

Improving Evening Culture Scrutiny Review

Feedback from Music Promoters & Music Venues in York

The Task Group agreed they would like to gather information from Music Promoters and Music Venues across the city and therefore agreed the following questions for circulation:

1. What time do you generally start your events?
2. What age group / categories do you generally cater for?
3. Have you considered running events that start earlier - If so, what were the barriers that stopped you?
4. Have you considered running events that would appeal to a different clientele - If so, what were the barriers that stopped you?
5. What incentives might encourage you to put on events that would fill the quieter time in the city centre between 5pm and 8pm?
6. Would you consider participating in promotions with other providers of attractions or accommodation to target the period between 5pm and 8pm?
7. How easy do you find it to advertise your events - Are there gaps in provision or are there ways that other organisations could support independent providers?
8. York supports a number of festivals. Do you find these a help or a hindrance to what you are offering? Are there gaps in provision, either of those that are currently run or any that might be possible in the future?

Response No.1

1. Around 7.30, although sometimes earlier or later
2. Most evening events are 18& as they take place on licensed premises and contain material that may be unsuitable for children. Have also run family friendly events e.g. at festivals
3. We have experimented with earlier starts, e.g. we ran a 1950s rock n roll night at The Duchess and started at 6 for a dance class. This was not well attended, and feedback from our audience told us this was too early and caused issues with people eating their evening meal etc. If only we could find a suitable venue to run a dinner show we could overcome this obstacle!
4. We are York's only producer of cabaret, variety and burlesque events. Have considered running family cabaret events, but as this is untried in York and rarely tried elsewhere, it would be a big financial risk for us.

We had some discussions with the Theatre Royal about their Youth Theatre being involved in something like this, but unfortunately it did not fit in with their schedule at the time. Venues are a big problem for us – we require a large enough, flexible space with cabaret seating– traditional theatre setting does not work for this art form and most other city centre venues are too small or much too expensive (e.g. Barbican) Adding in the practicalities of catering for a family audience makes this even more problematic. Last year we discussed a potential project with Dave Fleming which involved bringing a temporary venue to the city to create a space that could run family activities during the day and early evening, and more adult orientated cabaret, circus, spoken word and comedy events at a later hour. We had hoped that this might fit into one of the Tour De France cultural festival funding streams; however it didn't, so we have put this to one side for now whilst we investigate other potential sources of funding. We do think this is something that is currently missing from York's cultural offer and it's good that this consultation is taking place.

5. Support / partnership from another organisation or venue, that was mutually beneficial. Financial incentives, e.g. reduced venue hire rate, guaranteed support with marketing / linking in with other events to raise profile. We have lots of ideas and are open and flexible but we need suitable venues and as a completely independent organisation which receives no public funding, there is a limit on what we can afford to experiment with.
6. Yes
7. Very difficult and time consuming. We cannot afford to pay for advertising so make the most of 'free' marketing opportunities. We spend many hours persuading shops and businesses to display our posters and flyers, brokering deals with other promoters to cross promote, writing press releases, adding it to many listings sites and constantly updating social media. York would really benefit from a single, comprehensive listings service or publication as exists in many other cities. Also, finding some way for smaller independent providers to work with the larger cultural organisations – even if it was just allowing us to put flyers in their foyer etc. We are always happy to support other businesses in the same way. Any way of facilitating networking between providers would also be great – have attended a few events such as YTR's Break Out event and events connected with Yorkshire Cultural Festival, but they seem to fizzle out. There seems to be a disconnect between the major arts organisations and the smaller creative organisations, and we don't seem to fit in anywhere so do sometimes miss out on opportunities – I find it interesting that we have been

included on this mailing list alongside other promoters who produce music events!

8. Hindrance where they should be a massive help. We would really like to link up with events in the city more. We have tried e.g. last year's chocolate festival, we programmed a chocolate and sweet themed cabaret event and contacted several related businesses, offering them free advertising on our website and posters plus a stall to sell their wares at our event. Despite this all being agreed far in advance and in writing, they all let us down on the day for various reasons. The event was a success from our point of view but we did have to explain to our audience why there was no chocolate to purchase at our chocolate themed show in a chocolate city!!! I definitely think York's festivals could make more of us 'independent providers', who are often creating the more unusual and cutting edge entertainment in the city.

