

FAO CYC Executive Team
City of York Council
West Offices
Station Rise
York
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9th April 2026

Dear Executive Members,

York Christmas Market Operating Days and Times

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the York Tourism Advisory Board (TAB) regarding the proposal to introduce a weekly closure day for the York Christmas Market in 2026.

The York Tourism Advisory Board brings together a broad and balanced representation of key stakeholders from across the city, including representation from the tourism and hospitality sectors, cultural organisations, residents, and York's Disability Rights Forum. This breadth of representation ensures that discussions reflect not only economic priorities but also the lived experiences of those who live in and access the city.

The proposed introduction of a weekly closure day raises several substantial concerns for members of the Advisory Board. Firstly, the economic impact of a reduced operating schedule would be highly significant. The Christmas Market plays a vital role in driving visitor numbers during the winter period, supporting not only market traders but also hotels, restaurants, attractions, and the wider retail sector. A planned closure day risks reducing overall visitor spend, with limited evidence that this demand would be redistributed to other days.

Secondly, from a visitor perspective, the proposal would result in a high risk of confusion and dissatisfaction. York's Christmas Market is an internationally recognised experience, drawing visitors who often plan their trips well in advance. The introduction of a regular closure day, particularly midweek, creates a strong likelihood that visitors will arrive expecting a full market experience and instead be disappointed. This has potential implications for the city's reputation and repeat visitation.

The Board also questions whether the proposal will achieve its stated objectives. In particular:

- It is unclear whether a single closure day would meaningfully reduce overall footfall or crowding pressures across the wider period
- There is limited evidence that accessibility challenges, particularly for Blue Badge holders, would be effectively addressed by this approach, as opposed to longer-term, structural improvements
- It remains unclear whether associated measures, such as changes to traffic restrictions, would be implemented in a way that delivers tangible benefits

More broadly, TAB members feel that the proposal does not yet present a sufficiently clear articulation of who benefits and how success would be measured.

The Tourism Advisory Board would strongly encourage consideration of alternative, longer-term solutions that balance the needs of residents, visitors, and businesses. This could include enhanced access strategies, improved crowd management approaches, and learning from comparable destinations that have successfully integrated major events with inclusive city centre access.

If the proposals are implemented, the Board would strongly recommend that this is treated as a time-limited pilot, with clearly defined success measures agreed in advance.

While TAB members fully recognise the need to balance the success of the Christmas Market with the experience of residents and accessibility considerations, at this stage, the Board is not persuaded that the proposed weekly closure represents the most effective or proportionate response to the issues identified.

We would welcome the opportunity to continue working collaboratively with the City of York Council and partners to identify approaches that protect both the vitality of the city's economy and the quality of experience for all who live in and visit York.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Brendan Paddison
Chair
York Tourism Advisory Board