

**BRIEFING DOCUMENT**

**BACKGROUND**

York Museums Trust (YMT) is an independent charity created to manage and look after the City of York Council’s collections and assets including York Art Gallery, York Castle Museum, Yorkshire Museum, York Museum Gardens, and York St Mary’s

Since its formation in 2002 YMT has developed into an innovative, energetic and successful organisation responding creatively and positively to a demanding and fast changing environment. YMT works closely with partners in York and the wider museums sector. We make a significant contribution to the economic and educational welfare of the City and wider region. YMT is one of 21 museum services in England to receive Major Partner Museums funding from Arts Council England and has achieved NPO status for 2018-22 at the same level of funding. The Trust generates an income of c£6m pa and employs c100 FTEs. All income, including ticket income, supports the charity to preserve collections, gardens and buildings and continue to offer high quality access to those collections

On 1 August 2015 YMT launched an award-winning redevelopment of York Art Gallery and Museum Gardens and YMT is increasing the profile of its engaging, exciting exhibitions at all its venues which will attract more visitors, help build income streams and fulfil its long term strategic goals.

**Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives**

Our Vision is for York Museums Trust to play a major part in positioning York as a world class cultural centre.

Our Mission is to cherish and enhance the collections, buildings and gardens entrusted to us, presenting and interpreting them as a stimulus for learning, a provocation to curiosity and a source of inspiration and enjoyment for all.

**Strategic Objectives**

* To protect and conserve the collections, gardens and buildings
* To promote access to the collections, gardens and buildings appropriate to the 21st century
* To attract more visitors to our sites, thus contributing to the local and regional economy
* To create learning opportunities for all and develop innovative programmes springing from the collections, gardens and buildings
* To network and collaborate with partners and contribute to the development of the economic and cultural life of the city and the region
* To raise substantial funds to realise these aims

The Board and Senior Management Team have identified **headline priorities** for 2016-21:

* York Castle Museum major capital project and developing the Castle area as a cultural quarter
* Excellent, high profile programming, including strategic YMT-led events to attract visitors to York and high quality exhibitions at York Art Gallery
* Expanding Enterprises, building on success, becoming a more business-like charity and increasing our income streams and resilience
* Ensuring a Quality and 21st century Visitor Experience, pro-actively engaging visitors and sharing narratives
* Improving York’s and York Museum Trust’s profiles through local, regional and international leadership, partnership and delivering on all the expectations of key stakeholders

**THE ROLE**

YMT’s learning team enables over 30,000 school visits to our site, a number of community projects, and has achieved the accolade of UK Family Friendly Museum of the Year for the Trust. Working alongside curators, teams have delivered strong and well interpreted exhibitions including recently *Shaping the Body* at York Castle Museum and *Flesh* at York Art Gallery. Our volunteering team manage on average between 250 and 300 active volunteers at any one time. This role will build on these successes by bringing a more strategic approach to work across the Trust, guiding and developing the Trust’s exhibitions programming and audience development, ensuring delivery and engaging communities in meaningful ways with our collections.

This role will be a critical one within York Museums Trust driving the highest quality content and interpretation working closely with the Head of Curatorial Services and curatorial teams to produce the best possible experience for visitors. The postholder will lead the content team and work with curators to deliver the vision and content for York Castle Museum major capital project.

**York Castle Museum Capital Project**

York Castle Museum (YCM) consists of three buildings: Debtors Prison, Female Prison, and the Concourse, a modern link building. All buildings have listed status. The Female Prison was opened as a museum in 1938 and the Debtors Prison added in 1952. The connecting building was built in the late 1970s.

The Castle Museum buildings stand in what was originally part of the keep of the castle, which was cleared to make way for a new prison. The gaols housed debtors and criminals from all over Yorkshire and beyond, who were sent to York to be tried. Well-known inmates include leaders of the Luddite Rebellion and leaders of the Peterloo demonstrations in Manchester. Using the site remains, stories and objects from the collection, including those which demonstrate the Eye of York’s history as a power base for the crown across the North for many centuries, the York Castle Museum redevelopment will underline York’s status as a place of historic national importance.

All the Castle Museum collections are officially Designated as of national importance. Collections originate from Dr Kirk who collected approximately 7,000 objects as the founding collection of the museum with the reconstructed Victorian Street ‘Kirkgate’ at its heart. There are now around 350,000 objects in the social history collection. The Castle Museum has other outstanding collections relating to the chocolate industry, probably the best in the world. The military collection is seen as the finest non-regimental military collection outside of a national museum. The costume collection contains over 30,000 pieces of costume and accessories including hats, shoes, bags and jewellery with many areas being outstanding and important. The Victorian Street is much loved and will remain central to the visitor experience.

The Trust is looking to create a major capital project to resolve infrastructure issues, showcase York Castle Museum’s national collections and tell the story of the site. The content challenge and the opportunity for York Castle Museum is to make sense of the range of collections and various histories of the site and to build on the immersive atmosphere of its star attraction of Kirkgate Victorian Street. Its social history collections, period rooms and immersive environments will also show how extraordinary the everyday, ordinary lives of people become when seen through the lens of time. York stories and characters from Rowntree to Dick Turpin will be threaded throughout adding to the sense of place.

By 2026 York Castle Museum will offer a 21st century experience where the past has contemporary resonance, where visitors choose how to experience, enjoy, and explore the site and collections, communities feel ownership and engagement, and where history is accessible to all.