

York Museums Trust Performance Report: April 2007 – October 2007

Analysis of performance

1. The Partnership Delivery Plan (PDP) sets out a number of key targets relating to the Council's core objectives. It is worth noting that the Chief Executive was asked to give evidence to the Select Committee on Museums and Galleries who reported with regard to Trust Status that:

We agree that trust status should not be regarded as a panacea for the ills of an ailing local authority museum service and that it may be wholly unsuitable for some museum services. Local authorities should not see trust status simply as a cost saving solution for the provision of a public service. However, we have been greatly impressed at how the trust model has been effectively used to inspire leadership, raise the profile and sharpen the focus of the museum services in some larger authorities. We strongly recommend that any large local authority museum service motivated to seek improvement should look at the successful models operating in Sheffield and York.

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%.

In 2006-7 YMT set itself the target of breaking the barrier of 500,000 visitors for the first time and this was exceeded by 17,000. During the first five months of 2007-8 we have received 265,000 visitors, almost exactly the same number as for the same period last year (see table below for details).

3. Given that we had the re-opening of Kirkgate last year and the nationally acclaimed exhibition on Constantine we have had to work hard to keep the visitor numbers buoyant this year. We experimented with TV advertising for the first time for the Castle Museum over the summer which we think has proved to be effective in stabilising visitor numbers but it is too early to evaluate its full impact.

b) delivering new income streams

4. YMT has generated almost £3.6 million during the last 5 years. Details of all the fundraising applications made during the reporting period are attached at Annex 2. Trusts and Foundations are an important source of additional funding. We have received £30,000 towards improving access to Kirkgate at the Castle Museum from the Wolfson Fund. This builds on their support last year for the interpretation of Kirkgate.

5. YMT submitted a bid worth £6.3m for Yorkshire Museum called **A Thousand Stories** in March 2007 to Heritage Lottery Fund. This was part of the phased St Mary's Abbey Precinct project, (which is at the heart of the City's concept of the Cultural Quarter) which now is structured into four separate and stand alone phases. The refurbishment of the Hospitium is the first phase and Yorkshire Museum the second. YMT were asked to withdraw the bid by HLF in June 2007. Our discussions with HLF in September have indicated that we should consider reapplying in 2008 or 2009.
6. The Hospitium project is well underway with architects in place and plans ready to be submitted to planning. The Hospitium is due to close in November for refurbishment starting in December with a reopening in March 2008. The Hospitium will then be the centre of YMT's conference business.
7. Business Sponsorship was secured for **Fingerprints of Time** with Shepherd Building Group.
8. Renaissance in the Regions is an increasingly important income stream from Central Government, which is secured until March 2008. We are currently awaiting the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review this autumn which will determine the level of funding for the next phase of Renaissance in the Regions. It has become an important part of our funding and has enabled us to continue develop our schools programme and improve collection management and displays. The level of funding for 2007-8 is £521,000.
9. Conferencing and corporate hospitality will be centred in the future at the Hospitium by March 2008 The new refurbishment will include toilets, kitchen, office, stairs and lift creating two independent hospitality spaces on two floors. We are also promoting Castle Museum as a corporate hire venue as Kirkgate is now much more useable with a levelled floor on the street allowing formal dinners to take place. We have increased staffing with a part-time position to support the extra business we expect to attract.
10. Retail opportunities are continuing to be developed. A new hard-back Souvenir Guide Book has been produced for the Castle Museum which is selling well at just £4 per copy. A potentially important move is that a small number of experts have been recruited on a voluntary basis as non-executive directors of the Trust's Trading Company. They will give a strategic steer on the future development of YMT's shops and other commercial activities.
 - c) new exhibitions and interpretative service
11. The **Fingerprints of Time** exhibition opened at the Yorkshire Museum in February 2007 and deals with the different methods and techniques of dating objects. It has been a success with visitors as it is a hands-on exhibition with exhibits to handle and displays to engage with. **Wild Wednesdays**, which happen every Wednesday during August in the Museum Gardens, have been a great success taking a different scientific or archaeological theme every week, attracting some 6000 people overall.
12. York Art Gallery's summer exhibition has been **Fantin Latour - Painting the summer** which featured works from the collection by Fantin Latour and his contemporaries, with some loans from other collections. It has proved to be

popular. Our exhibition programme at the gallery is to feature the collection as much as possible drawing from it with themes and using loans from other collections to support it.

