

Report from Make it York

This report sets out an overview of the work that Make It York undertakes to contribute to the growth and sustainability of the visitor economy and place making agenda in York.

Visitor Economy

As part of our visitor economy activity, we lead on the city's tourism strategy and we promote York regionally, nationally and internationally to leisure and business visitors via our Visit York brand. This encompasses all aspects of tourism marketing and communications, as well as resident engagement, market intelligence and supporting our member businesses.

We have seen over 20 million impressions on our social media channels in the past 2 years, with more than 800,000 engagements and generating over 14,000 new followers. Allied to this, our communications team have generated a PR reach of 44,141,791 and an advertising value equivalent of £2,169,201.48 in the same period. This coverage and reach contribute significantly to York's 8.4m annual visitors, who contribute £909m a year to the economy. 28,000 people are also employed in the sector.

Marketing the City

At Make It York, it is our privilege to be the city's destination management organisation, enhancing and promoting York as a world-class destination.

Our Visit York brand continues to play a pivotal and positive role in positioning York to attract leisure and business tourism visitors, as well as engaging and inspiring residents to celebrate the joy of living in our great city.

Our thematic and seasonal campaigns put different aspects of York 'front and centre' at different times of the year and have proven to be a great way of driving awareness and footfall to businesses across the city and beyond.

All our campaigns drive traffic to a dedicated hub page on visityork.org and generate significant coverage and traction across our social media channels, along with dedicated PR and communications support from our in-house team.

PR & Communications

Our PR and Communications team work year-round to promote York as a world-class destination internationally, nationally and regionally. We deliver PR support for events and festivals in the city, as well as co-ordinating journalist press visits.

In 2021, a year where many press visits and events were put on hold due to the pandemic, we generated over 700 pieces of print and online coverage worth over £3 million and reaching over 74 million people. We also organised over 30 pieces of broadcast coverage, including BBC Breakfast, BBC Look North, Greatest Hits Radio and more.

Our PR and Comms team support key events across the year, including York's Christmas Festival. We generated 141 pieces of coverage for this event in 2021, a media reach of 19,401,931 and an advertising value equivalent of £1,149,278.

Digital Channels

2021 also saw the launch of a new Visit York website with an array of improvements and a strong focus on visual content, along with improved functionality for mobile users. During 2021, the Visit York website was visited by 1.4 million users, an increase of 59.3% compared to 2020 and there were 4 million page views of the site.

The Visit York social media channels also received a record 22.4 million impressions, 758.5k engagements and gained 14,208 new followers in 2021, meaning Visit York finished the year on a total of 132,619 followers across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

2021 also saw the introduction of increased UGC usage, which proved to be very popular amongst all our key demographics across every platform. We also launched #VisitYorkAdvent in December 2021 where we partnered with members to offer 24 days of giveaways, resulting in 310k impressions and over 1.5k new followers.

We achieve in excess of 1 million impressions and 50,000 engagements per calendar month across our social media channels (current record stands at 1.7 million impressions and 74k engagements in December 2021).

To provide an example of the social media reach we create for events and festivals, 199 posts referenced York's Christmas Festival across Facebook, Twitter/Instagram in 2021 and generated 1.8 million impressions (vs 639,824 in 2019), a reach of 1.4 million (vs 374,776 in 2019) and a potential reach of 6.4 million on Twitter (vs. 4.4 million in 2019), along with 81,439 engagements (vs 17,847 in 2019).

As an organisation working across the Make It York, Visit York and Shambles market brands, we operate 14 social media channels in total, regularly posting in excess of 500 individual updates per calendar month.

Whilst traffic numbers and engagement peaks across our Visit York channels (as you would expect) the Make It York website and social media channels enable us to promote B2B content, along with a dedicated culture hub.

