Investigation Report
July 2019

A report into the culture, governance procedures and management of Welcome to Yorkshire
Purpose

Clarion was appointed to conduct an investigation into the culture, governance procedures and management of Welcome to Yorkshire (WTY) with a particular focus on people issues.

We are tasked with reporting on any key themes and recommendations for the future.

In doing so, we aim to assist WTY, its team and all stakeholders in moving forward, to ensure that WTY continues to benefit Yorkshire and is instrumental in growing the tourism industry.

However, to best achieve this, it is necessary to reflect on the culture, which may have developed over time.

Objectives

One of the primary objectives of the investigation is to support participants, by listening to them impartially and allowing them to share any views or experiences with us in absolute confidence.

Participants have also had the opportunity to make recommendations about the culture, management and procedures of WTY, which may assist WTY and stakeholders when shaping the business and HR strategies for the future.

The objectives also include promoting positive relationships between WTY and relevant stakeholders.

Scope

To conduct the investigation, we have given past and present (i) employees, (ii) Board members (iii) Board Chairs and (iv) Board Observers the opportunity to contribute.

Past employees were informed of the investigation and able to consider the scope of it, through press releases made by WTY and an open communication on the WTY website.

A number of former Board members, Observers and Chairs were contacted by WTY directly, informed of the scope of the investigation and invited to participate.

Current employees and Board members were directly informed by WTY of the scope of the investigation and invited to participate.
Whilst the response was significant, and greater than anticipated, not all interested or relevant parties have come forward or been in a position to contribute. However, the desire for every relevant individual to be able to participate had to be balanced against avoiding undue delay and the public interest in concluding the investigation in a timely manner. There were 55 participants in total.

We are grateful to all participants for volunteering their time to make contact with us and contribute to our investigation, and, in most cases, for taking the additional time to travel and meet with us in person. Many took the time out of their day at an inconvenience to their employment and/or personal commitments. This was a real indication to us of the desire to contribute.

It was clear from the level of response and engagement that all participants were passionate about WTY and the Yorkshire region. There is a tremendous desire from all participants to see WTY survive and thrive.

Of the 55 participants, we interviewed 51 in person or by telephone, and 4 provided us with a written account. The participants can be summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant type</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current employees</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current members of the Senior Management Team</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Board members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current interim Chair of the Board</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former employees</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former members of the Senior Management Team</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Board member</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Board observers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Chairs of the Board</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, we were contacted by 3 people who were not within the scope of our investigation but were also keen to contribute and had taken the time to contact us. Those people were given the option to provide feedback directly to the Board of WTY, as follows:

- the first did not engage with us and may have been a journalist;
- the second was a member of the public; and
- the third was a former supplier to WTY.

From the 55 participants, we received contributions on a broad range of issues from a broad range of different viewpoints. There will inevitably be differences in the perspectives and perceptions of participants, and not all participants will agree with the perspectives of others.

However, we have endeavoured to report on the key themes in a balanced way to reflect the valued contributions and varying perspectives of the participants to our investigation, but without making definitive findings of fact.

With the agreement of the Board of WTY, all participants were given the choice as to whether to:

- provide us with information for context only, in respect of the investigation;
- to flag any general themes or generic points for investigation; or
- to refer to specific issues or incidents for investigation.
Participants were also given the discretion to contribute on an open or anonymous basis. Almost all participants chose to remain anonymous and did not wish to be named in this report or in the press.

We had no set questions for participants who attended interviews, and we had no pro forma for conducting them. This was to ensure that we received the broadest possible range of information from participants, on the broadest possible range of subject areas relevant to the scope of the investigation.

All participants wished to provide us with information for context only, to help identify the key themes for this report.

Many participants were explicit that they were only contributing to the investigation on the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore, it is not appropriate to include a list of participants or any specific examples or incidences within this report and we make no finding on them.

In addition to conducting interviews, we have reviewed a significant amount of documentation. We do not consider it appropriate to list the documentation, given the confidentiality requirements of the participants in this investigation.

The scope of the investigation was broad, the uptake was significant and due consideration has been given to the themes raised in confidence by participants. All contributions were extremely valuable and gratefully received.
1. BACKGROUND CONTEXT

WTY is a private company, limited by guarantee. It is the destination marketing organisation for Yorkshire.

Despite its reach, it is a small organisation that employs no more than approximately 50 people at any one time, typically including one Executive Director (the CEO) and a Senior Management Team (SMT) comprising around 10 divisional heads, of which three are the senior operational leaders. There is currently a non-executive Board of nine members.