13. Alongside our programme of major exhibitions, we have installed a number of new collection displays in our venues. Continuing our popular programme of displays from our prints and drawings collection at York Art Gallery, **The Madman in the Minster** in the Little Gallery illustrates the story of how, in the early hours of 2 February, 1829, fire, deliberately set by Jonathan Martin, swept through the east end of York Minster and fire fighters and soldiers battled the flames all day, finally extinguishing the fire in the evening. Changing selections from our ceramics collections are hosted in the stairwell gallery at York Art Gallery, such as a lovely display on Slipware selected from York's huge ceramic collection juxtaposed with two contemporary makers working with old techniques to show the continuity of practice. York Art Gallery has loaned a large number of works to the forthcoming exhibition at the Minster Library, many of which are featured in the catalogue for the show
14. New displays have been installed throughout much of the Yorkshire Museum. The **Natural History of the Abbey** mixes our natural history and archaeology collections in the St Mary's Abbey galleries at the Yorkshire Museum to illustrate the flora and fauna that would have been enjoyed and exploited by medieval monks on the site, as well as the wildlife that we can experience today on site. **Ceramic Safari** in the Upper Gallery continues to be popular with visitors and school groups on their way to our learning spaces. The Viking area has been given a more visitor friendly make-over on the theme of **Vikings: Fact or Fiction?** which is being very well received by family visitors in particular..
15. At York St Mary's the new installation by Keiko Mukaide has been the most popular to date attracting a great many people, exceeding last year some 40%. This has been funded by Arts Council Yorkshire and we are considering keeping it on display for next year.

d) create an education strategy
16. We undertook a review of the learning provision across YMT resulting in a number of new initiatives. We have appointed two new Learning Managers one based at the Castle Museum and the other at the St Mary's Abbey Precinct sites of York Art Gallery and the Yorkshire Museum. This additional support reflects YMT's continuing commitment to learning. We have published our latest formal learning information and marketing programme for schools outlining the learning opportunities for the coming academic year 2007-08. There are new workshops on Vikings, the slave trade, narrative paintings, the 1960s, and medieval mathematics.
17. The York Art Gallery has delivered formal workshops based around the exhibition **Fantin Latour**. We have continued to invite practising artists, to share their thoughts and work as part of the learning programme including Keiko Mukaide.

We have worked with the City Library and Read Write York in developing poetry, literacy and storytelling activities.

18. The informal learning at the Yorkshire Museum for the ***Fingerprints of Time*** exhibition has featured high quality access to the collection in the “dating bar”. This is an innovative opportunity for all visitors to meet knowledgeable staff, handle original artefacts, discuss and explore the ideas and issues springing from them. Some of the themes and objects have been chosen to complement city wide and national festivals and celebrations. We have continued to develop learning opportunities based in the Museum Gardens including a full astronomy programme and the ***Wild Wednesdays*** during August.
19. The Castle Museum informal learning events have included ***Sounds of the Street*** when over 11,600 visitors experienced the world of the street piano, polyphon, penny whistles and music boxes. Part of the event included 47 penny whistle workshops! We have continued to enhance the Kirkgate experience with a programme of characters from the past exploring the collection with visitors, including, military surgeon, lady cyclist, natural scientist and missionary. We also published the ***Castle Challenger*** an exciting interactive guide for families to explore the Museum.

Full details of all the events are available on request.

e) increase use and involvement by residents

20. Opening the York Observatory has been launched as the first of two pilot schemes for the **Volunteer Programme**. A small team of volunteers has been recruited and trained in interpretation of the astronomy collections and the Observatory building itself. Volunteers open the Observatory to the public 5 afternoons per fortnight. This is a long term project and we anticipate that by summer 2008 volunteers will be opening the Observatory every day including at weekends.

A number of small individual projects based on the geology collections have formed the second pilot scheme. A total of 7 volunteers have been recruited to work on a number of tasks ranging from identifying and cataloguing a previously undocumented rock collection, to researching documents and manuscripts dating from 1822 to create donor biographies for all the specimens which have been given to the geology collections over the 170 years of the Yorkshire Museum’s history.

21. Work has begun on identifying training needs and volunteer person specifications for the three workroom spaces which will open at the Castle Museum in spring 2008. These will be activity spaces around the idea of The Kitchen, The Wardrobe and the Armoury and will offer opportunities for volunteer programmes.

