
York Tourism Strategy

A vision for tourism in York: 2032



Introduction

Nestled in the heart of England, York boasts a rich tapestry of heritage, culture, and innovation. From the iconic medieval architecture of York Minster to the charming cobblestone streets of the Shambles, every corner of this city breathes life into centuries of stories. The York Tourism Strategy is not just a blueprint; it is a commitment to preserving and celebrating this historical legacy while embracing the opportunities of the future.

As we embark on a journey to showcase the best of what York has to offer, we proudly present the York Tourism Strategy – a visionary roadmap designed to elevate the city’s tourism experience for residents and visitors, fostering a sense of community and pride. Our strategy is founded on principles of sustainability, inclusivity, and authenticity and in this document, we outline key initiatives, partnerships, and innovative approaches that will shape the future of York’s

visitor economy. From promoting regenerative practices, to enhancing the well-being of York’s communities through tourism, the York Tourism Strategy is a comprehensive framework that aligns with the city’s values and aspirations. By engaging with the people who call York home, local businesses, and cultural institutions, we aim to ensure that tourism becomes a force for positive change, contributing to the city’s prosperity and well-being.

This strategy has been co-produced by the city, with extensive consultation with a breadth of stakeholders from across York and the wider region, led by the York Tourism Advisory Board. Its foundations have been built on insights, trends, research and reflection and is the beginning of a bold new approach putting our communities, our people, our visitors, our businesses and our environment at the heart of everything we do.

This is a tourism strategy for the City of York and its success hinges on the spirit of collaboration, recognizing the collective efforts of stakeholders, local government bodies, businesses, community organizations, cultural institutions, and, most importantly, the residents of York. This collaborative approach is not just a methodology but a commitment to unite diverse voices and perspectives, ensuring that the strategy becomes a shared endeavor that benefits everyone involved.

The York Tourism Strategy is more than a plan – it is a commitment to a regenerative tourism future, fostering authentic collaboration, and ensuring that York remains a beacon of history, culture, and hospitality for generations to come.

Dr Brendan Paddison

Chair, York Tourism Advisory Board

Cllr Pete Kilbane

Executive Member for Transport and Economy,
Deputy Leader City of York Council

Sarah Loftus

Managing Director, Make It York



Image credit Visit York



Image credit Visit York

Context

York is built on the history and heritage of over 2,000 years: from pre-historic beginnings, Roman roots and Viking invasions, to Civil War sieges, industrial growth and changing industries. Renowned for its Minster, one of the largest, most stunning Gothic cathedrals in Europe; celebrated for its rail and confectionery heritage; and admired for its scientific and cultural innovation, and social reform.

This rich history lives on in York's present, and sits juxtaposed within a modern, cosmopolitan European city. Consistently ranking among the best cities to live in the UK, and with the most attractions per square mile, York thrums with contemporary culture and creativity as a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts, with local independent businesses, shops, accommodation and eateries, a racecourse, a year-round programme of events and festivals, and beautiful countryside on the doorstep.

York is a bustling tourist destination, welcoming 8.9 million visitors each year, with a value to the local economy of £1.7 billion. The visitor economy in York supports 17,000 jobs and a fifth of York's visitors stay overnight in one of over 20,000 bedspaces. We also welcome 363,000 conference and event delegates each year.

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted global travel and tourism, with more and more visitor economies revising their tourism goals, asking: What kind of tourism do we want in the future and how can the visitor economy create value for the city beyond pure visitor volume? In 2020, Make It York commissioned Group NAO to produce a report on exactly this: how York "builds back better" after the pandemic, the kind of tourism we want in the future, and how the visitor economy can make York a better city.

Group NAO identified that Covid-19 accelerated trends and signs of crisis that had been already

happening: the retail crisis and surge in online shopping, the rise of localism in consumption and production, high cost of housing, consumer demand for responsible and sustainable products and experiences, along with the need for new urban governance models and mandating of the visitor economy – issues neither unique to York nor new to urban developers and policymakers. Group NAO also identified that "We need to think bigger, broader and bolder" – to explore the city's full potential as a creative, inclusive, and innovative place to live, work, study and visit. Most people that they interviewed also called for city leaders to lead the transformation towards a more sustainable and regenerative visitor economy.

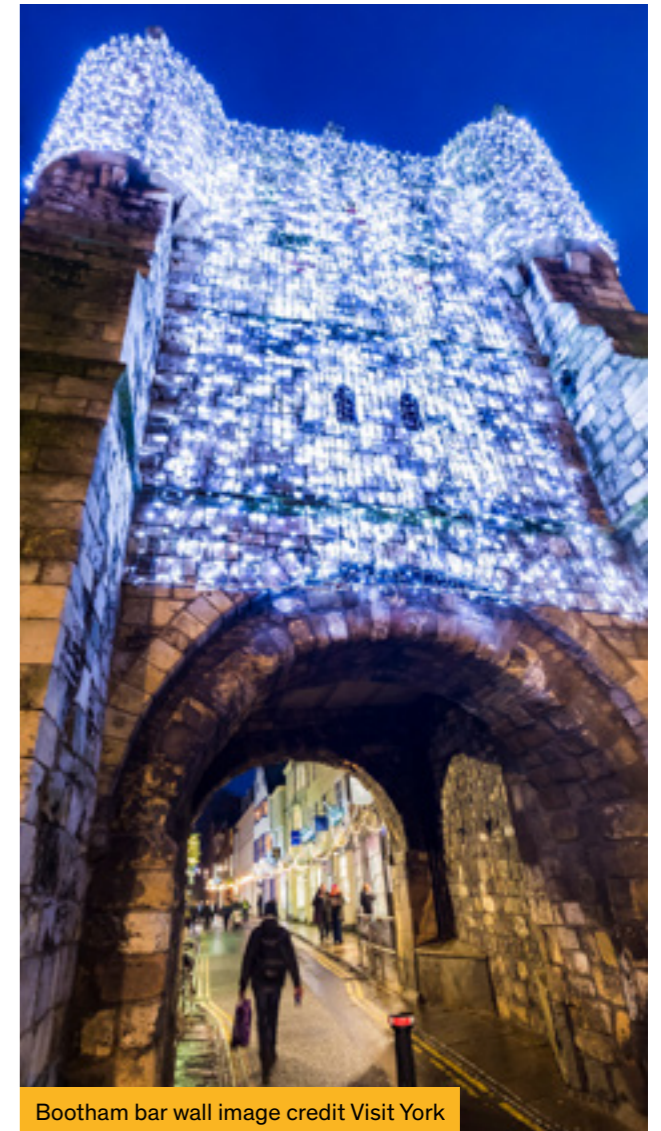
The ever-evolving visitor market, changing resident, student, workers and tourist demands, complex political and green agendas and increased global competition are having a significant impact on the way tourism operates in York. Since Group NAO's report was published, the ongoing legacy of the Covid pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and the war in Ukraine, are all impacting the way people live, shop and travel. These add to known issues for York, including the city's popularity meaning it can sometimes feel overcrowded for residents, the increase in short term lets having the potential to lead to rising housing costs, and ongoing staff shortages in the tourism and hospitality industry.



