

YORK ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2015-20

Annex 2

Choosing a better story



INTRODUCTION

Experience shows that writing a strategy is the easy part. Delivering it is what really matters, and this should be in the forefront of our minds.

Regardless of what is written in a document, our 'economic strategy' will be the things we do over the next 5 years.

No more. No less.

No matter what the phrases we overlay as ambitions or objectives, our 'priorities' will be what we focus our resources and energies on in practice.

At the outset we have a choice about what those things will be and how we will make them happen.

The following pages therefore set out our considered view, as key partners in the City, on what these decisions should be.

These choices are important, so they are the result of much debate and deliberation over the last year, taking heed of the input and ideas from over 100 businesses and delivery bodies in the city, as well as the evidence available. This has got us to a position where we can focus on making real decisions.

It is in these choices, and our ability to follow through on them, that we begin to compose the narrative of our City's future.

Clearly, businesses, skills providers and the public sector will only be part of the story. External and global actors will have an impact. However, based on what we know now and the results of our consultation exercise, this paper outlines what we need to do next as a city.



THE SCENE IS SET

Summary of where we are now; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

The last few months of 2015 provide a suitable backdrop to the future of York's economy.

- Enterprise Zone status for York Central brings the City's much vaunted landmark development within grasp, with the potential of around £100m of additional retained business rates.

- The relocation of the high value insurance firm, Hiscox, to the City and their associated business club which allows local small businesses to operate in their high quality offices in Hungate.

- £50m has been allocated by the Government for agri-tech Centres of Excellence at Sand Hutton, cementing York's position at the vanguard of agri-food and bioeconomy sectors.

- We have seen a decisive vote in favour of creating a Business Improvement District in York to deliver £4m private sector-led investment in the City Centre over the next five years.

- The hard work of Bishopthorpe Road traders has been given the recognition it deserves through its award for the 'Best British High Street'.

These achievements are foundations to build on, and a springboard for the future success of York. This should be seen alongside the City's exceptional rail connectivity, high ranking further and higher education, resident qualification levels, low unemployment and general quality of life.

Yet delve a little deeper, and the same challenges which York has faced for many years threaten to become permanent fixtures:

Despite having the highest skills levels of any city in the North, York's wages still fall below the national average in comparison due to a disproportionate skew towards low value sectors such as tourism and retail.

The lack of a Local Plan and new development in the City has resulted in a dearth of office space in good locations, meaning minimal opportunity for new high value jobs from inward investment or major business expansion in York.

House-building has also been constrained, with unaffordable prices for large parts of the local population.

Recent events also provided a stark reminder of the vulnerability to flooding of some York's business premises, and the effect this has on the City's economy.

Issues around congestion, graduate retention and external perceptions about the image of the City are other challenges which could be added to the list.

And all the while, other cities across the world are planning, striding forward, investing, competing. Standing still is not an option.

How will the story play out for York?

For full explanation of the evidence base of informing the actions we take, [click here.](#)

TWO TALES OF A CITY

Current projections of York's economy; vision and goals for what it could be



KEEP GOING, WE'RE DOING FINE...

Scenario one

Fast forward fifteen years or so, and one scenario could see York has retained its reputation as a top destination for tourism, education and quality of life, but has seen little shift in the underlying long term trends.

In this scenario is based on a continuation of current trends, the City's vibrant visitor economy has doubled in size, with successful promotional efforts in overseas markets, and new retailers attracted to the city. The City has also preserved its heritage environment, and has in fact digitised its archives to be openly accessible anywhere in the world. People love to visit York, and not only that, it is a pretty in-demand residential destination too.

The University of York has made its way back into the top 100 institutions in the world for academic excellence, as well as York St John rising up the rankings, with many of both universities' international alumni taking up top jobs at leading global firms because of its prestigious networks.

However, while student accommodation has abounded both on and off campus, University and research-led job creation never materialised with new business space de-prioritised in favour of more profitable land uses on the University of York campuses. Clifton Moor and Monks Cross soon became unviable after years of perpetual congestion, and applications for change of use to residential were an easy decision to make, continuing the trend of re-classification of office space seen for many other city centre properties over the period.