Response No.2

1. 7.30pm
2. 14 - 55
3. Nobody really comes to gigs earlier than 7:30pm unless a matinee show and even then it has to be special.
4. I do shows that appeal to all the live music fraternity but always interested in options.
5. Sponsorship or underwriting losses.
6. Yes
7. Need official poster boards in the city centre, properly regulated and kept clean and presentable like in Leeds.
8. There is only so much money to go around at the moment!

Response No.3

1. 8.30pm and 1pm on a Sunday.
2. 18+ and all ages on a Sunday.
3. I have considered it but it's not possible as musicians cannot get their equipment in to the city centre due to the driving restrictions.
4. No.
5. Access for entertainers in to the city centre to unload equipment for performances.
6. Not at the moment due to the above reason.

7. We do our own advertising through the website, mailing list, Facebook, twitter and flyers. Visit York have been helpful in distributing flyers. We find our current advertising methods to be successful.
8. We are glad that there are plenty of festivals and they certainly don't hinder our events. We want York to have as much entertainment and culture as possible. As a jazz promotion group, we would like to arrange a jazz festival for the city.

Response No.4

1. 7.30pm
2. Evening concerts are generally aimed at adults.
3. We promote events earlier in the evening as part of the summer festival
4. Yes of course – what stops us - finances!
5. Subsidy
6. Yes
7. -
8. We run the York Early Music festival in July each summer, this 'package' of events gives us much more freedom as the core of our audience stays in York throughout.

Response No.5

1. In general most events I have run historically start around 7pm - however we do have some afternoon gigs and world music events and have a bit more freedom. When running events at The Duchess and Fibbers there are strict restrictions in place around making noise before 5pm which hampers any afternoon events there as sound checks take about 2 hours and so events can't usually start before 7pm. At the Fulford Arms there are no noise restrictions and work with our neighbours to manage any issues but still tend to start gigs about 7pm in general
2. We are open to all ages but tend to be in the range 18 – 50. We put on a wide range of bands and music tastes.
3. When running events at The Duchess and Fibbers the main barrier is the offices above and managing complaints about noise during office hours from the businesses. At basement there are again noise issues with neighbours. At the Fulford Arms there are fewer barriers but in general people tend to be at work until 5pm midweek. We are happy to look at all day events on weekends though, but again there are extra

production costs due to staffing sound engineers etc for all day rather than a few hours.

4. Yes we cater to a broad range - the main barrier is promoting the events to the right people easily.
5. The obvious answer here is financial but that is not really the solution as you will end up with rubbish promoters putting on rubbish shows. The main incentive would be council support and production facilities. Since the removal of the toilets on Parliament Street this area has mainly been used for markets and not for any real entertainment events. The priority of markets over entertainment has killed this area. In my experiences of liaising with the Council when DV8 has tried to use outdoor spaces it has been difficult. There are certain production companies who are favoured by the Council and if you don't use these companies then events may not happen. Also there are a number of different areas you have to liaise with including the markets offices.

Actually looking at financial situation is difficult to justify the expense of putting on events in the city centre. Due to the open nature you can't charge entry fees so making revenue from the events has to be reliant upon selling advertising space, loss leaders for events at your venue or selling goods.

When we have looked to use areas in the city the costs for the space is high and there is no way to make money back from the events. Buskers have products they can sell so can justify the cost and effort but for venues it is a bit different.

In previous years i wanted to run an outdoor event on Parliament Street as part of the festival just to raise interest. We were unable to get an area in town due to the markets and when we looked at Tower Gardens there were massive flood risks and production costs were too high.

6. Yes - I have worked with most of the promoters in York over the years and always happy to do so again
7. Advertising - this is a particular place i would like to help out - In York there are some good things and some bad - Distribution of free media - It's great that we can flyer without a licence in York and most who distribute flyers are good and collect any litter. Poster distribution - this is horrendous in York but it is an area that I would be very interested in working with

Generally in York you can distribute posters but they have to go in private business premises - There is nowhere in York where events can be advertised on council property or council run notice boards. In Leeds

the Council worked with POPart and Frontline to get poster barrels which were placed on council land and thoroughfares but were maintained by a private poster distribution business.

