

York Museums Trust Performance Report: April 2006 – March 2007

Analysis of performance

1. The Partnership Delivery Plan (PDP) sets out a number of key targets relating to the Council's core objectives. The following paragraphs summarise the progress towards the 7 major targets outlined in the PDP.
 - a) stabilising visitor figures
2. In August 2002 one of the key objectives given to YMT was that of halting the long-term decline in visitor numbers. During the year from April 2002 to March 2003 the total number of visitors was 395,000. Since then we have seen an upward trend and in the 2005/06 financial year the sites had 465,000 visitors representing an increase of 17.7%. Last year YMT set itself the target of breaking the barrier of 500,000 visitors for the first time and achieved a total of 502,000 visitors to the sites.
3. This year we were expecting a drop in this final figure because we have had partial closure of York Art Gallery and Castle Museum and no new major offer at the Yorkshire Museum; however, we are pleased to report that the number of visitors was 510,446.
4. The clearest successes in terms of numbers has been the new contemporary art installation ***A Memory of Place*** at York St Mary's which attracted 36,498.
 - b) delivering new income streams
5. YMT has generated additional funds from a variety of sources. Details of all the fundraising applications made during the reporting period are attached.
6. **Trusts and Foundations** have been generous in supporting new projects. Noteworthy is the support from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for £60,000, towards an exhibition of Sashiko Japanese Textiles which is due to open in September 2009.
7. **Conferencing and Venue hire** is an important part of our sustainability. Minimal in 2002/03, the turnover in 2006/07 was more than £85k, yielding a profit of more than £20k after all costs. During the year we have refurbished the Hospitium which will become the centre of our venue hire business. Closed over the winter the Hospitium reopened in March 2008 and we are already seeing a great deal of interest and an increase in bookings for conferences and weddings. We expect to see an increase in income over the next few years which will enable us to reinvest in our ambitious plans for the Abbey precinct including the Museum Gardens, Yorkshire Museum and York Art Gallery.
8. The development of the Hospitium included new improvements as toilets, office, stairs and lift as well as opening up the two public spaces with the removal of the central stairs. With the appointment of a new business manager we are already seeing an increase of bookings for the other venues especially the York Art Gallery

and Yorkshire Museum. The full impact of the improvements to the venues will be evident during the coming year.

9. **YMT Enterprises Board** has now been established and has met regularly to advise and plan the business activities of YMT. Their remit is to improve the income generation of the retail, catering, venue hire and admissions income across all sites. Their expertise is already having an impact on our future plans and level of ambitions.
10. **Renaissance in the Regions** is an increasingly important income stream from Central Government, which is secured until March 2008. The funding has underpinned our Lifelong Learning and Collections Care initiatives amongst other projects including the new Volunteers scheme. It has become an increasingly major part of our income stream. During 2006/07 the funding from Renaissance has been £228,000 and in 2007/8 it rose to £493,050.
11. The Yorkshire Hub's Business Plan for 2008/09 was agreed by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council enabling YMT to continue developing the schools programme as well as improving the displays and programme at the Castle Museum. This additional funding from Renaissance in the Regions was conditional on City of York core funding remaining the same in real terms at the minimum.
12. **Retail** business has not performed well showing a small loss overall. We have put measures in place that should result in a return to profit next year. These include reducing staff costs at both the gallery and Yorkshire Museum and re investing in the York Art Gallery shop.
 - c) new exhibitions and interpretative service
13. **York Art Gallery** has continued to deliver a varied exhibition programme drawn both from the permanent collections and loans from other public and private collections. We have also balanced the content of the programme between historic and contemporary. The refurbishment of the South Gallery which has caused some disruption and mess to our visitors but the front of house staff managed the disruption extremely well and our visitors were sympathetic to what we were trying to achieve.
14. The exhibitions in the main gallery were ***Fantin Latour – Painting the Summer*** which featured works from the collection by Fantin Latour and his contemporaries with loans from other collections. In the Little Gallery we showed ***Madman and the Minster*** which told the story about how Jonathan Martin set fire to the Minster. This was followed with a show by the contemporary artist ***Tracey Emin*** selected from a private collection in Yorkshire. The third exhibition was displaying the new acquisitions by John Sell Cotman.
15. ***Passed as Present*** continued the contemporary art theme in the Main Gallery juxtaposing the contemporary works selected from the Lodevans collection with historic works from our collection.
16. **York St Mary's** opened a very popular site specific installation called ***A Memory of Place*** by Keiko Mukaide which we decided to keep for another year due to its impact and visitor numbers.