A few greenfield sites were forced through the planning process before a Local Plan was eventually agreed and adopted. For a complex mix of reasons, York Central's potential as a Central Business District is still not realised with only parts of the site developed.

The low growth of office space and business rates base has also had the added disadvantage that there is now no new money to invest in the City, affecting the provision of public services.

Despite a number of windfalls through change of use, housing in the City is now rated as the most unaffordable in the North. Not that it is actually the most expensive, rather wages are disproportionately low in comparison to other cities with similar demands on housing.

With tourism, retail and care continuing their long term trend as the city's biggest growth sectors, wages remained on a their steady downward trajectory over the entire period, placing York in the lower quartile of regional league tables, not only on wages, but on gross value added. These low-wage sectors, in fact, now account for around half of the jobs in the City.

After a number of the City's fastest growing digital, rail consultancy and professional services businesses left through lack of grow-on space, York has struggled to attract new inward investors to fill their place, further compounding the issue: other cities simply are a more attractive proposition.

Many residents work in jobs below their qualification levels. Few students stay on in the City now, instead heading to more diverse and creative cities such as Liverpool, Hull and Sheffield, which also have greater career prospects in high paying industries that York simply cannot compete with, like high value chemicals, energy, digital and bioscience. There is more of a young people's buzz and "scene" in other cities in the North, with York's cultural offering seen largely as heritage/pastiche, and for a non-resident audience.

The proportion of older people has increased significantly in York, with the needs of its aging population a contributor to rapid growth in York's care sector, although this, too, is constrained by the lack of affordable housing.

It is difficult to see where the City goes from here.

A POSSIBLE FUTURE IN NUMBERS:

WAGES:

£1,270 lower

York resident average annual real wages projections to 2030 vs. 2015 if doubling size of tourism and retail sectors achieved + baseline forecast maintained for other sectors*

BUSINESS SPACE:

Over 2million sqft less business space than in 2015

Continuation 2012-15 trend and committed developments for change in office and industrial space to 2030, largely as a result of changes of use

HOUSING:

5,500 shortfall

Continuation of 2012-2015 trend of net housing change versus local plan projected requirements (Arup, August 2015) to 2030



* Using Oxford Economic Forecasts and current national median wages for each sector to model future impact

CHOOSING A BETTER STORY

Scenario two

Fast forward fifteen years and we could see a very different story. York is recognised as the intellectual hub of the Northern Powerhouse, *the* place to do business for a number of distinctive industries which rely on the local high quality skills base.

The City Centre has been transformed. With York Central delivering a new Central Business District with significant quality office space, we have been able to protect other things that are held dear within the City; enabling a shift to higher paid jobs and housing within the means of local residents without compromising the unique qualities of York.

Through the growth in business rates base and the size and value of the Business Improvement District, an overhaul of the public realm in the historic quarter of the City Centre has been achieved and high quality developments delivered with long term sustainability in mind, improving the attractiveness of the City.

Growing business rates have also allowed us to unlock investment to address key blockages in economic growth, including improvements to the Outer Ring Road. With its impressive station regeneration, similar to the award winning scheme at King's Cross, and recently completed High Speed links, the City lives up to its status as one of six Northern High Speed transport hubs, enabling businesses and residents to access most of the major cities in the country in less than 90 minutes.

Whilst there has been growth in the number and quality of jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector, the largest growth has been in high value jobs, both through incoming businesses and growing indigenous businesses. Subsequently, by making the right choices around creating the right conditions for high value jobs, York has turned around the trends of falling wages and GVA per head. The economy is not necessarily massively bigger in terms of overall jobs, but these headline figures reflect the transformation to a better sort of economy, reflective of the abilities of the City's potential and the skills of its residents.

The decision to focus on high-value industries where York has a comparative advantage over other cities, particularly rail, insurance, agri-food and bioeconomy can now be seen as the right one.