North York Moors National Park - image credit Steve Bell



Image credit Pairings Wine Bar

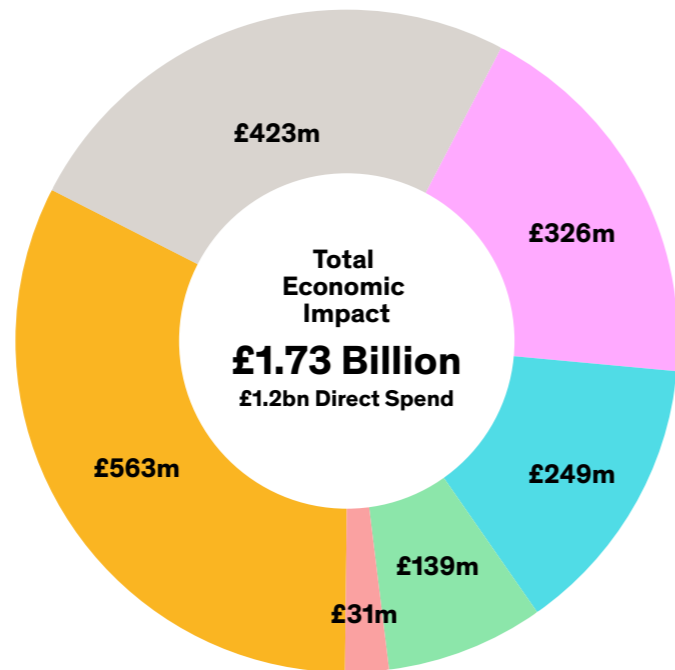


Bootham bar wall image credit Visit York

The economic impact of tourism in York

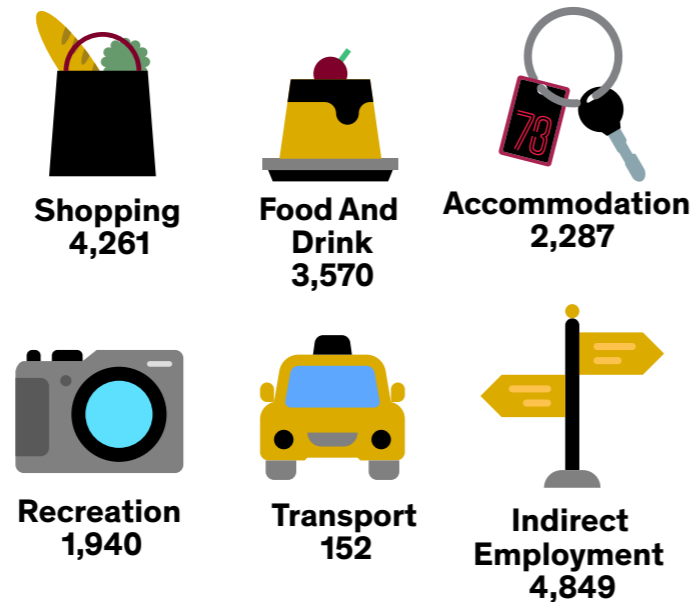
Economic impact of tourism in York 2022

- Shopping – £423m
- Food and Drink – £326m
- Accommodation – £249m
- Indirect Spend – £563m
- Recreation – £139m
- Transport – £31m



Number of jobs supported by sector

Total supported jobs: 17,060



8.9 million visitors in 2022

up 54% on 2021

1.2 million overseas visitors



1 in 5 visitors stayed over night

Overnight visitors contributed over half of the total economic impact including £249m spent on accommodation

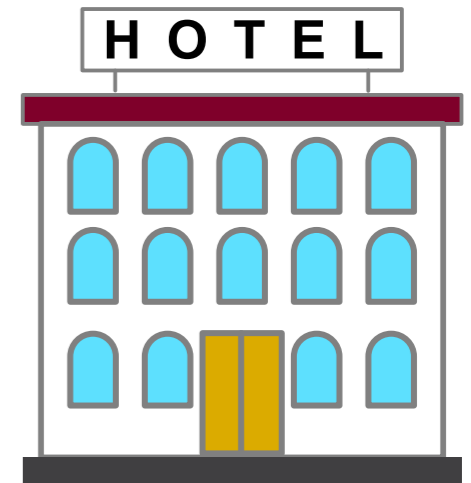


Image credit Visit York

Visit York

source: STEAM data for York 2022

Where do we go from here?

Our vision for York is as a sustainable, carbon negative city; a city where heritage, culture and public space are important and a city where, increasingly, the car is less important. A city where quality of life matters. And where tourism is a regenerative force for the post-covid years. A new era where tourism might not be an isolated goal, but an integrated means to sustain even better quality of life in the city.

This Tourism Strategy aligns closely with York's 10-Year City Plan, that "York will be a vibrant, prosperous, welcoming and sustainable city, where everyone can share and take pride in its success,"¹ with the Local Plan, and with the city's Economic Strategy. This has the ambition for York to be in the top 25% of UK economies, increasing productivity and pay while continuing to grow new skills in our workforce. For York to be a place where productive businesses are good employers, where our residents thrive. In particular, the Economic Strategy's vision is to grow the value of tourism with a quality offer for visitors and locals.²

Alongside the Culture Strategy³ and Health and Wellbeing Strategy⁴, this strategy will ensure that there are cultural and creative activities that residents and visitors can benefit from throughout their lives, to support their wellbeing and to tackle barriers to engagement.

Through the new York and North Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), City of York Council and Make It York will work closely with North Yorkshire Council and the York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, to develop joint approaches to visitor economy and tourism at a strategic level, while maximising the support they provide to the visitor economy industry.

