DRAFT York Creative Strategy 2018-2023

Part 2: Strategy

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Introduction & Vision

York is an ambitious city and our Creative Strategy needs to reflect that. We need to be bold. We need to punch above our weight. We need to utilise the wonderful successes and achievements of the creative industries to continue to shape the vision of York as it makes "a fresh loud statement of cultural and visual identity"[1].

Our aims over the next 5 years:

In 2015-16 York's Creative Industries contributed £140m to the local economy. By 2023 we aim to make this £200m annually.

We want to be collaborating with the other UNESCO Creative Media Arts Cities in some way and if possible with as many of the other 180 cities in the Creative Cities Network.

We want York to be known for Innovation and Creative Technologies, as a City of Ideas and Experimentation.

We want to develop a suite of new creative places that reflect and service the needs, distinct cultures and ambience of our diverse creative practitioners.

We want to double the number of creative businesses starting in the city

We need a massively collaborative effort from the creative businesses to actualise this vision through and to see city-wide investment and support for the sector.

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[1] City of York Council, 2016. York Economic Strategy 2016 to 2020
https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20036/performance_and_policies/67/york_economic_strategy/1, p. 9

Contents:

The strategy is organised into four key themes, each underpinned by a detailed action plan (still under development):

1. Workspace
2. Talent Pipeline
3. Business Development
4. Visibility

1. Workspace

From: A city where creatives struggle to find appropriate space

To: A city with a suite of creative places to work, experiment & play.

Needs

York needs more collaborative workspaces in the city, through which communities of creatives can come together. Well-designed workspaces not only yield creativity but can also attract new businesses and new clients. For these spaces to be effective, the infrastructure also needs to be robust; issues around wifi 'not spots' and affordability must be addressed to ensure that creatives do not go elsewhere for better connectivity and financial feasibility. Further, creatives need a public-facing element to their workspace so that the visibility of the businesses can be elevated in the eyes of residents and visitors.

Recommendations & Actions

- Address wifi concerns and lobby to ensure the promise of a Gigibit city is delivered across the whole city.
- Approach CYC and other landlords about incentivising the use of empty shops as "pop-up" spaces for creative businesses.
- Ensure creatives are considered in future development discussions for York (including York Central, Castle Gateway and the Guildhall).
- Assist with bids developing workspace in the city (e.g. Creative Centre (York St John University), Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Research and Development of Creative Clusters and Industrial Centre for Excellence bids (University of York).
- Ensure incubator space bids are supported and fostered (e.g. Barclay's Eagle Labs, AHRC funded incubator).
- Assist the Creative industries in developing a "creative hub and spoke model" – a suite of collaborative, public facing places with individual personalities.
- Support CYC's place-making agenda through creative ideas and possibilities

Overall Outcomes

- Better connection and collaboration between creative businesses through the development of a hub & spoke model
- More incubator space in the city to develop new ideas and experiment, which will generate innovation, build relationships and retain talent.
- More workspace in the city for the entire lifecycle of creative businesses.
- Raise the profile of the creative industries locally through an increased visible presence.

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2. Talent Pipeline

From: A city that pipes talent out.

To: A city that attracts talent in.

Needs

Nesta "underscore[s] the importance of universities as anchor institutions in emergent creative clusters, particularly in the North of England."[2] There needs to be a better link between the universities and businesses in the creative industries to fully take advantage of the universities' knowledge capital. But this should not be limited to developing and retaining talent at Higher Education levels, it should include attracting talented work professionals as well as students from Further Education institutions (e.g. York College) and younger. To start the process of talent development even before university age, the city should look at linking the schools with the creative industries to a much greater extent.

Recommendations & Actions

- Link the Universities with employers, including the following:
  - Create a sector-specific jobs fair to showcase the variety and number of creative and digital businesses looking for new talent
  - Create a 'business bootcamp' style to educate students on general and sector-specific business skills
  - Develop events which bring students into contact with employers and enterprise and encourage students to attend creative industry events
  - Encourage peer-to-peer support
- Support, promote and develop freelancing pools, programmes, networks and job boards as well as encouraging them to link up
- Create a creative / digital jobs board
- Ensure the available help and advice for students, young creatives as well as more established businesses and freelancers is visible and widely available
- Understand talent supply and demand within the sector (through innovative companies such as 'Geek Talent')
- Develop and deliver a programme akin to the Digital Adventurers Programme which links school children with the creative industries.
- Link with established talent development franchises (e.g. Pint of Science).

Overall Outcomes

- Higher graduate retention with more students staying here and growing with the city, or coming back to the city after a period of development.