WTY’s origins were with the Yorkshire Tourist Board, which was publicly funded. It was rebranded to WTY in 2009 (shortly after Sir Gary Verity joined the organisation as CEO, in 2008).

WTY received most of its public funding via Yorkshire Forward. That funding ceased in 2012 and WTY became a commercial entity, with a membership model. WTY initially had 22 local authority members who contributed an annual amount of funding. There were then around 25 legal members from the private sector, and approximately five other non-legal members.

The balance of funding between private and public sector members has fluctuated. However, we understand that, on average over the last 5 years, WTY has received about half of its funding from local authority members and the other half from private sector members, including Y30 partners who pay a higher annual sum.

There are many different stakeholders and many different perspectives and interests for the WTY team to balance, which is unusual.

As a small private organisation operating with a commercial membership model, financial and human resource is limited. WTY is entrepreneurial in its vision but it is not a typical commercial private organisation, given the publicly funded element.

WTY has been challenged by all these factors and has to strike the delicate, and somewhat unique, balance between public and commercial stakeholder interests. The team are undoubtedly stretched to deliver outstanding achievements, under great pressure.

However, the modest size and fundamentally commercial model of WTY are what enables it to be agile and creative. For these reasons, WTY contributes successfully to growing the regional tourism economy and the achievements of WTY under Sir Gary Verity’s leadership cannot be disputed.

Yorkshire is the only region to have grown the number of overseas visitors in recent years, and it is highly regarded for its world-class and awarding-winning events. According to the last full year of statistics, tourism in Yorkshire is now worth around £9billion to the region’s economy.

It is undeniable that several highly successful and high-profile events were delivered by the WTY team during Sir Gary Verity’s tenure, including the Grand Départ of the Tour de France and the annual legacy event of Tour de Yorkshire.

The success of WTY continues following Sir Gary Verity’s departure, given the capabilities, work ethic, passion and loyalty of the WTY team. Many employees continue to be attracted to WTY due to the success, nature and profile of the events that it delivers, and the exciting career opportunities that it creates.

In obtaining accounts from 55 participants, we have received extensive background that gives context to the key themes identified in this report. Participants shared insights with us dating back to around 2008, which were valuable in providing a full picture and have been given due consideration, particularly in respect of formulating the recommendations.
2. KEY THEMES

A number of key themes were consistently raised by participants to our investigation. Whilst not all interested parties came forward or were in a position to contribute, given the volume of participants who did provide input, the consistency of their accounts and frequency of the themes raised, we have no reason to doubt concerns were genuine and based on adequate grounds. We observed no malicious intent on the part of any participants, in sharing their accounts with us and making recommendations.

Appendix One of this report provides a visual representation of the key themes that we have identified, and an indication of the frequency with which they were raised.

In summary, the most frequently discussed theme was raised by around 83% of participants, equating to approximately 46 people. The least frequently discussed theme was raised by around 50% of participants, equating to approximately 28 participants.

We have grouped the most frequently raised themes together into key themes, and have discussed them more particularly below.

The key themes can be summarised as follows:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Behavioural Issues, Culture and Divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Board Visibility and Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Documentation, Reward and Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Behavioural Issues, Culture and Divisions

Around 83% of participants discussed cultural problems in interview, equating to approximately 46 people.

Many participants described behavioural concerns which seem to have become widely accepted from the top down.

Whilst the scope of our investigation is broad, in response to open questions about the general culture, governance and management of WTY, many participants raised concerns about the behaviour of Sir Gary Verity.

By his own admission, it appears that Sir Gary Verity fell short of the highest performance and leadership standards that he states that he tried to set, and which we find would be reasonably expected of a CEO.

Looking more broadly, it appears that the overriding objective of many participants has become to avoid conflict. Most have become adept at not challenging colleagues’ behaviour or raising any concerns (by way of a formal grievance or to the Board) or constructive criticism, and there are valid explanations as to why that was the case which stems from the culture that has evolved.

Unfortunately, many participants stated that they felt unable to raise concerns at the relevant time, although some were concerned about the behaviour of Sir Gary Verity.

We found that the culture of WTY was not open or focused on employee wellbeing, development or engagement.

The perceived inability to effect cultural change and address behavioural concerns has inevitably, negatively impacted how the SMT are perceived by some other employees. There is a lack of trust which must be rebuilt.
The issue was compounded by the suggestion that the Board were not, overall, a highly engaged group that would question or challenge decisions as much as they could.

This was made worse by the fact that the degree of information shared and those involved in key decisions appears to have varied greatly between Board members (and there seems to have been an inconsistent approach to engaging with the Board by the former Chair, Ron McMillan). Inevitably, some members have lost motivation, as the extent of their ability to influence and exercise control has diminished.

