

Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee 9 April 2024

York Museums Trust

March 2024

Since we last briefed the Committee with a new leadership team and with the support of our Board we have clarified our purpose and priorities and stated our values as detailed below.

Our Vision

Connecting and inspiring people with the stories, history, art and culture of York and North Yorkshire.

Our Mission

Championing curiosity, inspiring creativity and creating opportunities for people to flourish as we collaborate to tell stories about our collections and places.

Our Values

- We value curiosity, creativity, generosity and responsibility equally and together.
- We are curious - We ask questions, we don't assume, we learn and we encourage different perspectives to be heard.
- We are creative - We have fun being creative, driving positive change and exploring potential.
- We are generous - We care for people, collections and places inviting everyone to develop knowledge, to take delight in and enjoy our spaces.
- We are responsible - We make informed decisions today for a better tomorrow and for a sustainable future.

- We are supportive - We collaborate and seek connection to grow a thriving community where we celebrate one another, cheer on progress and are heartfelt with feedback.

Priorities

Building and sustaining a flourishing organisation by:

- Delivering innovative public programming supporting an audience-focused, inclusive, visitor-first approach;
- Driving visitor income, meeting and exceeding enterprise and fundraising targets, managing expenditure;
- Identifying, developing and delivering a Masterplan and associated capital projects;
- Investing in our people ensuring we recruit, retain and develop a high performing team which celebrates diverse experiences and voices.
- Tackling climate change, understanding our carbon footprint and making incremental changes towards a net-zero future.
- Raising our profile through cultural leadership and partnerships working locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Outcomes

1. We have a sustainable business model for the future and have sufficient resources to thrive.
2. We attract and welcome large numbers of people regardless of background and engage with them all in some way. York and North Yorkshire communities and visitors are inspired to be curious and creative.
3. YMT's employees, volunteers, contractors and creative practitioners have positive wellbeing and better reflect the diversity of the population - we provide a platform for people to develop their potential.

4. People, businesses, local government, key stakeholders, customers and funders invest in YMT.
5. City of York collections and buildings are managed and cared for into the future and become environmentally sustainable. They support new programming, participation, knowledge and research.
6. People who visit or work with YMT feel engaged with art, culture and a sense of place/identity.

Performance – 2023/24

We have had a difficult year **at York Castle Museum**. The discovery of the use of RAAC in the roof that CYC installed in the 1980s on the Female prison required us to close the Female prison to the public in late September 2023 and we were only able to reopen in mid December once the problem had been fully identified and repairs made within the planning constraints of a listed building. The Female Prison is the venue for Kirkgate which is our major visitor attraction. We had to drop our prices in this period and we had much lower visitor numbers which impacted our retail and catering on site. Whilst we were able to reopen with our full *Christmas at York Castle Museum* offer we were not able to market this fully because of the need to have completed the repairs and having reopened on 8 December we had already foregone the first three weeks of our planned Christmas season. The lost revenue from this closure was c£400k. In addition, YMT have had to find from our reserves the unplanned remedial works costs of over £80k. Unfortunately, we have still not been able to reopen the upper half of the Female Prison because of the need to mitigate remaining RAAC issues. We have quotes for the necessary works and are talking to CYC directors as to the extent of funding CYC can provide for these repairs. Surveys have also highlighted the urgent need to replace or overhaul the roof covering of the Female Prison to protect the RAAC, the building and collections and safety of our visitors and staff in the short term. Again, we have done the work to understand the cost of this work.

In addition to our permanent exhibitions, we collaborated with York Travellers Trust for an exhibition at the castle: *Celebrating Yorks Gypsy and Traveller Heritage*.

At the **Yorkshire Museum** we created a new exhibition for the summer of 2023: Mary Anning Rocks! celebrating the work of the renowned palaeontologist.

We took the decision in 2020 to reopen in the summer with free admissions to our permanent collections at **York Art Gallery** and to see what we could achieve through visitor donations. These results were disappointing with little or no donations being made despite extensive prompts. Given our precarious financial position we reinstated charging for general admission on 1 February 2024. We have run a number of exhibitions in the year: marvellous and Mischievous – Literature’s young rebels; Bloom; and Drawing Attention - emerging artists in dialogue.

Whilst we are launching a full programme of school visits from September 2024 we have been engaged with most schools in the City and a list of these and extent of engagement is attached at Annex A. We have also attached the community groups we’ve been working with in 2023/24 at Annex B.

All of York’s children continue to benefit from free admission. All of our sites participate in York’s residents weekend annually.

Given the numbers of visitors we are expecting in 2023/24 we are able to demonstrate that our attractions generate £19m of economic value added in the City in the current financial year.

Visitor numbers

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast
York Castle Museum	224,557	206,841
Yorkshire Museum	75,886	73,924
York Art Gallery	128,849	124,111
Total	429,272	404,876

Over 60,000 of our visitors are child visits and York’s children make up 50% of these visits.

Finances

We remain loss making given our reliance on visitor income and trading through our Enterprise subsidiary for 70% of our funding. We had set a budget loss of £0.3m for 2023/24. Because of RAAC issues we amended our outturn to a loss of £0.7m during the year. Because we have traded well, when we've been able to open, the outturn is expected to be nearer a £0.4m loss. This will leave us with reserves of £0.8m which is less than two months of our operating costs and is below our reserves policy of three months.

We are currently preparing the 2024/25 budget which will at best project losses of around £0.25m which will further diminish our reserves position. We receive a £300k annual grant from CYC each year which was reduced from £600k in 2015/16 and from £1.1m in 2014/15. We have in place a Letter of Credit from CYC for £1m which is renewed annually. It has a current expiry date of March 2025 and is essential to Trustees and auditors forming a going concern opinion on our financial statements each year.

We and CYC recognise the need to address and create a long-term sustainable funding model for YMT given we cannot continue to trade at a deficit and make needed improvements to the buildings to create an accessible 21st Century visitor experience to attract audience now and into the future. We are working alongside CYC and other partners in the City to explore how we can protect the future sustainability for YMT and ensure a flourishing museum and art gallery to benefit the residents of the City.

Capital Programme

We do not carry any capital funding and the state of the City of York buildings in our care remain of concern and we are unable to make any much-needed improvements or changes without such funding. We hope to secure a £5m MEND fund bid in 2024/25 to re-roof the Yorkshire Museum which will require some match funding from CYC. We have mentioned the roof works at the female prison above and there are capital works for us to complete at YAG to improve the operations of the gallery. We are also having to invest in our IT infrastructure given the increased loadings and dependency we have on IT and digital for all of our activity and services.

Annexes

Annex A: YMT CoY School Visits April 2023-March 2024

Annex B: Engagement Activities and Projects

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