

# MakeItYork

Shareholder Committee – 23 October 2023

**Make It York update.**

## **Introduction**

This paper sets out an update on Make It Yorks activities for the period April – October 2023. It presents the Audited Accounts for 2022/2023 (Appendix 1) the mid-year budget forecast 2023/2024 against the Business Plan base Budget, the estimated forecast for 24/25 and 25/26, and the balance sheet, cash flow and summary of profit and loss (Appendix 2, 3, 4 and 5) The updated Business Plan and Service Delivery Plan for 2023/2024 is also included (Appendix 6). The dashboard performance data is included in (Appendix 7).

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 2024. 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. We have also started discussion regarding our new SLA (Service Level Agreement) with Council representatives. This will be brought to the shareholder committee in March 2023 for approval.

## **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.

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### **Budget forecast for 2023/2024**

We set the budget to record a profit of £24,190. The mid-year budget forecast show 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 developed an approach 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 7). 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.

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### 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.

Moving forward we have committed to several actions and commitments that help us to work to net zero.

- We will 100% commit to recycling paper, cardboard, food, cans, and glass, reducing waste to landfill.
- We will not deal in plastic and will ban single use plastics at all our large events and ensure that Make It York and our partners understand and comply with updated bans from the 1 October 2023.
- We have introduced reusable bags for sale in the Visitor Information Centre.
- We will not deal with disposal cups and will instead use reusable coffee and water cups, and these are for sale in the Visitor Information Centre.
- We will reduce the use of fossil fuels by utilising green generators and exploring funding for installation of solar power options to run Shambles Market.
- We will source fair trade and ethically traded products from suppliers.
- We will review our supply chains to purchase locally where we can reduce transport associated with supply chains.
- We avoid the use of diesel generators on site – the one supplier requirement in the city centre has invested in a Green D+ Bio Diesel generator which have a significantly lower Carbon out-put by running on HVO, this is plant based synthetic fuel which is used as a replacement for diesel reducing Carbon emissions by 90%.
- Each of our suppliers at the Christmas Market is committed to reducing waste and minimising or offsetting our carbon footprint and making our offering as environmentally friendly as possible.
- We utilise local suppliers, reducing the carbon footprint of transport.

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- 77% of traders attending the Christmas Market are Yorkshire based and 35% are actual York Based.
- We request that traders utilise recycled materials (e.g., 100% plant-based cups which biodegrade within 2-3 months)
- We utilise LED lighting to reduce energy consumption.
- Working with local, regional, and national partners we encourage the public to get to the event by using public transport.

All our supplier contracts have included environment clauses, in acknowledgement of our net zero commitment and will demonstrate less impact on the local environment from our suppliers through these. Annually we will review our performance in implementing our environmental commitment and will continuously explore ways of becoming a greener business.

### **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.

### **Marketing & Communications**

#### **Volume and value of tourism:**

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. Full details here: [Tourism worth £1.7 Billion to York in 2022, according to new tourism report \(makeityork.com\)](https://www.makeityork.com/tourism-worth-1.7-billion-to-york-in-2022-according-to-new-tourism-report)

#### **Tourism performance in the city between April 23 and August 23: Footfall:**

- Total footfall recorded on Parliament Street and Micklegate between April and August 2023 was 4.17 million, up 2% vs. the 4.07 million visitors seen over the same period in 2022.
- Key events during this period driving higher footfall levels in the city included the York Chocolate Festival, York Open Studios, York Fashion Week, York Pride, York Roman Festival, and racing at York Racecourse.

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### Accommodation:

- Average Airbnb occupancy during April-August 2023 has improved from 68% in 2022 to 73% in 2023. Though the average daily rate was slightly down at £140 compared to £142 in 2022, increased occupancy resulted in monthly RevPAR (Revenue Per Available Room) reaching its highest level at £3,752, despite the average number of active listings increasing by 93 to an average of 2,138.
- Hotel occupancy data for July and August 2023 is still outstanding. Average hotel occupancy for April to June was 84%, compared to an average of 79% for the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

### Attractions:

- Over 1.39 million visits were made to York's 12 big attractions during April to August 2023, the same figure as in 2022. Though outdoor attractions are likely to have been impacted by the above average rainfall in July, the new Wonderlab exhibition at NRM has drawn in thousands of additional attraction visitors this summer
- A total of 104,926 visits were made to the 11 attractions in the York Small Attraction Monitor between April and August 2023, a 16% increase on this time last year.
- Overall, almost 1.5 million visits were made to these 23 attractions between April and August 2023, a 1% increase vs. 2022 and 90% of the 2019 figure. July saw the biggest increase in visitor numbers vs. 2022, despite the rain, while June saw the biggest decrease, when above average sunshine hours may have encouraged visitors to stay outdoors and go elsewhere.