A sustainable visitor economy must be strategized, inspired, and facilitated, and the tourism offer must be more culturally and socially engaging as well as family friendly for visitors and residents. To do so requires a new shared vision for the visitor economy and a more holistic approach to York as a destination. This strategy sets out that vision.



Image credit Visit York

¹York 2032: The 10-Year Plan: [Annex A 10 year plan FINAL.pdf \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

²York Economic Strategy, [Annex Ci Economic Strategy.pdf \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

³York Culture Strategy, [Yorks-Creative-Future-York-Culture-Strategy-2020-2025.pdf \(makeityork.com\)](#)

⁴York Health and Wellbeing Strategy, [York Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#)

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York will be a vibrant, prosperous, welcoming and sustainable city, where everyone can share and take pride in its success

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Image credit Visit York

The Tourism Strategy has come together through robust consultation, including through Group NAO's research, input and direction from the city's Tourism Advisory Board, feedback from city leaders and stakeholders, resident views through City of York Council's Our Big Conversation, My City Centre Residents Survey and the 2023 Residents Festival Survey, the Visit York Visitor Survey, and participation from the Cultural Leaders Group (now the York Culture Forum). The Tourism Strategy forms part of the City of York Council's Council Plan, supporting the City Vision, working alongside the Economic Strategy, Culture Strategy, Climate Change Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Transport Strategy, Our City Centre Vision, and underpinned by the York Narrative.

The success of this strategy is reliant on a collaborative approach. Led by the Tourism Advisory Board, and supported by Make It York as the city's Destination Management Organisation, York BID, and City of York Council, effective stakeholder partnerships will deliver development, management and marketing activity and support businesses to achieve their full potential. These collaborations and partnerships will carry the transformation of York's visitor economy to a new era.

Vision

The York Tourism Strategy will set York apart, as a small city true to its roots, that has a truly global reach. It will transform York’s approach to tourism, ensuring the city becomes a world-leader in regenerative tourism, that it grows and diversifies its offer responsibly, and that the city maximises tourism’s contribution to the economy, employment and quality of life in York and beyond.

By 2032, York is known as an inclusive and welcoming city with a thriving and regenerative visitor economy, world-leading in its commitment to protecting the environment, renowned for its culture and heritage – where localhood enables locals to experience the uniqueness of their city, and visitors to feel it is always a place to call home.

By 2032, we will have grown York’s £1.7 billion visitor economy sustainably and be members of the Global Destinations Sustainability Index, committed to improving and recognising sustainability, performance, and regeneration.

Through the York and North Yorkshire LVEP, our strategic approach to the visitor economy alongside North Yorkshire Council and the York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority will have resulted in a thriving, united and strategically aligned region, with a responsible York and North Yorkshire visitor economy, focus on sustainability and sector support and development.



Shambles, York



York Community Stadium. Image credit City of York Council

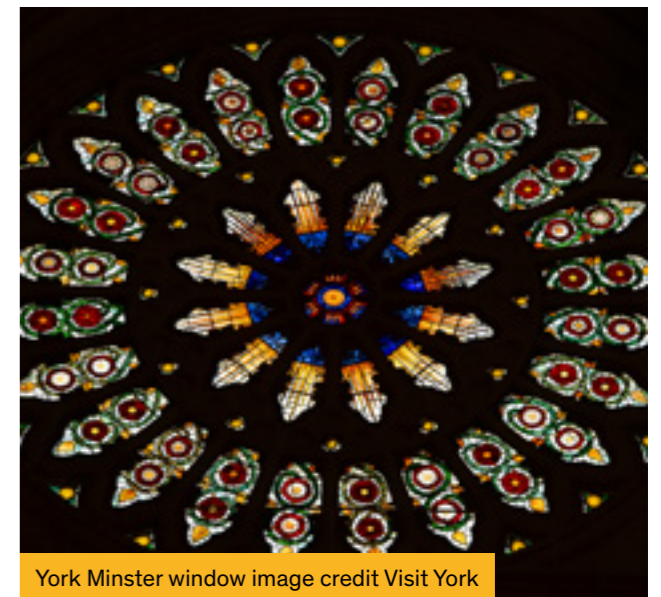
Priorities

York’s Tourism Strategy is focused on five Key Priorities with specific ambitions for the city:

- 1. A Regenerative Visitor Economy:** York is a responsible, robust and profitable destination with a regenerative visitor economy.
- 2. Green York:** Our businesses and visitors’ commitment proactively contributes to York’s transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- 3. Culture:** York is renowned for its heritage, culture and cutting-edge approach to creativity, which attracts cultural tourists and supports the city’s regenerative visitor economy.
- 4. Residents and Localhood:** Local people experience the very best of their city alongside its visitors, with tourism contributing to the quality of life in York and beyond.
- 5. Skills and recruitment:** The visitor economy is a first-choice career for school leavers and graduates, businesses invest in upskilling, training and career development, and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.



Image credit York BID



York Minster window image credit Visit York



Image credit York BID



Image credit York BID

A Regenerative Visitor Economy

Ambition: York is a responsible, robust and profitable destination with a regenerative visitor economy.

Need and opportunity:

Tourism can become a means to build and regenerate the local economy in York and beyond, seeking to increase the value rather than volume of tourism, benefitting local businesses, residents, students and the environment, and with visitors having a positive impact on their holiday destination.

Our research found that York's communities wanted the city to become a thriving, liveable city, "with a new bold plan to rethink the city centre and rebuild the visitor economy in a more sustainable and integrated way."⁵ 81% of residents also agreed with developing a strategy that ensures the tourism sector is sustainable and targets those visitors who respect our city and benefit the economy.⁶

Tourism is vital for the city's cultural scene and vice versa and an important source of employment for all groups of society. Conferences, meetings and business events also play a vital role in the economic and professional development of York's visitor economy. As such, tourism can contribute to income distribution in communities, greater employment opportunities, inclusivity and social mobility.

York has a thriving hospitality sector, with over 20,000 bedspaces, of which over 10,000 are serviced properties, including hotels. Of non-serviced properties, there were 1,938 active short lets listings in York in 2022. Overall, the split of serviced and non-serviced bedspaces is around 50:50, although usage is closer to 75:25, reflecting lower occupancy levels and longer stays in non-serviced accommodation, versus higher occupancy and turnover in serviced properties⁷.

York is proud of its welcoming and vibrant evening and night-time economy. As one of the safest cities in the UK, visitors return year after year to enjoy the diverse range of activities on offer. This has also been highlighted by the international Purple Flag award which saw our city centre's safety, cleanliness and vibrancy recognised by independent assessors.