Thematic Campaigns

All our thematic campaigns are monitored and analysed, with a full performance report provided to all partners. As an example, our Haunted York 2021 campaign ran throughout October 2021 and generated 16,830 visits to the Haunted York hub page, 92,775 Halloween content page views and 93,000 views of the campaign video. We also distributed our

consumer e-news to 26,500 visitors (7,963 opens), 7 days emailer distributed to a database of 5,000 residents and achieved an overall #HauntedYork social reach of 386,757.

International Marketing 2022

Visit York works on an annual programme of engagement and promotion with the travel trade in conjunction with VisitBritain, ETOA, UKInbound and England's Historic Cities consortium. During the pandemic we paused a lot of our paid for activity and relied on keeping relationships alive with our existing trade partners and through our own channels. Concentrating on domestic recovery work has been the priority, however we are now looking to recommence our full year-round programme of overseas work with our key Visit York partners on board.

We will be looking initially to mirror the target markets that VisitBritain has set out for their international campaign, North America and Europe with Asian markets set to follow later on. In the meantime, work continues on trade engagement and attending virtual or live trade events and seminars to make sure we keep York and our partners front of mind during this time.

We have continued to run our online travel trade training programme with OTT both for Visit York/York Pass and England Originals. We have attended various online trade events and webinars such as with Miki Travel, JAC Travel and Abbey Tours and attended virtual events such as ExploreGB with VisitBritain in March 2022. We are waiting for more information on forthcoming opportunities as they arise. We continue to work with Paull Tickner from Custom GB to keep the US travel trade up to date with our key partner content. We will be booking up at trade shows and workshops over the coming months to make sure York is front and centre during the recovery for the travel trade. Discover England Fund projects have continued for us with VisitEngland for England Originals and Explorer's Road.

Domestic Groups and Travel Trade Marketing 2022

York has always been a firm favourite for groups and we are now encouraging the return of UK group travel organisers and coach operators with a series of destination marketing spreads in key publications targeting the travel trade. We also work in conjunction with industry bodies such as the Coach Tourism Council and Coach Drivers Club to make sure York's profile is raised within the industry. In 2021 York was also voted Best UK Destination for Groups* and we need to retain this title (*Group Leisure Magazine).

In May 2022 and August/September 2022 we will purchase space in key group publications (both on and offline) such as Coach Tours UK, Group Leisure and We Want Groups. Those members participating in the campaign will be covered in advertorials about York making a much stronger destination piece to generate coach and group bookings for the city and beyond.

Domestic Consumer Campaigns

Mini Guide

We produced 750,000 copies of the Visit York mini guide for distribution across regional leaflet racks with 'Info display' (330k), Northern Print Distribution (110k) and Take One Media (125k) to include the national TIC network and London CIC. The remainder are being distributed via our own Visitor Information Centre, as well as across the York park and ride network.

York and Beyond

This campaign focuses on driving breaks to York and the North York Moors National Park, encouraging visitors to stay overnight. Following on from the success of previous campaigns Visit York will continue to work in partnership with the North York Moors National Park Authority, to deliver a whole host of marketing activity which started this year promoting the Dark Skies Festival with a 3-week campaign on both Classic FM North and London, together with a month-long 'Video on Demand' campaign which featured a new video on ITV Hub.

We continue to work with the national park authority on a year-round campaign working to promote day trips and short breaks to York and the wider 'beyond York' area. Using seasonal events as a driver to encourage bookings and in particular the Dark Skies Fringe Festival in October and Dark Skies Festival in February 2023. Plus all of the activity around the 70th anniversary of the North York Moors National Park. The two-centre break message will push for longer stays in the city using York as a base and also for longer stays in the Beyond York area travelling into York for the day so will benefit all parties.

JORVIK Viking Festival 2022

Between 5th April and 1st June 2022, we worked closely with Jorvik Viking Centre on their Viking Festival campaign, achieving 1.4 million impressions and 330k engagements across our social media channels.

A joint festival competition on Twitter performed really well, accumulating a potential reach of 800,000 and an engagement rate of 8.2% - significantly higher than the average rate.

