

York Museums Trust

Report Against Core Partnership Objectives April - December 2016

Creation of museum and gallery provision capable of contributing to positioning York as a world class cultural centre

Work has begun against YMT's ambitious Forward Plan 2016-21. The plan's Headline Priorities include that York Castle Museum should be subject to a major capital project and developing the Castle area as a cultural quarter

Thinking and planning for the development of the Castle Museum is being carried out in close co-operation with colleagues from CYC in order to take a strategic approach to the entire Castle Area.

The quality of the current provision has recently been evidenced by winning the national award for Family Friendly museum and appearing for the first time in Trip advisor top ten museums (see below).

Provision that is a source of inspiration and enjoyment for all and a stimulus for learning and skills development

Another Headline Priority in the Forward Plan is excellent, high profile programming, including strategic YMT-led events to attract visitors to York and high quality exhibitions at York Art Gallery.

Following on from its major renovation and redisplay in 2015-16, the Gallery's programme of major exhibitions has now begun.

Meanwhile at York Castle Museum the new 'Shaping the Body' exhibition is proving extremely popular with visitors. The exhibition explores 400 years of fashion, food and lifestyles to show the impact of all three on our bodies. It covers some difficult subjects but with a light touch. Amongst others, the exhibition has been a stimulus for learning and engagement with LGBT individuals and groups. It won a York Cultural Awards Highly Commended for the work with Howe Hill Hostel.

In 2016 York Castle Museum was designated one of the top ten museums in the UK according Trip advisor's Travellers' Choice awards, which are based on the ratings submitted by the general public. It was the only non-National museum in England on the list.

Following on from the impact of flooding last year, YMT have worked in partnership with YAT to put on 'Jorvik: Home and Abroad' at York St Mary's – a chance 'to discover the hustle and bustle of Viking York in this special exhibition devoted to the lifeblood of the city of Jorvik; international trade'.

Planning is also well underway for a major Viking exhibition at Yorkshire Museum in 2017, an exhibition produced in partnership with the British Museum which will tour Britain after its spell in York. On its tour it will be jointly branded as BM and YMT.

The protection and conservation of the collections, gardens and buildings for future generations including improved storage

Storage is another priority area identified in the Forward Plan. The aim is to dovetail the Castle Museum project with work to address most of the remaining collections storage and management issues. The social history collection alone has c.350,000 objects, the designated collection is one of the best social history resources in the UK. The process of properly documenting the collection and making it accessible to staff, volunteers and researchers is ongoing. A new storage project involving relocation, documentation and digitisation of the collection will be a major plank of a project to make use of facilities at Birch Park. The project will also improve the storage conditions of other sensitive collections.

Promotion of the city's museums and collections through a varied range of activities which could include exhibitions, displays, community projects, volunteering opportunities, formal learning for schools, informal activities for families, and adult learning

'Truth and Memory' ran March to September 2016, and the gallery was the only venue outside London to display this collection of more than 60 artworks produced during WW1 and in its immediate aftermath. The exhibition was originated by Imperial War Museums for the First World War Centenary and was first shown at IWM London. It was been specially reworked in partnership with York Art Gallery and featured key works from York's own collections.

Following that a major loan exhibition 'Flesh', including works by Rubens, Degas, Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, Circle of Rembrandt and Francis Bacon, is currently running. The theme of the show is how the body and flesh, human and animal, have long been subject to intense scrutiny by artists in a wide variety of methods and forms.

YMT's Volunteer Programme continues to be very popular, with around 350 active volunteers. We continue to pursue partnerships with organisations which

support adults with learning difficulties, and we are also looking to increase access to our volunteer programme for people with sensory issues.

A key element of our work in the future will be to identify and target groups who are experiencing social exclusion and develop meaningful volunteer roles which will encourage them to get involved in the work that we do.

We see strong potential to embed our volunteering programme into a broader strategy of community engagement which increases its effectiveness through partnership, signposting and progression.

Other examples of local partnerships currently important for the development our public programme are:

- University of York, Digital Creativity Labs: a pilot project to create a 3d Viking settlement for the Viking Exhibition
- York College: an established series of project work with students with public display opportunities
- Cultural Leaders Group: audience development partnership
- Cultural Education Partnership: promoting this newly formed organisation
- Media Arts Guild and the 2018 Mediale festival – as identified in CYC Economic Development Strategy 2016-20
- Aesthetica Art Prize: host of this major contemporary art award
- York Archaeological Trust: joint exhibition with Jorvik with potential for future developments, especially in 2017
- Eboracum Roman Festival: lead partner in this new annual event, with with CYC, York Explore, Roman Society, Roman Bath House pub
- Yorkshire Philosophical Society: ongoing source of information, ideas, funding and time from the body that founded the Yorkshire Museum and Gardens
- Friends of York Art Gallery: independent charity which provides funding, advice and public talks
- York Theatre Royal: youth theatre project in Kirkgate Victorian Street

Young people from schools across the city participated in the Griffin's Nest challenge in partnership with NYBEP. Schools were sent a creative brief to design an evening event to attract visitors into York City Centre in a project designed to develop enterprise skills.

YMT has an ongoing partnership with York College to provide opportunities for fashion and design students to use our collections for creative inspiration. In 2015 students worked with York Art Gallery to create fashion designs that incorporate ceramics, which were then displayed in the Centre of Ceramic Art. In 2016 the focus moved to the Shaping the Body exhibition, costumes were created by students on the theme of self-image and displayed alongside the historic costume collection.

