

York Museums Trust Performance Report: April 2005 – March 2006

Analysis of performance

1. The Partnership Delivery Plan (PDP) sets out a number of key targets relating to the Council's core objectives. 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 by CYC 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, in the 2003/04 financial year the sites had 426,000 visitors. Last year saw numbers drop back to 358,000 as York Art Gallery was closed for refurbishment.

For 2005/06 YMT set itself the target of 450,000 visitors. The actual total was 465,000, an 18% increase compared with 2002/03.

Although the overall figures are very encouraging, they do disguise the fact that the numbers at Castle Museum have continued to fall. This puts financial pressure on YMT and is a matter of priority.

The refurbishment of the Kirkgate, the Victorian Street, has begun to address this, however it will require a continuous programme of investment in the core product in order to sustain and increase visitor numbers.

b) *delivering new income streams*

3. YMT has generated over £3.2 million during the last 4 years. In appendix 1 there is a complete list of all the applications we have made, including unsuccessful applications. The categories of new income streams are as follows:

Trusts and Foundations have been generous in supporting new projects. Noteworthy is the support we have achieved for the international loan exhibition ***Constantine The Great - York's Roman Emperor*** which has resulted in £138,500 to date for the exhibition and £7805 for the publication. This exhibition was opened on 30 March 2006 by Princess Anne and the exhibition has attracted national press attention.

Heritage Lottery Fund supported the refurbishment of York Art Gallery which reopened in April to a great response from visitors. We are now waiting to hear about a major capital bid for St Mary's Abbey Precinct which will refurbish the Yorkshire Museum and start the process of improving the Museum Gardens, as well as addressing the collection storage issues. This will be the first phase of the St Mary's Abbey Precinct project which will involve, in later phases, the extension of the gardens up to the back of York Art Gallery, creating a new green route through the gardens to connect with Exhibition Square, refurbishment of the gallery including a new mezzanine floor over the main gallery.

This project supports the idea of the Cultural Quarter for the city.

Business Sponsorship is a new and developing income stream. York Art Gallery's opening exhibition **Reflections** was sponsored by Gerrards, **Forest** by the Forestry Commission and **Constantine** is being sponsored by Shepherd Building Group.

Renaissance in the Regions is an important new income stream from Central Government, which is due to continue until 2008. The Yorkshire Hub Business Plan for 2007-8 will enable us to continue the schools programme and develop the displays and programme at Castle Museum. This additional funding is conditional on the City of York core funding remaining the same in real terms.

Conferencing and corporate hospitality is a growing part of YMT's activities. This was minimal in 2002/03; during 2005/06 the turnover was £60k, net of catering.

YMT was short-listed for York Tourism's Conference Business of the Year award and a member of staff won York Hospitality Association's Award for Excellence in Customer Care.

The changes to **Kirkgate** mean that we can now cater for seated dinners, which are beginning to prove popular. The business will benefit further if the St Mary's Precinct Project goes ahead.

Retail business has moved from a loss making position to a profit making one over the past three accounting periods. In addition, the cost of sales has been reduced by 6% over the period.

There is still room for improvement in spend per visitor, particularly at York Art Gallery where the new shop is slightly off the normal visitor route.

c) *new exhibitions and interpretative services*

4. YMT has:

- Reopened York Art Gallery after a period of closure in April 2005. The programme has included high quality exhibitions. For example, **Reflections** included works from York's collections partnered with works from National and Regional collections which included works by Monet, Titian and Rembrandt. The second exhibition was **Forest** which was a loan exhibition of contemporary art; **Celebrating Ceramics** was entirely drawn from the extensive collections of ceramics. The project included concurrent exhibitions at Wakefield and Scarborough Art Galleries again selected entirely from York's ceramic collections. The whole project was funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. **Spanish Masters** was sponsored by the Friends of York Art Gallery and **Tom Bendhem: Collector** was organised by the Contemporary Art Society and has stimulated a new Contemporary Art Collectors group in Yorkshire.
- Opened the **Ice Age** exhibition at Yorkshire Museum which had an innovative approach in the design and hands on activities specifically with families and children in mind. The international loan exhibition on **Constantine the Great – York's Roman Emperor**, organised and curated by YMT opened in March 2006.
- At the Castle Museum the exhibitions **We are the People** (an impressive exhibition of postcards displayed throughout the museum which was on loan from the National Portrait Gallery) and **The Way We Were** (organised with ITV and the Yorkshire Film Archive) continued in early 2005. Work on **Kirkgate**, the Victorian Street at the Castle Museum, commenced during the winter and was opened in April 2006. A full report will be made in the next report.