York is now *the* place in the UK for value rail businesses. The global growth in infrastructure investment in high speed rail has created the need for a higher number of rail engineering consultants, and York capitalised on its specialism here.

In Financial and Professional services, businesses and the public sector in York worked to ensure that the combination of connectivity and liveability in the city was fully promoted to inward investors from the capital, looking to escape their higher staffing and accommodation costs.

The City is leading the way in UK agri-tech and bioeconomy research and businesses, with major multinational companies moving to York, and numerous innovative SMEs expanding from small initial setups in the City as a result of bespoke industry engagement facilities and accommodation focussed on business needs. The east of the City, including Heslington East, Dunnington and Sand Hutton is seen as a key European hub for this rapidly expanding global industry.

The City has made the most of its UNESCO Media Arts designation. A diverse programme of activities from internationally acclaimed festivals to coding clubs for school children is delivered entirely through sizeable private sponsorship from major international brands, and has made a tangible impact on the IT and creative sectors.



There is a strong creative scene spanning across disciplines, but with particular strengths in film and digital media building on continued major national and international investment in both of York's universities in this area.

Together with ambitious contemporary architectural design around York's Southern Gateway and York Central developments, this cultural vibrancy has caused a shift in the brand people associate with the City, and has played a key role in attracting and retaining talent. This has also been strengthened by a well established citywide graduate and apprenticeship programme enabling students to be able to stay in the city if they wish, and has allowed small businesses to gain particular skills and abilities through courses with significant local business engagement.

Tough decisions have been made on housing developments and affordable allocations, and together with collaborative work with neighbouring authorities and windfalls from change of use, house prices in York have bucked the trend of the likes of Harrogate, Bath and Chester; staying largely at 2015 ratios to average wages. This has kept home ownership within the reach of born-and-bred Yorkies, and there is a range of additional affordable options for those on lower wages.

People love being in York and the benefits of being able to enjoy both interesting and stimulating careers, and have a great place to rest and play too, as well as houses they can actually afford. The City has broad appeal, whether for sociable single in their 20s, families with young children, or those who have lived in the City for more than half a century. Neither a copycat nor a place clinging on to the past, York has creatively used its heritage and unique assets to cement its reputation as a distinct, exciting and beautiful northern City.

For full explanation of how we can measure this, [click here](#).

IN NUMBERS: LONG TERM TARGETS

WAGES ABOVE NATIONAL AVERAGE BY 2025

Measured by ASHE data

BUSINESS SPACE + HOUSING REQUIREMENTS FULLY MET

Measured by planning records against Local Plan projections

PRIORITY HIGH VALUE SECTOR GROWTH AT LEAST 20% FASTER THAN PREDICTED

Measured by BRES data against Oxford Economics projections

EMPLOYMENT RATE, SKILLS + CONNECTIVITY COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES MAINTAINED

Measured by being in top 10 Centre for Cities UK Rankings for indicators for the above areas where data recorded

A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, STUDY, VISIT + DO BUSINESS



