

York Museums Trust

Report Against Core Partnership Objectives 2015-16

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

2015 was a momentous year for York Art Gallery which, on 1 August, reopened to the public after a two year extension and refurbishment. An investment of approximately £8m capital spend has increased the gallery's public space by more than 60% and created an appropriate home for the newly created Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA) to display the gallery's exceptional collection of British studio pottery.

The newly fitted-out exhibition spaces will enable the gallery to display its own collections, touring exhibitions and loans of the very highest quality. The opening displays celebrated the core collections, complemented and enhanced by specially commissioned works from contemporary artists, most notably Clare Twomey, Mark Hearld, Phil Eglin and Susie MacMurray.

The list of funders includes: Arts Council England; Karen Madsen; Peter Emil Madsen; City of York Council; Anthony Shaw Collection Trust; DCMS/Wolfson; Garfield Weston Foundation; The Foyle Foundation; Sir Siegmund Warburg's Voluntary Settlement; Holbeck Charitable Trust; John Ellerman Foundation; Friends of York Art Gallery; J.Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust; Shepherd Group; The Patricia and Donald Shepherd Charitable Trust; Feoffees of St Michael's Spurriergate; The Headley Trust; The Pilgrim Trust and, of course, the Friends of York Art Gallery.

The new gallery has already received many plaudits from visitors and the media, as well a number of prestigious awards, including three RIBA awards for the project's architecture and Visit York Attraction of the Year. The gallery is one of only five Finalists from across the UK in the Art Fund Museum of the Year. The gallery has also been nominated for the White Rose Awards and European Museum of the Year.

The creation of the Centre of Ceramic Art gives York a marketable identity as a destination for those interested in ceramics from around the world, building on the city's unique collection of British studio pottery.

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

In March 2016 York Castle Museum launched its new 'Shaping the Body' exhibition which builds on the museum's reputation for providing highly accessible and fun ways to learn about the past. The exhibition explores 400 years of fashion, food and lifestyles to show the impact of all three on our bodies. It covers some challenging topics but without dampening the enjoyment.

The Yorkshire Museum received national publicity as a result of its partnership with the Universities of York, Manchester and Chester, bringing the nation's attention to the discovery of a Mesolithic pendant thought to be the oldest art found in Britain.

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

The investment in York Art Gallery has greatly improved the fabric of the building, most notably by stabilising a main gable wall that was revealed during the project not to be properly tied in or underpinned.

The project also greatly improved the fine art store, removing the air conditioning plant from the room and installing modern racking for the paintings and works on paper collections.

Plans are being laid to make the best use of the newly acquired storage unit at Birch Park.

Significant investment has also been made in Museum Gardens, including making safe and accessible a significant area of land which was polluted as a result of WWII air raids.

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

From April 2015 to March 2016 YMT worked with 352 volunteers, who contributed a total of 14,192 hours across all sites. These hours were split between visitor facing roles (9,344 hrs) and behind the scenes roles (4,848 hrs). York Castle Museum in particular benefitted from volunteer input behind the scenes in the run up to the new 'Shaping the Body' exhibition, which volunteers supported with over 1,200 hours of research, as well as

practical help in emptying the gallery and helping with the installation of the new exhibition.

There were 49 individual opportunities available for volunteers throughout this period. Two major new projects during this time were the Anthony Shaw space at York Art Gallery and the introduction of costumed volunteers on Kirkgate, the Victorian street at the Castle Museum, which have both attracted high numbers of volunteers, and are enhancing the visitor offer at both sites.

YMT continued our work with a variety of partners, to provide volunteer and placement opportunities for people with additional support needs at each site.

The learning programmes continued to thrive and during the academic year 2014-15, 35,561 children visited in booked groups across the three venues, of which 7,441 were from York schools.

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

It was a difficult year for the visitor economy, especially after the December floods, and in common with many other York attractions we saw some significant decreases in visitor numbers. The overall number of visitors held up reasonably well at 403,724 thanks to the reopening of York Art Gallery in August 2015. Numbers at York St Mary's dropped dramatically simply because there was no summer exhibition in 2015 due to the reopening of York Art Gallery.

