

YMT Report Against Core Partnership Objectives April 2016 - March 2017

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

Planning for the development of the Castle Museum is continuing in close co-operation with colleagues from CYC on the York Castle Gateway.

During 2016-17 YMT won the following awards and accolades:

York Art Gallery

Visitor Attraction of the Year - Visit York Tourism Awards

Family Friendly Museum Award – Kids in Museums

European Museum of the Year Award (Highly Commended)

Art Fund Museum of the Year (Finalist)

RIBA Yorkshire Award 2016

RIBA Yorkshire Conservation Award 2016

RIBA Yorkshire Project Architect of the Year 2016 for Tom Van Hoffelen of Simpson & Brown.

York Castle Museum

Top Ten of Museums in the Country 2016 - Trip Advisor

Best Attraction – Little Viking Awards

Yorkshire Museum Gardens

Yorkshire in Bloom

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

York Castle Museum was highly commended in the York Culture Awards for its work with Howe Hill Hostel which provides accommodation for homeless young people in York. The project engaged young people with the social history collections, exploring themes of body image, identity and self-esteem through a fashion show on the opening night of the Shaping the Body exhibition.

York Castle Museum continues to offer an arts engagement programme in partnership with community organisations including 'Changing Lives' – part of York in Recovery which helps those suffering from drug or alcohol addiction, young people from Refugee Action York and families from York Independent Domestic Abuse Services.

YMT leads York's Cultural Consortium for Wellbeing, promoting the ethos of the Creative Case for Diversity through the participating organisations in the city. The consortium has been commissioned by City of York Council (CYC) to deliver a programme designed to improve the wellbeing of York residents through cultural engagement.

Monthly practical 'Art for Wellbeing' sessions are held in the Studio at York Art Gallery. These sessions for adults are in the public programme and are also promoted via community support organisations such as York MIND and Brunswick Nurseries (centre for adults with disabilities).

YMT encourages deeper engagement with collections and themes through community engagement:

- Over 3,000 people participated in community projects in 2016/17: producing artwork showcased in the Project Gallery at York Art Gallery, five community exhibitions in the First World War community space at York Castle Museum and two in Shaping the Body.
- YMT supported artist Susan Aldworth in creating an installation of pillows embroidered by the public for exhibition in York St Mary's.

In the last year we have launched a major digital interpretation research project into Virtual Reality technology and its suitability for exploring complex historical narratives in a heritage setting. This is a multi-disciplinary partnership project.

It is the first unmanned VR experience housed in a museum. The first time VR has been used to explore Viking settlement. It is delivering never before seen archaeological research to the public and it is a full research project that will define the impact and sustainability of the technology for museums.

We have continued adding openly-licensed collections content to Wikimedia Commons and pages featuring YMT collections images and research have reached 22 million unique visitors in the past year. As well as reach, our Wikipedia work has been the basis of two substantial, volunteer-led digitisation projects of Roman and Medieval English coinage.

We have completed the first phase of our online collection redesign project.

We have launched a dedicated Google Arts & Culture page for the Castle Museum, complete with new online exhibitions, Google StreetView of the Victorian Street and Debtors Prison. YMT was one of 180 international project partners on the We Wear Culture project.

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. As previously reported, the aim is to dovetail the Castle Museum project with work to address most of the remaining collections storage and management issues.

In the meantime, research and development of the collections continues, for example:

- Original collections research including our Roman collections in preparation for an exhibition in 2019 funded by the Designation Development Fund
- an 8-month post-doctoral research post focusing on artist Lucie Rie
- the ongoing work of the Contemporary Ceramics Subject Specialist Network, run by YMT
- York Art Gallery inspired two major donors to support our reintroduction of the 'Evelyn Commission' - artists are commissioned to respond the rich history of the City of York
- The bequest of the Dickinson Collection – over 100,000 Rowntree artefacts and memorabilia collected by Joe Dickinson who worked at Rowntree for over 40 years – and
- The acquisition of the 3rd century AD Wold Newton Hoard of nearly 2,000 Roman coins after £44, 200 was raised by public appeal

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

YMT's strategic plan 2016-2021 outlines a strategy of building on our strengths and past successes, particularly in investing in an excellent, high-profile public programme.

