

City of York Council
Children, Education & Communities Policy & Scrutiny Committee
28 March 2018

[The work of York@Large since April 2017](#)

[Members, meetings and agendas](#)

York@Large has continued to adjust its membership to better enable us to share informed views about the city's progress towards its objectives. As well as Make It York and the Council, members are drawn from the major cultural organisations, voluntary-managed organisations, individuals from the creative industries, the heritage and arts sub-sectors, and experts in our three theme areas of Economy, Wellbeing and Place.

A decade ago, the Without Walls Strategy 2011-22 set out this ambition for York as a City of Culture

'Our priorities for the future are to be:

- Recognised internationally as a cultural city
- A diverse, inclusive and cosmopolitan city
- An active and participative city
- A city of high quality spaces both public and private
- A UNESCO Creative City for the Media Arts.'

The creation of Make It York, the winning of the UNESCO designation, the realisation of Mediale, and continuing progress with major urban developments have meant that York@Large has shifted gear. Now it acts as a sounding board and a discussion forum, providing a link with the Council through the cabinet member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, and publishing our minutes and agendas on the Council website. We have also worked through smaller groups to demonstrate practically the value of culture and, through public meetings, we have engaged many citizens in debate about York's culture.

Our quarterly meetings over the last year have had a consistent agenda based on the impact of culture on the *economy*, on *wellbeing* and on the quality of

place. Items discussed include Mediale, the Culture Awards, strategy work in the sector, the York Cultural Education Partnership, Higher York, the Guild of Media Arts, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, the CYC Cultural Commissioning Pilot project, My Castle Gateway, York's Local Plan, and York Central.

Organising culture in York

The most obvious feature of cultural provision nationwide, not just in York, is the extent to which it is now in non-governmental hands. It is no coincidence that York@Large, the cultural partnership, was established in 2002, the same year that York Museums became a Trust. The path to independence has been followed by others, with increasing frequency in the last decade, so that now the cultural leadership provided by the Council is vested only at the most senior level, and virtually everything must be done in partnership.

This can be confusing to someone used to a hierarchical government structure that exists to execute the policies of the elected administration. Arguably though, what went on 'inside the black box' was just as complicated as the mesh of charities, organisations and partnerships that has replaced it. It's just that previously the complexity was largely invisible, now it is open to debate

The UNESCO designation led directly to the formation of two bodies which, in July 2017, were formally registered as Community Interest Companies, Mediale and the Guild of Media Arts. A memorandum of agreement between these CICs and Make It York sets out their respective roles and responsibilities. As autonomous organisations these may have as long or short an existence as any Guild or Company.

York Cultural Education Partnership, which was motivated by the Arts Council's intention to kick start an arts and education partnership in every local authority area in England, is now seen as one of the more successful projects in the region. The bridge organisation, IVE, continues to provide support, which is now matched by the Council. This funds the time of an Associate to develop the projects in the action plan. Mediale 2018 is a major opportunity for the CEP to advance its core aim, to encourage every child and young person to experience and to participate in the creative arts.

The Cultural Leaders' Group has grown through the addition of the senior representatives of cultural organisations, and of organisations, such as universities, that offer a cultural programme. It is the appropriate locus for the development of a cultural strategy which will, in turn, become owned by its members and other stakeholders.

Complementing these larger committees, we established small 'task and finish' groups. The Culture & Wellbeing Group has successfully completed the first year of a CYC Pilot Cultural Commissioning Project and, depending on funding, the group will continue to offer Cultural Commissioning in York as a service.

A second example of the 'task and finish' approach is the Arts and Place group. As well as opening up wider public debate about the role of arts and culture in placemaking, the group has worked with Council colleagues and with My Future York on the My Castle Gateway project and is currently involved in the public engagement process, My York Central.

A third group, the York UNESCO Partners, has come together to ensure that York makes the most of our UNESCO designation. Its members are representatives of the Council, the Lord Mayoralty, Make It York and the Guild of Media Arts. The Creative Cities Network works with the Guild as the 'Focal Point' for the designation. Members of YUP are concerned with coordinating Network requests for information, evaluating other cities' monitoring reports and candidacies for designation, arranging incoming and outgoing visits, exhibitions and representation at Network meetings. The group is currently planning the quadrennial Monitoring Report which has to be submitted to UNESCO by November 2018. This year we were pleased to be profiled in the UK National Commission's report on the value of UNESCO designations in England, to have hosted a Ministerial visit to hear about York's experience as a Creative City, and to participate in a national study of the support needs of places holding designations.