We have worked with a number of students at York Art Gallery, through the Millennium Volunteers Scheme, who have made significant contributions to both the planning and delivery of weekend and holiday activities.

Preliminary research has begun on the feasibility of re-opening Raindale Mill to the public, working with volunteers to facilitate access to the Mill building itself as well as interpret the milling equipment it houses and provide information about milling in the region.

22. We have hosted 4 very successful work placements from Germany through our links with Münster. These placements have worked across all sites and all disciplines within the Trust. We will continue to work in partnership with our colleagues in Münster to facilitate a similar number of placements each year.

We continue to work with Newcastle University to provide placement opportunities for postgraduate museum studies students in our archaeology and geology departments.

We took part in the British Association for the advancement of Science Festival with lectures, demonstrations and displays, including object handling, late night science, and school workshop taster sessions.

23. We have had a full and varied programme of activities and events, for example we invited local residents, pupils from Westfield Primary School, young actors from the Theatre Royal and Riding Lights together with the York's Trans global drummers to join us to recreate the outline of a deck from the Slave Ship Brookes enacted on the Eye of York, a moving commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade.

Local pre-school and nursery groups have taken up the opportunities for early years learning on all our sites with a total of 40 group visits. Themes have included stories, puppets, ceramic safari and minibeasts.

Family First days, held on the first Saturday of every month at York Art Gallery are also primarily aimed at local people and 380 people have attended the last 6 sessions.

24. Local groups we have worked with include:

- Community, Voluntary & Hospital based Mental Health Service Groups:
 - Our Celebration - Mental Health Charity
 - Bootham Hospital
- Future Prospects working with the following groups:
 - Baby Gap – Teenage Mums
 - Mental Health Community Groups
- Informal Carers and Young Carers, Selby and York Carers Centre
- Blind and Partially Sighted Society
- Songbox 0 – 4 year olds and mums

We have secured Arts Council funding to extend the **Territories** project for the next three years. This project has proved very successful in delivering opportunities for local people to participate in the work of York Art Gallery and exploring the collections.

25. The St Mary's Abbey Precinct project has been developed with the help of a Steering Group which comprises the University of York, the City Of York Council's planning and parks sections, English Heritage and St Olave's Church. The consultation process has been expanded to include a wider group of

Stakeholders including York Conservation Advisory Panel, CYC Conservation, Yorkshire Philosophical Society, Police and others.

26. The **History of York** project is continuing to gather support and momentum. This is a city partnership project led by YMT to create accessible material giving visitors and residents an overview of the city's history.

A website is due to go live in October at which point partner organisations will be able to upload their own content related to the story of the city. The site will then be launched to the general public through a press and e-mail campaign.

f) achieve high visitor satisfaction

27. During August YMT trialled a new method of gathering visitor feedback at York Castle Museum. This involves two networked computer terminals which can be programmed to ask visitors simple, closed questions such as those normally found on survey forms.

The response rate has been remarkable, with tens of thousands of 'clicks' in answer to the questions posed. YMT has already used this method to gauge customer responses on a variety of issues.

Over the coming months YMT will measure overall customer satisfaction using the standard question "How satisfied were you with your overall visit today?" This methodology will be tested by comparing it with the MORI survey in October and may then be rolled out to all sites.

There has been further emphasis on consultation with visitors at the Castle Museum in the last six months as a number of focus groups have been interviewed regarding the museum experience in general and the development of the 1960's exhibition in particular, which is due to open in April 2008. One of the interesting messages to come out of that was that the museum works much better for first-time visitors than it does for return visitors, which has caused us to reconsider the how changing activities are programmed and how return visitors might better find their way around the museum.

28. The Challenge and Change programme is a new initiative at the Castle Museum, which seeks to develop new attitudes and ways of working embedding an audience focussed approach to all our projects at Castle Museum. Gill Greaves has been appointed as the Challenge and Change Manager, a one year project post based at the Castle Museum. Gill is working with the curatorial team to develop new working practices through the delivery of our new projects for 2008. The Challenge and Change project includes audience consultation and Wafer Hadley have been engaged to undertake this work which will contribute to the development of our public offer at the Castle Museum.

g) ensure the cataloguing of the collection

29. **Collections Developments:** York's collections are the featured images throughout the Museum Associations new report on '**Making Collections Effective**' which gives national promotion to the range and quality of the material held here in York.