York's 10-Year City Plan sets out an ambitious city-wide vision for the future, with a set of shared priorities, goals and actions. This shared vision, that "York will be a vibrant, prosperous, welcoming and sustainable city, where everyone can share and take pride in its success," focuses on three core areas: economic growth, health and wellbeing and climate change.⁸



Shambles, York

This aligns with the city's Economic Strategy's vision, to "build inclusive, healthy and sustainable communities, by promoting the positive social and environmental benefits of economic development. With more and better employment and business opportunities, retraining and reskilling opportunities for growing sectors, and great transport infrastructure to get people to and from work sustainably, we will help to improve the wellbeing of our residents."⁹

The city-wide Our City Centre Vision also establishes a 10-year strategic vision for the centre of York: with a vibrant city centre that a wide range of people spend time in day and night, creating the right conditions for responsive businesses to grow and adapt, for city living to develop, and for cultural and social activity to flourish.¹⁰

York is committed to becoming a sustainable tourism destination, and as city leaders come together to promote responsible tourism, we will lead, operate and market the destination together, with Make It York as the city's Destination Management Organisation. Through the York and North Yorkshire LVEP we will work closely with North Yorkshire to ensure a thriving, united and strategically aligned region, focusing on the visitor economy, sustainability and sector support and development.



Image credit Visit York

⁵Group NAO Report on Tourism in York

⁶My City Centre Draft Vision Survey Results - Final Report, [My City Centre Winter Consultation 2021 - Datasets - York Open Data](#)

⁷Visit York Visitor Survey 2022

⁸York 2032: The 10-Year Plan, [Annex A 10 year plan FINAL.pdf \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

⁹York Economic Strategy, [Annex A - Draft Economic Strategy June 2022 \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁰My City Centre York Vision, [My City Centre York Vision - City of York Council](#)

Recommendations and actions:

- Commit to city-wide leadership on sustainability, with the Tourism Advisory Board, Make It York and City of York Council, along with city partners, leading this work and communicating responsible and regenerative tourism as a destination-wide code.
- Focus on developing the value of the visitor economy based on the quality of visitation, rather than the overall volume of visitors, to enhance people’s travel experience and encourage stays with higher spend and a focus on sustainability.
- Extend the length of day visits into evening, to support the city’s evening economy, taking full advantage of York’s Purple Flag status and the city’s reputation as safe and welcoming, and utilising York’s particular community and economy strengths, including culture, archaeology, horse-racing, events, the Minster and the restaurant scene.
- A targeted marketing approach, informed by Visit York tourism intelligence, which focuses on both domestic and inbound tourism and encourages longer stays for visitors from abroad. This approach will be informed by market intelligence.
- Ensure York is a year-round destination, through product development, collective marketing, a year-round calendar of events, city-centre attractions and further developing economic growth in outlying areas.
- Develop a sustainable business tourism sector that positively benefits businesses and residents, as well as addressing seasonality issues and the shoulder season: focusing on intercity partnerships across venues and smaller events to overcome the city’s limited meeting and conference capacity.



Image credit Visit England



Image credit York BID



Image credit Visit York

Key outcomes:

- By 2032, we will have grown York’s £1.7 billion visitor economy sustainably and be members of the Global Destinations Sustainability Index, committed to improving and recognising sustainability, performance, and regeneration.
- York is renowned for quality experiences, infrastructure and sustainable and regenerative tourism products and services, which encourage people to stay longer and spend more, as well as repeat visits, ensuring that the value of tourism is the key measure of our regenerative tourism economy, rather than the numbers of visitors to York.
- York is a year-round destination, maximising city spaces such as Parliament Street, Eye of York and Tower Gardens, with new significant developments such as Castle Gateway and York Central also integrated into the city’s year-round offer – through promoting a high-profile annual calendar of events, festivals and exhibitions, for both visitors and residents.
- New city centre experiences are created for residents and visitors, through working collaboratively to develop York’s attraction portfolio; helping to attract new independent tenants and businesses to fill vacant city centre premises. New experiences are also created in areas across the city and beyond to encourage new visitor economy businesses to further develop economic growth in outlying areas.
- York’s range of unique and bespoke historic, cultural and arts venues act as a strong draw and point of difference to larger conference cities, as well as a thriving post-covid hybrid events scene. The city encourages combined business and leisure trips.
- An accommodation and housing strategy that considers hotel provision, as well as the recent explosion in short-term lets, that directly impact on property prices and those living in neighbouring properties.

¹¹Future of Tourism, [Guiding Principles | Future of Tourism](#)

Green York

Ambition: Our tourism businesses and visitors' commitment proactively contributes to York's transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Need and opportunity:

Climate change is now the greatest threat facing our planet¹¹. Reducing our carbon emissions and adapting to a changing climate are crucial to ensure that York is a city fit for the future.

In 2019 York announced a Climate Emergency. City of York Council set the ambition for the city to be net zero carbon by 2030, and established an independent Climate Commission. The city has since been awarded an A rating for climate action leadership by the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), one of only 122 cities across the world to receive this.¹²

York's greenhouse gas emissions are mostly from buildings (32% residential and 30% commercial) and from transport (28%) and significant emissions reductions are required to achieve our net zero ambition. If we do all we can with the currently available options, we will reduce emissions by 77% by 2030¹³; but we will need to go further – through new scientific endeavour, emerging technology, lobbying for and embracing policy change, attracting external investment, and working together across the city.¹⁴

The Tourism Strategy recognises the impact of climate change and city leaders will proactively work together to ensure shared commitment by the city's tourism, leisure and culture businesses to deliver York's vision of achieving the net zero ambition, and to encourage visitors to make environmentally sustainable choices, including through measures suggested in the city's Draft Local Transport Strategy, York Civic Trust's A Transport Strategy for York and York Cycle Campaign's 42 Ways to Transform York.



Image credit Visit York

¹¹Climate change widespread, rapid and intensifying - IPCC, <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wg1-20210809-pr/>

¹²York named as A-list climate leader, <https://www.york.gov.uk/news/article/1127/york-named-as-a-list-global-climate-action-leader>

¹³On 2005 levels

¹⁴[York Climate Change Strategy 2022-2032](#)

¹⁵Visit York Visitor Survey 2022

In 2022, 59% of visitors came to York by car, van, motorhome or motorbike, 36% arrived by train, 17% by airplane, 16% used Park and Ride, 4% arrived by ferry, 3% by coach tour or special excursion, and 3% by public bus or coach service (visitors can select more than one mode of transport).¹⁵

This strategy will champion more sustainable travel methods, and we will work in partnership to encourage visitors to use these to reach our city and beyond. York is one of the most easily accessible cities in the UK, with direct rail links from London, Edinburgh and Manchester in around two hours, and direct cycle routes from neighbouring areas.

