

Make It York : Scrutiny Update

November 2017

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee on the progress of Make It York with regard to the SLA agreement with City of York Council.
2. So far this financial year, Make It York is trading slightly ahead of budget and it is anticipated that the full year budget will be achieved. There will be a small surplus on a revenue budget of £4.7 million.
3. A detailed report on the SLA is attached covering all aspects of the agreement including business support and inward investment.
4. For the relevance of this committee, several things relating to culture, tourism and events and festivals can be highlighted :

5. CITY CENTRE EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

Shambles Market

The renaissance of the Shambles Market continues with a strong revenue performance so far this year, 22% ahead of last year and 11% up on budget. This performance is underpinned by the growing success of the food court. It has attracted some good national publicity and 'Los Moros' is now number 1 on TripAdvisor in Yorkshire as a place to eat. Extra, new parasols have added to the ambience of the area and a temporary cover is being arranged to try and maintain momentum during the winter months. Longer-term, a permanent cover is what is really needed. Both universities have held significant 'freshers' events in the food court. A monthly 'makers market', based on arts and crafts is also proving to be popular.

Christmas

The Christmas festival is on track for another strong performance. This has allowed MIY to invest more back into the programme. This has included a new partnership with the BID to improve Christmas lights in York. Completely new lights have been arranged and the improvement to last year should be significant. The annual ice trail is the biggest yet –

45 sculptures across the city. Christmas is launched in York on November the 16th with a big switch on event in St. Helen's Square.

The Great York Ghost Trail

Working with Snow Home on Gillygate, MIY has created a Ghost Trail to run over the October half-term break and, to some extent, to fill the void created by Illuminating York not taking place this year. It has proved to be immensely popular with hundreds of families entering the competition and really good traditional and social media coverage.

Balloon Fiesta

Make It York has been instrumental in facilitating and sponsoring York's first hot-air balloon fiesta on the Knavesmire. Despite some very unkind weather, there were 2 balloon launches and a night-glow event that between them attracted thousands of visitors. Again, the media coverage was immensely positive for the city.

Bloom !

Funding has been raised to organise and curate a 4 day horticultural festival from the 5th to the 8th of July next year, to tie in with the 250th anniversary of the Ancient Society of York Florists. The support for the concept has been incredible and a vast array of partners are now working to create a fun, quirky celebration of York's horticultural heritage.

Shakespeare's Rose Theatre

MIY has been instrumental in supporting the pop-up Shakespeare Rose Theatre coming to York for the summer of next year. This should be a remarkable event that will be the highlight of a packed programme of content full of opportunity for the tourism and cultural sectors.

The Mediale

Things are now moving on quickly, as they need to. The Mediale now has its team, a website, an office (courtesy of MIY), fixed dates, a steering board (chaired by Dianne Wilcocks) and a recent £100,000 additional grant from the Arts Council. The programme will be formally launched in the spring.

6. CULTURE

The Culture Awards

The Culture awards take place on November the 23rd at York Minster. There has been a good spread of entries and there is a robust short-list for each category. The awards themselves have been made from 13th century timber from the Minster itself.

Cultural Leaders Group

Progress on the development of a cultural strategy for the city is slower than anticipated. The reality is that some budget is needed to get some development help and the City Council, as part of the scrutiny review, has been asked to help fund this exercise.

7. VISIT YORK/TOURISM

New Visit York website

Website development is well underway. Homepage and content page designs have been approved. The emphasis now is on working with over 800 members to source new photography and updated content. The design stage has taken longer than expected and so the new go live date will now be early January 2018, with the official launch being on 17 January at the Tourism Conference.

Launch of the Chocolate City Campaign

During National Chocolate Week in October, the new Chocolate City campaign was launched. The project celebrates the 250th anniversary for Terry's in York and includes a relaunched Chocolate Trail around York, updated visityork.org/chocolate pages, a dedicated e-newsletter and PR activity. York's Chocolate Story is sponsoring the campaign.

Destination England Fund

Visit York now has confirmation that it will be involved in 3 major projects:

- England's Historic Cities – the Collection. £1m funding
- Marketing Manchester's - Gateway to the North. £1m funding
- Horseracing- Sport of Kings. £300,000 funding

Familiarisation trips

16 travel agents from China York, Castle Howard and Whitby on a Northern England and Scotland trip. Also, 12 top end Indian Operators and agents spent 48 hours in York as part of a week's familiarisation visit to the UK looking for new attraction product. The city was very highly rated by them.

Group Leisure Show

York was voted the best destination for a Group Visit at the annual awards and beat London, Birmingham, Manchester and Eastbourne. The actual show was attended with York City Cruises, Bar Convent Living Heritage Centre, Jorvik Group of Attractions and Yorkshire Air Museum.

Destination Britain North America

Visit York exhibited at this show in Los Angeles. A total of 72 meetings with American and Canadian operators and agents were held.

York Pass

The performance of the York Pass is currently at exceptional, record levels. Year to date it is 32% up on budget and 62% up on 2016 - a great upturn in sales though high attraction costs (71% of sales) during the summer months have resulted in a lower margin. The new website, more targeted marketing and strong sales in the VIC are all clearly impacting positively.

Membership

In the first 6 months of this financial year, 90 new members of Visit York have been recruited with a value of over £20,000. Retention of existing members also remains strong and the full budget for the year should be achieved. There has been a strong and well attended programme of member events.

Visitor Information Centre (VIC)

The VIC continues to perform strongly, 15% up on the revenue budget. There is a new partnership with York City FC on merchandise sales and the team were finalists at the White Rose awards for the Tourist Information Centre of the Year category - to be pipped by Bridlington!

PR

Among the PR highlights for York in the last few months are:

- Christmas features in Group Travel World and Olive Magazine.
- Tony Naylor's article published in the BBC Good Food Guide, featuring the best of York restaurants.
- The Times published Stephen McClarence's article: 'A weekend in . . . York'
- Jess Gibson featured York in Expedia's Video Guide and her blog Thetravelista.net
- Simon Stabler's press visit for Best of British Magazine, resulted in 3 articles, featuring JORVIK, York's Chocolate Story and the Ghost Bus
- Boundless Productions filmed at the York Food and Drink Festival to showcase York in a new series for Channel 5 titled 'Love in the countryside'. 'Girlfriends' produced and written by Kay Mellor
- York Balloon fiesta featuring on page 5 of The Sunday Telegraph