Public Programme 2016-17

The following is an outline of the newly developed exhibitions and events offered to the public across YMT's sites through the year:

The Star Carr Pendant: A Mesolithic Mystery (Yorkshire Museum)

February 27– May 8 2016

A display featuring the newly discovered pendant, the oldest known mesolithic art in Britain.

Shaping the Body (York Castle Museum)

March 25 2016 (Ongoing)

A major new exhibition showing the impact on our bodies of 400 years of changing fashions, diets and ways of life.

Truth and Memory, in partnership with the Imperial War Museum (York Art Gallery)

March 25- September 4 2016

This was the largest exhibition of First World War art for nearly 100 years.

The Aesthetica Art Prize 2016 (York St Mary's)

April 14 - May 29 2016

Showcasing cutting-edge practice from today's ground-breaking contemporary artists, this exhibition showed work from all of the prize finalists.

Day of Clay (York Art Gallery)

May 14 2016

A celebration of ceramics with professional ceramicists Emily Stubbs and Rebecca Appleby, artist Chris Beale and winner of "The Great Pottery Throw Down" television competition, Matthew Wilcock.

Crystals from Beneath (Yorkshire Museum)

May 14 – July 10 2016

This exhibition featured a selection of the collection of Lindsay and Patricia Greenbank. These lifelong collectors have a passion for the minerals of Northern England, one of the best places in the world to find brilliant mineral specimens.

Eboracum Roman Festival (Multi-site)

June 1-5 2016

Further work and achievements in 2016-17 included:

- Flesh, at York Art Gallery and Shaping the Body at the Castle Museum both took an innovative approach in interpretation. Flesh took risks in developing unusual subject matter, while Shaping the Body used historic collections to explore modern day issues including body image and obesity

- Partnership with the University of York to create an historically accurate virtual reality Viking settlement which features in our new exhibition at the Yorkshire Museum Viking: Rediscover the Legend. This is part of an ongoing partnership with the Digital Creativity Labs at the University to research the potential application of digital technology in heritage environments

We ran family activities during busy local school holiday periods at all our sites and have developed new sessions particularly designed to engage children with our exhibitions, available to all visitors every day. We also provided Museum Monkeys sessions, designed for the under-5s, run throughout the year.

We offered a broad range of workshops for primary schools across all our sites and run annual competitions encouraging teachers to use our collections to inspire creative learning in the classroom. Our summer Teenage Art School at York Art Gallery enabled teenagers to work with local artists over 4 days, exploring new materials and concepts.

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

2106-17 was very positive in terms of visitor numbers:

	Actual	Last year	% Change
York Castle Museum	275,156	244,765	+13%
Yorkshire Museum	87,391	87,946	-1%
York St Mary's	51,546	6,810	+657%
York Art Gallery	87,036	60,788	+43%
Total	501,129	400,309	+25%

The 'YMT Card' scheme, introduced in summer 2015 continues to be very popular and there are now 24,000 active card holders, approximately half of whom are York residents.

Many more families visited the gallery for drop-in practical activities during local school holidays than did prior to refurbishment.

The numbers of children visiting in school groups increased:

From 2015/16: 15,571 for workshops and 11,203 self-led

To 2016/17: 16,362 for workshops and 15,992 self-led

Through our partnership project with York Theatre Royal as part of our 'Changing Spaces' HLF Activity Plan, we commissioned a writer to create a new play entitled Forward to Victory performed at York Castle Museum by YTR Youth Theatre. The project brought in 75 14-16 year olds, traditionally a difficult audience for museums to attract, as well as enabling YMT to reach new audiences through YTR's connections. The project's legacy included the production of Arts Award resources for future usage with that age group.

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

Admission for children is free of charge at all YMT sites and, thanks to a contribution from CYC, residents aged 17-24 and, last year, those entitled to most forms of income related benefit could get a YMT Card free of charge. All 4,000 of the initial allocation have been issued but YMT has continued to issue cards free of charge.

YMT also has two weekends per year when the sites are free to all residents. Last June saw nearly 3,000 additional visitors across all the sites over the weekend and in January 2017 more than 5,000 residents attended for the Residents Festival.