EIGHT ESSENTIAL TO-DOS

Programmes and actions



DELIVER YORK CENTRAL ENTERPRISE ZONE + HIGH SPEED HUB



DELIVER A LOCAL PLAN THAT SUPPORTS A HIGH VALUE ECONOMY



TAKE PRACTICAL STEPS TO RETAIN TALENT IN THE CITY



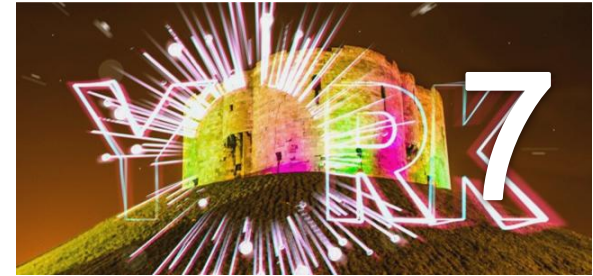
DRIVE REAL BUSINESS GROWTH AT HESLINGTON EAST + SAND HUTTON



LOBBY FOR INVESTMENT IN KEY TRANSPORT NETWORKS



USE LOCAL BUSINESS RATE FREEDOMS TO DRIVE HIGH VALUE GROWTH



MAKE A FRESH LOUD STATEMENT OF CULTURAL + VISUAL IDENTITY



BRING PEOPLE + BUSINESSES TOGETHER IN CREATIVE LOW-COST WAYS

1. DELIVER YORK CENTRAL ENTERPRISE ZONE + HIGH SPEED HUB

The *number one* priority for the next five years is delivering the new Central Business District elements of York Central: providing around 7,000 high value jobs and up to 120,000m² office led commercial space. Without this, it is unlikely we will achieve our ambitions of tangibly shifting York's wage, productivity or business space trends. As such, and as a complex project, there are a number of different elements which need to be taken forward. This work cannot be over-prioritised. We firmly believe that this provides an opportunity not just to provide an also-ran standard development, but to deliver something iconic and attractive which makes people sit up and take notice.

Directly linked to York Central is getting York Station high speed ready and moving towards it becoming a full regional multi-modal transport hub, which will both enhance the benefits of York Central as a business and housing location and cement York's excellent national and regional connectivity credentials.



We will...

IN PARTNERSHIP:

YORK CENTRAL AS FEASIBLE INVESTABLE PROPOSITION – Building on Enterprise Zone status, between Network Rail and City of York Council, get the site into a position where it is a feasible proposition for developers, delivering enabling infrastructure, necessary land clearance and acquisition and commercial partnership arrangements

LINE UP EXPANDING YORK BUSINESSES TO BE ANCHOR TENANTS ON KEY SITES - Compile and maintain documented demand for new premises from existing businesses with desire to expand, including enabling signing pre-lets where appropriate

TARGETED INWARD INVESTMENT THROUGH SENIOR ADVOCATES - Equip senior advocates to proactively sell the city, and specifically the York Central site, to inward investing businesses in high value sectors, with a rolling top 100 list of prioritised business targets

AS THE PUBLIC SECTOR:

INDEPENDENT DEMAND REPORT FOR YORK CENTRAL GRADE A OFFICE FEASIBILITY - Commission an independent report of demand for Grade A office space on York Central to demonstrate to market, and for planning decisions, the feasibility of high value commercial space on the site, as well as in the City Centre

PROMOTE MAJOR SITES TO INVESTORS + DEVELOPERS - Proactively promote key development opportunities through major property conferences, networking opportunities and other events

SEEK EXTERNAL FUNDING TO:

YORK CENTRAL ENTERPRISE ZONE - Fully deliver on the opportunity presented by York Central Enterprise Zone, sharing the risk and reward of borrowing against retained business rates as appropriate and ensuring enabling infrastructure, necessary land clearance and acquisition is in place.

YORK STATION HIGH SPEED HUB - Make the improvements necessary for York Station to be ready for HS2/HS3, maximise the impact of this opportunity, and be an multi-modal sustainable transport hub for the region

NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM TRANSFORMATION – Upgrade/renovate the National Railway Museum to become a high tech science museum attracting a greater range of visitors and a key landmark driving footfall to York Central

EARLY TEST CASE OFFICE DEVELOPMENT ON YORK CENTRAL TO PROVE DEMAND - Invest in an advanced smaller test case office development on York Central with public/private financing to release latent office space demand and demonstrate viability of key sites

2. DELIVER A LOCAL PLAN THAT SUPPORTS A HIGH VALUE ECONOMY

York has been without a Local Plan for too long, leading to under-development and lack of strategic framework for long-term planning decisions. The first priority is to produce one. The second is to get it right, which, from an economic perspective, means enough business space of sufficient quality in locations the market is demanding to encourage high value jobs. It also means providing for the housing need to support this so that people who work in the City can also afford to own a home here, while balancing the need to protect the natural environment and character of the City. To deliver this in practice, we must ensure a robust evidence base, utilising our insight into the City's economy, market aspirations and failures, and future development opportunities to produce a sustainable plan for York.



