

Executive meeting on Tuesday, 12 May 2026

Written representation in relation to agenda item 6, York Christmas Market Operating Hours and Economic Impact

Dear Executive Members,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed closure of York Christmas Market on Tuesdays during the 2026 season. As a freelance marketing professional with experience in destination marketing, visitor engagement and event promotion, I have serious concerns about the reputational and commercial impact this decision could have, particularly as a number of my clients are based in York city centre and are directly affected by the Christmas Markets.

Visitor Expectation and Reputation

York Christmas Market has built a strong reputation as a reliable festive destination operating throughout its advertised dates. Most visitors do not closely check operational schedules before travelling; they reasonably assume that a major Christmas market runs daily.

Introducing a weekly closure creates unnecessary uncertainty around the visitor experience. Once people begin questioning whether the market is operating on certain days, confidence weakens, particularly among day visitors, short-break tourists and those travelling from outside the region.

No communications strategy, however comprehensive, can guarantee full awareness of a mid-week closure. Visitors who arrive on a Tuesday to find the market shut are likely to post about it. Negative press coverage, reviews and social media content can spread quickly and remain visible for years.

A single season of “we came all this way and it was closed” content could undermine years of positive reputation building and affect visitor confidence for future seasons. In tourism marketing, perception becomes reality very quickly.

The Marketing Challenge

From a marketing perspective, communicating a weekly closure effectively would be extremely difficult. Visitors discover Christmas markets through a wide mix of sources including search engines, social media, tourism websites, hotel recommendations, travel guides, third-party listings and older online content from previous years.

Historic content from earlier seasons will continue circulating throughout 2026, reinforcing the expectation that the market operates daily. Once information is reshared across social media and external tourism websites, it becomes very difficult to control.

To minimise confusion and reputational damage, a significant communications campaign would likely be needed throughout the season. This could involve paid advertising, repeated social media messaging, updated signage and print materials, tourism partner coordination, PR activity and active online reputation management.

A genuinely effective awareness campaign to support weekly closures could realistically cost £25,000–£50,000 once paid advertising, updated signage and print materials, tourism partner coordination, PR activity and ongoing online reputation management are taken into account. Even with substantial marketing investment, there would still be no guarantee that all visitors receive or retain the message.

The fact that such a large and costly campaign would be needed simply to explain the closure highlights the reputational risk created by the proposal itself.

Tuesdays Remain Commercially Valuable

The assumption that Tuesdays are commercially insignificant during the Christmas market season does not necessarily hold. December weekdays attract office parties, retired visitors, school groups and short-break tourists, many of whom deliberately choose weekdays to avoid weekend crowds.

Visitors who arrive on a closed Tuesday are also unlikely simply to return another day. Many will have planned specific travel dates, overnight stays or day trips around their visit. Once that opportunity is lost, the wider commercial benefit to the city is often lost as well.

Long-Term Impact

Reducing trading days sets a precedent that may prove difficult to reverse. York Christmas Market has spent years building a reputation as a consistent and accessible festive destination. Introducing weekly closures risks weakening public confidence in the reliability of the experience being promoted.

Recommendation

I strongly recommend that Make It York maintains the market's full trading schedule throughout the 2026 season. If operational pressures or cost concerns are driving this proposal, I would encourage consultation with traders, hospitality businesses and marketing professionals to explore alternatives that do not involve closing the market on any advertised trading day.

Many thanks,

Charlotte Bodman