### Visit York:

- Between April and August 2023 there were 25,863 visits to attractions using a York Pass, a 19% decrease vs. 2022, though some attractions have yet to submit data.
- Issues with the footfall counter in the VIC (Visitor Information Centre) have made it difficult to track VIC footfall this year. 67,429 visitors were counted between April and August 2023, compared to 90,489 during the same period in 2022, a decrease of 25%

### Marketing Campaigns

In June we launched the summer campaign working with First Buses and 6 other partner members. The campaign included activities across the

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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 31st September 2023**

- Visit York social media content gained 8.01 million organic impressions. +12% vs 2022. (Overall impressions are 9.8 million impressions, down 3.3% caused by less ad-spend in 2023.)
- 219 posts referencing summer (including ads) resulting in 2.7 million Impressions, 510K Engagements, Summer Reels were viewed 1.7 million times.
- Engagement in social posts 291,867 organic engagements -30% vs 2022 (This is an industry wide pattern). 1.3 million organic video views. +91.2% vs 2022, 1,558 Published Posts +18.5% vs 2022.
- 6,924 Net Audience Growth +11.1% audience size vs 2022 (172,459 total followers).
- Web visitor numbers – 691,098 users. +4.7% vs 2022.
- Summer hub visits - 1st June to 15th September = 14,731 page views +0.2 increase vs 2022.
- Haunted hub visits – 1st August to 1st October = 4,736 page views +7.5% increase vs 2022.

### **Key PR Statistics - 1st April to 31st September 2023**

- 368 articles achieved.
- 2 radio interviews.
- 87,988,535 Opportunities to see (OTS)

### **Membership**

Our current membership retention is 84%. Since April, 16 new members have joined, with the strongest growth seen across the food/drink and retail sectors.

We have hosted and collaborated on 10 membership events between April-September 2023, including a repeat of the 'Meet the Team' event

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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 will launch the Autumn Winter guide and are also supporting the Events team with Christmas-related marketing activity.

### **Visitor Information Centre**

The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) has been active on Parliament Street for ten months. We have decorated the VIC and continue to make improvements to optimize the space. 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 – helped even more by regular members' briefings. We will continue to investigate additional revenue streams to boost the VIC's financial performance whilst showcasing our members and all York has to offer.

We are working on developing an international marketing strategy alongside interested attractions and accommodation providers, in preparation for January 2024.

### **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 and Visit York Awards.

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

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associated with events, waste management arrangements and initiatives, energy-efficient practices, sustainable sourcing especially local sourced commodities and traders and eco-friendly site transportation. All three party event organisers are signposted to the ACT (Action Counters Terrorism) training prior to any event.

Logistics planning is completed for the York Christmas Market 2023. The market will not have a large undercover facility this year, this area will see additional street food with more space being left to enable better movement of people, making the area more accessible. The Market opens on the 16 November.

Regular dialogue is in place with the York Disability Forum in relation to events and positive feedback was received in relation to the use of space at the Christmas Market 2023. The forum will be consulted moving forward on all events using public spaces including 3rd party events.

We are working 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 will be promoted on maps and via QR codes.

Renting public spaces continues to be a challenge this year 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**

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. A lot of work continues to be undertaken to deliver a market that is balanced and supportive for all traders that wish to trade at Shambles.

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Make it York recognises the important contribution markets make to the local economy and the character of the area. It not only serves the local community and visitors but creates local employment opportunities and contributes to the local economy. To ensure that the market is a viable and sustainable part of the local economy, it is necessary that there is a policy in relation to the balance of trade (i.e., goods and services) and the trader mix. This policy must also consider any legal requirements and must encourage constructive competition which will benefit all parties concerned.

Work has been undertaken to achieve a good mix of goods at the market, which is balanced, ensuring that we do not oversaturate, this in turn offers a wide selection of goods for residents and visitors that shop at the market. A balance of trade policy is now in effect, and this is used to achieve an appropriate mix of traders within the market on each trading day. The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is fair and reasonable and appropriate to the trader/produce/product mix, which is not too prescriptive and best reflects the ever-changing retail environment.

It does not offer trader exclusivity on any goods and ensures that the market operations and allocation decisions are compliant with legislation.

We utilised the services and expertise of a shopper led expert who provided some analyse on shopper behaviour journey, motivations, patterns, and trends and they identified some key actions to improve shopping experience and benefit the trading community. This will be explored further to enhance the visitor experience.

Funding bids were submitted for investment at the market to facilitate improvements. Make it York were recently advised that it was unsuccessful in the sustainability strand however it is still awaiting the outcome of the Shared Prosperity Fund E16 bid.

### **Culture and Wellbeing**

We are looking into grant funding to enable future cultural project delivery.

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

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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. Branding and marketing launched this quarter, as well as a June launch event revealing the tansy beetle programme theme, where a local artist created a giant tansy beetle painting in Museum Gardens. 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. Grants have now been shortlisted and funding is being awarded before public announcement made. 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. Project next step is to launch 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, 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.

The Culture and Research team worked with the sector to publish a culture infographic of the volume and value of culture in York, which

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showed the cultural and creative industries have a GVA (Gross Value Added) of almost £60 million to the city. See the full results: [infographicv \(makeityork.com\)](https://www.makeityork.com/infographicv)

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 is currently being 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 is now undergoing final design edits – these will be completed by Make It York and York St John University in October 2023 – ahead of sign off by City of York Council.

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.

At present, we continue to support the delivery of the York Culture Strategy, the Culture Forum and Culture Executive, partnership working and project development, profile raising for culture in York nationally and internationally, and supporting the UNESCO Creative City designation.

Make It York and North Yorkshire Council's joint application for Local Visitor Economy Status has now been submitted to Visit England, with support from City of York Council.

## **Conclusion**

This 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.