Increased access to the city's collections, gardens and buildings and increasing visitor numbers, especially young people

It continues to be an unpredictable time in terms of visitor numbers, however they generally picked up in the last quarter of 2016 and the figures for the 9 months April to December 2016 are very positive when compared with what was a difficult 2015:

	Actual	Last year	% Change
York Castle Museum	214,359	189,313	+13%
Yorkshire Museum	65,809	68,690	-4%
York St Mary's *	40,643	6,119	+564%
York Art Gallery *	64,379	37,898	+70%
Total	385,190	302,020	+28%

** York St Mary's and York Art Gallery were only open part-year in 2015.*

The 'YMT Card' scheme, introduced in summer 2015, has been remarkably popular:

- 30,000 'YMT Cards' have been issued in 18 months.
- currently 22,000 active card holders, and
- approximately half are York residents, meaning one in every fifteen adult residents are members.

The number of active members is still increasing every week. In the coming years we plan to increase engagement of members with YMT, growing the commitment on both sides, thus increasing the retention rates of members and their support for YMT.

The increasing overall visits disguises a drop in school visitors in the year to date – 26,821 compared with 30,948 last year. We are investigating the reasons. One

question is whether the increasing number of academies may be having an impact in terms of curriculum links and budget priorities.

We are exploring the many ways that technology can enable YMT to work with our members and our broader audiences and supporters. We have invested in developing a customer relationship system that is linked to our point-of-sale systems and will shortly have an online public interface.

Recognition of the special significance of the museums and gallery for York residents through the maintenance of pricing incentives for York residents and opportunities for free access

The offer to York residents has been improved in partnership with York Explore. York Card holders can still use their cards as evidence of residence to purchase YMT Cards at half price and they are now also entitled to 20% off day tickets. Alternatively, residents without York Cards can use their Council Tax bill as evidence to gain the discount on YMT Cards.

Admission for children is free of charge at all YMT sites and, thanks to a contribution from CYC, residents aged 17-24 and those entitled to most forms of income related benefit can get a YMT Card free of charge. Out of an initial allocation of 4,000 cards around 3,500 have been taken up to date.

The YMT residents open days proved popular on 25 and 26 June 2016, with nearly 3,000 additional visitors across all the sites over the weekend. We look forward to participating in the Residents Festival again this month.

The facilitation of outreach activities and pricing mechanisms designed to encourage visits by those who do not traditionally use the museums or gallery

YMT's public programme of talks, workshops and events for adults continues to include regular sensory tours, particularly suitable those with a sight impairment, and monthly practical, inclusive Arts for Well-being sessions. Dementia, autism and deaf awareness training has been introduced for staff and 'relaxed openings' have been introduced for people with sensory impairments. YMT now also has an interdepartmental 'Access Group' whose brief is to identify and remove barriers to engagement facing different groups within our audiences

The community spaces at York Castle Museum and York Art Gallery, which are curated in partnership with local community groups, continue to be fully booked. As part of our review of community engagement we are committed to focusing this work more on traditionally excluded groups, including those with protected characteristics and lower incomes.

Excellent customer service and visitor experience

“Ensuring a Quality and 21st century Visitor Experience, pro-actively engaging visitors and sharing narratives” is another headline priority in YMT’s Forward Plan and so a new senior post of ‘Visitor Experience Manager’ has been created.

As well as the Tripadvisor award, York Castle Museum won York’s Little Vikings award for most kid friendly museum in York. York Art Gallery won York’s Visitor Attraction of the Year and also the national UK “Family Friendly Museum of the Year” award.

In future we intend to make more use of digital media to within the on-site programmes to enhance or form the basis of the visitor experience. A current example is our work with the University of York to create a historically accurate Viking settlement in virtual reality which will feature in 2017’s Viking exhibition at the Yorkshire Museum. This is part of an ongoing partnership with the Digital Creativity Labs at York University to research and publish on potential applications of digital technology in heritage environments.

Active international partnerships to enhance public programmes, to increase YMT’s and the city’s reputation, and to raise funds

The partnership exhibition of the works of York artist Albert Moore is currently on show in the Museum De Buitenplaats in the Netherlands. The show is scheduled for 2017 in York Art Gallery.

We are currently working with CYC, Make It York and British Council to build links with Chinese museums.

Retention of registered museum status and development of the designated collections to ensure maximum public benefit

Continues. YMT now formally provides expert support and advice to other museums in the region which are seeking to renew or gain accredited museum status.

The maintenance of the Museum Gardens on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest maintained and the register of botanical gardens

Continues. York Museum Gardens won another Yorkshire In Bloom Gold Award in 2016.

Public access to the Museum Gardens daily (except relevant Christmas / New Year holidays) unless closure is necessary for reasons of public safety

Continues.

Effective, open and transparent governance including effective access and equalities policies covering trustees and staff recruitment practices

As part of our Equality Action Plan, we monitor local demographics via census both for York and wider Yorkshire area and compare them with information submitted by both existing staff and new applicants.

We run fair and transparent selection processes for both Trustees and staff. Trustee vacancies are advertised and board diversity is an important consideration in recruitment. For staff posts, HR representatives are present on each interview panel, questions are submitted to HR in advance and all candidates receive the same information and are asked the same questions. The system of Personal Development Reviews means that routes to training are also open and fair. We opened all vacancies to volunteers in 2016 to widen the pool of potential candidates for jobs advertised internally.

Report of:

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