

MakeItYork

Scrutiny Committee – 22 January 2024

Make It York update.

Introduction

This paper sets out an update on Make It Yorks activities for the period April – November 2023, also included at Appendix 1 is the dashboard performance data.

This year is proving challenging for MIY (Make It York) with revenue streams impacted due to the increase in the cost-of-living, poor weather, and continuing train strikes. The year so far has been focused on raising sponsorship for free events and trails for residents and visitors to enjoy. During these first 6 months we have also focused on membership retention and our summer campaigns, as well as planning for Christmas and events in 2023. We have had key successes in the activities we deliver, and our media reach has grown.

Regular Client Meetings and reporting between MIY and CYC (City of York Council) have continued to take place. A Quarterly Narrative has also been produced in advance of each quarterly meeting.

Financial Position April 2022 – March 2023

The financial position at the end of March 2023 shows a profit for the financial year of £177,050 - 2022: loss (£44,648). There is an actuarial gain of £10,000 leaving the total profit for the year at £187,050. The balance sheet position at March 2023 is (£94,079) - 2022: (£281,129). The strong financial results and performance show the company is moving towards solvency.

Budget forecast for 2023/2024

We set the budget to record a profit of £24,190. The mid-year budget forecast shows we are on track to return a profit for 2023/2024. We continue a cautious approach with the budget this year as we anticipated it will be a slow recovery from the global cost of living crisis.

We have been successful in our covid disruption insurance claim and received £239,710. This is larger than the amount budgeted, £37,000. This increased amount will enable the company to return to solvency this year and build back the reserves for the company and to look to return paying dividends.

Governance

The Make It York Board gained 2 new members from the Local Authority, due to the change in administration, the representatives being Cllr P Kilbane and Cllr D Smalley.

Our Membership Advisory Board has met on 3 occasions. This group provides challenge, new ideas and an increased ambassadorial voice for the city. The group currently supports new ideas for Christmas 2023 and the Membership Conference for 2024. This group also ensures that we are more accountable to our Membership and provide what Members want.

There has been a focus on staff training and development. All staff have undertaken Health and Safety training, Equalities and Diversity training, as well as Counter Terrorism training. Individual training plans have also been developed. We also have a new Head of Finance for the organisation.

We have worked with North Yorkshire Council and the Combined Authority to gain LVEP (Local Visitor Economy Partnerships) status, to ensure we work closely with Visit England and Visit Britain. We have developed a more transparent way of measuring our impact. A copy of the two most recent Quarterly Performance Dashboard Report is included in the report pack (Appendix 1). This report has become stronger in terms of data reporting to show exactly how we are having an impact and the return on investment, which is wider than a financial return on investment. Sitting alongside these documents is the updated company risk register.

Sustainability

We are committed to supporting York's ambition to be a net-zero carbon city by 2030 and will reduce our environmental impact.

We recognise that what we do and provide has an environmental impact and are committed to making continuous improvements to the environmental performance of our activities.

We have been successful in achieving our accreditation for the Good Business Charter status in recognition of delivering responsible business practices.

Business Performance

Below provides information on our business performance during April 2023 – March 2024 to demonstrate the impact and services MIY provides for the city, visitors, residents, stakeholders, members, and customers.

Volume and value of tourism in York:

Data from the recent STEAM report, which measures the annual volume and value of tourism activity in the UK, has recorded that the tourism industry has had a total economic impact of £1.7 billion within York in 2022, with visitors spending £1.2 billion in the city.

As a result of being a world-class tourism destination, 17,000 full time jobs in York have been supported across accommodation, visitor attractions, food and drink, and retail sectors throughout 2022.

With so much to see and do across the city, 1 in 5 visitors to York stayed overnight in 2022, generating more than half of the total economic impact, with £249 million of direct spend from visitors going towards accommodation.

The data also shows how the city welcomed 8.9 million visitors in 2022, with 1.2 million of these coming from overseas as we witness the return of international travel. This increase, whilst not yet at pre-covid levels, showcases a visitor economy growth of 54% when compared to 2021.

