
**Meeting of the Executive Member for City
Strategy and Advisory Panel**

14 July 2008

**Meeting of the Executive Member for Leisure and
Culture and Advisory Panel**

15 July 2008

Report of the Director of City Strategy and the Director of Learning Culture and Children's Services

Towards a Heritage Strategy for York

Summary

1. This report recommends the production of a Heritage Strategy for York. It suggests:
 - an overall aim for the Strategy
 - a definition of Heritage in York
 - a framework and timetable for the production of the strategy

Heritage is a cross-directorate subject. Hence this report will be taken to the Executive Members for City Strategy and for Leisure and Culture.

Background

2. York is a special place. Its heritage is unique. It is valued by local residents, by people throughout the country and across the world. For the purposes of this framework, heritage includes archaeology, historic buildings and structures, historic landscape, cultural artefacts and memories, and written, visual and oral archives. It is about all those things that help us to understand what has made our communities and our City.
3. The City of York is one of the UK's premier historic cities. Each year some 4 million people visit the City. The City has been a continuously occupied site since 71AD. York Minster and York City Walls are two of the finest medieval monuments in Europe. There are some 2,000 listed buildings (1,800 list entries) of which 65 are Grade I, 156 Grade II*, and 1579 Grade II; 22 scheduled ancient monuments; 35 designated Conservation Areas; 4 registered Historic Parks and Gardens; 1 Area of Archaeological Importance which is divided into 7 separate areas. The City maintains an Historic Environment Record and has recently made the monument data for York available on the internet through the Heritage Gateway site (www.heritagegateway.org.uk).
4. The City is actively considering the issue of whether York should apply for inclusion on a revised UK Tentative List of sites for World Heritage listing.

5. The York City archives contain civic records dating from the 12th century to the present day. There is a separate York Museums Trust which has responsibility for the care of the nationally designated collections in the Yorkshire Museum, the York Castle Museum and the York Art Gallery. In addition there is a wide range of ecclesiastical and private archives held within the City. The National Railway Museum is the largest railway museum in the world, showcasing the important role of York in the railway heritage of the country.
6. There is a thriving business and academic sector based in the City which delivers specialist heritage services both within the UK and internationally. York University Archaeology Department is a 5 star-rated research and teaching centre.
7. The City Council has a well-developed policy framework for the historic environment. The management and use of the historic environment for the benefit of residents and visitors to the City is an integral element of the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Council's Corporate Strategy, and the emerging Local Development Framework. However, the City lacks a Heritage Strategy - a document which will provide a strategic overview for the City's heritage. It is clear from guidance at national and regional level that authorities should produce a strategic framework which sets direction, provides guidance, allows priorities to be determined, and allows progress to be measured. Such a strategy would be approved by Without Walls, would both sit alongside and inform other strategies such as City of Culture, or Learning City.
8. Other external factors include:
 - The publication, in January 2008, of a draft Regional Heritage Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber by the Yorkshire and Humber Historic Environment Forum
 - Concerns expressed during the Regional Cultural Commentary process last year by English Heritage that priorities for the historic environment and heritage are not being clearly articulated in York at a strategic level
 - The widely held view within the heritage community in York that the City of York Council should take a clear strategic position on heritage in the City

Consultation

9. This report proposes a framework within which consultation on a heritage strategy can take place.

The Starting Point for a Heritage Strategy

10. For the purposes of this report York's heritage is defined as:
 - a. the historic environment represented by the buildings, structures, and spaces we see all around us;
 - b. the rich archaeological deposits preserved beneath the City;