- York St Mary's opened in May with the contemporary site specific installation ***breathing space*** by Caroline Broadhead at. This was made possible by a grant from the Arts Council Yorkshire.
- A programme of family activities was delivered at the Castle Museum, York Art Gallery and Yorkshire Museum during weekends, public holidays and the summer holidays.

d) *create an education strategy*

5. One of YMT's most important achievements has been the schools programme. With funding from the Renaissance in the Regions initiative and working with the five partners across Yorkshire, YMT now has dedicated learning team who are delivering a comprehensive service to schools in line with ***Inspiring Learning For All***. YMT has also been involved with a major survey commissioned by MLA on *What did you learn in the Museum today* which involved every teacher and every school who visited the Castle Museum during September and October 2005. YMT has published the programme for schools in a brochure which is sent out to all schools in York.

We have invested in all the Learning spaces across YMT financed by Hub resources. The Studio at York Art Gallery has improved the service we can offer in the arts immeasurably and we have developed two learning spaces at the Yorkshire Museum, the 'Curia' – a Roman themed space – and the Lab – which focuses on science and has computers and an electronic white board. We have also created a Victorian Schoolroom at the Castle Museum as part of the Kirkgate scheme and refurbished the adjoining educational space. These facilities are also used for informal learning activities for families. See Annex 3 for details of number of users.

The development of the schools service is entirely dependent on the continued funding from the Hub. This has been secured for 2006 - 08.

YMT have also been working on creating a website and e-learning opportunities in partnership with other hub museums and this will be launched on June 19th 2006.

YMT has worked with University of York, University of York St John, and York College on all our sites. This has included lectures and projects covering; history, fine art, design, citizenship. electronics, museum studies, archaeology, teacher training, astronomy, careers advice and volunteering.

e) *increase use and involvement by residents*

6. We have developed a public programme that is directed at families, concentrating our resources during school and public holidays. We intend to build on the informal learning programme in 2006-7 with additional funding from the Renaissance in the Regions by appointing an Informal Learning Coordinator and a Volunteers Manager. These posts will build relationships through a series of programmes and activities that intend to involve local residents in the collections and the venues. During 2005-06 YMT involved local residents through a varied programme:

York Art Gallery

The Studio has enabled us to organise more activities:

- **Family First** days, held on the first Saturday of every month, primarily aimed at local people.
- **Territories** project has proved extremely effective in contacting community groups and in breaking down the conceptual and physical barriers for local people and York Art Gallery collections. The audiences involved over the last year have included, Baby Gap, Blind and partially sighted, Informal Carers, Young Carers, Dads and Lads group, Future Prospects and young primary school. The final exhibition of the work produced by the various groups was shown at York Art Gallery was shown over one weekend attracting 1230 people.
- The Big Draw was held in October with 700 participants.
- Curatorial Lunchtime talks have also proved popular.

Yorkshire Museum

The public programme around the **Ice Age** exhibition proved very popular with local people and included:

- Lunch time lectures.
- Children's activities in the Ice Laboratory.
- A month of art sessions based on the Ice Age themes of cave art, freezing, hot savannahs, and beasts.
- Cool Wednesdays, again activities for everyone to join in with.
- YMT are also working with volunteers from the Yorkshire Philosophical Society on the library.
- The observatory has developed a programme of talks, demonstrations and open evenings are proving popular.

Archaeological opportunities included:

- A training dig throughout the summer behind York Art Gallery, a project in partnership with YAT. There were opportunities every Friday to meet the archaeologists and see the objects they had found.
- The archaeology team also joined in with the Roman Festival in July.

Castle Museum

The development of Kirkgate has included working with the following communities with the help of funding from the HLF:

- York Oral History group and ex employees of Terry's, to record their memories and thoughts on the factory and working in it.
- Fishergate Primary school on designing and creating a Victorian School room as a part of the new display.
- Theatre Royal and local youth theatre group from New Earswick school to interpret Kirkgate with drama. Performances will take place in 2006.
- A Blind and Partially Sighted group in consultation about the proposed new displays in Kirkgate.

In addition other projects included:

- ***Their past your future*** involved a number of local projects to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII. This has included working in partnership with the City Archives on a project for local schools combining archive papers and objects from the collection. We have had a very successful display celebrating the contribution of men and women from York to the war effort. Ranging from WRENS and Soldiers to Airmen and the land army.
- Huntington Adult Community Education Centre on a reminiscence session.

The ***St Mary's Abbey Precinct*** project has been developed with the help of an External Steering Group that comprises the University of York, the City of York (CYC) planning and parks sections, English Heritage and St Olave's Church. The consultative process has been expanded to include a wider group of Stakeholders including Conservation Advisory Panel, CYC Conservation, Yorkshire Philosophical Society, Police and others. Talks and presentations have been given to various groups including the Guildhall Ward to introduce the project to local residents. A full public consultation process will begin if we proceed to Stage 2 of the Heritage Lottery Bid.

f) *achieve high visitor satisfaction*

7. Visitor satisfaction ratings vary across the sites. York Castle Museum continues to be consistently high – e.g. in surveys in May and June this year visitors were asked to rate their overall visit in marks out of 10, 10 being excellent, the average mark awarded was 8.92.

