

York's Creative Future

Culture Strategy 2020 - 2025

Quarterly Report 1 July - 30 September 2021

MakeItYork



Introduction

York's Creative Future is the city's culture strategy for 2020-2025. It was launched in December 2020 following extensive consultation across and beyond the creative sector. Find the full strategy and watch the launch event [here](#).

The strategy identifies six priority areas:

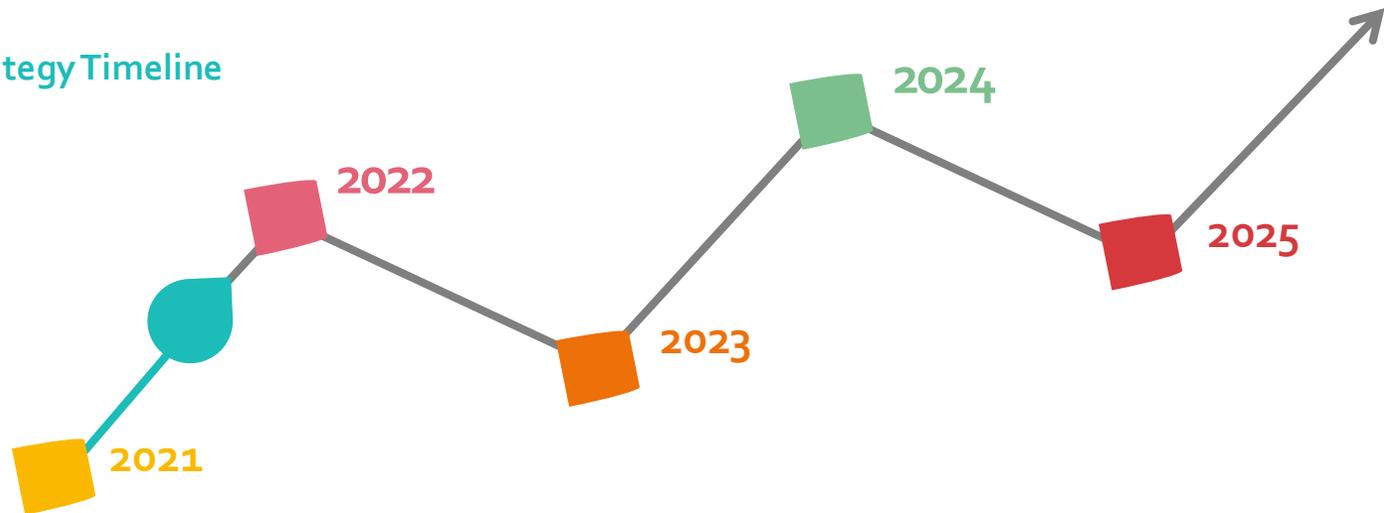
- Cultural Engagement, Participation and Relevance
- Placemaking
- Children and Young People
- Talent Development and Retention
- Culture and Wellbeing
- York's National and International Profile

This report covers the period of 1 July 2021 to 30 September 2021, quarter three of year one of the strategy's implementation. Some initiatives and projects mentioned straddle multiple priority areas and are therefore referenced throughout.

The report comprises a summary of the period followed by a more detailed update on each of the priority areas.

Information on creative activity is drawn from the sector through the Cultural Leaders Group (in the process of transition to York Culture Forum) and tracked by Make It York.

Strategy Timeline



Priority Areas

1

- **Cultural Engagement, Participation and Relevance**

Culture is inclusive, relevant and accessible to everybody in York, regardless of age, background or postcode.

2

- **Placemaking**

Culture is fully embedded into local investment and city planning developments, with the arts and heritage and cultural wellbeing integral to development processes.

3

- **Children and Young People**

York is the first city to achieve cultural entitlement for all children and young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

4

- **Talent Development and Retention**

York's creative and cultural sectors thrive and contribute to strengthening and diversifying York's economy: through universities and colleges providing clear routes to skilled employment, and creative workspaces attracting and retaining creative talent in the city.

5

- **Culture and Wellbeing**

York is recognised nationally for its innovative work in culture for health and wellbeing, including social prescribing, which residents can benefit from throughout their lives.

6

- **York's National and International Profile**

York's outstanding arts, culture and heritage and its status as the UK's first UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts are championed and celebrated, raising the city's profile nationally and internationally.

Emerging from pandemic restrictions

The quarter saw a gradual phasing out of restrictions as government advice changed. Some venues reported a return to pre-pandemic levels of footfall. Non-socially distanced theatre and music events resumed, with reports of full and new audiences attending events.

Others reported bumpier recovery, with cancelled events, low take-up on advance tickets, and difficulties recruiting front-of-house staff. Live music venues have been particularly affected by these challenges.

Some volunteers returned to in-person volunteering, with others choosing to step back all together. Many venues reported increasing reliance on volunteers and freelancers given the reduction in core staff. Recruiting new volunteers and staff is a key focus for many cultural organisations.

York's tourism bucked trends in the north, with very high levels of visitors throughout the quarter. Many attractions and restaurants operated pre-booking only which sold out well in advance. Whilst economically valuable, the large number of visitors brought challenges for the city's infrastructure and businesses, which was exacerbated by venue closure caused by short-staffing in the "ping-demic".