Group NAO identified that “the new buzz is the 15-minute city, where all you need as a citizen is within 15 min”¹⁶. For York, as a small yet vibrant city,

2022 saw 99% of visitors walking between venues, with 1% taking a taxi, and 1% using a public bus or coach service.¹⁷ We will continue to champion and encourage active travel for people commuting within York, where possible, and for those visiting attractions in outlying areas of the city.



Image credit Nick Howard



Image credit Nick Howard

¹⁶Group NAO Report on Tourism in York

¹⁷Visit York Visitor Survey 2022

Recommendations and actions:

- Influence behaviour change among visitors and residents and encourage them to take positive action and make sustainable choices throughout their time in York, promoting the benefits of this, to contribute towards the city's ambition of being net-zero carbon by 2030.
- Support tourism and hospitality businesses to develop their green accreditation, sharing best practice and signposting to national and international accreditation schemes recognised by Visit England, such as Green Tourism and Green Key.
- Businesses will take steps to reduce energy consumption, influence behaviour change (among employees, customers and networks) and engage local supply chains, support York's net zero ambition, which ensures businesses are resilient to climate change and provides opportunities for new local jobs.
- Deliver a balance of sustainable events and markets from Make It York, City of York Council and York BID, which have a reduced carbon footprint by promoting green travel initiatives, recycling systems, ban of single-use plastics, managing energy and water more efficiently and choosing sustainable suppliers along with using more local suppliers where possible, while developing events and meeting visitor expectations. Work with local event and festival organisers towards the same goal.
- Support York's vision for an inclusive and accessible transport infrastructure, promoting alternatives to the car such as public transport, active travel and encouraging uptake of e-vehicles, improving health and wellbeing of residents and visitors alike.
- Visitor economy partners will actively promote, and encourage use of more sustainable travel options.
- Join the Global Destinations Sustainability Index, as part of York's commitment to benchmarking, improving, and recognising sustainability, performance, and regeneration.
- Make It York, as the city's Destination Management Organisation, to become signatories to The Future of Tourism Coalition's Guiding Principles on responsible tourism.¹⁸



Holgate Windmill, Image credit Paul Jarvis



Image credit Rebecca Newman, York Proms

Key outcomes:

- York will be known as a world-leading city in its commitment to environmental sustainability and will achieve net-zero by 2030, due to the actions and collective drive of city leaders, Make It York as the city's Destination Management organisation, and tourism and hospitality businesses.
- Active travel and use of public transport by visitors and residents will have increased in line with the city's vision for inclusive and accessible transport infrastructure, through advocacy and coordinated promotion among visitor economy partners.
- Visitors to York will maximise the positive impacts of responsible travel during their stay, making more environmentally sustainable choices, and minimizing the negative impacts on the destination, leaving the city in a better condition than they found it.
- Tourism and hospitality businesses, and events in York, will have developed their green accreditation, committed to reducing carbon emissions, waste reduction and have banned single-use plastics, to support York's ambition to be a net-zero carbon city by 2030.



York Community Woodland - The Accessible Woodland
Image credit City of York Council

¹⁸Future of Tourism, [Guiding Principles | Future of Tourism](#)

Culture

Ambition: York is renowned for its heritage, culture and cutting-edge approach to creativity, which attracts cultural tourists and supports the city’s regenerative visitor economy.

Need and opportunity:

With a diverse music scene, thriving grassroots initiatives, major culture and heritage venues, and status as the UK’s only UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts, York is a city where outstanding, renowned heritage meets a cutting-edge and contemporary approach to creativity. York is home to six Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations; York Museums Trust, York Theatre Royal, Pilot Theatre, Next Door But One, the National Centre for Early Music, and Explore York Libraries and Archives. There are at least 94 professional arts and heritage organisations operating in the city and over 750 creative industries businesses, with over 4,400 employees. The sector is worth £33m to the local economy.

The Commission on Culture and Local Government recently highlighted the essential role culture plays in tourism: “Local cultural infrastructure is essential in supporting a healthy visitor economy. Culture, and particularly heritage, is the main driver of inbound visits and the basis of Britain’s reputation overseas.”¹⁹

Group NAO also identified that: “In the broader strategic perspective, long-time leading cultural cities like Berlin and Nantes, see the city’s cultural resources as the soft power that will enable them not only to reboot, but also to thrive as attractive urban habitats in the future. For these cities, culture is core to the manifestation of city life and sense of place.”

¹⁹Local Government Association, [Cornerstones of Culture: Commission on Culture and Local Government Summary Report](#)

²⁰York Culture Strategy, [Yorks-Creative-Future-York-Culture-Strategy-2020-2025.pdf \(makeityork.com\)](#)

York has an ambitious Culture Strategy, which ensures culture is inclusive, relevant and accessible to everybody in York. It supports residents’ health and wellbeing throughout their lives, puts culture at the heart of placemaking, ensures talent development and retention, and has the vision to raise York’s profile nationally and internationally: as both a city renowned for its heritage and for its cutting-edge, contemporary approach to creativity²⁰. The Culture Executive Group, elected by the Culture Forum, provide the citywide leadership, advocacy, direction and oversight for the Culture Strategy.

Culture has a key role to play in developing a regenerative visitor economy, encouraging higher-spend and longer stay visits, and in promoting York’s unique character both locally and to the world. By aligning the Tourism Strategy and Culture Strategy’s aims we can ensure an integrated approach to the promotion of culture and tourism across the city and beyond.

The arts can help to support mental and emotional health, reduce hospital attendances, and improve health outcomes. Culture and wellbeing is a priority area of the Culture Strategy, and this aligns with the city’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy, ensuring residents, students and visitors can benefit from culture throughout their lives.



