

VISIT YORK: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is York: A Vision for Tourism?

It's a vision for the development of tourism in the York area which identifies a series of ambitions for the city, whilst highlighting a number of York's strengths and assets.

What are the key messages of this vision?

York seeks to deliver long term growth in the value of tourism – the money generated by visitor spending on accommodations (hotels, guest houses, self-catering etc), attractions, shopping, eating out etc. This will be done by building on York's distinctiveness as a visitor destination, improving the quality of the visitor experience (including service, public spaces, attractions and accommodation) and promoting York as a world class visitor destination.

How will this vision be achieved?

The vision sets out a series of ambitions for tourism in York which will all work towards achieving. These address such key issues as:

- Quality, service and access to information – and to York
- Strengthening partnerships
- York as a European cultural centre – a unique heritage with a modern outlook
- Improve York's public realm (spaces, signage, pedestrian areas, riverfronts etc)
- Encourage sustainable investment in tourism
- Develop York's gateway role to the rest of Yorkshire
- Promote York worldwide to business/leisure visitors

The Vision has been written by "Visit York". What is Visit York?

Visit York is the city's single tourism organisation. It's a non profit making company working to achieve long term growth of York's tourism industry, and the contribution it makes to the overall economy of York. It's supported by tourism businesses, the Council, Yorkshire Forward and other stakeholders.

What does it do?

In a nutshell – it works to meet the needs of the visitor, and of the businesses that provide a service to visitor. Activities include the marketing and promotion of York as a European leisure and conference destination, public relations, Visitor Information Services, promoting major events and festivals, and working with others to improve visitors' experience of the city, by encouraging investment that will attract and keep visitors.

Why does York need a Vision and a set of Ambitions for tourism?

As a company founded in April 2008 it's important for Visit York not just to take stock of past achievements, but to set out a vision of what York tourism should be aspiring to in the

foreseeable future – more than a short-term goal, but a set of ambitions for businesses and stakeholders to get behind. The vision acknowledges current challenges, but also how the city can build on strong foundations – as a distinctive, quality and world-class destination – to be able to respond to these challenges and prepare for the recovery.

What is Visit York doing for business?

The company is working closely with hundreds of businesses in York, providing them with opportunities to get visitors through their doors, through a range of marketing and promotional methods. Visit York also provides businesses with regular information and updates, and works with them on their training needs.

Why all this attention on tourism – won't visitors always come here?

Tourism matters to York a great deal – one in ten people in York work in tourism, and tourism strengthens the York economy hugely both directly (through attractions, accommodation etc) and through jobs in supporting services (printing, professional services, retail, marketing etc). Tourism also boosts the image and reputation of the city – making the city a great place to live and work as well as to visit. We are concerned that unless action is taken to maintain and enhance York's appeal to visitors then people will simply go elsewhere – either to other destinations in Britain, or to one of our European competitors – so the city will lose out on these benefits

Why launch a strategy in the middle of a recession – no-one's going anywhere at the moment?

There's no doubt that worldwide economic pressures will hit tourism prospects as people – overseas and UK visitors – face difficult problems. York needs to get the message across that the city offers excellent value for money – not selling itself as “cheap” but as offering a wide range of attractions and things to do, just as highlighted in the latest Visitor Guide. The York Pass is an especially effective option, with genuine discounts and deals on many attractions. With the value of the £ now falling relative to other currencies this will be an ideal time to encourage overseas visitors to come here – and for British residents to explore their own country – and Visit York works with carriers and transport companies to offer great deals to the traveller.

How important is tourism to residents?

Tourism's important to the residents of York. It creates jobs – over 10,000 of them in 2007-08, and most go to local people. The income generated by tourism (£364mn in 2007-08) adds to the range of choice available to residents, in terms of shops, festivals, events and attractions. York has a much higher standard of shopping, events etc than most cities of this size. For example, York is the 74th biggest local authority in England – but is one of the twenty most popular English shopping cities. We don't take residents' support for granted though – so we're expanding the Residents First Weekend into a Residents Festival on 31 Jan-6 Feb 2009 where a wealth of visitor attractions, shops, restaurants etc will be providing special entertainment for York's people.

What do visitors think of York?

Visitors enjoy the the city's outstanding heritage and attractions. They also enjoy the shopping offer, the city's compactness and its ambience. The city has won many awards in recent years – nominated by the public and through independent judging panels – and scores very highly in visitor satisfaction surveys. This enthusiasm is gratifying and has practical benefits in terms of increased visitor spend. We don't take this support for granted – hence A Vision for Tourism very much focuses on building on the city's distinctiveness, quality and world class status.

But don't people want excitement nowadays – does York provide what visitors want any more?

Evidence over a long time shows that York remains a really popular visitor destination – over 4 million visitors a year. What's exciting about York is how it does change over time, despite being a great historic city. Consider new investment in the Minster, National Railway Museum, Yorkshire Museum in recent times – also all the events and festivals, new shops, the Quilters Museum etc. 25,000 people came to the illuminating York event last October – we want to build on those kinds of numbers. One of our ambitions is to develop York's position as a leading European cultural centre - combining a unique heritage with a modern outlook – so not resting on our laurels.