Creative workers expressed pleasure at being able to return to in-person settings, though at different levels of concern about steering from the government. Concerns over the ending of the Job Retention Scheme have been shared across the group.

Freelancers in the sector reported slow improvement in income-recovery and ongoing concern about their futures.

York's creative sector has broadly transitioned from pandemic survival to recovery, bolstered by strong domestic tourism to the city, but uncertainty about the future and further setbacks may cause recovery to be fragile.

Local Funding and Support

Financial support for some major events and live music venues was announced, with £100K of CYC's ARG funding given to live events and £100K to live music venues, with grants confirmed to York Music Venues, York Design Week, Aesthetica Film Festival, the Ice Trail, and Jorvik Viking Week during the quarter.

Make It York, CYC and York CVS' cultural and social prescribing grants awarded £60,000 to 19 projects across the community from the Better Care Fund.

Creative Sector Highlights

York Creatives Night Market

The first event for indie artist and makers to sell their work in the Shambles Market, which was attended by 2,500 people.

Around the World in 80 Days

The travelling theatre model returned for YTR's summer show. It visited four wards for outdoor performances and played in the main house.

The Desire Paths

YTR offered a two day installation outside York Art Gallery for York residents to rename the city's streets to reflect their hopes for the city.

Yorkshire Balloon Fiesta

Family friendly fun on the Knavesmire, attended by 65,000 people from near and far.

Music Showcase Weekend

Rick Astley and McFly drew a combined audience of 60,000 people to their concerts in July at York Racecourse



1. Cultural Engagement, Participation and Relevance



Speak Up Diversity's motion declaring York's ambition to become an [anti-racist and inclusive city](#) was endorsed by a number of creative organisations and the Cultural Leaders Group (it passed unanimously in Q4). York is the first city in the North to pass such a motion.

[IT ReUse](#) is a pilot project equipping the 10% of York's people without online access with refurbished technology. The project has been immensely successful, empowering 160 households with technology to date. Gaining access to online information, services, and cultural opportunities has been transformational for recipients. As the project develops connections with the culture sector are emerging. Part of York Community Furniture Store and member of York Explore's 100% Digital initiative. [Find out more](#)

[Makers and Shapers](#) is a significant multi-partner heritage campaign over 2022-2024. Celebrating key anniversaries in the city and bringing unknown histories of York's people into the spotlight, the emerging programme aims to engage a wider range of residents in York's world-changing past and inspire them to shape the future. There's time to contribute to the programme– contact [York Civic Trust](#) to get involved.

The nineteen [culture and social prescribing projects](#) awarded funding to help isolated people engage in their communities, combat mental ill-health, improve physical health, enable participation in culture and creativity or access to employment and learning opportunities. For the first time the grant application process brought together two funding streams made available by the Better Care Fund: York CVS' Ways to Wellbeing project and the Cultural Wellbeing grants programme led by Make It York and CYC. [Read more about the projects here.](#)

2. Placemaking



[York Creatives Night Market](#) successfully took place in the Shambles Market, attracting visitors to the area when it is usually quiet. The market attracted around 2,500 attendees and supported local artists and makers.

A [York Central Design Workshop](#) with attendees from York Civic Trust, Kaizen Arts Agency, the universities, York Creatives, and My Future York on the role of culture in the development's design process. Responses to the workshop were positive, with a formal writing of a proposal to be led by YCT with input from workshop attendees during Q4 to present to the York Central Steering Group in the new year.

[CYC's My City Centre Draft Vision](#) published Sept 2021 with key objectives on revitalising empty units through experience-based businesses and temporary arts spaces, utilising underused upper floor spaces for SMEs and gaining Purple Flag status.

The [Jorvik Centre](#) repurposed an empty shop on Feasegate for a temporary "24-hour museum" window display, with digital elements.

[Creative Workspace](#) meetings have started between Guild of Media Arts, York Creatives, University of York, CYC, York Conservation Trust and MIY representatives, to consider availability and need of creative workspaces within the city, and to help simplify processes to access these for creatives.

3. Children & Young People



A quieter quarter in some ways with the summer holidays, and busy for others offering holiday events! Many were glad to resume their in-person young people provision during this quarter, including [York Explore's Summer Reading Challenge](#) and storytelling events, [York Theatre Royal's Youth Theatre](#), which now meets in four locations across York, plus the new Creative Connections course and more.

The [REACH](#) Steering Group worked on a bid to release Arts Council funding to continue projects with their partners. One condition of the funding is for REACH to find a home to keep the resources and a temporary arrangement has been made with York Theatre Royal while they secure a permanent arrangement from 2023. They must also secure match funding (every pound will be matched by two pounds from the Arts Council) – work on this is ongoing.

York Theatre Royal's family show, [Around The World in 80 Days](#), toured to four outdoor locations around the city and attracted strong reviews.

[Accessible Arts and Media](#) resumed Junior IMPs and summer holiday clubs in person (all but Hands and Voices Choir are now back in the room).