York Tourism Stats 2022

Economic impact of tourism in York 2022



Number of jobs supported by sector



Total supported jobs: 17,060

8.9 million visitors in 2022
up 54% on 2021



1.2 million overseas visitors

1 in 5 visitors stayed over night



Overnight visitors contributed over half of the total economic impact including £249m spent on accommodation

source: STEAM data for York 2022

VisitYork

York visitors between April 23 and November 23:

Overall, tourism performance in the city between April and November has been positive, with all key measures showing an improvement compared to 2022.

Footfall:

- Total footfall recorded on Parliament Street and Micklegate between April and November 2023 was 6.9 million, up 5% vs. same period in 2022 (*source: Springboard*).
- 5.2 million counts were recorded on Parliament Street over this period, and 1.7 million on Micklegate. September was the busiest month for footfall on Parliament Street, closely followed by November, with over 700,000 counts recorded in both these months.

Accommodation:

- Average hotel occupancy for April to November was 87%, an increase of 6% on the same period the previous year. The highest occupancy was in September at 91%. The average daily rate per room was £110, also up 6% vs. 2022, and average RevPAR (Revenue Per Available Room) was £96, up 12% (*source: STAR data via Hospitality Association York*)
- Average Airbnb occupancy from April to November 2023 was 73%, an increase of 4% on the same period in 2022. The average daily rate remained steady at £140, but the increased occupancy resulted in a higher average monthly revenue of £3,690. The average number of active Airbnb listings over this period was 2,128, an increase of 6% vs. 2022 (*source: AirDNA via T-Stats*).

Attractions:

Every month, 23 attractions within the York city boundary provide their visitor numbers. This includes 12 big attractions (defined as those receiving over 50,000 visitors a year) and 11 small. To date (20th December), all but one has supplied data up to and including November:

- The 12 big attractions received over 2 million visitors between April and November, the same as in 2022. This is despite some adverse weather conditions affecting outdoor attractions and the partial closure of York Castle Museum from September due to RAAC.
- The 10 small attractions received over 150,000 visitors between April and November, a 14% increase on the same period in 2022.
- Overall, almost 2.2 million visits were made to these 2 York visitor attractions between April and November 2023, a 1% rise vs. 2022.

Inbound:

- Around 100 international visitors were interviewed between April and September. More than half were from the USA and Australia

(source: Visit York Annual Visitor Survey. Q4 data not yet available)

- Largest international spend by VISA card transaction during April to September was by cardholders from the USA and Australia. Over this period, spend more than doubled amongst VISA cardholders from Peru (+159%), South Korea (+128%), New Zealand (+112%) and China Mainland (+104%) when compared to the same period the previous year *(source: VISA via the York BID. Q4 data not yet available.)*

Visit York:

- Between April and November 2023 there were 35,304 visits to attractions using a York Pass, an 18% decrease vs. the same period in 2022.
- A total of 89,837 footfall counts were registered in the VIC between April and November, a decrease of 36% on the previous year. However, the footfall trackers have been unreliable all year, so the actual count is likely to be higher than this.

Marketing & Communications

Marketing Campaigns

In June we launched the summer campaign working with First Buses and 6 other partner members. The campaign included activities across the web, social media, email marketing, influencer campaigns, online advertising, PR, outdoor advertising, competitions, radio, and TV. We also produced a 56-page summer guide, printed 30,000 copies, and distributed this throughout key locations in York.

In September we launched the 'Haunted York' campaign. This began with a teaser post on social media, which was picked up extensively by online press, including national publications the Mirror, Daily Star and Daily Mail.

Key web and social media statistics - 1st April to 30th November 2023

Social:

- Visit York social media content achieved:
 - 15.4 million impressions, +12% vs 2022.

- 415,341 engagements, -34% vs 2022 (This is an industry wide pattern).
- 2.7 million video views, +215% vs 2022
- 2,181 Published Posts, +15% vs 2022
- 11,933 Net Audience Growth +11.8% audience size vs 2022 (177,459 total followers).
- Summer:
 - 219 posts referencing summer.
 - 2.7 million impressions.
 - 510K engagements.
 - Summer Reels were viewed 1.7 million times.
- Haunted York:
 - 86 posts referencing Haunted York, +62% vs 2022
 - 4.5 million impressions, +350% vs 2022
 - 123K engagements, +200% vs 2022.

