

York Museums Trust Performance Report: April 2006 – March 2007

Analysis of performance

1. The Partnership Delivery Plan (PDP) sets out a number of key targets relating to the Council's core objectives. The following paragraphs summarise the progress towards the 7 major targets outlined in the PDP.
 - a) stabilising visitor figures
2. In August 2002 one of the key objectives given to YMT was that of halting the long-term decline in visitor numbers. During the year from April 2002 to March 2003 the total number of visitors was 395,000. Since then we have seen an upward trend and in the 2005/06 financial year the sites had 465,000 visitors representing an increase of 17.7%. This year YMT set itself the target of breaking the barrier of 500,000 visitors for the first time. During this year we have welcomed 517,000 visitors to the sites representing a 12% increase from the previous year.
4. The clearest successes in terms of numbers have been the refurbishment of Kirkgate, the Victorian Street at York Castle Museum (up 41,000) and the Constantine Exhibition at the Yorkshire Museum (up 7,000).
 - b) delivering new income streams
5. YMT has generated almost £3.6 million during the last 5 years. Details of all the fundraising applications made during the reporting period are attached at Annex 2. The categories of new income streams are as follows:
6. **Trusts and Foundations** have been generous in supporting new projects. Noteworthy is the major grant of £200,000 from the Wolfson Foundation for the *1960s Experience* for the Castle Museum which is due to open in March 2008.
7. In December 2005 YMT submitted an application to the **Heritage Lottery Fund** for a major capital bid for St Mary's Abbey Precinct, to refurbish the Yorkshire Museum and start the process of improving the Museum Gardens, as well as addressing the collection storage issues. This was to be the first phase of the St Mary's Abbey Precinct project which will involve, in later phases, the extension of the gardens up to the back of York Art Gallery, creating a new green route through the gardens to connect with Exhibition Square. The total bid was for £9.3 million and was rejected by HLF in July 2006. YMT submitted a more focussed bid worth £6.3m for Yorkshire Museum called ***A Thousand Stories*** in March 2007. The St Mary's Abbey Precinct project is now structured in four separate and stand alone phases of which the refurbishment of the Hospitium is the first and Yorkshire Museum the second. Architectural plans for the Hospitium are complete and ready for the planning process. Work is due to be completed by March 2008. The Hospitium will then be the centre of the YMT conference business.

St Mary's Abbey Precinct is at the heart of the City's concept of the Cultural Quarter.

8. **Business Sponsorship** was secured for the Constantine project with Shepherd Building Group and we successfully applied for an Arts & Business award to help develop this partnership with employees of Shepherds. Building on the success of the partnership, Shepherds are now the sponsors of the ***Fingerprints of Time*** Exhibition at the Yorkshire Museum.
9. **Renaissance in the Regions** is an increasingly important income stream from Central Government, which is secured until March 2008. During 2006/07 the funding from Renaissance has been £228,000.

The Yorkshire Hub's Business Plan for 2007/08 was agreed by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council enabling YMT to continue developing the schools programme as well as improving the displays and programme at the Castle Museum. This additional funding from Renaissance in the Regions was conditional on City of York core funding remaining the same in real terms at the minimum. Continued funding beyond 2008 will be decided by Government at the next Comprehensive Spending Review. YMT will be working with the other four partners on the Business Plan for 2008/10 once we know the outcome of the CSR later in the year.

10. **Conferencing and corporate hospitality** continues to grow. This was minimal in 2002/03; the turnover in 2006/07 was more than £85k, yielding a profit of more than £20k after all costs.

The development of the Hospitium as YMT's primary conference centre by March 2008 with facilities including toilets, office, stairs and lift are underway. The Kirkgate refurbishment at York Castle Museum has prompted renewed interest in it as a corporate hire venue resulting in an increase of 220% compared to the previous year.

11. **Retail** business has moved from a loss making position to a profit making one over the past three accounting periods. Retail performance for the year is well ahead of last year – sales of £442k have yielded a profit of £42k compared with £12k last year.