The JORVIK Viking Festival was also featured in 10 Visit York e-newsletters which were sent to a total of 111,206 recipients.

The festival hub page received 5,878 views for the duration it was live and the festival received 122,000 views across the website including the 'What's On' page and the homepage video.

Vintage York

Our Vintage York campaign targeted regional visitors and residents in order to encourage them to utilise the bus, and in particular the Park & Ride sites in and around York, to enjoy the city in all its glory. In honour of The Queen's accession to the throne in 1952, we drew inspiration from the travel adverts of the 1950s to produce a 3-week campaign that ignited

nostalgia and played on the elegance, glamour and excitement of the 1950s travel boom to promote York as 'the' local and regional destination for a day out with the kids.

Summer In York

Our Summer in York campaign runs throughout July and August 2022 as a joint campaign with First Bus, City Cruises, Visit York Pass and various other attraction partners to target regional visitors, with the aim of promoting York as a great place to spend a jam-packed summer day out or a longer weekend break / overnight stay.

We are continuing the nostalgic 1950s campaign theme that we developed for the May half-term promotion, taking our cue from the Queen's jubilee celebrations, while expanding and developing this to include both a wider area and an overnight stay element.

York is the ultimate destination for foodies and those looking for a special culinary experience, with a huge range of dishes on offer from a wide variety of quality cafés and restaurants.

Taste York

To tie-in with the food and drink festival taking place from 23rd September until 2nd October, we will spotlight this event, as well as York's fine dining, independent and thriving street food scene at the Shambles Market Food Court throughout the month of September.

The campaign will launch on Monday 5th September and run through until Sunday 16th October. New videography and photography will spotlight York as the ultimate foodie destination; with restaurants serving up world foods, including Chinese, Thai & Asian cuisine, deliciously aromatic Indian and hearty Italian dining, all packed within the city.

From small plates with big flavours to vegetarian, vegan and other specialist & inclusive dining delights, we'll encourage our audiences to visit York and experience unique fine dining in intimate settings, as well as beautiful Sunday lunches and classic fish & chips with river views.

Haunted York

Officially known as the most haunted city in Europe, we plan to retain this title indefinitely by promoting York as 'THE' Halloween destination for days out and short breaks this autumn. The campaign will once again be headlined by York Dungeon as our main attraction partner and First Bus as our main transport partner, with the acting team at York Dungeon providing various characters to 'star' in the photography and videography that forms the centrepiece of the campaign.

The seasonal campaign will launch on Monday 12th September and run through until Sunday 6th November 2022, incorporating Guy Fawkes celebrations from 4th to 6th

November. The haunted website hub will then adapt and change to concentrate on York's wider year-round haunted heritage with more evergreen content.

Christmas 2022

174,705 users visited VisitYork.org in December 2021 and the 102 social posts on our Visit York channels throughout December 2021 generated 1.7 million impressions and 74,036 engagements; just one of the many reasons why events and festivals in York attract such strong footfall.

York's Christmas Market will return in 2022 from 17th November until 23rd December and this year marks the 30th Anniversary of St Nicholas Fair, which has been a staple in York's streets during the festive period since 1992. The famous alpine chalets will again line Parliament Street and St Sampson's Square, creating a festive wonderland with an array of local traders and artisan products.

We will be encouraging our audiences to enjoy the Christmas cheer on offer in one of the UK's most festive cities as York's restaurants, shops and attractions once again provide a wonderful winter experience.

Focus will be on York's wonderful winter experience and atmosphere to create a highly visual campaign using festive photography and video content, along with pushing the 30th Anniversary of St Nicholas Fair. We will also be highlighting the incredible range of festive events and activities taking place across the city and encouraging people to stay longer and soak up the festive atmosphere.

Activity will include a dedicated campaign hub at visityork.org/Christmas, photo and video content, press advertising to include both consumer and group travel trade audiences, a printed autumn and winter guide for distribution across regional leaflet racks, PR & Comms support and both organic and boosted socials.

