

York's Creative Future

Culture Strategy 2020 - 2025

Sector Report 1 January – 31 March 2023

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:

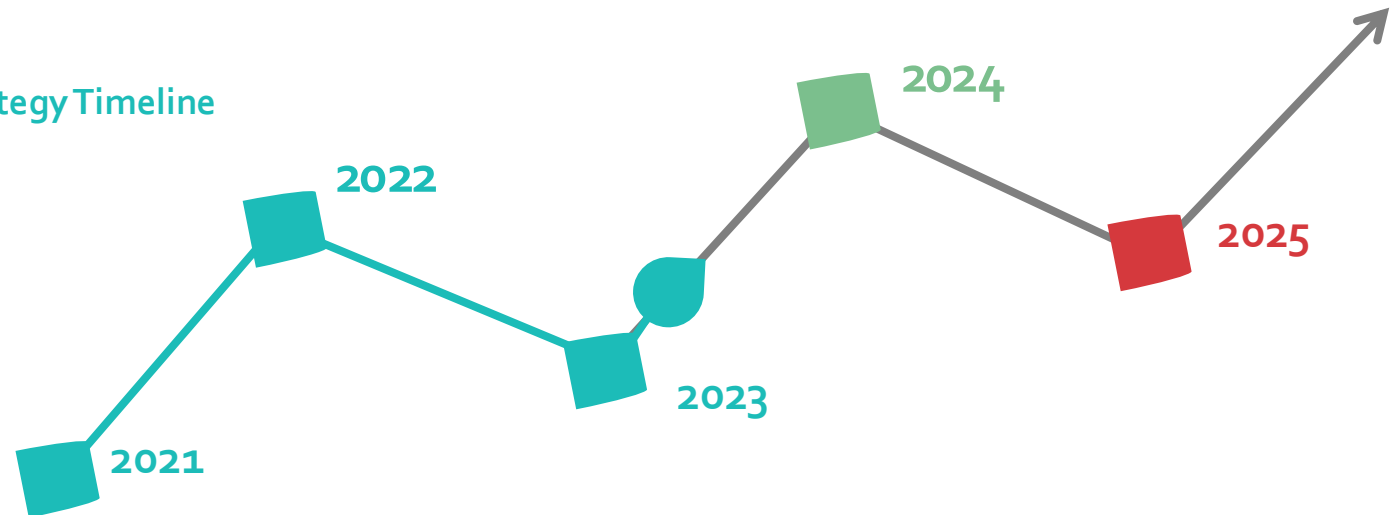
- Cultural Engagement, Participation and Relevance
- Placemaking
- Children and Young People
- Talent Development and Retention
- Culture and Wellbeing
- York's National and International Profile

This report covers the period of 1 January – 31 March 2023, quarter one of year three 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 York Culture Forum and tracked by Make It York.

Strategy Timeline



January to March is generally a quieter time of year for the city and the sector after the busy run up to Christmas. This quarter charts steady progress against the priority areas of the strategy, especially in Placemaking with the Forum and Culture Executive's activities in advocating for important planning documents to accompany York's upcoming local plan – see the Placemaking page of this report for more detail on this activity.

Highlights during the quarter are the Residents Weekend, and York Ice Trail, both festivals which seek to bring residents into the city centre during a quieter time of year and enjoy the creative and heritage attractions the city has to offer. This year, both achieved excellent attendance, with the Ice Trail weekend gaining highest city centre footfall in the quarter.

It was an exciting period for York Art Gallery, with the announcement that in Summer 2024 it will host Monet's *The Water-Lily Pond* as part of the National Treasures initiative. Inspired by the painting, York Art Gallery is planning a programme which encompasses the both gallery and the Museum Gardens to inspire wellbeing through nature and creativity in both spaces. During the installations in 12 regional galleries across the UK, more than half the UK population will be within an hour's journey of a National Gallery masterpiece.

During this quarter, the gallery has hosted two free exhibitions,

Treasures from the Store, which brought little-seen works from the gallery's archives into public view, and the 2023 Aesthetica Art Prize.

Explore York opened the new library at Haxby and Wiggington, restoring a permanent service to that community after the previous building was condemned. The space is shared with local community partners and provides a six day a week service, café, and children's library. Plans for the new Clifton library continue to progress, with contractors now appointed for the development. Jenny Layfield joined Explore as CEO at the beginning of the quarter, with a background in arts and culture leadership. Her arrival coincides with Explore joining the Arts Council's 2023-2026 National Portfolio Organisations.

Conclusion

There was steady progress in ongoing initiatives during the quarter for the priority areas, as detailed on the following pages of this report. The cost-of-living crisis continues to affect the sector and audiences; however, impact is generally reported to be lower than feared. Organisations and freelancers remain concerned for the outlook in the remainder of the year as costs remain high for people and services.

1. Cultural Engagement, Participation & Relevance



The [York Ice Trail](#) and [Residents' Weekend](#) took place during this quarter. The Ice Trail attracted up to 40,000 people to the city centre over a weekend, with 84% of visitors to the trail hailing from York or Yorkshire.

York Art Gallery's free exhibition, [Treasures from the Stores](#), brought some of the jewels of their collection out for public viewing for free. It was followed by the [Aesthetica Art Prize](#) exhibition, also free, which opened during this quarter. Aesthetica also produced the Future Now Symposium, a national conference at the Yorkshire Museum, about the future of the visual and digital arts.

[Explore York](#), in partnership with Oaken Grove Community Centre, opened a new library in Haxby and Wiggington, which is now open six days a week and includes a children's library and cafe.