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[2] Mateos-Garcia, J., and Bakhshi, H. (2016) 'The Geography of Creativity in the UK' London: Nesta, p. 28

- Increased number of creative start-ups here
- Having a better linked up network of freelancers so that businesses can easily find subject specialists for projects and enables a flexible approach to working

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3. Business Development

From: A city with micro businesses working in isolation.

To: A city with a strong joined-up creative network.

Needs

According to Nesta, policymakers can help "by supporting local business networks, and bridging the gap between communities and groups with complementary resources and capabilities."[3]

The 'business development' workshop indicated networking was important because it links up like-minded creatives and can generate new business. Furthermore, the survey indicated that many businesses do not view R&D and IP as exploitable and protectable assets which may also have a negative impact on their business development.

Recommendations & Actions

- Create R&D and/or IP courses and toolkits
- Create masterclass programmes for creative businesses (including accessing finance)
- Develop a creative industries specific pitch event (similar to MIY Stand & Deliver event)
- Develop a mentoring programme for both students and working professionals (including pop-up surgeries for continued support).
- Encourage, link and support the sector-specific networking groups and events already in place (to link creatives with each other as well as potential clients).
- Develop a series of collaborative "networking" events across the sector that enable the spread of best practice knowledge for the sector (both in and out of York).
- Create and enable research projects that lead to creativity and innovation.
- Provide business development for start-ups as well as more established businesses
- Incentivise suppliers to develop packages for York creatives to help with business development.

Overall Outcomes

- The sector is better linked up with each other through networking leading to better and more frequent collaborations.
- Regular and sustained workflow for York creatives by having better links with potential clients
- Creative businesses taking better advantage of their R&D and IP, through protection and exploitation
- Mentoring programmes both for students and working professionals.
- Creative businesses have better access to finance.

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[3] Mateos-Garcia, J., and Bakhshi, H. (2016) 'The Geography of Creativity in the UK' London: Nesta, p. 29

4. Visibility

From: A city whose creativity flies under the radar.

To: A city that is known as a 'creative hot spot' far and wide.

Needs

York needs to develop a compelling story to raise the profile of its Creative Cluster as a whole, through generating a strong association between York and cutting edge creativity and innovation.

This will help to attract and retain new skilled talent as well as bring in new investors to the city. York should be seen as a creative 'Hot Spot', so the city must "boost the signal" around creative successes, achievements and accolades as and when they happen.

Recommendations & Actions

- Develop a PR and communications strategy for the creative industries in York.
- Map the creative industries in York and benchmark what exists now.
- Create an aggregated platform of the sector's activities, including:
    - A Calendar of events of what is happening within the sector
    - Regular promotion of companies and their successes
    - A "Bucket List" creative eNewsletter that is curated
- Develop the PR & Comms around the creative industries, including:
    - Develop media relationships with sector specific news outlets
    - Create "100 Stories" publications (including York-based creatives and those from York working elsewhere)
    - Create "Top 50 Innovators" accolade
    - Enter York into international competitions; consider how these competitions could be franchised to include York.
- Develop a Creative Ambassador Programme and identify a Creative Champion to raise York's aspirations and expand its reputation regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Use our UNESCO City of Media Arts designation more, including:
    - Developing our relationships and working more with the other UK cities
    - Developing our relationships and working more with the Media Arts cities
- Support, develop and utilise innovative international events (e.g. York Mediale, Aesthetica) as well as the Universities and international gatherings to inspire the sector
- Make more use of physical / public-facing storytelling (e.g. posters, public art, projection mapping)
- Utilise conferences both by bringing industry-specific ones to York and showcasing York businesses at those further afield

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- Create regional links with content and stories, including working with the Universities to showcase research and develop stronger links between business and academia.
- Develop the reputation and reach of York throughout the region, nation and world.

Overall Outcomes

- York to be seen universally as a Creative Cluster (and therefore receiving higher profile in subsequent analysis and publications on Creative Clusters)
- Better knowledge of York's creative sector locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Develop a brand around York as a 'creative city of ideas'
- Showcase York's creative and digital achievements internationally
- Encourage local York residents, businesses and other stakeholders to be ambassadors of the new brand.

Conclusion

In order to actualise our vision and ambition for the next five years, of doubling the creative start-ups in the city, increasing the economic contribution from £140m to £200m, putting the city firmly on the creative map as the 'go-to place' to start and grow your creative ideas and to build the infrastructure to enable this to happen, we need to work collaboratively, quickly and with ambition. We need to be bold and brave, we need to reach out to our UNESCO city network and maximise the opportunities that network presents us with, and also we need to create our own opportunities to lead on and share internationally. Now is the time for York to punch above its weight and become the leader for innovation in media arts and immersive technologies in the UK. Through our 'human sized' city we can nurture new ideas and develop cutting edge innovations through experimentation and collaboration. Through our global networks we can then shout about it.