Whilst not unusual for a non-executive Board of unpaid volunteers in a small organisation, the Board was (until recently) not known to employees below SMT level and attendance of the Board at WTY’s offices has been intermittent.

The above themes appear to have contributed to a perceived divide between employees and the SMT, and the SMT and the Board. Around 83% of participants referred to internal divisions. This equates to approximately 46 people.

Sir Gary Verity and Ron McMillan have both now left WTY. Sir Gary Verity resigned on health grounds on 22 March 2019, amid concerns about his behaviour towards staff and expenses.

Ron McMillan resigned shortly thereafter on 18 April 2019, on the grounds that it was the right time to step down to allow the organisation to move forward. In doing so, Ron McMillan stated to the press that “new leadership culture with greater transparency, accountability and governance” was urgently needed at WTY (Yorkshire Post, 17 April).

Whilst there has been public criticism of Sir Gary Verity and Ron McMillan, it is worth noting the feedback of many participants was that the culture at WTY is a “problem that is bigger than one person”.

However, despite the cultural challenges, the overwhelming view of participants was that WTY remains relevant and an exciting place to work. The whole team are clearly passionate about Yorkshire and loyal to WTY’s mission, with a strong desire to see WTY and regional tourism move forward successfully.

2. Board Visibility and Representation

Around 52% of participants (around 28 people) felt that they were not clear on the identity, skills, experience and roles of Board members.

Many participants did not know the current Board or know how to contact them. However, it was also acknowledged that the Board is voluntary and unpaid, with the exception of the Chair. Increased on-site presence, and support more recently, has been well-received and would be beneficial for the future. We have set out some recommendations later in this report.

Many participants shared a general view that equality and diversity is lacking at Board level. There is a significant appetite to see more women appointed to the Board, particularly to the positions of Chair and CEO.

There is also a desire for the Board to better reflect the cultural and racial diversity of Yorkshire and for members to go through a full and formal recruitment exercise, which has not always been the case.

However, the overwhelming response was that “the right person for the job” should always be appointed, irrespective of their gender and other characteristics.
KEY THEMES

We received consistent feedback that WTY must ensure that there is transparency around Board governance and decision-making, including the sharing of information and requirement for debate.

It was also suggested by a number of participants that private members of WTY could be better represented on the Board. It was acknowledged (and viewed positively) that a certain number of local authority representatives appear on the Board, as a matter of good governance, given that WTY receives some public funding.

However, given that WTY is fundamentally a private organisation with an entrepreneurial vision (whose agility and ability to be commercial has proven to benefit the region and tourism economy), there is a desire to see greater commercial knowledge and tourism experience on the Board.

It was also proposed that introducing legal, financial and digital expertise to the Board would be beneficial from a governance perspective, moving forwards. A number of participants also perceived that not all regions of Yorkshire are represented effectively.

In light of the above feedback, there is a proposal for private members to work more collaboratively with the Board. We have dealt with this under a separate heading of ‘collaboration’ below.

Undertaking a Board audit and considering the recruitment and selection procedure for Board members is likely to assist with addressing these themes.

It should also be noted that a number of current Board members recognised that they had been members for an extensive period and we envisage there would be a number of voluntary resignations, if it was felt appropriate to appoint a newly constructed Board to prepare for the future.

3. Documentation, Reward and Recognition

Around 81% of participants commented negatively in respect of documentation and procedures. This equates to approximately 45 people.

Further, approximately 50% of participants reported that they felt reward and recognition structures were poor at WTY. This equates to approximately 28 people.

We received significant feedback that HR policies are outdated, sometimes implemented inconsistently and often not implemented at all. Further, whilst a staff handbook was in place (containing policies and procedures such as a grievance procedure), using it was not an integral part of the culture at WTY.

It also appears that contracts of employment are lacking, outdated and/or inconsistent. Sick pay and family-friendly entitlements were criticised, in particular.

This theme is unsurprising for a small organisation with funding constraints, and no internal HR resource. The situation is certainly not unique in our experience.

It was acknowledged by participants that a full-time permanent HR team would be inappropriate for an organisation of WTY’s size. However, participants were critical of there having been no HR function for some time.

We believe that action is required in light of this theme of feedback, and we have made recommendations below. We understand that WTY is already taking positive action with the support of an external HR consultant, which is encouraging and a positive step that has been well-received by participants.