We will...

AS THE PUBLIC SECTOR:

A LOCAL PLAN SUPPORTING A HIGH VALUE ECONOMY

- Deliver an ambitious Local Plan which allocates appropriate land enabling a high value economy (with the balance of new jobs created 20% higher than baseline projections in high value sectors), and the housing to support this

IN PARTNERSHIP:

PRIVATE SECTOR INPUT INTO LOCAL PLAN

– Deliver a unified private sector voice to articulate business space requirements in the City and work with the Council to evidence commercial demand.

3. TAKE PRACTICAL STEPS TO RETAIN TALENT IN THE CITY

Any successful economy requires skilled people to replace those leaving the labour market. With many young people in York going on to study and make a life elsewhere, York's pipeline of graduate and apprenticeship talent is essential to its economic vibrancy. London will always be a draw for many completing their studies, yet significant numbers of York students want to stay in the City.

Indeed, many take lower value jobs than they have the potential to do in order to keep living in York. On the other hand, with a smaller labour market than many urban centres, York SMEs, particularly within high value sectors, can struggle to find the talent and skills they need and do not have the recruitment budgets to promote jobs far and wide. There is more we can do to address these issues simultaneously and help the City to be a place where talented people can build a career and make a significant contribution with the skills they have.



We will...

IN PARTNERSHIP:

GRADUATE PROGRAMME FOR SMEs - Coordinate a shared graduate programme for SMEs which would otherwise be unable to do on their own, keeping talented people in York and equipping businesses

APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME FOR SMEs – Coordinate a brokerage service for SME apprenticeships, including higher level and degree apprenticeships, stimulating the marketplace as required.

PROMOTION OF YORK CAREER OPPORTUNITIES TO YORK STUDENTS - Universities to proactively market York career options alongside paid-for national business promotion, including a complimentary stand at Careers Fairs for groups of York-based SMEs to promote opportunities across the York sector

4. DRIVE REAL BUSINESS GROWTH AT HESLINGTON EAST + SAND HUTTON

(particularly around agri-food and bioeconomy businesses)

York Science Park has already proved the impact university and research-led growth can have on a city. Yet while the likes of Cambridge, Bath and Manchester science and R&D base have continued to rapidly expand and impact the industrial makeup of the city, in York there still feels much untapped potential – particularly where the City has distinct comparative advantages. Part of this is simply due to limited suitable space, especially for larger businesses.

Through the University of York, Fera Science and others, York is already at the leading edge of many disciplines of bioeconomy and agri-tech research such as process innovation involving organic materials, crop protection, plant science and creating valuable products from waste. There is notable industry engagement through tailored facilities such as the Biorenewables Development Centre and recently announced agri-tech Centres for Excellence at Sand Hutton.

The next step on this journey of establishing the City as a major hub for these rapidly expanding global industries is to build on these foundations and realise the resulting indigenous SME growth and relocation of businesses. Similarly, at an earlier stage of the journey, now is the time for York's applied research excellence in film and digital creativity to be harnessed and affect tangible business growth. This means delivering the support and accommodation which the market demands and nurturing strong private sector-led networks to continue this work on a sustainable footing.



We will...

AS THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK:

HESLINGTON EAST AS HIGH VALUE INNOVATION-LED BUSINESS LOCATION - Market a business accommodation offer for Heslington East for developers to invest in and businesses to relocate

MAXIMISE LOCAL BUSINESS IMPACT OF DIGITAL CREATIVITY HUB - Maximise the support for local and regional SMEs through new Digital Creativity Hub as there is market demand.