Research & Insight

Make It York employs a dedicated Research and Insight Specialist who works with the visitor economy sector and our in-house team to ensure that our campaigns and activity are insight led. Monthly activity includes:

- Monitoring city centre footfall
- Coordinating and analysing monthly visitor surveys
- Monthly accommodation occupancy and room rate reporting
- Visitor attraction footfall data
- Airbnb data (occupancy, growth, average rate)
- Overseeing York's economic impact modelling
- Past and future trend modelling

Other Noted Activity

Summer guide: Produced 50,000 copies, now in distribution via InfoDisplay, NPD and Take One Media and the VIC.

2022 Events calendar (printed): Finished and distribution is ongoing to local businesses with 575 already having received a copy via our volunteers and Visitor Information staff.

New £1 shopping map: Created for sale in the VIC. 3,000 copies for now with a view to creating a new one when we move location.

Business Support

Make It York supports the industry through its Membership programme. We currently have 602 members in membership. We support our members by arranging membership networking events, training, and marketing. We deliver an opportunity to feature in; International, National, Regional, Domestic and Groups marketing campaigns on a partnership level. This allows Business to broaden their message and reach wider at a lower rate than needing to do themselves.

Member Sectors:

- 128 Accommodation Providers
- 130 Attractions
- 138 Business Services
- 6 Conference (not hotels)
- 58 Retailers
- 20 Culture (entertainment and events)
- 121 Food and Drink

All our Marketing and website development is funded through our Membership fee and sponsorship.

We also provide networking and training events free for our members.

Business Tourism and Conferencing

Make It York supports the Visitor economy through Business conferencing.

867,000 conference and event delegates account for 1 in 10 of York's visitors. £140m is spent by delegates, which accounts for £2 out of every £10 spent in the city.

We work with venues in and around York to create a safe and welcoming place for delegates to return to; we're here to help plan future events, as well as offering free impartial advice and an in-depth, local knowledge of the city and surrounding area.

- Venue finding services for events with 50 delegates or more
- Venue inspiration for smaller events at visityork.org/conference
- Familiarisation visits to ensure organisers find the right venue
- Connections with accommodation providers for great rates

- Bespoke social experiences, incentive itineraries and memorable extras
- Letters of support to accompany event bids

We recently attended the conference and hospitality show in Leeds to promote York alongside key partners including Castle Howard and York Gin, an event which attracts exhibitors from across the UK, made up of venues, hotels and suppliers of meeting products and services. We also recently came back from the 'The Meetings Show' in London, the best platform in the UK for the events, meetings and incentives industry to come together to source, learn and network.

We're currently working on expanding and reworking the meetings and venue finding service on visityork.org, as well as planning a series of campaigns that promote York as a unique place for meetings.

Tourism Advisory Board

Make It York supports the tourism sector by coordinating and administering the Tourism Advisory Board.

Make It York established the city's tourism advisory board in December 2020 and provides the secretariat for the group.

The Tourism Advisory Board (TAB) meets on a monthly basis and helps shape the direction, development and delivery of a long-term tourism strategy for the city, in the context of a broader economic strategy.

The TAB also monitors the performance and progress of York's visitor economy in achieving its aims and ensures that Make It York is meeting the needs of all relevant stakeholders.

The TAB also acts as a feedback loop between city-wide tourism stakeholders, Make it York and City of York Council.

Beyond agreeing its own business, TAB is not a decision-making body but does advise and make recommendations to Make It York and City of York Council. TAB also provides a snapshot report for the health of the tourism sector in York and alerts Make It York to any opportunities or challenges.

Membership is via invitation from the Senior Marketing & Comms Manager at Make It York, in consultation with board members and the board comprises a reflective ratio of the business interests of relevant stakeholders:

- Visitor Attractions
- Accommodation providers
- Transport operators
- Retailers or retail bodies
- Hospitality businesses (pubs, restaurants)

- Relevant sector support bodies

Through its work, TAB seeks to facilitate deep and long-lasting partnerships with operators from key tourism sectors as outlined above.