I know that they and I would be very interested in doing this in York and offering a solution to how to let people know about events whilst in the city. Yes online is good, and some people read the press or tourist information brochures BUT the easiest way to let someone know about an event is if they see a poster in the street and it always will be.

It would require some investment in designing poster barrels/boards in York and possibly also working with the empty shop window things that have been done by the council but this would be prime advertising space and would help numerous small promoters as well as the big ones and would also get rid of fly posting

FLY POSTING is not a big issue in York especially when you look at other cities but there are certain promoters - particularly the circus and irregular events which do fly post. BUT they don't seem to be prosecuted - there needs to be a real incentive not to fly post and also there needs to be an alternative such as poster barrels

Please do talk to me further about this as I do know a number of people who would be happy to work with the Council on this.

There is also no gig listing magazine distributed in York - instead there are a few magazines like one and other/ press / circulation/ the link but nothing for York.

A friend of mine has tried this but found it very difficult to get distribution again this is something that could be a quick fix and happy to help with but also needs to cover all venues from the pubs to the barbican

8. I am sorry to say that I would disagree with this statement unfortunately. From my experience of running an award winning metropolitan festival in York we found it very difficult to get support without having to pay a premium for it. Advertising using council facilities such as the lamppost signs and in council publications is very expensive particularly for small promoters and tends to not reach the right crowds.

DV8 has been running since 2010 in York but has very rarely been picked up by the council or mentioned despite trying to work with both the council and Visit York. This is not a complaint by the way. In York where tourists are key a festival which brings in 2000 people during the summer doesn't make a massive difference but the focus tends to be on events like Jorvik and the food festivals which can generate revenue

easily , whilst other events like the festival of traditional dance and early music festival get little mention.

York is known from its history but unfortunately it's musical culture is not celebrated as much which is a shame - We have loads of live music venues providing entertainment but they tend to lose out as the focus is put on the barbican, theatre royal and opera house which have larger capacities.

I hope you can see from the length of this email that I am passionate about both entertainment and York and would love for this City to have a great support structure to help put on great events and make it a cultural hub for the future.

We need to support local bands and artists providing them with a way to get heard, we need to support venues and good promoters and make both tourists and residents aware that there is a lot to offer in York at all times of the day and to help fill the gaps in the day by working with businesses and I am really glad to see this happening here.

Response No.6

1. 7.30pm - except during festival periods or where there is a partnership event with guaranteed footfall
2. General public 12 - 90 interested in top quality jazz and world artists
3. Not in York as we do not have the partnerships to do so - in Hull - yes regularly
4. Yes - however budgetary restrictions need to be considered
5. Fully backed and marketed festivals that encourage footfall into City Centre. Or focus on events in York's hidden buildings for example
6. If financial conditions were right - sure!
7. We are dependent on York Theatre Royal marketing support and York Press (Charles Hutchinson is a huge cultural asset to York) - however we find it difficult to access a fully joined up marketing offer for culture within the city
8. Well, I feel that York's Festival strategy is flawed - there is no real cultural overview to the city's offer - it is left to individuals to fight for space. We are part of the Hull 2017 UK City of Culture and the development of Freedom, which are examples of fully joined-up City offers for Culture.

Response No.7

1. Between 7pm and 8pm.
2. 14 upwards
3. Due to noise restrictions from our neighbours we are unable to start events earlier
4. Yes. Lack of financial backing and marketing tools have always prevented this.
5. We would be unable to put events on during that period of time due to sound checks, noise restrictions etc.....
6. Not at this stage, no.
7. There is very little space to advertise events in terms of displaying posters and flyers around the city. Some independent places take flyers and posters, but these are very few and far between. Advertising an event is limited and therefore quite difficult to promote effectively. It would be helpful if there were more places where we could display posters, and more free listing opportunities.
8. I think the festivals work both ways. In terms of them being a help, they promote awareness of local events, venues and local artists. And in terms of being a hindrance they often drive acts/audiences away from the venue around festival season, making it harder to book acts and attract a good sized audience.