



**Report to City of York Council Shareholder Committee
Tuesday 19th March 2024**

Introduction

This paper provides an update of Make It York's (MIY) activities from October 23 to March 2024. It also presents:

Appendix 1 – MIY Summary Profit & Loss (Confidential).

Appendix 2 - MIY Draft Budget Forecast 2024-2027 (Confidential).

Appendix 3 – MIY Balance Sheet (Confidential).

Appendix 4 – MIY Cashflow Summary (Confidential).

Appendix 5 – MIY Service Delivery Plan Update.

Appendix 6 – MIY Company Dashboard Jul - Sept 23.

Appendix 7 is a report to the Shareholder for the new Board Director.

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. The year so far has been focused on raising sponsorship for free events and trails for residents and visitors to enjoy. During the last year 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 is also produced in advance of each quarterly meeting along with an Action Log.

Budget Position April 2023 – March 2024 and profiled budget for 2024/2025

The forecast financial position at the end of March 2024 shows a profit of £125k compared to the budgeted profit of £24k. This has been achieved

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despite challenging conditions with income streams struggling to return to pre pandemic levels. However, strong financial management and controlling of costs is allowing MIY to return a strong profit. In addition, a successful payout from our COVID insurance claim pushes the forecast profit for the financial year to £321k.

The strong financial return will bring MIY back to solvency with reserves of approximately £120k to take forward into the new financial year.

The 2024/25 budget is currently showing a profit of £52k. This is factoring in the reduction in income from CYC of £25k in the 2024/25 financial year.

MIY is applying a cautious approach to budget setting and is underway with reviewing all financial arrangements, including the individual income streams, to ensure that all funds are maximised and used to further MIY's objectives.

Alongside this work, MIY is creating a reserves policy to ensure that there are adequate financial resources for MIY to look ahead to the future. Combined with a robust financial plan this will ensure CYC have full confidence in the future of MIY.

Governance

We continue to be transparent in measuring our impact. A copy of the most up to date Quarterly Performance Dashboard Report is included in the report pack (Appendix 6). This report has become stronger in terms of data reporting to show how we are having an impact and the return on investment, which is wider than a financial return on investment.

The MIY Board is proposing a new board member to be ratified by the CYC Shareholder Committee. (Appendix 7).

We are committed to supporting York's ambition to be a net-zero carbon city by 2030 and will reduce our environmental impact. We have successfully achieved Good Business Charter status; all our supplier contracts include an environmental clause to demonstrate how they will impact on reducing carbon. We promote the benefits of Good Business Charter to Visit York Members by providing information in monthly newsletters and providing direct links to Good Businesses Charter Organisation and signposting to CYC for further support where required.

Our Membership Advisory Board has met on 4 occasions. This group

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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.

We continue to work with North Yorkshire Council and the Combined Authority and York and North Yorkshire have been accredited LVEP (Local Visitor Economy Partnership) status.

Annual 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.

Positive PR and Promotion

YORK has been named the **number one city in England to visit** by the luxury magazine, Condé Nast Traveler. Recognising its "constantly evolving" nature and variety of parks, restaurants, attractions, and events; the magazine described York as "a wonderful city break."

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

York Christmas Market was **voted No 3 in the top 10 markets in Europe for 2023 on The travel.com.**

York Christmas Market has won the '**Best Large Specialty Market**' in the UK category at the Great British Market Awards, organised by The National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA). We share this alongside Stratford upon Avon.

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.

Snooks were showcased at London Kings Cross Station on the 15 January.

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As part of Yorks City of Trails campaign, the five Snooks appeared alongside a Tansy Beetle canvas to represent the York Trailblazers Trail, and an impressive ice sculpture of the London to York skyline to represent the York Ice Trail, taking place in February.

We attended the ITB World Travel Trade Show in Berlin on 5 – 7 March 2024 promoting York and Yorkshire.

Conferences and Awards

The Visit York Tourism Conference was held on 1 February with guest speaker Martin Green Martin who has masterminded some of Britain's most significant major cultural events including the London 2012 Olympic, Paralympic Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Hull UK City of Culture 2017, Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 and led Eurovision in Liverpool on behalf of Ukraine in 2023.

The annual Visit York Tourism Awards are being held on the 14th March 24 at York Racecourse.