Long-term Profit / loss:

8 months to March 2003	loss of approx. £11K
12 months to March 2004	£2k profit
12 months to March 2005	£9k profit
12 months to March 2006	£12k profit
12 months to March 2007	£42k profit

c) new exhibitions and interpretative service

- 12 The ***Constantine*** Exhibition was the main event in the Yorkshire Museum and was opened by the Princess Royal. During the exhibition 53,289 visitors were received and 1510 catalogues were sold, which covered the cost of the publication. The catalogue was short listed for the prestigious AXA Art Newspaper and Exhibition Catalogue prize, having been selected from 124 entries down to the final 21. The impact of the exhibition and the special commemorative service at

the Minster with the procession through the streets of York, led by the Archbishop of York, made this event one of the highlights of the year for the city.

The project was very ambitious given the level of funding required and the quality of the exhibits needing to be secured. YMT were very well aware of the possible risks undertaking such a project in the relatively early years of the organisation. However the reputational gains have been tremendous with the British Museum acknowledging the achievement and willing to work with us on other projects with them as well as interest by universities wanting to work with us on other ambitious research and exhibition projects.

After the Constantine Project we were able to negotiate the loan from the British Museum of the Warren Cup – a Roman silver cup which had not been displayed outside London before. This was followed by the ***Fingerprints of Time*** exhibition which opened in February 2007 and deals with the different methods of dating objects.

The upper gallery at the Yorkshire Museum has been transformed into a ***Ceramic Safari*** in a joint Decorative Arts/Natural History exhibition. This exhibition displays a wide variety of ceramic vessels using animals as decorative motifs. We have given the science collections a higher public profile this year than they have enjoyed for some time. A display celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of the 18th century scientific instrument maker Thomas Cooke was followed by the installation of ***The Natural History of the Abbey***. Also in the Yorkshire Museum, alterations to the permanent archaeology galleries have been implemented to make them more family friendly.

13. The exhibition ***Tom Bendhem: Collector*** was held at York Art Gallery and included works by well known contemporary artists. The exhibition was organised by the Contemporary Art Society and offered an opportunity to promote contemporary collecting. A special in the gallery brought together Collectors from both London and Yorkshire. It was a very useful profiling event for York and has resulted in loans from private collections being programmed into the exhibition programme.

This was followed by the very popular exhibition ***Icons and Idols*** which was on loan from the National Portrait Gallery. This was the only other showing of the exhibition outside London.

The Art of Conversation coincided with a conference on 18th century art at the University of York, showcasing major artists from the period complemented by costume and decorative arts collections. The exhibition was selected from the York collection with loans from national and regional collections.

Relationships: Contemporary Sculpture included 20th century works from our collection alongside loans from the collection of the Arts Council (England).

A new display of Japanese prints and studio ceramics was opened in the Little Gallery called ***Art in Life*** which was drawn entirely from the collections. This was followed by ***Richard Fozard; Printmaker*** which was drawn from the extensive collection of diverse prints from this remarkable Yorkshire printmaker for the first time.

At York St Mary's **Echo** by Susie MacMurray was opened in June and ran until October. This site specific installation was made possible by a grant from the Arts Council Yorkshire.

14. We secured a major grant of £260,000 (65% of the costs) from the Wolfson foundation to breathe new life into the Kirkgate display, tackle a number of structural problems and provide an infrastructure to continue interpreting the street in the future. The work included, mending the roof, a new lighting system, overhead slide projection, an extra interpretation space to address current issues, re-cobbling the whole surface of the street to improve wheelchair access, new audio system and sound recordings. New displays of a Victorian school, clockmakers parlour and grocers shop. Finally five of the displays were opened up to allow visitors into the buildings and in three of them to meet costumed interpreters and to handle objects from the collection. This project has proved extremely successful increasing the overall numbers of visitors to the Castle by 19%.