Web:

- Web visitors – 1.14 million users. +0.3% vs 2022.
- Christmas:
 - 671,064 page views, +5.5% vs 2022, including 356,812 page views for the Christmas hub page and 124,665 page views for the Christmas market page.
- Summer:
 - 14,731 page views, +0.2 increase vs 2022.
- Haunted York:
 - 60,371 page views, +98% vs 2022, including 17,126 views of the Haunted hub page, +25% vs 2022, and 22,932 views of the Halloween event category pages, +101% vs 2022

Key PR Statistics - April – November 2023

- 585 print and online articles
- £5,279,148 AVE
- 175,052,521 OTS
- 7 radio/broadcast interviews including BBC Look North and ITV Calendar

Membership

Our current membership retention is 84%. Since April, 29 new members have joined, with the strongest growth seen across the food/drink and retail sectors.

We have hosted and collaborated on 17 membership events between April-November 2023, including a repeat of the 'Meet the Team' event and a Christmas launch, alongside networking opportunities, webinars and online training and showcase events hosted by Visit York members. We have also hosted 5 forums for different sectors of membership, including attractions' meeting and a self-catering/short-let accommodation session attended by Rachael Maskell MP to discuss challenges facing the sector. At the end of October, we launched the Autumn Winter guide.

Visitor Information Centre

The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) has been active on Parliament Street for a little over a year. We have focused on adding to our commission-based ticketing offering (transport, attractions, tours) with the inclusion of one-off events such as York Pride and York Proms. Our merchandise offering has become more streamlined as we analyzed trends and historical data to identify demand whilst focusing on increasing profit margins and local supplier exposure. Our excellent team of ambassadors and volunteers continue to provide up-to-date knowledge to visitors, members, and residents alike.

Markets and Events

In April 2023 we produced our Event Planner for the year up to March 24. This was circulated to all city centre businesses and partners and published on the Visit York website.

Since April 2023 we have delivered or supported several events. These include Chocolate Festival, Viking Festival, Made in Yorkshire, Food and Drink Festival, York Pride, Summer Festival, Visit York Awards and the Christmas Market.

A new third-party application process has been introduced which ensures compliance with all conditions including health and safety, licensing conditions and appropriate use of space. It also requires organisers to provide information on reducing carbon footprint associated with events, waste management arrangements and initiatives and energy-efficient practices.

All third-party event organisers are signposted to the ACT (Action Counters Terrorism) training prior to any event.

The York Christmas Market 2023 had a different layout this year to enable better movement of people and more food outlets introduced as opposed to a Bar area. York Christmas Market has been voted No 3 in the top 10 markets in Europe for 2023 on The travel.com.

The Market Traders were all from the Yorkshire Region with 35% of these being York Based and 77% being Yorkshire based. Over 200 applications were received to trade on the market.

In 2023 MIY facilitated Indie York having a unit for the six weeks for them to sell. Several local businesses have utilised this for over 6 weeks. This has been invaluable to Indie York.

Make it York facilitated Channel 4 filming in November/December for the Matt Baker Christmas Travels with mum and dad. The Christmas market and its traders were featured along with Betty's Team Rooms, Barley Hall, National Railway Museum, York Cocoa Works, Holy Trinity Church, York Bid and MIY Christmas lights and the cobbled streets. This aired on Channel 4 in December.

York was voted Best UK city for shopping (best large city) in Which magazine with a score of 86% for City and Market.

The market also received a visit to the market from Newcastle BID to look at our Xmas market and how we deliver it, the feedback was positive, and they were impressed with the overall offer.

The Christmas Market has been submitted for the National Association of British Markets (NAMBA) – Large Market Award.

Consultation took place regarding 2023 Market with the York Disability Forum regarding the layout of the market. The forum will be consulted moving forward on all events using public spaces including 3rd party events.