17. **Castle Museum** has undergone a series of improvements and changes to the displays. As part of the **China in Yorkshire** initiative which was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, we opened **Chinese Reflections** in February. As this was the first event in the year long programme we had the launch of the whole county wide event at the Castle. This included the Chinese Consul of the People Republic of China opening the exhibition with displays of Chinese dance, opera, music, calligraphy and Chinese food. The Chinese community in York were central to the content of the exhibition and celebrations. We also launched a major display on the **SIXTIES** transforming the Half Moon Court street into a 1960's exhibition whilst still retaining the shop fronts. This also involved local people donating items for display and we plan that elements of the display will continue to change with loans and gifts from York residents.
18. The reasoning about the change is that it follows on from Dr Kirk's original idea to reflect people everyday lives and this is a decade that people in their 50's and 60's relate to and they are a target audience for the Castle Museum. So far the **SIXTIES** has proved popular.
19. We have also created three new **Studios** in the Hearth and Home gallery which is a working kitchen, one in the Military Gallery and the third in the costume and textile gallery. These spaces are designed to enable visitors to engage with the collections. We have a programme of activities across all three where there will be at least one operational at any one time and at holiday periods we will have all operating. This is possible because the front of house guiding staff take an active part in the interpretation of the collections and are supported by volunteers.
20. Other initiatives include clearing the Exercise Yard so that we now have part of the old Castle wall available to the public creating a larger space for activities which we will develop during the coming years.
21. **Yorkshire Museum** continued with **Fingerprints of Time** as its main offer, and continued the process of refreshing the permanent collections in the rest of the displays including a display on **Aliens**.
 - d) create an education strategy
22. The Lifelong Learning Team are now delivering a comprehensive service to an increasing number of schoolchildren and have published the third programme of school sessions which address the needs of the National Curriculum. The team also organises informal activities for the general public and to visitors across the three main sites during the holiday periods. It is YMT policy to have special events at half terms and summer holidays to attract residents and visitors to the museums.
23. YMT has dedicated learning spaces at each of the three main venues funded through Renaissance. The impact of these new resources is shown in the attached figures. Each of the learning spaces has its own special qualities and resources that are suitable for the varied programme that we offer to schools. The Lab, is the e-learning space in the Yorkshire Museum which is fully equipped with new technology including white board, computers, digital cameras, sound recorders and microscopes. It is proving very popular and is an effective way to

promote science learning and develop our outreach and e-learning offers, in particular the learning journeys on the Hub website www.mylearning.org.

24. The Studio at York Art Gallery offers opportunities for practical work relating to the National Curriculum whilst the Victorian Schoolroom at the Castle Museum offers a chance to experience Victorian teaching techniques. We consult with teachers regularly as to their requirements and we work with a growing number of organisations on projects. Some of these are as follows: NYBEP, York St John University, Young Archaeology Club, Theatre Royal, City Archives to name a few.
25. Science activities have continued to develop with a second year of **Wild Wednesdays** which attracted a great number of people in the Museum Gardens. Astronomy events included Observatory open evenings, sun observing and talks were organised. The Observatory is now regularly open courtesy of our Volunteers on Thursdays and Saturdays.