In answer to the same question the average score at the Yorkshire Museum was 7.8.

Responses to York Art Gallery have been sought in a less statistical way, by way of comments forms. Some analysis can be done however, and of the 425 forms completed from July to September, 149 included comments on the refurbished gallery as a whole. Of these 139 were positive comments.

In October 2005 MORI conducted a visitor survey at York Art Gallery and Castle Museum; 98% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied and 0% were dissatisfied with their visit.

In order to ensure future visitor satisfaction we have commissioned original market research among visitors and non visitors to ascertain which subject matter would be most popular for future display and exhibition projects.

g) *ensure the cataloguing of the collection*

8. **Collections**

- **Accreditation** - Our applications to MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) for Accreditation were successful and we were commended on the quality of the application.
- **Collection Care and Documentation**
We have established and implemented a 5 year plan for the eradication of the documentation backlog. Good progress is being made on the documentation of the works on paper with the appointment of a part time Research Curator funded

by the Paul Mellon Foundation. The location audit of archaeology and geology collections is complete. Much of the ongoing documentation work in Social History, Military History and Decorative Arts has been linked to major display projects such as **Kirkgate** and **Celebrating Ceramics**. See Appendix 2 for retrospective documentation figures.

- The Library of historic volumes at the Yorkshire Museum has been re-ordered and basic conservation work completed, with voluntary assistance from members of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society.
- We have completed the formal loan agreement for the Newburgh Priory Pier Glasses. The agreement is one of three outstanding loans for artworks that have been allocated to York under the Acceptance in Lieu in situ arrangements. The MLA are delighted that this longstanding matter has now been resolved after a number of years.
- Great improvements in collections storage have been made, and the majority of the collections that were at risk have now been re-housed. The Yorkshire Museum store is completely re-organised, enabling staff to work directly with collections in the store. The Biology collections have been moved from the poor conditions in the Marygate huts to an environmentally controlled area at Birch Park. The WA Ismay collection of studio ceramics has been relocated from boxes to purpose made ceramic storage, enabling easy access to this important collection for the first time. Additional racking has been installed at the James Street store, to house the new archive from Nestlé.
- **Conservation** – 13 works have undergone conservation treatment, primarily in preparation for going on display.
- **Research** – Our Curator of Astronomy is working on a project with 3rd year Astrophysics students in the Physics Department at the University of York to try to determine the exact location of John Goodricke's observing site at the Treasurers House. Large numbers of enquiries are dealt with by all staff.
- **External activities** - The Portable Antiquities Scheme has been running its monthly finds ID days in Hull and York. The team have also recorded some 400 finds from major metal detecting rallies in our region, at Long Marston and Well.
- The Social History team is working with the York Oral History Society to interview forty past employees from Terry's and we will receive a full set of transcripts.
- The Science Team participated in a Science Day at the North York Moors Centre in Danby, also helping to promote the **Ice Age** exhibition further afield.
- We loaned two Roman Altars from Dunnington to that village for a weekend community celebration of **Dunnington through the Ages**. Over 500 people attended the event.
- **Archaeology Live** at the Yorkshire Museum - This year's training excavation by YAT was run in partnership with the YMT. To provide public access to the results of the excavation, we created a space in the basement of the Yorkshire Museum displaying the latest discoveries from the site.

- **60th Anniversary of the Second World War - York People at War** is the revamped exhibition at the Castle Museum about the personal experiences of people in and from York during the Second World War. **Their War – Your War** is a regularly changing display from local people who have provided mementos of their experiences of the Second World War. A rather large gun now welcomes visitors to the Castle Museum: our ‘Gate Guardian’ is a 25pdr Field Gun. The Second World War commemorations at YMT are funded as part of the Big Lottery Fund project for events nationwide.

9. Detailed performance indicators

Visitor Numbers

12 months from April 2005 to March 2006

	Visitors			Receipts £		
	Actual	Target	Last year	Actual	Budget	Last year
Castle Museum	216,134	243,700	247,632	942,310	1,076,222	1,017,732
York Art Gallery	152,313	124,800	29,829	0	0	0
York St Mary's	24,429	24,000	18,036	0	0	0
Yorkshire Museum	72,332	58,000	58,374	141,032	119,983	117,850
Grand Total	465,208	450,500	354,465	1,083,342	1,196,205	1,135,582

Financial Implications

10. YMT is financially stable at the moment, but it has always been recognised that in an increasingly competitive and demanding market it would require further investment funding and capital investment to survive. With regard to the financial agreement, it is now time for the Trust to discuss with the Council the next tranche of investment funding and the core funding for 2008-2013. A proposal has been submitted and is being considered separately by the Council's Executive.
11. The current agreed funding for 2004/5 is £1,364,000, which includes an inflationary uplift. Additionally, the Council is still holding £1.898m of capital funding to match actual and potential lottery awards, of which £85k is already committed against the HLF scheme at the Art Gallery.