AS DEFRA:

SAND HUTTON AS HIGH VALUE INNOVATION-LED BUSINESS LOCATION – Tailor and promote business accommodation on the Sand Hutton site according to commercial market demand, with a focus on agri-food businesses

IN PARTNERSHIP:

TARGETED INWARD INVESTMENT THROUGH SENIOR ADVOCATES (see also #1) - Equip senior advocates to proactively sell the city to inward investing businesses in high value sectors, with a rolling top 100 list of prioritised business targets

BIO-ECONOMY + AGRI-FOOD PRIVATE SECTOR LED NETWORK & INITIATIVES - Build on BioVale initiative to deliver a vibrant private sector-led agri-food and bioeconomy network with shared capacity to support initiatives going forward

BIOECONOMY / AGRI-FOOD ENTERPRISE ZONE - Deliver a bioeconomy and agri-food enterprise zone providing incentives around key sites which are tailored to attracting new businesses in these sectors, borrowing against future business rates to fund this

SEEK EXTERNAL FUNDING TO:

BIO-ECONOMY / AGRI-FOOD HUB(S) WITH SHARED ACCOMODATION & KIT (BIOHUB, CATAPULT CENTRE OR SIMILAR) - Where market failure or commercial opportunities identified, invest in accommodation, shared kit or for bioeconomy / agri-food businesses

5. LOBBY FOR INVESTMENT IN KEY TRANSPORT NETWORKS

York's excellent rail connectivity in particular is vital to the City's economy and making it an attractive place for businesses, residents and visitors. With significant national rail investment planned for the next 15 years at least, York must position itself to make the most of these opportunities. There are also a number of congestion pinch points which undermine otherwise viable and attractive commercial sites. Again, many of these fall outside of local control, but funding is available, so having clear propositions and influencing the decision makers will be key. The city has taken a strong approach to sustainable transport solutions, and we must continue our focus on deriving economic, social and environmental outcomes.



We will...

IN PARTNERSHIP:

COORDINATED LOBBYING AROUND RAIL CONNECTIVITY - Coordinate a joined-up, strategic and proactive approach to lobbying Government for continuing to improve rail connectivity to the City, including high speed improvements, electrification and integrated ticketing and pricing across North and West Yorkshire.

SEEK EXTERNAL FUNDING TO:

YORK STATION HIGH SPEED HUB (see also #1) - Make the improvements necessary to prepare York Station for HS2/HS3, maximise the impact of this opportunity, and be an multi-modal sustainable transport hub for the region

OUTER RING ROAD IMPROVEMENTS - Invest in improving A1237 outer ring road to ease congestion

A64 DUALLING TO SAND HUTTON - Invest in A64 dualling to Sand Hutton to enable benefits from high value business growth at Agri-food campus

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT INITIATIVES – Invest in initiatives which build on the city's strengths in sustainable transport around electric vehicles, Park and Ride and cycling

6. USE LOCAL BUSINESS RATE FREEDOMS TO DRIVE HIGH VALUE GROWTH



The Chancellor's recent announcement that local areas will retain 100% of business rates raised and will be the means for providing local services, brings both opportunities and threats. These new powers and flexibilities must be used wisely and focus on priority outcomes if they are both to help achieve the economic ambitions in this strategy and provide a sustainable income stream for providing the frontline services residents need. Nevertheless, especially for a place like York, projecting steady increases in business rates base, coupled with Enterprise Zone status for York Central, such a policy provides the prospect of a previously unavailable major tool to impact the City, its economy and businesses.

We will...

AS THE COUNCIL:

BUSINESS RATES BORROWING FOR UPFRONT INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS - Once new national business rates policy is clear, explore the use of business rates retention to fund upfront infrastructure costs on key sites

BUSINESS RATE INCENTIVES FOR HIGH VALUE GROWTH - Once the national business rates policy is clear, explore and provide business rate incentives which encourage high value job creation (especially where they can be effectively fiscally neutral)

7. MAKE A FRESH LOUD STATEMENT OF CULTURAL + VISUAL IDENTITY

From an external perspective, few would argue that York wasn't 'nice' or 'pretty' – and these are part of our appeal. The challenge is to stay 'nice' and 'pretty', but also aim to be exciting, 'inventive', 'ahead of the curve' - the City characteristics which drive a vibrant economy .

Culture and visual identity play an important role in defining perceptions of a city. For York, perhaps the Minster, City Walls or the Vikings spring to mind.