Income and Sponsorship

We continue to maximise opportunities for sponsorship and income which secures best value for money for MIY managed assets such as public spaces, publications, the website, Art benches, digital TV screens and sponsorship of key event trails, which creates and supports the development of commercial partnerships. Sponsorship and advertising income has a “key role to play” in ensuring that we can continue to deliver several key outcomes such as events which are valued by residents, visitors, and businesses.

Hiring 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 this and further work is needed to explore options to improve these locations.

Visit York 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.

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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.

Our new Annual Visitor Guide was launched on February 24.

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

York visitors between April 23 and February 24:

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

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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 (Visitor Information Centre) 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

Campaigns

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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. In October we launched the Winter Guide, distributing 40,000 copies nationally.

Key web and social media statistics - 1st April to February 24

Social:

- Visit York social media content achieved:
 - 19,255,673 impressions + 4.2% vs 2022
 - 541,931 engagements -33.3% vs 2022 (this is an industry wide pattern)
 - 3,455,057 video views +190.8% vs 2022
 - 2,923 published posts +21% vs 2022
 - 17,475 net audience growth -16.4% vs 2022
- 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 – 1.35 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 – February 24

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

Visitor Information Centre

The Visitor Information Centre (VIC) has been active on Parliament Street for a year. 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, Visit York Awards and the Christmas Market.

Currently exploring opportunities to develop the events and speciality markets programme to provide a more diverse offer which is family orientated and inclusive, appealing to both residents and visitors. Meetings have taken place with third-party speciality market providers, looking at options to enhance the Yorkshire Day offering, Halloween celebrations, World Food produce market and Chinese New Year celebrations in February

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2025.

Christmas Market

The amended layout of the Christmas Market 2023 was positively received. This facilitated an improved layout and enabled better movement of people along with increased food outlets.

In addition, last year we worked with partners to introduce hidden gem spaces at the Christmas Market. As the markets get extremely busy, especially at weekends, these spaces provided 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. Feedback from venues was that they were busier than normal.

Market Traders (112) were all from the Yorkshire Region with 35% of these being York Based and 77% being Yorkshire based.

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

Ice Trail

The Ice Trail was held on the 4 and 5th February showcasing 33 individual Ice Sculptures with 33 being sponsored by businesses, attractions, and hotels.

Visitor Numbers

68,000 visitors came to visit the Ice Trail

Visitor Opinion

93% are likely to recommend the Ice Trail to others

92% were satisfied overall with their experience of the Ice Trail

91% are likely to visit the Ice Trail in 2025

Repeat Visitors

37% were first time visitors to the Ice Trail

63% were repeat visitors

Influence on Visit

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86% came to York specifically for the Ice Trail

Visitor Type

64% were on a day trip to York

24% lived in York

11% were staying in York

Visitor location

North Yorkshire 41%

West Yorkshire 21%

South Yorkshire 11%

East Riding of

Yorkshire 8%

Northeast England 7%

Northwest England 7%

East Midlands 2%

West Midlands 1%

East of England 1%

Means of Transport

Just over half drove to get to the event, while almost 3 in 10 used the Park & Ride. 14% both drove and used the Park & Ride.

28% used Park and Ride

13% walked

12% used trains

11% buses

3% bike

67% of those attending did so by public transport, walking or cycling

Other activities

Three quarters of Ice Trail visitors also enjoyed walking around York and going for something to eat / drink. Around half went shopping in regular shops and almost a quarter also visited a museum or attraction while they were in York.

Digital Engagement

39,000 Digital Maps were downloaded

70,810 page views

23,000 printed maps distributed

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Snooks

The Snooks trail officially launched on the 2 March and over the course of 8 weeks will see 21 individual snooks sculptures displayed across the city.

15 artists have been commissioned to decorate each snook on behalf of the sponsors, these artists range from students to professional artists, in a range of different art disciplines.

Each snook represents the business and links in with the York narrative. We have partnered with the St Leonard's hospice as a charity partner and worked closely with them. These snook sculptures will then be auctioned at an event in May generating funds for both St Leonard's Hospice and York Creates fund.

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 on a six-weekly basis, 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 will all the trading community.

Market Charter

We have supported the reintroduction of a monthly Market at Acomb as a result of the streetscape improvements on a trial basis. This will see approximately 30 Artisan stalls located monthly for community benefit.

Culture

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.

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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.

Conclusion

MIY is a going concern as the 2023/24 budget demonstrates. The MIY team have worked hard to restore financial stability and strong management within the organisation and will continue to do so during 2024/25 and despite 2023/24 proving challenging 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.