The Howl and The Hum 19 | credit Nathan Luke



The York Dungeon



York Ice Trail 2023, image credit Visit York



Image credit York BID



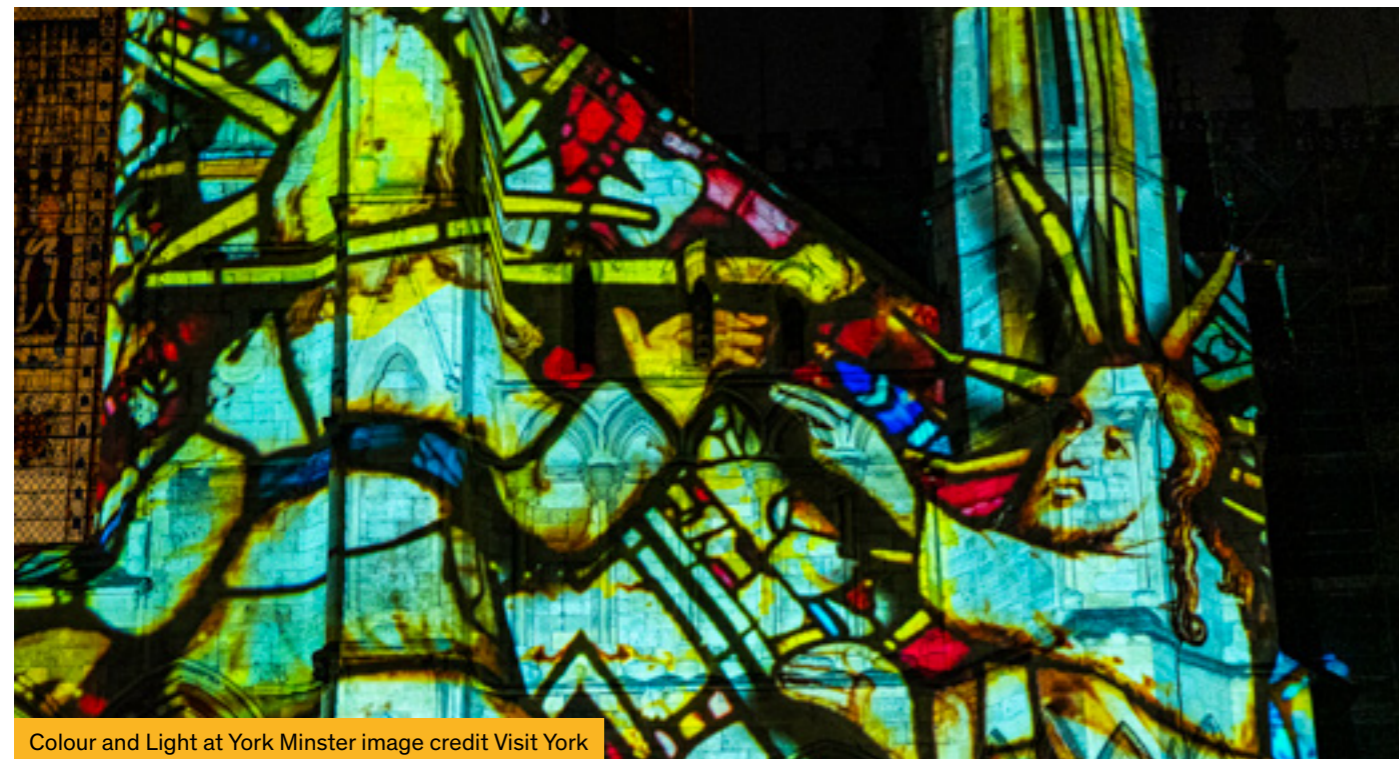
Image credit York BID



image credit Visit England

Recommendations and actions:

- Support the York Culture Strategy’s vision to transform York’s cultural participation, ambition and reputation: York will become known as a city where outstanding, renowned heritage comes together with a cutting-edge contemporary approach to creativity, reflecting the city’s rich history and its status as the UK’s first UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts.
- Integrate and maximise the profile of arts and heritage as part of the city’s tourism brand, to raise its national profile as a cultural destination and to promote and maximise York’s UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts Status and potential to become a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- Implement a citywide Marketing and Communications Strategy for arts and heritage, promoting the key priorities of the Culture Strategy, Tourism Strategy and the UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts designation. This will ensure an effective and joined-up approach, so that both residents and visitors can benefit from opportunities to be creative and to engage with and participate in culture.
- Support cultural organisations’ capital aspirations to develop cultural public spaces both in the city centre and in parks, open spaces, and districts beyond York, with national and international profile, ensuring that arts and heritage assets attract residents and cultural tourists. The Culture Strategy will work in tandem with the Tourism Strategy on this action.
- Celebrate York’s headline acts and champion up-and-coming local talent, working with the York Music Venue Network and cultural venues, to ensure the diverse roster of cultural events and shows in the city is reflected in our tourism marketing.



Colour and Light at York Minster image credit Visit York



Pop-Up Patio, York Theatre Royal Summer 2020, Photograph by Karen Boyes

Key outcomes:

- York is known as a place where outstanding internationally renowned heritage comes together with a cutting edge, contemporary approach to creativity.
- York’s rich and innovative culture offer attracts higher spend cultural tourists, growing the value rather than volume of tourism and supporting the city’s regenerative visitor economy. Our potential to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site also brings economic benefits to the city.
- Culture and tourism stakeholders work together in placemaking and creating urban space with national and international appeal in the city centre and beyond.
- York and its wider region will work collaboratively to maximise the profile of arts, culture and heritage as part of the city’s tourism brand, raise the city’s national profile as a cultural destination and York’s UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts status.
- Evidence of a tangible increase in the media profile of York’s cultural offer nationally and internationally.

Residents and Localhood

Ambition: Local people experience the very best of their city and wider region alongside its visitors, with tourism contributing to the quality of life in York and beyond.

Need and opportunity:

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Make It York and City of York Council produced a Tourism Recovery Marketing Strategy, to re-energise the city and tell the story of York’s diverse history, whilst building resident and visitor confidence that the city is a safe and welcoming place. The strategy had an initially hyper-local focus, which celebrated York’s uniqueness and the community spirit of local people and businesses who got us through the pandemic. This approach has been recognised across Europe and championed as “the return of localhood”²¹.

The pandemic accelerated and progressed trends already happening in Destination Management Organisations. Group NAO highlighted that, “The city belongs to the citizens

– not the visitors, nor the stakeholders of the visitor economy. Quality of life in the city has moved to the core of destination management. This means that the end-purpose of destination management has moved well beyond the growth imperative and the immediate visitor experience to “better life in the city”. This reflects resident concerns on overreliance on the tourism and the night-time economy, and the needs of tourists over those of residents.²²

The city’s attractiveness lies beyond its tourism attractions alone, also in its localhood, its atmosphere and non-touristic in-between spaces. Place branding and destination marketing are now moving towards more value-based manifestations – often with culture at the forefront.