	Actual	Last year	% Change
York Castle Museum	246,973	290,841	-15%
Yorkshire Museum	88,997	98,911	-10%
York St Mary's	6,966	28,105	-75%
York Art Gallery	60,788	0	n/a
Total	403,724	417,857	-3%

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

YMT's relationship with its local community is a priority for the trust and YMT is determined that people who cannot afford the cost of admission charges can still access its museums.

York Residents with a York Card can become a YMT Card Holder for half of the normal price. 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. 1,022 people have taken up that offer to date.

In total 8,140 York residents have supported the charity by becoming a YMT Card Holder.

YMT took part in the Residents Festival in January and saw thousands of additional visitors as a result. A YMT residents free weekend has also been introduced, it will be 25-26 June this year.

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 also includes regular sensory tours, particularly suitable those with a sight impairment, and monthly practical, inclusive Arts for Well-being sessions.

York Art Gallery alone has hosted 15 Workshops with community organisations including York Blind & Partially Sighted Society, York Carers Forum, Magnetic Arts who run arts workshops for adults with mental health issues and Blueberry Academy who lead work related learning for adults with additional support needs. Since reopening the Gallery's learning and outreach programmes have given 61 Days paid work to 19 local artists.

The 10,000 slip cast bowls that make up Clare Twomey's installation, Manifest, were made in workshops at York College, the University of York and in London at Westminster School, involving over 170 People.

The Project Gallery at York Art Gallery, has hosted 4 exhibitions that have involved 4,183, mostly local, people in producing art for display.

Both the 1914 and Shaping the Body galleries at York Castle Museum have community programmed spaces. Groups engaged with include the York Quakers, York Oral History Society, the 1914-18 Commemorative Quilt Group, Friends of York Cemetery and CYC's Youth Offending Team.

York Castle Museum was also recently one of five locations that displayed artwork by homeless people, in a project run with York SASH

Excellent customer service and visitor experience

The 2015 visitor survey results were:

At Yorkshire Museum:

- 99% of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their visit
- 99% would recommend the museum to others
- 93% would visit again
- 99% said it was good or very good value for money

When asked which was their favourite exhibition or experience 51% responded “all of it”.

At York Castle Museum:

- 99% of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their visit
- 100% would recommend the museum to others
- 96% would visit again
- 98% said it was good or very good value for money

In a reversal of previous years’ results, the Prison Cells were the favourite exhibition of 36% of visitors, the Victorian Street was favourite with 24% and 20% responded “all of it”.

At York Art Gallery:

- 99% of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their visit
- 100% would recommend the gallery to others
- 88% would visit again (of those saying ‘No’ nearly 90% gave ‘Won’t be in York again’ as the reason)
- 94% said it was good or very good value for money

The new ‘Centre of Ceramic Art’ was the most popular gallery - 38% of visitors named it their favourite. “All of it” was the second most popular response (at 26%).

Improved public realm through capital investment and imaginative interpretation schemes

Investment has continued in Museum Gardens, more than £1m has been spent on extending the Gardens to the rear of York Art Gallery, creating a major new high quality public space for the city.

The newly planted Edible Wood is thriving and the first installation in the new Artists Garden is planned for July.

There is now a green, landscaped route from the River Ouse through to Exhibition Square. St Leonard's Place is the only obstacle in a traffic free pedestrian route from the Station to the Minster and the wider Footstreets area.

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

Agreement has been reached with the Museum De Buitenplaats in the Netherlands to produce and tour an exhibition of the works of Albert Moore, the popular Victorian painter who was born and grew up in York. The show is scheduled for 2017 in York Art Gallery.

York's objects have gone on loan to the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, the Museum of Dieppe and Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome.

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

York Art Gallery's was re-awarded Accredited Museum status during the year, joining York Castle Museum and Yorkshire Museum which successfully went through the process in 2014.

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

Continuing.

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

Continuing.

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

YMT has an Equal Opportunities Action Plan against which progress is regularly reviewed.