve itself in local community meetings and the Engine Shed sees regular visits from members of the public walking in the area. Linking the community with the students has been successful when compared to the

former campus. Whereas prior to the move community outreach was driven by students groups finding like-minded people in the local area (For example, a student wheelchair basketball team linked up with the towns one) today the Union is much more involved in the linking of the two groups. Solutions to the issues surrounding parking are also being put in place, with an online portal being opened up to members of the public enabling them to book parking spaces on campus which will allow community groups to more actively use the Engine Shed for meetings.

It has been noted that engaging students with the Engine Shed outside of their studies has been difficult. Therefore moving forward, the Union will continue to work alongside the academics to closely align their outreach with the courses learning objectives, repeating the success found with the events management programme and architecture students, who have been able to benefit significantly through the Engine Shed project. The team have found it difficult to plan yearlong activities with the students due to the ebbs and flows of the new campus differing from the old one and students not staying on site during breaks. To combat this, short term activities will be planned in, based around the students study times. This duty has been carried out by the Heritage coordinator, a role that is due to come to the end in September. The responsibilities of the role will be divided up between the remaining team members and the former role holder has been invited to join a regular meeting in order to stay involved and help continue to influence the direction of the project.

The Engine Shed team also found that working with a consultancy to help them develop a business plan that suited the HLF's model was beneficial, however, they feel they should have had more focused goals rather than trying to 'over deliver', as a student union offers a variety of different challenges due to its differing infrastructure and operations to a regular business. Extracting financial data regarding the maintenance and management of the Engine Shed grounds has also been difficult as the figures are tied into the University's full budget, with the latter party taking responsibility for the buildings upkeep. The building's lease is due to be signed in the near future which will guarantee the University will continue to provide the maintenance of the building.

The flooring installed by the original contractors to match the aesthetic of the building has suffered wear and tear due to the concrete being lime-based. A replacement floor is being sought with a focus on durability rather than look, however, with the Northampton Councils conservation officer not allowing the lime mortar to be replaced with cement, the contractors who laid the floor, Bowner and Kirkland, will be asked to replace the lime mortar which will likely delay the replacement of the floor past the original plan of summer 2019. The flooring between the tracks has caused issues to wheelchair users who have said that it's uncomfortable to move across. To resolve this, the team is looking to use branded matting with fluted edges to cover the brickwork.

In all, within its first year of operation, the Engine Shed team has faced a host of challenges that couldn't have been predicted when first planned five years ago. The team has, however, been proactive in resolving these problems and putting solutions in place to ensure that they don't repeat moving into the next academic year.