The **Community Archaeology** project has seen York College hairdressing students working with our Roman collections to study hairstyles of the period. During the process, the students have helped us to learn more about our collections, and they have recreated hairstyles depicted on coins and sculpture using replica implements of the period. These will be incorporated into our interpretation on the Roman galleries in the Yorkshire Museum. We have also worked with butchery students who have demonstrated the effectiveness of prehistoric stone tools by using replica tools to butcher lambs.

Senior Collections staff and Curators are participating in an initiative to develop a Knowledge Bank for the region. The programme is administered by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council Yorkshire, and will last for 6 months. Staff are available to offer advice and share expertise with regional colleagues.

30. **Documentation:** We have continued to build momentum with the retrospective documentation project. Over 3,000 paper records for Social History objects and costume, created during the earlier DCF (Designation Challenge Fund) project have been entered onto Adlib. Over 30,000 records have been transferred from earlier systems, cleaned up and edited.

Significant progress has also been made in computerising records for the Tillotson Hyde collection of works on paper; military uniforms; dolls and children's clothes; Roman glass; the ceramics handling collection; social history from the Darnborough Street store; the Ismay collection of studio ceramics; rocks in the geology collection; the herbarium, taxidermy and scientific instruments. Over 6,500 geology records were successfully transferred from an Access database into Adlib, plus 2580 geology and 316 biology records were created in Access and 62 scientific instruments entered onto Adlib.

Volunteers have assisted with the documentation in many of the collections, particularly geology, ceramics and costume and textiles. The Friends of York Art Gallery have agreed to extend the contract for our Research Curator of Works on Paper, until December 2007.

31. **Collections Storage:** Improvements in the organisation of collections at Birch Park have continued apace, and it is planned to open the store to organised tours on a limited basis now that access is improved and collections are more easily viewed. The programme of removing ceramics from above the Roman gallery to Birch Park has continued to remove them from risk of water damage. We have implemented new guidelines for working with radioactive specimens in the collection, and key staff have now been trained in driving forklifts to move collections in the stores.

Regular 6 monthly reviews of storage by the Director of Collections and Collections Manager are now in place, and we have hosted a routine inspection visit from the National Security Advisor to the military stores, in line with recommendations for good practice.

32. **Acquisitions:** Highlights of our new acquisitions include *'Irene tending Saint Sebastian's wounds'*, a porcelain piece with gold lustre, 2006 by Claire Curneen. Two works by Bridget Riley were presented by the Contemporary Art

Society from the Tom Bendhem Bequest: ***'Cloudy Blue-Greens with Pink and Emerald Thrusts'***, 1985 and ***'Study 4 Painting with Two Verticals'***, 2004. Two 19th century rocking horses were bequeathed to the Castle Museum. In preparation for the 1960s display a small number of items were collected.

33. Detailed Visitor Numbers

Visitor Numbers

5 months from April 2007 to August 2007

(excluding conference visitors)

	Actual	Last year	% Change
Castle Museum	135,931	135,433	0%
York Art Gallery	75,270	75,053	0%
York St Mary's	27,158	17,857	53%
Yorkshire Museum	26,371	37,603	-30%
Grand Total	264,730	265,946	0%

34. **Financial stability:** YMT remains financially stable. However, due to the investments made in 2006-7, particularly in exhibition development, at the end of the year free reserves (£230k) were well below the level that the Trust aims to maintain (£400k).

2007/08 is forecast to be a transitional year financially; we anticipate only a small increase in free reserves this year. Further major investments in displays are planned for the Castle Museum during 2007; these will begin to have an impact from March 2008. Similarly, the planned investment in the Hospitium facilities will begin to deliver profits from Spring 2008 onwards.

Core funding for 2008-2013 has been agreed by the Council at the current level, plus an inflationary uplift.

35. It has not been possible for the Council to commit to any additional investment funding. However, the Council is committed to £1.763m of capital funding for YMT (£1.898m less earlier expenditure of £85k against the HLF scheme at York Art Gallery and £50k towards the Kirkgate redevelopment at York Castle Museum).

The following breakdown of funds has been agreed by the Council with YMT:

2007-8	Hospitium	£200k
	1960's Experience	£200k
2008-9	Prison Experience	£100k
	Yorkshire Museum	£500k

2009-10	Yorkshire Museum	£500k
	Gardens	£263k
	Total	£1,763k (of a £22 million investment)