Image credit City Cruises

²¹Group NAO Report on Tourism in York

²²Our Big Conversation 2022, [Our Big Conversation 2022 - Datasets - York Open Data](#)

More than two in three residents think that improved parks and open spaces would add value and benefits for residents and the wider city, while 69% believe the theatre, arts events and festivals add value and benefits.²³ 73% of York residents have attended the Christmas Market, and 67% of residents have visited the Ice Trail in the last two years. While residents perceive the

main benefits of tourism in York to be economic benefits (89%) and job creation (82%), 77% have also said that major benefits include maintenance of the historic environment, and 74% agreed that it creates events that residents can enjoy.²⁴

It is this strategy’s aim to ensure that resident engagement and inclusion is maintained and grown, and that York’s citizens can experience the very best of their city, alongside its visitors. We will develop and create special resident-specific offers and incentives and encourage our residents to be proactive participants in York’s tourism offer, and to feel valued by and part of their city.

Alongside the Culture Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy, this strategy will tackle barriers to engagement in York and provide opportunities for creativity, cultural engagement and participation for residents, including for marginalised or isolated groups, to support their health and wellbeing.



National Railway Museum York



Around the World in 80 Days, York Theatre Royal 2021, Photograph by Charlotte Graham

²³My City Centre Residents Survey Final Report 2021, [PowerPoint Presentation \(storage.googleapis.com\)](#)

²⁴York Residents Festival 2023: Make It York Research Report

Recommendations and actions:

- Increase the engagement level of residents at events, activities and leisure and hospitality businesses in York throughout the year, making full use of what is on offer and can be enjoyed in their city, along with the visitor.
- Through the Culture Strategy, ensure there is a specific community offer and cultural and event activities for residents, working in partnership with local groups, acts and creators.
- Create a visitor offer that is inclusive and relevant to both visitors and residents, in the city centre and in local communities, through initiatives like York Trailblazers, which will explore stories from York’s past, encouraging communities to reimagine them in new and creative ways.
- Ensure York is an inclusive and accessible destination, working with partners and local advocacy groups including York Pride, York Disability Rights Forum and Inclusive Equal Rights UK to ensure inclusivity in all tourism offerings..
- Develop a resident ambassador programme focusing on sense of place and improving product knowledge locally and across the wider region.
- The Tourism Strategy will support residents to live well throughout their lives, with tourism, hospitality and leisure activities contributing to positive health and well-being outcomes.



Image credit Visit York

Key outcomes:

- York’s visitor economy and tourism sector will directly contribute to the quality of life for its residents via improved places, enhanced facilities, enriching cultural and educational experiences, access to fair and rewarding job opportunities and an environment that inspires and supports entrepreneurs.
- New tourism developments in the city will contribute to the quality of life for York’s communities.
- York’s visitor offer is inclusive and relevant to both visitors and residents: residents of all backgrounds can engage and participate in activities in the city centre and in their local communities, through initiatives like York Trailblazers.
- There is more diversity and intergenerational engagement in arts, heritage, and events, including people from the LGBTQ community, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, D/deaf or disabled people, and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- York will have an effective and joined-up approach, so that residents and people who work, study in, and visit York, can benefit from opportunities to engage with and participate in the visitor economy. We will be a welcoming city that celebrates inclusion, working with Inclusive Equal Rights UK to make York the first anti racist and inclusive city in the North of England.



JORVIK Viking Festival 2023 credit Visit York



March to Coppergate credit JORVIK



Muster to Deans Park credit JORVIK

Skills and Recruitment

Ambition: The visitor economy is a first-choice career for school leavers and graduates, businesses invest in upskilling, apprenticeships, training and career development, and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Need and opportunity:

Tourism in England contributes £106 billion to the British economy (GDP) and supports 2.6 million jobs. There were 208,880 VAT registered businesses in England in tourism sectors in 2019, including accommodation, food and drink, transport, travel agencies, cultural activities and more.²⁵ With over 7,000 businesses and a Gross Value Added (GVA) of £6.5bn, York is a major driver of growth across the region and beyond.²⁶

The Tourism Strategy works in tandem with the Economic Strategy on this priority, which has the vision that, “The north needs York to be in the top 25% of UK economies and that means increasing productivity and pay while continuing to grow new skills in our workforce. These are the headline ambitions of our strategy – we want York to be a place where productive businesses are good employers, where our residents thrive. Through growing the productivity of our tourism, retail and social care businesses, we believe they



Fossgate

can be even better providers of employment for York’s people. We were the first Good Business Charter city, and we encourage all York’s businesses to be part of the initiative.”²⁷

“Focus therefore needs to be placed on growing the amount of part-time work available in high-paid sectors, providing opportunities to upskill and retrain, improving individual mobility, and on increasing both productivity and pay in lower paid sectors such as retail, tourism and social care.”²⁸

²⁵[The value of tourism in England | VisitBritain](#)

²⁶York Climate Change Strategy, [draft-climate-change-strategy \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁷York Economic Strategy, [Annex A - Draft Economic Strategy June 2022 \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁸York Economic Strategy, [Annex A - Draft Economic Strategy June 2022 \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

The Tourism Strategy aims to support young people, and those interested in a career in the tourism and hospitality sector, to find out more about what this career could be like and to achieve their full potential. The strategy also commits to ensuring upskilling, apprenticeships, training and ongoing career development opportunities and support for the sector. We will work collaboratively across the sector to eliminate workplace inequality, address the gender pay gap and embrace diversity.



Image credit Visit York

In tandem with the York Economic Strategy, the Tourism Strategy focuses on the growth of local businesses on driving income up through quality jobs, ensuring talented people can build a career and make a significant contribution with the skills they have. This will be achieved through working together to promote the sector as an employer, creative opportunities such as apprenticeships and highlighting the progression opportunities it can bring.



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Image credit Visit York



York, Low Petergate

Recommendations and actions:

- Improve perceptions of the industry and establish tourism and hospitality in York as a career of choice.
- Develop an innovative and ambitious tourism and hospitality skills strategy that focuses on training and development, the creation of an industry-wide coaching and mentoring scheme, and establish apprenticeships as routes into the industry to provide essential skills.
- Work in partnership to enhance the accessibility of public transport for workers – to advocate for making this more affordable and to cover more service hours.
- Promote the sector for employment, working with local schools, colleges and universities.
- Promote and actively encourage tourism and hospitality businesses in York to sign up to the Good Business Charter by 2032.
- Actively promote the tourism sector as an employment choice, along with career pathways and progression opportunities.