With its recent status as a UNESCO City of Media Arts, new developments in the pipeline, many creative SMEs working with major international brands, and the opportunity of a Business Improvement District for the City Centre, York has a good a chance as ever to make new statements of intent that ensure people sit up and take notice; to rethink the perception of York as simply a place for a pleasant day out.

Promotional materials and communications will go some way, but in a noisy marketplace of cities as brands, an holistic and ambitious approach which affects the fundamentals as well as the narrative is required.

This won't work if we rely on local public sector subsidy or initiative – such an approach in fact narrows possibilities and dampens the scale of thinking we should be aiming at. Instead, commercial creativity and engaging major investors is the name of the game if York is to continue to make its mark and sustain and diversify its cultural vibrancy.



We will...

IN PARTNERSHIP:

CREATIVE MARKETING + PR TO CHANGE PERCEPTION OF CITY - Take forward a initiative together to promote and talk up a positive image of the city, delivering a sustained marketing/PR campaign and regularly communicate stories of business success in York to deliver business and investor confidence

AMBASSADORS PROGRAMME - Initiate and equip a group of senior advocates with significant national/international influence with a small number of key messages to support the promotion of the city to a range of audiences

COORDINATED MARKETING TEAM ACROSS ORGANISATIONS - Set up a virtual shared marketing team of marketing officers from key organisations and businesses in the city to spot opportunities to cross-promote York and key messages nationally and internationally.

TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING – Continue to creatively develop York’s tourism and culture offer, and to raise the city’s profile as a quality visitor destination through targeted campaigns

WEB + DIGITAL MARKETING OF THE CITY TO A RANGE OF AUDIENCES - Develop an improved digital toolkit including web presence for promoting the city

MAJOR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN COMPETITIONS AROUND KEY DEVELOPMENTS - Run and promote national/international architectural design competitions for each major new development in the city over the next few years to help York become known for progressive contemporary urban design with sensitivity to its heritage

SEEK EXTERNAL FUNDING TO:

PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME - Invest in a programme of maintenance and enhancement of public realm in York city centre to improve its attractiveness as the 'shop window' of the city

YEAR ROUND CREATIVE LIGHTING SETUP FOR THE CITY CENTRE - Plan and deliver comprehensive all-year-round lighting setup for the city centre which can used dynamically, be adapted seasonally and used to tell stories - to be an attraction in itself encouraging evening economy

EYE OF YORK ICONIC DEVELOPMENT - Develop a new iconic public open space around Eye of York, with architecture that is an attraction in itself and reason to re-visit/re-think York, and where things happen

DIGITAL SIGNPOSTING & WHAT'S ON - Roll out a comprehensive creative approach to digital signposting / communicating what's on and things to do in the city, which is accessible both virtually (e.g. through apps) and physically at key points in the city

DIGITAL+CREATIVE SHARED ACCOMODATION & KIT (GUILDHALL OR OTHER) - Where market failure or commercial opportunities identified, invest in shared accommodation & kit for IT, digital and media arts businesses, for example, in an iconic building like the Guildhall as a hub

MEDIA ARTS FESTIVALS – Deliver high profile festivals which play into UNESCO branding, whether new opportunities such or growing existing international festivals in the city such as ASFF or Great Yorkshire Fringe.

8. BRING PEOPLE + BUSINESSES TOGETHER IN CREATIVE LOW-COST WAYS

While some of the most important interventions for York's economy for the next five years can be planned, experience tells us that many of the keys to unlocking will happen 'along the way' will come through relationships and conversations between all manner of businesses, organisations and individuals. The success of 'Bishy Road', generating the Hiscox inward investment lead, the development of a major international film festival, the creation of the BioVale innovation cluster and UNESCO designation are just a few things that didn't feature in the last Strategy, nor were initiated primarily by statutory partners or the biggest employers in the City.

Yet all of them came about through connected relationships and working together across different people, businesses and organisations in the city. By this, we don't mean through bureaucratic board meetings or stale old boys clubs, simply good mutual relationships between enterprising individuals. Such connectedness is, of course, excellent for effective communication, coordination and sharing of information but in a world built more on networks than control and command hierarchies, we should absolutely expect this is where some of the best ideas and initiatives will emerge.