The [Joseph Rowntree Theatre](#) re-started workshops for primary schools in the autumn and welcomed Haxby Road School and Park Grove Academy into the theatre.

[Kaizen Arts Agency](#) delivered workshops in Burton Green Primary designing their dream community centres.

[Pilot Theatre](#) announced their Spring 2022 project, an adaptation of *The Bone Sparrow*, with accompanying teaching resources.

4. Talent Development and Retention



SLAP switched focus to supporting emerging artists in the city. 2021 saw them support three local artists and companies - Freddie Hayes, Practically Creative and Closed Forum. They helped Freddie and Closed Forum with successful applications to Arts Council England to develop their work, with all three performers gaining significant commissions.

In September SLAP received ACE funding to deliver an [Artist Incubation Scheme](#); a year of support for six artists working in the city to develop both their artistic practice and their business knowledge. The project has about 15 partner organisations across the sector. The project includes six workshops that cover a wide range of areas that are essential to being a working artist. The programme will launch in November 2021.

Northern Girls: [Pilot Theatre](#) brought together a team of professional and community writers to develop monologues that explore what it means to be a northern girl in 2021. Spanning York, Bridlington and Redcar, with each location having unique performances created by women and girls with direct links to the community, during this quarter Pilot worked with local creatives developing every stage – writing, direction and performance. They were performed in early October.

The [Talent Development Task Group](#) planned first meeting in October with representatives from both Universities, Make It York, Kaizen Arts Agency, and SLAP, which will be reported in Q4.

5. Culture and Wellbeing



Culture and Social Prescribing Grants - [Nineteen York-based charities](#), social enterprises, voluntary and community groups were awarded grant funding of up to £5K by York CVS, Make It York and City of York Council from the Better Care Fund to support a range of new initiatives for York residents. Spanning a diverse range of creative art forms and social activities the grants will support everything from fairy trails and community coffee mornings to youth theatre workshops, excavation projects, craft workshops and creative cafes. £60,000 was awarded with projects ongoing through 2021 into Spring 2022.

Ways to Wellbeing work closely with all recipients of the small grants programme and have provided a bespoke offer of support to each organisation as and when needed. This will be an ongoing offer provided by Ways to Wellbeing to the groups funded. The Social Prescribing teams are now beginning to access the opportunities that have been made available through the organisations that received funding.

Ways to Wellbeing and **York Museums Trust** are exploring partnership working. The focus of discussions have been on opportunities for social prescribers to use museum/gallery spaces for appointments, and the consequent opportunities for them to introduce the people they support to these cultural venues and their wellbeing potential. Conversations are ongoing.

The **Cultural Commissioning Partnership** is a group of arts, culture, heritage, charity, local authority, health and educational partners, who are committed to working together to support York residents' health and wellbeing, through creative, innovative and meaningful Culture and Wellbeing activities. The group agreed their Terms of Reference at a meeting on 20 July. An action plan will be developed in Q4.

6. York's National and International Profile



Creating the [York Culture Forum](#) is a key recommendation in York's Creative Future, replacing the existing Cultural Leaders Group with a free-to-join forum for anyone working in York's creative and culture sector. Designing an open and equitable forum with an elected Executive Group has been a complicated process and the Culture Forum Terms of Reference are with the CLG for final approval in early Q4.

A timeline for transition, once approved, is to open membership applications and widely advertise the Culture Forum in Q4, offering taster sessions to new members in Jan 2022, with the first meeting and elections in early 2022 for the initial period. Once transition has taken place, more task groups will begin or be re-established, drawing from the forum and other expertise across the city.

A new [toolkit](#) for York's [UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts](#) designation has been created in partnership by Make It York, City of York Council, The Guild of Media Arts, and York Mediale. It includes social media assets and will be launched in Q4.

[The Guild of Media Arts and Mediale](#) have been speaking with colleagues in Viborg, Denmark, a fellow UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts, over the possibility of joint working and collaboration.

Taeheon Lee has been participating in the [City to City digital exchange programme](#) as York's artist. He is hosted virtually by The Jorvik Centre.

The oldest continuing alliance on Earth is between England and Portugal, signed in June 1373. It will be celebrated as [UK Portugal 650](#). Braga and York, the countries' two UNESCO Creative Cities of Media Arts, are discussing activities with the organisers that will form part of the national and international programme of celebrations in 2022 and 2023.

Picture Credits

Front page and side image	York Mediale Archive
1. Cultural Engagement, Participation and Relevance	Speak Up Diversity Logo IT ReUse press release St Nicks 'Journey Through Winter's Heart' Project
2. Placemaking	York Creatives Night Market CYC logo York Archaeology Trust Feasegate press release
3. Children and Young People	York Explore Labs York Theatre Royal's Around the World in 80 Days REACH - Bags of Creativity
4. Talent Development and Retention	SLAP Incubator Project Pilot Theatre's Northern Girls
5. Culture and Wellbeing	Friends of Rowntree Park - Community Crafting Next Door But One CIC York Archaeological Trust Press Release
6. York's National and International Archives	York Mediale's People We Love Drawings of Hope press release, York Primary Schools Make It York Archives