In addition to HR, we understand that health and safety, and some practical procedures either do not exist or have been disregarded over time. Alternatively, it appears that practical procedures are applied inconsistently between departments. The topics of lieu time and project work/secondments were raised in particular.
KEY THEMES

4. Collaboration

It cannot be disputed that WTY has successfully built its brand and delivered world-class events, contributing to the growth of the visitor economy to £9billion and Yorkshire being the only region in the UK to grow the number of overseas visitors.

However, whilst brand development and events have been prioritised with great results, feedback from participants suggested that there has been less focus on developing the regional agenda and the broader strategy beyond events.

Many colleagues below SMT level are keen to collaborate with the SMT and Board, and to play a part in shaping a broader strategy. The majority participated in our investigation specifically to collaborate and contribute to the future, given their passion for WTY and Yorkshire tourism.

We were encouraged to receive feedback from the SMT that indicated a desire to work more collaboratively internally. At Board level, we also received a suggestion of implementing a ‘Junior Board’ to encourage collaboration, promote learning and development, plan for succession and increase Board visibility and engagement.

In addition to collaboration internally, there appears to be a real opportunity for staff and the Board to collaborate and think more creatively, and strategically, about running external events and initiatives that encourage local authorities, and also groups of private members, to collaborate in order to benefit Yorkshire tourism industry as a whole.

WTY is in the unique position of being able to help shape the regional tourism agenda, by bringing together people with common interests and values.

Externally, the engagement of stakeholders could be improved by developing the regional collaborative strategy. A number of former employees who participated in our investigation continue to work in the tourism industry and interact with WTY in the course of their duties, which presents an opportunity.

In addition, it may be beneficial to consider ways in which the engagement levels of private members could be increased through greater collaboration.

For example, it was suggested by some participants that groups of private members with common interests or sector experience could be brought together and engaged with in a more targeted way. It was also suggested that private members could elect a representative to sit on and/or report to the Board, which would enable private members to provide greater direct feedback to WTY.
3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The process of reflecting and contributing was evidently challenging for many participants, including some former employees who left WTY several years ago.

Some found it difficult to provide a full account of the circumstances and events that had contributed to the culture of WTY. However, we hope to have reported in a representative and balanced way, having identified the key themes raised by participants who came forward and were able to contribute, whilst respecting their anonymity and confidentiality requirements.

In most cases, interviews with participants lasted around 1.5 hours each, with the majority of the time constituting a discussion about the future and suggested recommendations.

A number of participants told us that they had ultimately decided to contribute because they wanted to advance suggested recommendations and play a part in shaping the future of WTY, which evidently matters to them.

There is a remarkable sense of pride and passion, not only for WTY but also Yorkshire and regional tourism. Whilst the culture could be improved, there is an obvious loyalty and desire to see WTY move forward successfully for the ultimate benefit of all stakeholders and the regional economy.

We were thoroughly impressed by the enthusiasm, professionalism and insights of participants, whose suggestions were articulate and considered. Some of the suggestions extend beyond the scope of our investigation but are nevertheless valuable. Having had the benefit of receiving participant suggestions, we feel it is only appropriate to include them in our report.

We have populated Appendix Two with the detailed suggestions proposed by participants, in order that they can be considered by WTY as potential options for the future. We envisage that not all of the suggestions will be practicable to accommodate in the short to medium term, or possible. However, we hope that they provide useful and longer-term considerations. It will ultimately be for WTY to decide what is appropriate and to what extent.

Our key recommendations can be categorised as follows:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CEO Appointment and Interim Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Counselling and Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>HR Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cultural Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Business Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Office Space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have selected and listed the key recommendations from each category below, being those recommendations which we would believe are likely to be the most impactful and ought to be given priority consideration by WTY in the short to medium term (if they have not already commenced).
### RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Considerations</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Communications</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Share this report with all participants, employees and stakeholders.</td>
<td>Employees should be briefed and supported in dealing with enquiries, whether from the media and/or stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish regular staff feedback forums, such as annual engagement surveys, quarterly all staff meetings, weekly departmental meetings and structured 1-2-1’s between colleagues and line managers.</td>
<td>We understand that weekly staff and SMT meetings have been implemented, which is an encouraging start and ought to be maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. CEO Appointment and Interim Plan</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Begin the process of recruiting a new CEO.</td>
<td>Agree in writing with each relevant Board and SMT member who will be responsible for what functions and tasks, to ensure clarity and accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pending appointment of a new CEO, establish an interim executive plan and divide responsibilities between Board members and the SMT.</td>
<td>It is encouraging to note that an interim executive plan of this nature appears to have already been put in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. The Board</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conduct a Board audit.</td>
<td>Ensure there is always a formal recruitment and appointment process for Board members (with a selection panel including an independent third party).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appoint new members (including an executive Chair) and establish a plan for the rotation of existing members.</td>
<td>We understand that a skills audit of the Board is already underway, to assist with the rotation and recruitment process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Counselling and Welfare</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide counselling for employees who require support.</td>
<td>We understand that counselling is being organised for those employees who have been identified as most affected by their experience, which is reassuring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure employees are supported by the sick pay policy if they do not feel able to attend work.</td>
<td>We also understand that a sick pay scheme has been implemented for those who did not previously have any entitlement, which is a positive step.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5. HR Strategy
- Conduct an audit of policies, procedures and contracts.
- Ensure HR documentation is updated and fit for purpose, and applied consistently.
- Ensure staff are trained, including with regard to equality and diversity, and anti-harassment and bullying.
- It is encouraging to note that work has already commenced, with an external HR consultant engaged to attend the office on one day per week to conduct an audit and provide a sounding board to colleagues.