Representatives of City of York Council are encouraged to attend (the relevant portfolio holder and economic development officer). Membership is reviewed annually and may be temporarily extended to include additional expertise as agreed by the Board.

Organisations joining the Board are asked to commit to contributing to city-wide objectives rather than promoting their own commercial interests.

Tourism Strategy Update

During the autumn of 2020, Make it York (MIY) commissioned Group NAO (a Copenhagen based agency who work with change in tourism, culture, urban and community development) to produce a reflection paper on how York's visitor economy might 'build back better' in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

NAO interviewed close to 20 key stakeholders in York's visitor economy and city management for inspiration and aspirations for the future, including workshops with York's then Culture Leaders Group and the Tourism Advisory Board.

Existing research and documentation was also utilised and referred to in the production of the final Group NAO report, including:

- My City Centre Project
- Our Big Conversation
- The York Narrative
- York's Creative Future

This report was presented at the Visit York tourism conference in January 2022 and, following this, we surveyed all attendees asking for their thoughts on what should feature in the tourism strategy.

All stakeholder research was then collated and analysed, with six key areas of focus for this strategy being identified:

- Sustainable Growth
- Business Tourism
- Community Engagement
- Culture
- The Green Agenda
- Skills and Recruitment

These six key areas were further developed by the tourism advisory board at the March and April meetings and, following this, feedback was worked into a draft set of ambitions, objectives and actions. This was presented back to the TAB at the June meeting and we allowed three weeks for board members to feed back in full.

A further draft of the tourism strategy is now being developed as we continue to consult with the tourism advisory board on a monthly basis and work towards a January 2023 launch.

Place Making

Placemaking is one of the six Key Priorities in the York Culture Strategy, York's Creative Future, 2020 – 25. The strategy has the vision that culture is fully embedded into local investment and city planning developments, with culture playing a central role in place-making and the relationship people have with place.

Here are some of the developments we are currently working on and initiatives that have been delivered over the past year:

Policy work

Make It York have worked alongside CYC and the cultural sector to contribute to a number of significant national policy reports and inquiries on culture and place, on behalf of the city: including the Northern Culture APPG on Levelling Up Culture, the NP11 Place Strategy, and the recent DCMS inquiry on cultural placemaking.

Of these, the Northern Culture APPG's Levelling Up Culture report has now been published and York features strongly, both in discussing the importance of being custodians for the city's important cultural heritage, and in a featured case study on the Festival of Ideas.

Make It York are currently developing case study evidence in response to a call from the Commission on Culture and Local Government, to investigate the role that publicly funded culture can play in national recovery post-pandemic. This will focus on York Life Festival, for which CYC provided ARG funding to MIY, to programme the event alongside the York Music Venues Network: enabling a resident-friendly festival to go ahead in April, with over 30 local cultural acts.

Placemaking-focused support for the sector

Make It York takes part in sector-led Creative Workspace meetings between the Guild of Media Arts, York Creatives, University of York, CYC, York Conservation Trust and other local creatives, to consider availability and need of creative workspaces within the city, and to help simplify processes to access these for creatives.

Make It York has developed a guide for creatives looking to find space in and around York within vacant shop spaces, to make the process easier to navigate. The Creative Workspaces Group were consulted on its contents, and it will launch on the Culture hub on the MIY website over the summer.

Make It York has taken part in My City Centre and Castle Gateway strategic meetings, ensuring that the culture sector is represented and consulted as part of city planning developments.

Make It York ran an Events and Festivals Grants scheme this year, for York based event organisers negatively impacted by Covid-19, to support upcoming events in 2022. The £50k grant funding came from the Government's ARG fund, and was kindly provided by City of York Council to Make It York, supporting the city's economic recovery from Covid-19. 15 events were awarded the grant funding in May, to support their delivery and future sustainability, including York Pride, the York Mystery Plays and York Design Week.