In some ways, we have little control over these things, but we *can* help to nurture this sort of environment and culture. This doesn't have to cost lots of money, and in fact if it is only the public sector willing to stump up or coordinate, we're probably doing it wrong. This isn't about expensive conferences or networking events without purpose, but about bringing together diverse and enterprising people in interesting and stimulating contexts.

And who knows, the resultant impact in five years may be greater than many an elaborate programme?



We will...

IN PARTNERSHIP:

DIVERSE & INTERESTING INFORMAL NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES (CREATIVE CONVERSATIONS OR OTHER) -

Provide informal enjoyable opportunities for creative and energised people (particularly not just the usual suspects) to come together to network, develop ideas which will benefit the city + enable serendipity to happen

DIRECTORS FORUMS AND/OR PRIVATE SECTOR LED NETWORKS FOR HIGH VALUE SECTORS -

Facilitate regular private sector-led forums to bring together key sectors in York for mutual support, promotion of the sector and to harness the key opportunities which arise from working together. An example of this would be the Guild of Media Arts or York Professionals.

NEXT STEPS

Actions for the year 2016/17

In the next year, you should see:

1. Partnership agreements including financials confirmed for York Central, with funding fully in place, including a mechanism for borrowing against future business rates. There should also be agreement on business and housing allocations through the Local Plan and progress towards taking the site to market.
2. An agreed Local Plan submitted which supports making a shift towards a higher value economy.
3. Progress towards a graduate scheme for SMEs, as well as a continuation of apprenticeship brokerage which has successfully adapted to changes in national policy. You should also be beginning to see York SMEs being represented at University careers fairs through collaborative agreements.
4. Firm vision and plans for future developments on Heslington East and Sand Hutton scoped and agreed by relevant parties, with next steps identified. There should also be progress on a clear pitch for businesses around options for locating their company on Heslington East or Sand Hutton which has been shared with property agents and key intermediaries. There should have also been continued progress and business involvement within the BioVale and DC Hub initiatives.
5. A clear list of priority transport asks, with feasibility work undertaken and outline business cases developed for major transport investments where they don't currently exist. This should form part of a clear lobbying strategy for influencing key individuals around relevant decisions.
6. A City of York Council response to the Government consultation on business rate retention, expected in Summer 2016. On a national level, we'd expect updates on government guidance and the parameters we will be able to set local business rates policy within.
7. An improved web presence for promoting the City to businesses considering locating in the city, an ambassadors programme launched and initial meetings of a coordinated marketing team across organisations, led by Make it York. You should also see feasibility work undertaken and outline business cases developed for identified major initiatives focussed on changing the perception/visual appearance of York.
8. Several creative networking events delivered, and sector networks happening within all key sectors and moving towards a self-sustaining position

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Conclusion

Regardless of what is written in a document, our 'economic strategy' will be the things we do over the next 5 years.

No more. No less.

At the outset we have a choice about what those things will be.

Sounds simple. The challenge is of course to follow through and make what we say needs to happen to happen in practice for the benefit of our residents, our businesses and our city.

Making it happen means we avoid the temptation to try to do everything and spread ourselves thinly with numerous other ideas and sub-strategies, being clear about opportunity costs in our decision making.

It also means proper alignment of operational resources, activities and approaches of key stakeholders such as the Council, Make it York, Universities and Local Enterprise Partnerships to the things that we know will make the biggest difference.

We must ensure strong delivery structures and accountability of the actions detailed here (which are outlined in an annex), while taking a supportive approach in problem-solving collaboratively where issues arise.

And where actions aren't just about a single organisation, it means genuine partnership working, not just at a board level, but allocating shared resources to deliver key programmes across private and public sectors, like was demonstrated so ably in the BID development process. Make it York could provide a good vehicle for this sort of approach.

Nevertheless, collectively, we now have a choice.

Today, we choose a better story.