e) increase use and involvement by residents

26. The Studio at the York Art Gallery has again given us the capacity to have an active programme of activities. An annual event is the **Big Draw** week in October which attracts a lot of families. Central to our developing relationship with local communities is the **Territories** project which is a community involvement project seeking to work with hard to reach groups. This is an audience development project and is in its fourth year of funding from the Arts Council Yorkshire. We work with diverse groups of local people.
27. **Family First** days, held on the first Saturday of every month are primarily aimed at local people.
28. The Volunteers Scheme is the newest initiative that YMT have launched. This year has been a series of pilot schemes involving the Observatory, the Historic Library at the Yorkshire Museum, exhibitions such as **Memory of Place**, the **Studios**, cataloguing and many other projects. We are now poised to expand the scheme to many more people and have appointed a full time Volunteer Manager to lead this project. This is funded through Renaissance in the Region.
29. YMT has taken the lead on a city wide initiative called the **History of York**. This is an exciting project that has led to the launching of a new website. YMT invited experts and enthusiasts across the city to form an Expert Panel who would advise and guide a series of communication tools to inform and guide visitors and residents to a better understanding of the history of the city.

f) achieve high visitor satisfaction

30. This year has largely been about improving our services to visitors through new displays such as the **SIXTIES**. A crucial part of the development process was consultation with focus groups that was managed by an outside company called Wafer Hadley. The findings of this research were factored into the project, however it is too soon to have carried out more market research on visitors reactions. This will be part of a review we are planning after the summer.
31. We took part in a Mori market research project and the results will be reported at the next half year report. At each of the venues we have feed back forms which are periodically reviewed as a guide to improve services.

g) ensure the cataloguing of the collection

Documentation:

32. We have continued progress against both our Collections Plan and our Retrospective Documentation Plan and we are monitoring progress quarterly to ensure we will complete the retrospective documentation to Accreditation standard by our target of 2010. Statistics for progress on retrospective documentation are included Part 3 of this Annex.

Storage:

33. The MLA security adviser visited the Castle to look particularly at the firearms and military stores. An audit of licensable firearms has been undertaken and is now programmed to take place every 6 months. This has also given us an up to date list of what we have and exactly where it is located for this collection which is crucial for both Accreditation and security reasons.
34. Ceramics have been removed from above the Roman Gallery in the Yorkshire Museum to avoid the risk of rainwater damage. All pieces were photographed before being carefully packed and transported to new shelving at Birch Park Store.
35. Social History collections have been moved out of the Darnborough Street store and the container storage; a new mezzanine and additional shelving has been installed at James Street and additional shelves at Fulford to accommodate the relocated collections. We have taken a lease on a new storage unit to accommodate three Victorian carriages that had been on long term loan since 1977.
36. Several volunteers have assisted with the geology collections repacking all the larger fossil material and labelling it all up while the accession records are being created by curatorial staff. This process has helped to transform the geology store so that we can now get at them and use them. This exercise has also had some additional benefits – seemingly ‘lost’ specimens have been found and split groups have been reunited once again.
37. The Yorkshire Museum in leading the way for the national Portable Antiquities Scheme approach to recording finds at large scale metal detecting rallies, and they have been heartily congratulated by the National Organiser at the British Museum for their successful handling of this controversial subject. They attended two rallies recording over 400 finds and dealing with nearly a thousand metal detectorists, including at the very controversial site of Thornborough, a highly sensitive Neolithic landscape.

Detailed Visitor Numbers

Visitor Numbers

12 months from April 2007 to March 2008

(excluding conference visitors)

	Actual	Last year	% Change
Castle Museum	261,535	253,849	-3%
York Art Gallery	160,988	159,188	-1%
York St Mary's	36,498	19,797	84%
Yorkshire Museum	51,425	69,173	-26%
Grand Total	510,446	502,007	2%

Financial Stability

38. YMT is financially stable at the moment, but it has always been recognised that in an increasingly competitive and demanding market it would require further investment funding and capital investment to prosper.
39. 2008/09 is forecast to be a positive year financially – the impact of the **SIXTIES** investment at the Castle Museum will attract a new audience and so admissions income is likely to remain constant despite the threats on the economy. The investment in the Hospitium facilities will begin to deliver profits during 2008 onwards. The impact of the Enterprises Board will energise our thinking and planning especially in retail.
40. Core funding for 2008-2013 has been agreed at the current level, plus an inflationary uplift.
41. It has not been possible for the Council to commit to any additional investment funding. However, the Council is holding £1.163m of capital funding for YMT (of the original £1.898m). It has previously been agreed between the Council and YMT that these funds would be applied to the Prison Experience (£100k) and the remainder to the Yorkshire Museum and Gardens project.