

## **Annex 4 : York Castle Museum, York Museums Trust (YMT) and the Eye of York – Development Aspirations**

### **1. York Castle Museum and the Eye of York**

York Castle Museum makes up two of the four sides of the Eye of York and, along with Clifford's Tower, the Museum buildings dominate the views of the area from Castlegate, Coppergate and Tower Street. Currently the car park and Museum create a dead end to pedestrian flow heading south. With development, the museum site could provide new routes through the city extending the Coppergate / Castlegate area, providing access to St. George's Field and Fishergate and adding an attractive riverside walking route. With the Castle Museum in such a dominant position it makes sense for the Castle Museum and Eye of York landscaping to be approached as a whole; not least because capital development plans for the Castle Museum could ensure high quality public realm that complements the historic buildings. As a cultural venue in this location, the Castle Museum is well placed to animate the Eye of York more effectively and make it an attractive area for the public to spend time in as a destination in its own right.

The Castle Museum is currently occupied by YMT on a 35 year lease from 1 August 2002. Options are currently being explored as to the most suitable form of tenure for the longer-term; the preferred solution being a combination of management trusteeship by YMT and custodian trusteeship by CYC. The footprint of the leased area includes some spaces in front of the buildings as well as the land behind to Tower Street and the River Foss. York Museums Trust is looking to extend its footprint to the North and create an extension to the building known as the Female Prison.

### **2. York Castle Museum buildings and public space**

The museum consists of three buildings: Debtors Prison, Female Prison, and the Concourse, a modern link building. All buildings have listed status and, due to their age, both prisons require extensive regular maintenance. The Debtors Prison has a subsidence issue, currently being monitored. The Concourse building is not fit for purpose. The roof leaks despite substantial repairs, it is cold despite substantial cost heating it, it fails to provide adequate visitor flow and is too small to provide a good customer experience for admissions, café or shop. YCM has also developed the land beside the Foss between the Castle and Tower St to create an attractive green space by the Foss and a paid visit to the Castle Museum provides access to this area as well as the former prison exercise yard and parts of the original Castle and city walls to the South of the site. The Female Prison was opened as a museum in 1938 and the Debtors Prison added in 1952. The connecting building was built in the late 1970s.

The Trust is looking to replace the concourse building with a new link building that would resolve these issues, provide disabled access to all floors, improve the welcome and visitor experience and create new spaces for income generation. YMT also intends to build a modest extension to the Female Prison as the best way to improve visitor flow and to resolve the current unsightly façade to the side of the Prison. This façade will become more prominent in any development of the Eye of York car park. The intention is for both new additions to be very high quality architectural interventions that would attract the eye from Castlegate and the Piccadilly side of the river respectively, encouraging better use of the Eye of York as destination public space. As part of a wider public realm development the land by the River and the Castle and City walls which is currently behind YMT's pay barrier, could be developed as part of a riverside connecting

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route. Creating a through route would require some minor works to create a walkway to the side of the Female Prison along the Foss, which is currently not safely accessible.

### **3. Telling the national stories of York Castle**

York Castle and the Eye of York area has been a significant site since Roman times. The first castle on the site was established in 1068 by William the Conqueror, as part of a campaign to suppress the North. Later rebuilt, it was continuously repaired and altered until King Henry III rebuilt it in stone in the unique quadrilobe design still evident. It was a gaol, mint, treasury and centre of administration throughout most of the medieval period.

The Castle Museum buildings stand in what was originally part of the keep of the castle, which was cleared to make way for a new prison. Some of the walls of the exercise yard, on the Castle Museum visitor route, are from the period of Henry III's rebuilding of the Castle and reveal the extent of the Castle beyond Clifford's Tower. Using the site remains, stories and objects from the collection, including those which demonstrate the Eye of York's history as a power base for the crown across the North for many centuries, the Castle Museum will underline York's status as a place of historic national importance.

The Debtors prison, 1705, is of National Significance, as the earliest example of a bespoke prison building in the United Kingdom. The Assize Courts, 1777, and the Female prison, 1780, were designed to complement each other. The gaols not only housed debtors but criminals from all over Yorkshire and beyond, who were sent to York to be tried. Well-known inmates include Dick Turpin, leaders of the Luddite Rebellion, leaders of the Peterloo demonstrations in Manchester. In 1834 Thomas Rogers was executed for homosexual activity.

The Castle area has played its part in national events from the trial of Jacobite rebels to the gathering of 30,000 people at the Eye of York in the 1831 election which led to male suffrage.

With the exception of prisoners' histories, York Museums Trust acknowledges that the complex history of the buildings and their surroundings is currently not adequately explained. The redevelopment will address this so that visitors, whether local or tourists, will leave knowing why this history is important, locally regionally, nationally and internationally. By engaging with the buildings, museum objects, stories and characters, visitors will gain an understanding of how and why the site and buildings have evolved over time.