We have also added activities during the holiday periods which has added value to the visit to the street. Projects such as **Life of Grime** were a great success. In March we opened **Unfair Trade** which was our response to the international commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade. We wanted to mark this important event in a different way to other museums by reinterpreting the displays in the museums to reveal their origins in the slave trade. We also organised a special event on the Eye of York, when people were invited to re-enact the distribution of slaves within the interior of a slave trade ship.

d) create an education strategy

15. The Lifelong Learning Team were awarded the Sandford Award for educational services to schools. This is a great achievement given that the Learning Team has only been operating fully for two years. The staff team are now delivering a comprehensive service to an increasing number of schoolchildren and have published the second programme of school sessions which address the needs of the National Curriculum. The team also organises informal activities for the general public and to visitors across the three main sites during the holiday periods. It is YMT policy to have special events at half terms and summer holidays to attract residents and visitors to the museums.
16. YMT has dedicated learning spaces at each of the three main venues funded through Renaissance. The impact of these new resources is shown in the figures at annex 4. Each of the learning spaces has its own special qualities and resources that are suitable for the varied programme that we offer to schools. The Lab, is the new e-learning space in the Yorkshire Museum which is fully equipped with new technology including white board, computers, digital cameras, sound recorders and microscopes. It is proving very popular and is an effective way to promote science learning and develop our outreach and e-learning offers, in particular the learning journeys on the Hub website www.mylearning.org.
17. The Studio at York Art Gallery offers opportunities for practical work relating to the National Curriculum whilst the Victorian Schoolroom at the Castle Museum offers a chance to experience Victorian teaching techniques. We consult with teachers regularly as to their requirements and we work with a growing number of

organisations on projects. Some of these are as follows: NYBEP, York St John University, Young Archaeology Club, Theatre Royal, City Archives to name a few.

18. We have also organised formal and informal learning activities for the **Constantine** exhibition including workshops on Roman food, army, theatre and entertainment. These events took place in the 'Curia', a specially created Roman room within the museum. A family guide was written based around some of the objects on show and activities on catapults, board games and Roman recreation were held.
19. Science activities included **Wild Wednesdays** which attracted a great number of people in the Museum Gardens. Each Wednesday during August featured a different area of Natural History. We also published **The Garden Explorer** for self directed activity. Astronomy events included Observatory open evenings, sun observing and talks were organised.

Full details of all the events are available if required.

e) increase use and involvement by residents

20. The Studio at the York Art Gallery has given us the capacity to have an active programme of activities. An annual event is the **Big Draw** week in October which attracts a lot of families. Central to our developing relationship with local communities is the **Territories** project which is a community involvement project seeking to work with hard to reach groups. This is an audience development project and is in its third year funded by the Arts Council Yorkshire until December 2006. New funding is being sought for 2008.

We have worked with over 13 community groups representing 201 people, over 40 days, with over a 1000 local supporters on special celebration days

The groups included the following:

- Community, Voluntary & Hospital based Mental Health Service Groups:
 - Clifton House, Driveway, New Lane and Red Roofs working with the Assertive Outreach teams as part of Mental Health Rehabilitation Service
 - Sycamore House– Adults from Mental Health Day Centre
 - Our Celebration - Mental Health Charity
 - The Retreat
- York Carnival - Active York Community
- Future Prospects working with the following groups:
 - Dawn Team - Learning Disability Groups,
 - BME groups – Women,
 - Baby Gap – Teenage Mums and Mental Health Community Groups
- The Peasholme Centre - Homeless Group
- Age Concern Cherry Tree House Club – Social Activity Club for older people with dementia or Mental Health Problems
- Informal Carers and Young Carers, Selby and York Carers Centre
- Blind and Partially Sighted Society

- Women's Aid Refuge
- Baby Gap a group for young mothers and toddlers
- Songbox 0 – 4 year olds and mums
- YACRO – York Association for the Care and Re-settlement of Offenders

Family First days, held on the first Saturday of every month are primarily aimed at local people.

21. The St Mary's Abbey Precinct project has been developed with the help of a Steering Group which comprises the University of York, the City Of York Council's planning and parks sections, English Heritage and St Olave's Church. The consultation process has been expanded to include a wider group of Stakeholders including York Conservation Advisory Panel, CYC Conservation, Yorkshire Philosophical Society, Police and others.

A Thousand Stories, the bid to HLF for Yorkshire Museum has been informed by market research. The focus groups and interviews with a wide range of people selected subjects of possible future exhibitions.