[As others see us](#)

We frequently take time to consider the implications of national reports for the sector in York. Two recent reports from NESTA, *The Geography of Creativity in the UK* and *Creative Nation*, sought to analyse industrial sector data to support an argument about the most likely areas of growth for the

creative industries. Both downplayed the potential role of York. The Centre for Cities publishes an annual *Cities Outlook*, ranking cities according to a range of indicators, including indicators of social and economic inequality. The RSA and HLF jointly publish an annual *Heritage Index* which, again, ranks York lower than many would expect. Perhaps the most significant report last year, Peter Bazalgette's *Independent Review of the Creative Industries*, is seeking to influence the UK Government's industrial strategy, and a potential Growth Deal for the sector.

Our concern is to understand the basis of York's position in the analysis contained in these reports, and to formulate appropriate objectives to improve it. This work continues, with the aim of arriving at a simple 'dashboard' of indicators which will help us understand York's position as it changes over time and in comparison with other places.

York holds a number of 'titles' some of which are designations awarded in competition, others are the result of popular vote or data survey, while others are voluntary. The UNESCO City of Media Arts title is an example of the first, the recent Sunday Times 'Best City in the UK 2018' of the second, and City of Service, and Human Rights City, of the third. The One Planet York initiative, like three of the examples above is derived from United Nations treaties and declarations. Our UNESCO Creative City title, for instance, requires us to work towards UN Sustainable Development *Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*. The One Planet York initiative begins to address the role of the creativity and the cultural sector, though work remains to be done to establish benchmarks and suitable indicators.

Milestones

If a measure of the success of the work of York@Large is endorsement of the value of the sector to the main policy areas of the Council, then the past year has seen significant progress. Three reports witness this progress.

The Impact of Arts and Culture

The Economy & Place Policy Development Committee considered a report on the *Impact of the Arts and Culture Sectors on the Economy of York*. The Scrutiny committee set out to achieve the following objectives

- To promote cultural amenities in the city for the purpose of attracting economic investment, leading to an increase in high-value jobs and the retention of high-quality employees.
- To examine the City Council's role within these sectors and assess what further interventions the Council can undertake to support these sectors.
- To identify ways to facilitate more and better joint working among cultural organisations.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations, including providing support to the Cultural Leaders' group to produce a Cultural Strategy. This is in the context of a recognition of the importance of the sector to the city, not just in terms of economic value but, as importantly, those that cannot be accounted for in this way.

Using Culture to Reduce Health and Wellbeing Inequalities

The Health and Wellbeing Board asked the Culture & Wellbeing partnership to attend their meeting on 7 March 2018 to discuss the use of culture to reduce health and wellbeing inequalities. The report the partnership submitted related to the vision in the Board's joint health and wellbeing strategy 2017-2022 'for every single resident of York to enjoy the best possible health and wellbeing throughout the course of their life'. The very positive endorsement of the report and its recommendations holds out hope that the Cultural Commissioning Pilot can continue, with Council support. The partnership has offered its support to the Board and commissioners to ensure that culture and cultural assets are always considered when health and wellbeing services are designed and procured.

Cultural Wellbeing in the Draft Local Plan

The Draft Local Plan published in February 2018 reflects the dialogue that the Arts and Place group has been facilitating in recent years. Both the general statement about culture and cultural provision in the Plan, and Policy D3 on Cultural Wellbeing put York at the forefront of planning practice in this area. The Plan contains clear commitments to

- Good place-making and design excellence
- Heritage and contemporary culture being equally important
- The concept of cultural wellbeing

The last point is elaborated in *Policy D3 – Cultural Provision* which outlines the requirements that any developer will have to satisfy

- ‘The Council will also want to understand how the city's culture and cultural capacity will be affected by developments...
- The Plan will ensure that the city's arts and cultural assets are protected and enhanced, with new assets and resources created whenever possible...
- Applicants will be required to submit a *Cultural Wellbeing Plan* for all strategic sites, of whatever scale...’

We look forward to working with Council colleagues to identify best practice in this important area.

Conclusion

We are grateful to the Scrutiny Committee for the interest you continue to show in our work. We are engaging with the Council as officers determine the optimum structure for its partnerships with external organisations and the sectors they represent. We are committed to working in a way that best fits the functions that the Council and others ask of us.

Chris Bailey

18 March 2018