

Cabinet

16 December 2014

Report of the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture & Tourism

York UNESCO City of Media Arts

Summary

1. Earlier this year, Cabinet Members endorsed York's application to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a City of Media Arts. That bid was submitted on 19 March 2014.
2. Cabinet also supported a series of actions to give the application the best possible chance of success. Activity could be broadly grouped into five key areas. They were:
 - Raising awareness of the application locally, nationally and internationally
 - Briefing all parties mentioned in, and endorsing, the application
 - Proactively building strategic links with national professional agencies
 - Making connections within the Creative Cities Network
 - Mapping York's first two years as a UNESCO City of Media Arts and embedding into local development plans
3. On 1 December 2014, the bid was confirmed successful as Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, welcomed York into the Network as a new City of Media Arts. The Network now comprises 69 cities from all the regions of the world – 8 in the category of Media Arts.

Background

The Bid

4. Work began on the bid in 2010 when the city was first approached to consider submitting an application for UNESCO designation as a creative city. Representatives were invited to South Korea in 2011 to pitch the city's credentials and future potential. Following a temporary stop to the designation process, York was approached in

2014 to make a formal bid.

5. The bid was developed by the city's cultural partnership. It followed a period of consultation with the many cultural bodies and practitioners that form York's thriving Digital & Media Arts sector and was accompanied by formal endorsement from existing member cities of the Creative Cities Network. As a city, we were united in our ambition to become a UNESCO City of Media Arts.
6. From our cultural heritage to our contemporary strengths and international potential, York believed it had strong credentials for designation.
7. York was able to point to existing strengths, such as:
 - York is a hotbed of creative talent with world-class learning institutions
 - Creative industries represent the fastest growing sector of York's economy with over 250 creative media arts companies employing over 3,000 people
 - York's cultural experiences form an important part of everyday life with York labelled the 'City of Festivals'
 - York's world class heritage continues to be the centrepiece of its cultural offer, attracting over 7 million visitors per annum with media arts the engine of its future interpretation
 - More than £100 million has been invested in media arts facilities and resources to support the sector by York's two universities
 - Reinvigorate York, a £3.3m investment in York's public realm, is reimagining the city's streets and open spaces
 - York is one of the UK's first Super-Connected Cities and aims to be the most digitally connected city in Europe by 2015
 - Media Arts is a driving force of York's social innovation and is testament to the city's inclusivity and diversity
8. The city also set out its ambitions for the future, including new projects – some evolutionary and others transformative – that would give life to the title of York, UNESCO City of Media Arts. These included:
 - providing the infrastructure and support for its creative industries to continue to thrive and attract trade, commissions, and investment

- being an active member of the Network, exchanging ideas and experiences with a view to enhancing capacity and connections
 - placing creative and cultural education and exploration at the centre of its lifelong learning opportunities, cultivating a rich and diverse talent base
 - building an iconic new Digital Media Arts Centre (DMAC) and sparking new public-private centres of production
 - increasing youth access to Media Arts as a means of self-expression and skills development
 - expanding its digital and social inclusion strategy, offering support to other cities within the Creative Cities Network with similar ambitions
 - working with other Creative Cities to develop an international programme of cultural festivals showcasing Media Arts
 - promoting York as a capital of Media Arts production and experiences, acting as a gateway for national and international connections and consumption
 - inspiring and empowering communities to regularly engage in the arts and to tell their own stories
 - working in consortia with like-minded organisations in other Creative Cities to bid for major cultural projects and developments
 - offering support to other aspirant Cities of Media Arts
9. These commitments paint a clear vision for York as a City of Media Arts where York:
- will be a place where creativity defines the future understanding and enjoyment of our heritage
 - will be a meeting place of ideas, creativity and innovation for the next millennia
 - will be a place where media arts helps define the quality of life for our future generations

The benefits

10. York is committed to ensuring everybody benefits from York's new creative city status, publishing 10 inclusive benefits:
- Contemporary culture will be more visibly celebrated and accessible in the city, with new projection points and digital facades
 - An iconic Digital & Media Arts Centre (DMAC) will be built, blending creative invention, participation and industry