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

YMT aims to make sure that as broad a range of people as possible can enjoy a great visitor experience on our sites. Successful initiatives in 2016-17 include:

- Shaping the Body exhibition was developed in consultation with representatives from LGBTQ communities and feedback from visitors is displayed prominently in the exhibition
- The Flesh exhibition reflected diversity through both the contributing artists and the works on display, addressing issues of race, age, disability, gender, sex and health 'Queer Sundays' events in the Flesh programme invited people to explore artworks and develop creative responses from a queer perspective
- Cultural Wellbeing in York – YMT are lead partner in delivering a new programme of work designed to improve the wellbeing of York's residents through engagement with cultural organisations, in conjunction with York City Council's Public Health team
- Cities of Sanctuaries – we worked with this movement to provide free admission to groups of refugees newly arrived in the UK

- ‘Relaxed openings’ for people with sensory impairments were introduced across all sites. Sensory tours are delivered regularly at York Art Gallery.
- Staff were trained to support and welcome people with sensory impairments, dementia, and autism.
- StageText training was undertaken for subtitling of all on-gallery and online videos
- Free admission for Max Card holders (foster families and families of children with additional needs)
- Discounted or free admission offers targeted at York under 24s, community groups and people on income support
- Monitoring and adapting as necessary our concessions policy: in 2016-17 our flexible admission policies enabled 150,000 people to make free / repeat visits
- York Castle Museum and Yorkshire Museum show higher percentage attendance than the National Museums and Heritage data in three of the four least-engaged categories on Audience Spectrum. York Art Gallery also performs well in Homes and Heritage, Up Our Street and Facebook Families compared with data from the Visual Arts Sector

Excellent customer service and visitor experience

YMT encourages deeper engagement with collections and themes through community engagement:

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Examples of quality interpretation enabling exceptional cultural experiences for our visitors:

- Shaping the Body offers increased opportunities to engage deeply with objects through high quality interactive interpretation
- Volunteers leading ‘Hands On’ tables in the galleries giving access to objects not currently on display
- Costumed interpreters in Kirkgate Victorian Street at the York Castle

Museum providing exceptional and highly popular experiences for visitors

- Art Shot talks at York Art Gallery, Curator talks at the Yorkshire Museum, and guided tours of York Museum Gardens provide bespoke experiences for people
- Our digital strategy used established platforms to create global presence, and demand, for online access to our collections, e.g. in December 2016 alone, there were 2.9 million views of YMT images on Wikipedia
- Programme of lectures, masterclasses and events, including the 'Day of Clay' to nurture the growing public interest in studio pottery as an art form

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

YMT attracts audiences from all over the world and works with Make It York to actively promote the city and its attractions abroad.

York Art Gallery is currently showing a retrospective of the work of York-raised artist Albert Joseph Moore. The exhibition is the result of a partnership with the Museum De Buitenplaats and was shown in the Netherlands - York is its only UK venue.

2017 is the fifth year of our partnership with the Aesthetica Art Prize, an exhibition of innovative works from today's leading artists, established and emerging. Presenting the works of shortlisted artists, the show unites an international community of creative practitioners, whose projects touch upon themes within the categories of Photography and Digital Art, Painting and Drawing, Three Dimensional Design and Sculpture and Video, Installation and Performance.

YMT supports the city's initiative in developing links with Nanjing Museum in China. YMT is also in discussions with Suzhou Museums about potential collaborative projects, centred on the exchange of exhibitions.

Last year the Learning Team introduced ESOL resources for foreign language students.

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.

Arts Council England recently committed to supporting this work for another 4 years.

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. The new Artists Garden behind York Art Gallery in the York Museum Gardens was created to give a very public, outdoor and large-scale opportunity for artists to showcase their talent. In 2016 the first commission, Foundation Myths by Ordinary Architecture, was a response to the historic and natural environment through large ceramic pieces and was accessible to audiences entirely free of charge.

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

YMT's Equality Action Plan is reviewed annually for progress and monitors and sets improvements YMT can make in both employment and service delivery.

The 2016 review of progress against YMT's Equality Action Plan showed improvements across a broad range of criteria, including that our workforce had become significantly more diverse. We will take a leadership role in providing exceptional opportunities for engagement and empowerment for volunteers. A YMT Access Group promotes and develops good practice in diversity and equality for dissemination across the organisation. This can range from trial projects to organising training and building awareness. Recent training for Visitor Services staff has been on autism by the National Autism Society, deaf awareness and dementia awareness