- c. the primary documentary archives, both public and private, and publications held in the collections of numerous institutions and individuals across the City;
 - d. the collections of objects, paintings, drawings, prints and photographs held by public and private organisations and by the general public;
 - e. the personal archives and memories, individual and collective, of the people who either live in or have lived in the City.
11. Most of all, heritage is about people. It is about people learning about and enjoying this special place; it is about people caring for and looking after this special place; it is about people using their heritage to ensure a vibrant forward-looking City.
12. The past, after all, does not have an independent existence. The past is represented through those places, objects, documents and memories (both tangible and intangible) which survive and are recognised in the present. The past is presented through the interpretations and stories that we create from this inheritance. We pass on this heritage through the decisions we make about which of these elements we will take with us into the future. An effective Heritage Strategy is an essential part of this process. It will help shape both the values we give these survivals and the decisions we make about how we use them and if we wish to conserve them. This process, therefore, is about shaping the future. In this respect, heritage is not about the past, it is about how we see the present and about the future we aspire to.
13. The starting point for a Heritage Strategy will be the Sustainable Community Strategy *York, A City Making History*. This sets out a shared vision for York over the next 20 years. The strategy identified seven themes: The Safer City; the Healthy City; A City of Culture; The Thriving City; The Inclusive City; The Learning City; The Sustainable City. Heritage runs through most of these themes. It is a key resource which supports initiatives within these themes, as well as being a key element within the Sustainable City strand.
14. The recently refreshed Corporate Strategy sets out key Direction Statements and Values for the period 2007-2011. These commit the Council to providing strong leadership for the City, to listen to communities, and to place environmental sustainability at the heart of everything we do. Again, heritage is a key element within these Direction Statements and Values.
15. The key themes of the heritage strategy are likely to be concerned with the contribution of heritage to:
 - Place making and managing change: sustainable approaches to the historic environment
 - Enhancing Local Cultural Activity
 - Encouraging Lifelong Learning
 - Improving Accessibility
 - Promoting Partnership Working and Accessing New Funding
 - Supporting and Developing Voluntary Involvement
 - Sustainable Tourism

16. The purpose of this report, however, is not to set out what a heritage strategy will be. Rather it sets out a process for producing a strategy, and asks the Executive Member to approve this process.

Options

17. Two options are set out for the Executive Member to consider:
 1. Do not adopt a Heritage Strategy;
 2. Work with the heritage community through a series of workshops in order to produce recommendations which, after a review process, can be incorporated into a consultation draft Heritage Strategy.

Analysis

18. The first option is a do-nothing option. It ignores current practice at both regional and national level. It is also not in line with the Corporate Strategy objectives. It would also mean that the Council had failed to provide adequate leadership in this important area. It is recommended that this be rejected.
19. For option 2, it is suggested that four workshops would be set up in September and October 2008. The workshops would examine the following themes:
 - Visitors and Tourism
 - Training and Learning
 - the Historic Environment
 - Cultural Involvement
20. Each workshop would be convened by the City Council. A position paper would be produced for each workshop theme. The position paper would be a short bullet point document setting out some of the opportunities and challenges that exist in each chosen area. It would guide and inform the discussion at each workshop session.
21. Each heritage organisation in the City will be invited to participate in the workshops. The workshop will be asked to consider what a strategic framework for each theme might contain. This process will allow these organisations to have an early input in framing a draft Heritage Strategy for consultation.
22. It is suggested that a consultation draft will be brought back to the Executive Members in December 2008, that the consultation period will run through January and February 2009, and that a final version will be brought back to the Executive Members for adoption in May 2009.
23. This option will allow the Council to make use of the expertise and experience present within the heritage community in the City. There is a huge amount of expertise resident in the City which if co-ordinated correctly can contribute at an early stage to the creation of a strategy. It will allow the organisations that operate in the heritage sector to have a positive input at a very early stage. It also represents a positive way of engaging with the many partner organisations with which the City works.

Corporate Priorities

24. This proposal addresses the Direction Statements:
 - The council will provide strong leadership for the city using partnerships to shape and deliver the Community Strategy for the city
 - We will listen to communities and ensure that people have a greater say in deciding local priorities
25. It will also be a key strategic document in delivering a Sustainable City and a Learning City.

Implications

26. **Financial:** There will be additional costs associated with Option 2 through the costs of organising the workshops. It is anticipated that the costs for Option 2 will be no more than £1,500. This can be funded from existing departmental budgets.
27. **Human Resources (HR):** There are no HR implications.
28. **Equalities:** There are equalities implications. The workshop and consultation process must give all sectors of the community and opportunity to engage in developing this strategy. The Equalities Officer will be consulted in order to ensure that the creation of a Heritage Strategy meets the Council's Equalities Policy.
29. **Legal:** There are no legal implications.
30. **Crime and Disorder:** There are no crime and disorder implications.
31. **Information Technology (IT):** There are no IT implications.
32. **Property:** There are no Property Implications.

Risk Management

33. There is a risk of criticism in future assessments of the Council if a Heritage Strategy is not produced. Setting in motion the production of a Heritage Strategy will prevent this happening.

Recommendations

34. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to approve the approach set out in Option 2 to produce a draft Heritage Strategy for the City.

Reason: To involve all stakeholders in the production of a draft heritage strategy for the city.

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Report Approved Date 30 June 2008

Report Approved *tick* Date *Insert Date*

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Regional Cultural Commentary report – held by Charlie Croft