Full details here: [15 organisations awarded ARG Events](https://www.makeityork.com/news/2022/05/15-organisations-awarded-arg-events-festivals-grants/) [HYPERLINK](https://www.makeityork.com/news/2022/05/15-organisations-awarded-arg-events-festivals-grants/) ["https://www.makeityork.com/news/2022/05/15-organisations-awarded-arg-events-festivals-grants/"](https://www.makeityork.com/news/2022/05/15-organisations-awarded-arg-events-festivals-grants/) & [HYPERLINK](https://www.makeityork.com/news/2022/05/15-organisations-awarded-arg-events-festivals-grants/) ["https://www.makeityork.com/news/2022/05/15-organisations-awarded-arg-events-festivals-grants/"](https://www.makeityork.com/news/2022/05/15-organisations-awarded-arg-events-festivals-grants/) Festivals Grants (makeityork.com)

A key priority of the York Culture Strategy has been to create more democratic and open structures. In December 2021, MIY launched the York Culture Forum, which anyone working in arts, culture heritage and the creative industries in York can join. The Forum now has c.160 members, including a broad range of creative freelancers, members of cultural and creative organisations, and volunteers. The next stage for the Culture Forum is to elect their Culture Executive this September, who will together oversee the future direction of the city's Culture Strategy. We believe this model is the first of its kind in the UK.

UNESCO World Heritage Status bid for York

In April, the Council Executive accepted the recommendation of the York UNESCO World Heritage Steering Group (WHSG) that York should bid for World Heritage status for the city.

WHSG have finalised the application for UNESCO World Heritage Status, which will be submitted by 15 July. This application will see York applying to join the UK Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. A list of the recommended sites for the Tentative List will then be submitted to ministers for approval before being registered at UNESCO later this year. Should York join the Tentative List, the Steering Group will then make a full application to UNESCO for World Heritage status. Make It York sits on the Steering Group and has assisted with the bid-writing process. The application for World Heritage Status is a key deliverable of the York Culture Strategy.

More information here: [Agenda item - York as a World Heritage Site](#)

Events and Festivals

Planning for York Trailblazers (formerly known as Makers and Shapers) is ongoing, led by York Civic Trust and Make It York, with support from a broad coalition of partners. The ambition is for Trailblazers to be a city-wide project from 2022-25, celebrating the anniversaries of past innovators and inspiring those of today. It aligns with the Culture Strategy's ambition to unveil the full stories of York's historic places, including currently

hidden histories, and to ensure representation of diverse voices in retelling the stories of place. YCT and MIY submitted a funding bid to support the project in early July.

The York Ice Trail is the UK's biggest outdoor ice trail, and it featured over 40 sculptures, with an audience of 25K this March. MIY has now launched the 2023 York Ice Trail (4th and 5th February 2023) with the theme, 'A Journey Through Time'. The theme is seeking to include ice sculptures from prehistoric through to futuristic with two key zones that are animated and themed to immerse visitors.

The York Life Festival, funded through CYC's ARG Fund, took place on 2 - 3 April. It featured a programmed stage of local mixed acts, curated by the York Venue Network, and an entertainment hub area on Parliament St., featuring stand -up comedy, spoken word poetry and theatre, as well as a number of family-friendly initiatives including face painting, drumming, ukulele, arts, crafts, magic, and beatboxing. During the festival, footfall was 19% higher than the same period in 2019, with over 71K visitors to York that weekend. Feedback from partners and cultural stakeholders has been very positive.

Shambles Market

Make It York manages the Shambles Market on behalf of the City Council to ensure that the market is sustainable and develops for the residents and visitors to the City. Make It York also ensure that the Market Charter is followed and adhered to on behalf of the City Council. We are currently developing an Investment Plan for the market and will be developing a Market Strategy earlier in 2023.