Key outcomes:

- York will actively promote the tourism sector as an employment choice, along with career pathways and progression opportunities, working with local schools, colleges and universities.
- The tourism workforce in York is well trained and flexible enough to adapt to the future demands of the workplace. Employees are led by motivated, inspiring leaders who are innovative and run successful tourism and hospitality businesses.
- Every tourism and hospitality business in York will have signed up to the Good Business Charter by 2032. This will ensure that York’s residents have access to the best working conditions, with fairness, representation, diversity and a shared commitment to our environmental responsibilities at the core of our employment standards.
- Organisations across the city will work collaboratively to ensure support is in place to promote and deliver access and development, eliminate workplace inequality and increase pay levels across the industry.



Image credit Visit York

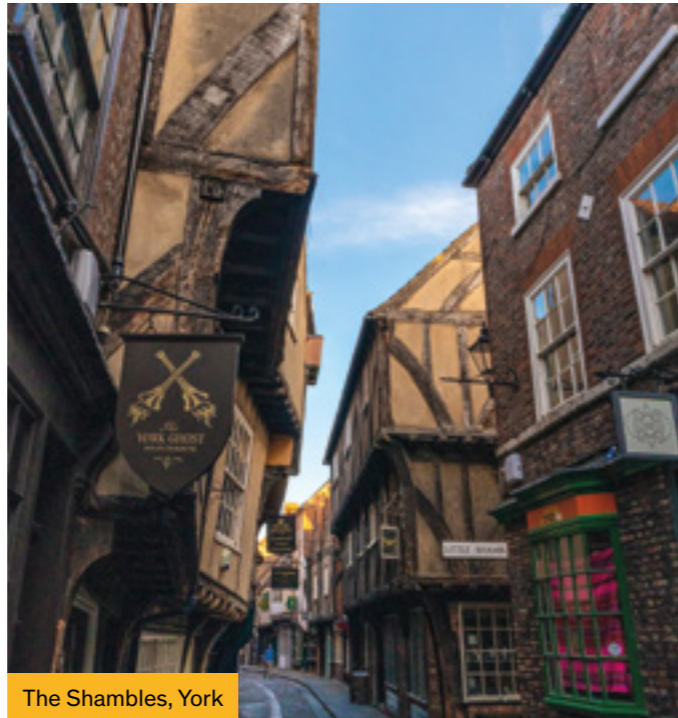
Delivering the Tourism Strategy

The Tourism Strategy will be achieved through the many tourism, hospitality, leisure, culture and educational organisations in the city, in full collaboration with them and with the people of York.

The Tourism Advisory Board, a citywide network of tourism, hospitality and leisure organisations, will provide the citywide leadership, advocacy, direction and oversight for the strategy. Working with the Tourism Advisory Board, City of York Council, Hospitality Association York, York BID, and Make It York's Members Advisory Board, Make It York, the city's Destination Management Organisation, will support the development and delivery of the Tourism Strategy.

The oversight and leadership provided by the Tourism Advisory Board will enable 'Task and Finish Groups' to focus on specific elements of strategy delivery and ensure that shared interests between individual organisations and individuals are aligned to the five Key Priorities. Key outcomes identified for each priority area will be used to inform Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).

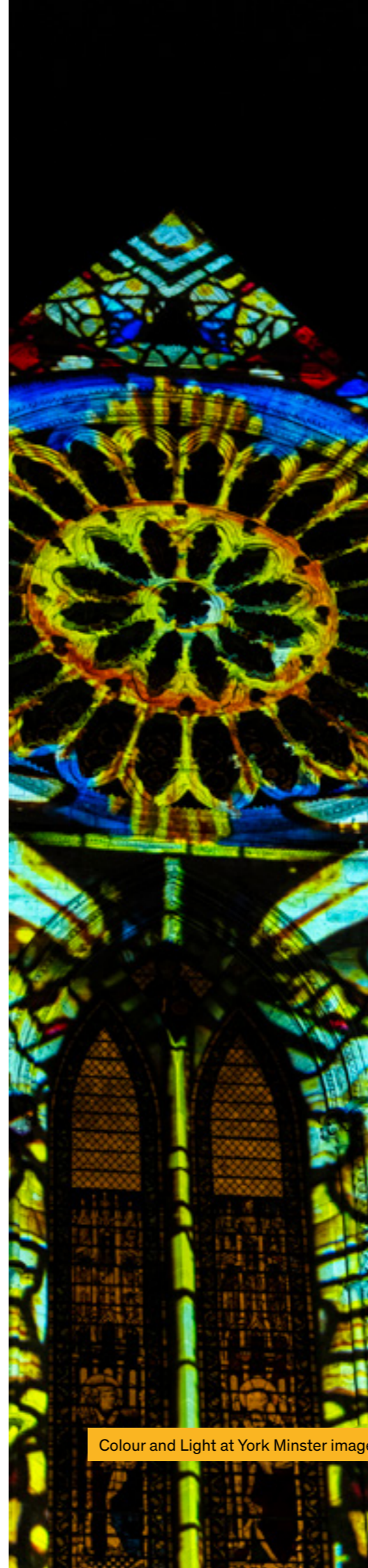
Working with North Yorkshire Council and the York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority through the new York and North Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), we will develop joint approaches to visitor economy and tourism at a strategic level, which align with the York Tourism Strategy and North Yorkshire Destination Management Plan.



The Shambles, York



Image credit Rebecca Newman, York Proms



Colour and Light at York Minster image credit Visit York

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- Continuum Attractions
- English Heritage
- Explore York Libraries and Archives
- Exploring York
- Fairfax House
- Galtres Lodge
- Guild of Media Arts
- Hospitality Association York
- JORVIK Viking Centre
- Make It York
- North York Moors National Park
- North Yorkshire Moors Railway
- REACH
- Roman Bath Museum
- SLAP
- United By Design
- University of York
- York Archaeology
- York BID
- York Civic Trust
- York Culture Executive
- York Cultural Leaders Group (now York Culture Forum)
- York Dungeon
- York Independent Business Association
- York Museums Trust
- York Music Venues Network
- York Proms
- York Racecourse
- York Retail Forum
- York St John University
- York Theatre Royal
- York Tourism Advisory Board

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York Tourism
Advisory Board