### **4. York Castle Museum collections and the vision for a new visitor experience**

A redeveloped York Castle Museum will be a must-see, welcoming place which will be for the first time fully physically accessible. It will use its buildings and collections to tell the national story of the Castle area as a power base in the North of England and how that power impacted on people. Its social history collections, period rooms and immersive environments will also show how extraordinary the everyday, ordinary lives of people become when seen through the lens of time. York stories and characters from

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Rowntree to Dick Turpin will be threaded throughout adding to the sense of place. By 2026 York Castle Museum will offer a 21<sup>st</sup> century experience where the past has contemporary resonance, where visitors choose how to experience, enjoy, and explore the site and collections, and where history is accessible to all.

Castle Museum Collections originate from Dr Kirk who collected approximately 7,000 objects as the founding collection of the museum with the reconstructed Victorian Street 'Kirkgate' at its heart. The Victorian Street is much loved and will remain central to the visitor experience. The sense of losing yourself in the past is a key part of the curatorial approach which sets out to offer a place of wonder, where every visitor has a special, immersive and memorable experience.

All the collections are officially Designated as of national importance. There are now around 350,000 objects in the social history collection. The quality of the collection is remarkable with its strength lying in objects used in everyday life across a range of classes. Much of this type of evidence does not exist in other museum collections as these lower status objects tend not to be saved for the future. The sheer size of the collection also marks York's collection out as important, when compared to other social history collections across the UK.

The Castle Museum has outstanding collections relating to the chocolate industry, probably the best in the world. The military collection is seen as the finest non-regimental military collection outside of a national museum. The costume collection contains over 30,000 pieces of costume and accessories including hats, shoes, bags and jewellery with many areas being outstanding and important. Beginning in 1700s it is particularly strong in the Victorian period and is one of the largest collections in the country. The quality of our *Shaping the Body* exhibition has led to visits from across the UK museums sector and resulted in a partnership with the V&A.

### 5. The need for redevelopment and financial sustainability

York Castle Museum is already successful: we have won a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence and been placed in the Top 10 Museums in the UK as rated by travellers. We are the only non-nationally funded museum in England in that list. Of English museums in the list, only the Castle Museum and National Railway Museum are outside London. However, we win that success against a backdrop of crumbling infrastructure and rising maintenance costs as well as a lack of disabled access.

YMT's financial sustainability increasingly depends on the funds it generates from paying visitors. We know that without periodic major reinvestment visitor attractions almost always suffer from declining visitor numbers. Moreover, following government and lottery investment in many new and old museums and galleries since the 1990s, the public have high expectations of the infrastructure and environment of public attractions. Whilst there have been medium-sized capital improvements, the Castle Museum has not seen such major investment since the 1970s when the Concourse link building was inserted.

The Castle Gateway project offers the prospect of a step-change in the number of people using the Castle area. A revitalised York Castle Museum would be the heavyweight cultural offer that anchors its success.

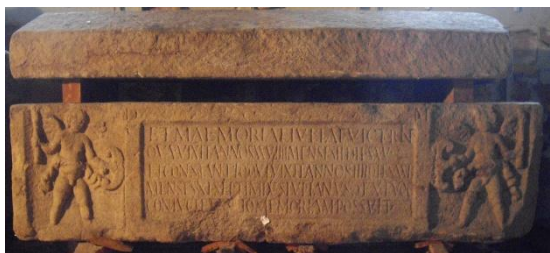
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### 6. Initial Development Costs

YMT's Castle Museum ambitions will require capital development in the region of £14 – 18 million. The bulk of this fundraising would be from Heritage Lottery Fund and a range of other funders with a requirement for match from the City of York Council at an appropriate stage. A Heritage Lottery Fund bid of this magnitude requires significant up-front investment to reach the level of detail required for a funding decision. These decisions are highly competitive and only made at one UK-wide HLF Board meeting once a year.

YMT's plans for the capital development of York Castle Museum will therefore involve up-front development costs, including, for example, building and landscape architects, building conservation specialists, engineers, cost consultants, display designers and project management staff. The aim is to prepare a stage one application to the Heritage Lottery fund for December 2018 and, if successful, a stage two application a year later. This work is likely to cost at least £800,000.

### 7. Examples of relevant artefacts found at the Castle and in the care of York Museums Trust



A Roman sarcophagus commemorates the death of the wife and son of a Roman Centurion, found in the Castle area.



A Silver coin of William the Conqueror. It was struck at the Castle in York in 1068 and was then buried in the city around the time that William the Conqueror 'harried' the North in 1069.