



## INTRODUCTION

- We started in 2022. The concept came from London (which has now has 800 buildings across 33 boroughs)
- York Unlocked is based on similar successful “open buildings” weekend events all around the world. London, Edinburgh, Bristol, Paris, Barcelona, Brno. New York, Brisbane, Belfast, etc. Now in hundreds if not thousands of cities around the world.
- Most of these events have been running (and growing) successfully for 30 yrs or more
- The YNYLEP created a report (2020?) “Celebrating our Distinctive Heritage” stating that for many visitors York’s heritage was “the Minster and the Shambles” and heritage opportunities were being wasted (there are almost 2000 listed buildings and hundreds of award winning contemporary buildings and conservation projects). We deliver on the recommendations of this report.

## RESULTS

- In York Unlocked in the last 2 yrs, over 40,000 visits have been made to around 70 -80 sites (incl heritage buildings, contemporary buildings, gardens, monuments etc). These have included free access visits (Guildhall, Mansion House) PLUS expert tours (eg Kings Manor, Terrys Clock Tower, Hudson Quarter)
- Buildings have included; Duncombe Place Masonic Lodge, Herbert House, Bishopthorpe Palace, Peasholme House, Hiscox, The Guildhall, Mansion House, St Marys Tower, Bootham School (spanning Georgian through to 2016) , St Peters, Unitarian Church, St Mary’s Bishophill Junior.
- Last year, bookable visits were oversubscribed an average of 7 times. Tickets went within 2 hrs (these are FREE by the way)
- We’re now the “event organiser of choice” for Bishopthorpe Palace and Terry’s Clock Tower (this year both have increased their visit opportunities due to positive experiences in 2023)
- WeE get RAVE reviews from the public, building owners and local businesses. (See our Evaluation Report 2023). Building owners and visitors ask for the next date immediately after we finish a YU weekend. We have 11,000 social media followers and thousands of subscribers.
- Most building owners reported the highest ever visitor numbers (eg Monk Bar got over 1500 visitors in 2022, Mansion House got 800 when the normal Sunday visitor number is 40.)
- Places like All Saints North Street, despite having their own strong engagement programme, attract record numbers of new visitors.
- Venues that are generally “open” such as Assembly Rooms and City Screen also report increased numbers and both remain part of our core offer.
- Shops, cafes and restaurants reported higher than expected activity over both York Unlocked weekends.
- We deliver a small well-received education programme to local schools (and target schools that are less likely to engage in this kind of programme)
- In the last 2 yrs we have collaborated with: City Cruises, York Georgian Society, York Explore Archives, Friends of York Walls, York Army Museum, York Clock Group, Good Organisation, York Conservation Trust, and others.
- We’re also gained a LOT of publicity in the last two years including in; The Guardian, Daily Mail Travel, Country Life, Manchester Evening News, BBC Radio Yorkshire, Look North etc.

## WHAT WE LEARNT

- 55% of visitors came from outside of the City of York. Mostly from other parts of Yorkshire, but also from London, Durham, Manchester, Liverpool.
- Our livestream interactive tours attracted local people with mobility & other health issues but also attendees from Canberra, Canada, California, France. (You can see some of this on YOUTUBE).
- However, it's also true that many City of York residents don't know their own buildings, only coming into town for a specific purpose. Assembly Rooms aka ASK report that many people say they've lived in York for 20-30 yrs and never been inside the building (before).
- York residents often tell us via social media that they hadn't realised such-and-such a building or open space existed.
- Our event has changed behaviour; visitors stayed the whole day or whole weekend; they enjoyed our buildings, learnt something new about York, and spent money in local shops, restaurants and hotels
- We were told visitors weren't "typical National Trust" type visitors. In year 1, many attended as families and children were very engaged
- Because York Unlocked INVITES people to visit places; they accept that invitation.

## GOING FORWARD

- We've had two successful years but demand is growing while our resources remain static; success breeds success. We will disappoint if we don't deliver
- A 100% volunteer workforce is a problem for growth and sustainability; our biggest risk is losing a member of our Core Volunteer Team (only 6, and all are vital)
- This year, we've improved our board by appointing three very experienced trustees in; Finance, Education/Governance, Finance, Fundraising/ Heritage (one may be known to you – James Grierson, who is a big fan of our work)
- We hope to grow our livestream York Unlocked by improved networking with local mental health & disability charities
- We want to improve volunteer opportunities for people who find access to paid employment more difficult or who have special support needs
- We want to offer heritage experiences to neurodiverse and other groups with special needs
- Improve our networking with like-minded organisations and co-promote our work
- Expand our programme beyond the City walls into areas like Acomb, Holgate, Heslington, New Earswick
- Free up time to be more strategic, raise more funds, expand education, be innovative, and plan our sustainability.
  - We're encouraged by HLF to apply but don't have the resource to complete this complex application.
  - We want to explore a Friends scheme, and a series of events throughout the year that we can charge for (our weekends remain free), improved donations page etc
  - Be more strategic about our volunteering programme
  - Meet with Bristol Open Doors, Scottish Open Doors etc to learn more about how they grew and developed sustainability

**YOUR SUPPORT WOULD HELP US CONTINUE, AND TO GROW AND BE SUSTAINABLE.**

## FINAL THOUGHTS

We are very clear about the impact we want to have.

- We want to **inspire** people with an understanding and love of the riches of architecture and building that we're so privileged to have in York.
- We also want our tens of thousands of visitors to leave with a deeper and richer sense of **York as a place**.
- We hope that some of our young visitors are inspired with a lifelong **passion for the built environment** and the **well-being** that comes from evocative and beautiful places. Is it fanciful to believe that some lives will be transformed by these experiences?
- York Unlocked only happens because so many young **volunteers** are prepared to work so hard with no direct reward. This is a debt we repay by doing our utmost to make their volunteering experience as relevant, fun and enriching as possible.

YORK UNLOCKED April 2024