22. As part of the **Constantine** celebrations, YMT organised a commemorative service for 25 July with the Minster where a special service took place as well as a procession through part of the city leading to a performance by young people from York. This was organised with York St John University staff and students. The event was only made possible with the support from many people and organisations within the city. The Arts & Business award we received has enabled us to give special evening access to employees of Shepherd Building Group, our sponsors of the exhibition.
23. A consultation exercise was undertaken to identify best practice in the volunteer sector and in particular in relation to Museums and Galleries. We have now appointed a Volunteers Manager who is currently working on two pilot schemes, based at the Yorkshire Museum and the York Observatory in the Museum Gardens. The Volunteer Programme will enable the local community to engage with the collections, buildings and staff at a level which will enhance knowledge and understanding of their heritage and facilitate learning at all levels. As part of the Volunteer Programme we are also hosting a number of work placements, including several from abroad. The programme is funded by Renaissance and will be extended to all YMT sites by summer 2007.
24. YMT has taken the lead on a city wide initiative called the **History of York**. YMT commissioned some market research about what interested visitors and potential visitors to museums and the city and overwhelmingly it was the history of the city that stimulated their interest.

YMT invited experts and enthusiasts across the city to form an Expert Panel who would advise and guide a series of communication tools to inform and guide visitors and residents to a better understanding of the history of the city. A website is currently being planned and will be launched in July 2007.

f) *achieve high visitor satisfaction*

24. In October YMT held a Public Meeting which attracted 15 members of the public. This was a good deal less than in previous years but we see this as positive as local people have less anxiety about the creation of YMT. However, they all asked pertinent questions which we found useful in thinking about future plans. The overall impression was very positive. An on-line Annual Report is now available on the website.
25. A major piece of visitor consultation has been carried out as part of the development process for the **A Thousand Stories** HLF bid at the Yorkshire Museum. This involved both quantitative and qualitative evaluation with an online survey, focus groups and interviews with users and non-users of the Museum. The results were very instructive – revealing what visitors valued about the current museum and where they felt change was necessary. Some typical comments were:

“You felt as if you were experiencing various stories of the past”

“I remember being bowled over by these things that I’d only ever seen in books. Making it real was the thing for me”

“You can see the marks that the creator made on it. It can make a connection with people.”

“You can imagine who touched it, what did people do with it. I like the imagination thing of museums”

“..objects from 300 years ago...just how similar in terms of some of the designs of the silverwork to what is being produced today and you get a real sense of connection with people who are long dead”

However, the case for improvement was also made very strongly:

“If you spend £2.5 million on a jewel and then it’s in a corner somewhere. It’s not impressive. You’d almost expect it to be in a room by itself.”

“The lighting is terrible. You try to look at something and your own shadow falls across. I want to see but I’m casting a shadow on it when I try to get close.”

“I think it’s strange that there’s this whole fossil thing after going through all the history”

“There are too many different styles of graphics, panels and images”

“You’re just getting lots of bits of information that aren’t easy to read, with no clear story”

In contrast, a piece of evaluation work was also carried out for the Victorian Street at York Castle Museum, following the investment there, and satisfaction ratings

were very high. Over 90% of respondents rated the experience good or better, with more than half rating it 'excellent'.

We have also received the results of a Hub-funded MORI survey that was carried out at York Castle Museum and York Art Gallery in October 2006. This shows that 74% of visitors gave the highest rating of "Very Satisfied" to their overall visit to YMT sites, this compares with 70% national average and 64% at the other Yorkshire Hub museums surveyed.

g) ensure the cataloguing of the collection

26. Major Projects

A highlight of this period has been the launch of the North Yorkshire volume for the **Public Catalogue Foundation** which features all the paintings in public collections held in North Yorkshire, of which York's collection is the largest. The catalogues are now on sale in York Art Gallery. Proceeds from the sale of the catalogue benefit the conservation of our Fine Art Collection.

In October, we launched our Renaissance funded partnership project with the theme of **Archaeology: Connecting Communities with Collections**. The first group we have worked with are trainee hairdressers from York College who are working with our collections to recreate Roman hairstyles. Across the region we are working with Scarborough and Wakefield Museums Services and North Yorkshire County Archive Service.

27. Documentation

We have continued progress against both our Collections Plan and our Retrospective Documentation Plan and we are monitoring progress quarterly to ensure we will complete the retrospective documentation to Accreditation standard by our target of 2010. Statistics for progress on retrospective documentation are included at annex 3.