We worked with partners and city centre venues to create hidden gem spaces at the Christmas Market. As the markets get extremely busy, especially at weekends, these spaces will provide less busy venues and facilities for anyone preferring a quite less busy space for a period. These were promoted on maps and via QR codes.

Renting public spaces continues to be a challenge and income levels have been affected. The reasons for this are costs to hire the space, cost of utilities, and an increase in supplier costs. In addition to this some spaces are not suitable due to having no utilities or problematic due to permits required and delays in securing these.

Shambles Market

Shambles Market has recently been awarded the 'Travellers' Choice award 2023' (top 10% of listings on TripAdvisor). The award celebrates businesses that have consistently received great Traveller reviews on TripAdvisor over the last 12 months, placing the market among 10% of all listings on TripAdvisor globally.

Regular meetings with Shambles Traders Forum continue monthly and these prove beneficial and ensure that issues are addressed quickly, fairly, and transparently. Meet the team events for all traders have also been instigated. These will be held 3 times a year. This ensures a more inclusive engagement with all the trading community.

Shambles Market has been submitted for the National Association of British Markets (NABMA) Great British Market Awards – best outdoor market.

Funding bids were submitted for investment at the market to facilitate improvements. Both Shared Prosperity Fund applications were unsuccessful. MIY will explore other sources of funding to improve the market for traders and visitors.

Culture and Wellbeing

We are looking into grant funding to enable future cultural project delivery. 2 Bids have been submitted.

The York Culture Forum now has over 180 members, who engage in the network through bi-monthly forum meetings and e-news information on culture news, funding, and events. Most recent meeting held at the Guildhall, with sessions from Cllr Jo Coles on her vision for culture, and Aesthetica, on forthcoming Reignite event on economic impact of media arts and the creative industries.

The Executive Group of the Culture Forum leads on culture advocacy and steers the Culture Strategy's future direction. The Exec recently

produced an open letter asking CYC to include a vital Supplementary Planning Document for Cultural Provision in the Local Plan, which has over 70 signatures from Forum members.

Make It York and York Civic Trust continue development and delivery of York Trailblazers, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Trailblazers is a city-wide programme of events and activities across 2023 – 25, celebrating York's heritage.

Trailblazers' community grants launched in July, with a £30,000 funding pot, for projects that celebrate York's history and heritage, enable community activity, and work with marginalised groups. In 2024, the tansy beetle sculpture trail will appear across the city, with local artists commissioned by community and heritage groups to customise 20 giant tansy beetles to tell the stories of York's hidden trailblazers. Workshops to choose the trailblazers are ongoing, led by York Civic Trust. The project has released its digital commissions.

Seven York-based charities, social enterprises, community groups and individuals have been awarded £26,775 grant funding by Make It York and City of York Council this summer, made available via the Better Care Fund. The Cultural Wellbeing Grants supports the cultural and creative sector to run a range of initiatives for York residents that support mental wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation.

REACH (Reconnecting Education, the Arts, Creativity and Heritage), York's Cultural Education Partnership, began delivery of the pilot project expanding culture and creativity in ten of York's most deprived schools. Make It York is supporting the project through developing and hosting the digital hub for Reconnecting Education, the Arts, Creativity and Heritage (REACH) funded through IVE and City of York Council and steering group representation.

MIY continues supporting the development of the UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts status, working closely with the Guild of Media Arts and City of York Council to promote the designation. The Guild of Media Arts hosted a study group visit by senior cultural managers from 19 municipalities in Denmark in April, supported by Make It York.

The Tourism Strategy has been finalised, having gone through rounds of consultation with key tourism, culture, and business stakeholders. Strategy development has been led by the Tourism Advisory Board, working closely with Make It York, York St John, and City of York

Council. It has now undergone its final design edits – ahead of sign off by City of York Council in early 2024.

Make It York were recently advised that we were unsuccessful in funding applications to the Shared Prosperity Fund that would support the Culture Forum and York Life Festival.

Conclusion

This financial year is proving challenging for MIY with revenue streams impacted due to the increase in the cost-of-living, poor weather, and continuing train strikes. However, we continue to offer all our services and deliver strong results.