Analysis from the 2022 [City of York Council and Make It York Events and Festivals Grants](#) shows that 388 volunteers helped with funded activities, with some organisations reporting increased levels of volunteering following those funded events.

The [York 100% Digital Steering Group](#) met during this quarter, with a presentation from Vodafone on their social tariffs.

Progress on the [REACH directory](#) continues, with creative practitioners uploading listing to the site.

2. Placemaking

The [Draft Local Plan](#) underwent final consultations in Q1 of 2023, with the plan then being submitted to inspectors for approval, then formally adopted by the city.

[Policy D3](#) in the plan requires developments of scale in the city to include cultural provision. This policy could be a powerful tool for the sector to advocate for areas of cultural need within the city and help shape York's developments over the next fifteen years. It's an innovative approach to culture and city developments, and a first in enshrining cultural provision into a city's local plan. However, the Local Plan Working Group have recommended that the plan is presented without a specific Supplementary Planning Document on Cultural Provision, blunting the impact of this potentially trailblazing policy.



Andrew Morrison, Head of Priority Area for Placemaking and then co-Chair of the York Culture Forum, and Chris Bailey spoke at the Local Plan Working Group in support of a separate Supplementary Planning Document for Cultural Wellbeing that will provide the definition and detail of Policy D3 once the Local Plan is adopted however this recommendation has not been taken forward.



Andrew led discussions at the Culture Forum on lobbying CYC on the inclusion of a Cultural Wellbeing SPD and including culture as its own pillar in the Community Infrastructure Levy draft policy, which has instead included culture as a subset of communities. The Forum encouraged Andrew to provide a range of resources, including open letters, templates, and suggestions for lobbying councillors, to run alongside and beyond the consultation period on the local plan. This was provided for the consultations, and a digital open letter from the Forum is currently being signed by Forum members.

During this quarter, [North Star](#) announced they plan to sell the Eboracum site now it has achieved planning. The impact of this on plans for the museum is uncertain.

The National Railway Museum's new [Museum Square](#) concepts opened for consultation during this period.

3. Children & Young People



During this quarter [REACH](#) recruited 21 schools to take part in the pilot project, each providing a creative leader from their staff team, and committed to recruiting [REACH Ambassadors](#) from their students.

Recruiting volunteers from the culture sector to take part in the pilot as [REACH Champions](#) has begun. The REACH Network Manager also resigned during this quarter, which has led to a restructuring the project going forward to cover the next full academic year and recruitment for the role.

Promotion of the [REACH directory](#) was ongoing over this quarter, with more cultural organisations and individuals showcasing their offer on the platform. Further communication strategy is needed once the new manager/temporary cover is in place to generate impact on the scheme.

February's [York Culture Forum](#) took place at York College, whose three heads of relevant departments gave introductions on their courses, student trends and interests, and their needs. They were able to connect with members on arranging school trips, offering talks and workshops to their young people.

4. Talent Development & Retention



February's [York Culture Forum](#) took place at York College, where three heads of department gave introductions on their courses, student trends and interests, and their needs. They were able to connect with members on arranging school trips, offering talks and workshops to their students.

Opportunities to host [fully funded summer internships](#) in SMEs were advertised to the Culture mailing list and Culture Forum during the period.

[SLAP and York Creatives](#) ran workshops for emerging artists and creatives on Establishing Credibility and Applying to ACE Fund Developing Your Creative Practice during this quarter. SLAP also produced events at York Art Gallery and The Crescent during February.

The [Culture Executive Group](#) are considering ways to renew activities for this priority area, including making grant applications for a new project which would span creative careers and talent development in school and university settings.

5. Culture & Wellbeing



Culture and wellbeing activities have been funded across the majority of the [2023-2026 NPOs](#) based in York as part of their planned activities. The funding enables some project-based work to become a continuous offer and offers the arts organisations stability and sustainability over the funding period.

The 2022-2023 round of [cultural wellbeing projects](#) awarded in partnership between Make It York and City of York Council with funding from the NHS Better Care Fund come to a finish at the end of this quarter. Nine funded projects across the city offered a diverse range of activities for wellbeing, including visual arts, theatre and performance, choirs, and music making.

Activities were for people experiencing ill health, isolation or poor mental health, people with additional needs, sanctuary seekers, and connecting generations. Over the spring and summer case studies for these projects will be shared on the Make It York website.

6. York's National & International Profile



During this quarter, the [Culture Executive Group](#) appointed Laura McMillan, new Theatre Director of the [Grand Opera House](#) to fill a vacant seat following Tom Bird's departure from York Theatre Royal. Laura was previously Director for Audience Strategy for the Coventry City of Culture and brings experience of both subsidised and commercial arts, multi-partner working, and sector leadership. She joined the Executive Group in March 2023.

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The Culture Executive Group continue in their work, with a focus on placemaking related lobbying. They also consulted on the upcoming [York Tourism Strategy](#), which strongly references the Culture Strategy and includes a priority area on culture and engaging tourism in this offer.

Picture Credits

Front page and side image	Mediale Archive
1. Cultural Engagement, Participation and Relevance	Ice Trail 2023, Make It York Aesthetica Short Film Festival 2023
2. Placemaking	Eboracum concept design, York Archaeology and North Star NRM Museum Square concept design, NRM and Feilden Fowles
3. Children and Young People	REACH logo, REACH York College Atrium, York College
4. Talent Development and Retention	York College Atrium, York College Work of Art Workshop, SLAP York and York Creatives
5. Culture and Wellbeing	A Rehearsal for Life, Next Door But One An Exhibition of Sanctuary: from the hospital to the city, Converge
6. York's National and International Profile	Laura McMillan at the Grand Opera House, YorkMix The Water Lily Pond, Monet, National Gallery