There are many specific documentation projects that warrant specific mention. All items that are on display in Kirkgate have been re-catalogued and photographed, and are now being added into our computer database. This has been a huge undertaking, and is in line with our Collection Plan whereby collection management and public programmes are linked together.

The Geology collection is now completely up to Accreditation Standard through bulk accessioning. Work is now proceeding on enhancing the records for individual objects within the bulk records, and appears to be moving well on target. Progress has also been made on the documentation of the rock collection, the scientific instruments catalogue, the Herbarium and the exotic shell collection.

Archaeology has focused on a location audit for the prehistoric collections and work has begun on completing the documentation of the architectural collections stored at Birch Park. Several volunteers have started to catalogue parts of the collections that have not received a great deal of attention in recent years: the medieval and later document seals and some of the Anglo-Saxon coinage.

Over 4,000 works on paper have been catalogued with support from the Paul Mellon Foundation, and the WA Ismay collection now has over 1,800 of the 3,000+ works catalogued. The Japanese prints in our works on paper collection have been documented for the **Art of Life** exhibition which combined these exquisite and beautifully coloured works with studio ceramics.

We have continued to make progress on retrieving records from the previous City of York DCF-funded cataloguing exercise, with 28,411 records being recovered from laptops and integrated into our database. Progress continues to be made on entering paper records from this project, and we hope to have cleared all paper records from the 1999 project by the end of this financial year.

We now have safety copies on CD for all the accession registers at York Art Gallery, in line with Accreditation standards. The work is being carried out by the North Yorkshire Archives to a very high standard.

28. **Storage**

Storage improvements

Ceramics have been removed from above the Roman Gallery in the Yorkshire Museum to avoid the risk of rainwater damage. All pieces were photographed before being carefully packed and transported to new shelving at Birch Park Store.

Social History collections have been moved out of the Darnborough Street store and the container storage; a new mezzanine and additional shelving has been installed at James Street and additional shelves at Fulford to accommodate the relocated collections. We have taken a lease on a new storage unit to accommodate three Victorian carriages that had been on long term loan since 1977.

Several volunteers have assisted with the geology collections repacking all the larger fossil material and labelling it all up while the accession records are being created by curatorial staff. This process has helped to transform the geology store so that we can now get at them and use them. This exercise has also had some additional benefits – seemingly 'lost' specimens have been found and split groups have been reunited once again.

The Yorkshire Museum is leading the way for the national Portable Antiquities Scheme approach to recording finds at large scale metal detecting rallies, and they have been heartily congratulated by the National Organiser at the British Museum for their successful handling of this controversial subject. They attended two rallies recording over 400 finds and dealing with nearly a thousand metal detectorists, including at the very controversial site of Thornborough, a highly sensitive Neolithic landscape.

29. **Detailed visitor numbers**

Visitor Numbers

12 months from April 2006 to March 2007

(excluding c15,000 conference visitors)

	Actual	Last year	% Change
Castle Museum	254,478	213,080	19%
York Art Gallery	155,528	149,474	4%
York St Mary's	19,802	24,429	-19%
Yorkshire Museum	69,137	61,628	12%
Grand Total	502,219	448,611	12%

30. **Financial stability**

YMT is financially stable at the moment, but it has always been recognised that in an increasingly competitive and demanding market it would require further investment funding and capital investment to prosper.

2007/08 is forecast to be a transitional year financially – the impact of the Kirkgate investment at the Castle Museum will be less than in 2006/07 and so admissions income is likely to come under pressure. Further major investments in displays are planned for the Castle Museum during 2007; however these will only begin to have an impact from March 2008. Similarly, the planned investment in the Hospitium facilities will begin to deliver profits from Spring 2008 onwards.

Core funding for 2008-2013 has been agreed at the current level, plus an inflationary uplift.

31. It has not been possible for the Council to commit to any additional investment funding. However the Council is holding **£1.763m** of **capital funding** for YMT (£1.898m less £85k against the HLF scheme at York Art Gallery and £50k towards the Kirkgate redevelopment at York Castle Museum).

The following breakdown of funds has been agreed with YMT:

2007-8	Hospitium	200k
	1960's Experience	200k
2008-9	Prison Experience	100k
	Yorkshire Museum	500k
2009-10	Yorkshire Museum	500k
	Gardens	263k
Total		1763k (of 22 million investment)