- York will benefit from the thought leadership and ingenuity of the world's other leading creative cities as active members of the network
- There will be a new drive for sponsorship of media arts events, adding new dimensions to our already-popular festivals
- Creative education will be embedded at the heart of the learning experience for all ages, including new overseas residencies and exchanges
- York's creative talent will be retained in the city and others will be drawn here as our creative industries thrive
- York will recognise and reward its creative talent with an annual awards ceremony, acting as a platform to international markets
- York will be a place that promotes the value of diversity of people, ideas, and cultures
- York will be known as a place that is inventive, pioneering and surprising – complementing its historical charm
- York will be an international crossroads for the world's ideas and creativity once more.

Financial Benefits

11. Existing members are also using their affiliation to the Network as a catalyst to increase investment and enhance their own brand value. The 2013 study issued a conservative estimate that the financial benefit of UNESCO membership to the UK's 180 organisations affiliated to UNESCO was £90 million per annum.
12. Having discussed the benefits of designation with other UK cities, there is a common view that their economies have directly benefited. There is no reason to expect that York will be any different. Media Arts is already a strong sector of the city economy and we expect to see it flourish further.

The Plan

13. On 1 December 2014, York also published its 2015/16 plans (Annex 1) for designation.
14. The plan was developed in close collaboration with key stakeholders and industry bodies, and considers the challenges and opportunities facing York as a Creative City, along with a plan of ambitious targets that will drive growth and job creation in the

sector. It also proposes an organisational structure for managing designation after consultation with existing members of the Network.

Consultation

15. York's application to be designated as a UNESCO creative city was developed, in partnership across the city
16. **We are asking Cabinet to**

- 1. Support the creation of an official office of designation:**

It is proposed that custodianship of the management, promotion and development of 'York UNESCO City of Media Arts' and the city's objectives for accreditation should sit with York's new Destination Management Organisation 'Make It York'.

- 2. Endorse the immediate priorities and actions as a City of Media Arts (Annex 1), proposed to follow the four themes of:**

- **Create**
Championing the acts of creation, learning, and expression, whilst cultivating the right conditions for each.
- **Participate**
Refreshing the experience we offer and opportunities to get involved, whoever or wherever they are in the city.
- **Transform**
Balancing the established cultural and economic identity of York with the growing attributes of its digital and creative industries.
- **Exchange**
The discovery of new audiences, ideas and opportunities through better connections to other leading creative cities.

- 3. Endorse the major aspirations for York's creative sector as a result of designation:**

- To double the size of York's creative economy ¹ from £164.8m to £329.6m by 2025

¹ Defined as the 'Information and Communication sector' by Oxford Economics

- To increase engagement in the Arts² from 50.3% to 75% by 2025
- To double the proportion of schools in the area with Arts Council Artsmark accreditation from 17% to 34% by 2025
- To increase the proportion of cultural tourists from 17% to 25%, contributing to a doubling of the value of tourism to York to £1bn by 2025

Implications

17. This report is for information and is to seek endorsement for the work that the council will do in partnership with others to secure the benefits that Unesco designation will offer. At this point, activity already being undertaken by the council will contribute to the delivery of aspirations with the Unesco Plan. If further investment is required, specific proposals will be brought through for decision making in the normal way.

Other Implications

18. There are no specific HR, Crime and Disorder, Information Technology, Equality or Property implications arising from this report.

Recommendations

19. Members are recommended to :
 - Support the creation of an official office of designation
 - Endorse the immediate priorities and actions as a City of Media Arts (Annex 1) proposed to follow the four themes
 - Endorse the major aspirations for York's creative sector as a result of designation

Reason: To update Members on the successful bid and the actions required in order to implement.

² As reported by DCMS on Active People. Baseline taken from 2010 figures

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**

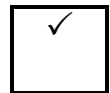


Date 5 December
2014

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *List information for all*
None.

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex 1- York's Bid for UNESCO City of Media Arts 2015/16 (online
only)

Annex 2 – UNESCO City of Media Arts Plan 2015/16



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



**York UNESCO
City of Media Arts**

Designated
UNESCO Creative City
in 2014