### 6. Cultural Work
- Redefine WTY’s purpose, vision and values and identify ways to integrate them into business and HR strategy, policies and procedures, to bring them to life.
- Consider undertaking the cultural element in parallel to the HR audit referenced above, for maximum impact and integration.
- Subject to funding, there are specialist external consultants available to assist with this type of project.

### 7. Business Strategy
- The Board and SMT should formulate a business plan, to be refined (as may be needed) with input from the new CEO in due course.
- Engage with all stakeholders and consider bringing together groups with shared interests to maximise the strategy for those groups and feed into the regional agenda.
- We understand that the SMT and Board are actively putting together a focused business plan, which will play a critical part in moving WTY forwards.
- Once the new CEO is in place, we envisage that they will wish to review the structure and skillset of the SMT to help shape it for the future and maximise strategic delivery against the agreed plan.

### 8. Office Space
- As an interim step, and subject to funding, consider reconfiguring seating arrangements and layout.
- This may reveal more efficient ways of working and collaborating, with improved privacy for sensitive work or confidential business meetings.

It is reassuring that work has commenced with a number of the above priority recommendations already under-way. We are hopeful that this will help to bring about positive culture change and rebuild trust. The impact is likely to be significant within the short to medium term.

With further potential consideration in the longer term of the additional participant suggestions, we are confident that there is every opportunity for WTY to excel, continue to promote Yorkshire and grow the visitor economy.
4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the investigation was evidently a challenging experience for many participants. In our view, participants were professional, authentic and credible. We saw no evidence of malice. Rather, a desire of participants to volunteer their time to reflect and provide their account, in order to help shape the future.

It is clear that participants have experienced different things (positive and negative) at different times, and that not all participants have been employed or otherwise engaged by WTY at the same time or for the same duration. It is also clear that different levels of information have been available to different people at different times. As such, a reference to a particular category of people in this report cannot be taken as definitive or representative of those currently employed or engaged in that particular category.

However, WTY has taken an open and longer-term position in this investigation, ensuring that our scope was broad and that we were able to receive accounts from a meaningful number of participants with a broad range of experiences and different perspectives.

With an uptake of 55 participants and a significant volume of documents, we are confident that the investigation has been thorough and representative. We have identified the key themes, with the least common still being raised by about 28 people (around 50%) and the most popular representing the view of about 46 people (around 83%).

Many participants expressed that the investigation has been a worthy and beneficial exercise, and an opportunity to search their conscience and ask whether they could have done more or done things differently, on reflection.

Many participants reported that the investigation was an opportunity to speak openly and honestly in a way that they had not felt able to previously. The experience was described by some as cathartic.

It is evident that, in recent years, WTY and the team have had to navigate through challenging circumstances, including funding limitations and a rare combination of different stakeholder interests and pressures. This has unfortunately impacted on the culture and behaviour of people. There has been a shortfall against the high standards that could reasonably be expected, including in the case of Sir Gary Verity, as he accepted.

However, it is abundantly clear that there is a great deal of passion and commitment for WTY, contributing to Yorkshire and the tourism economy. There is also a great deal of talent. It cannot be denied that, despite cultural issues, the WTY team have excelled and enabled the organisation to deliver world-class achievements.

That loyalty, pride and commitment has not faltered. There is an evident desire of participants to see WTY move forward and thrive. We were particularly impressed with the enthusiasm and considered-thought with which participants proposed their recommendations for the future.

It is clear that WTY remains relevant with every opportunity of remaining instrumental to the region’s success. Funding remains a challenge for WTY and we hope that this report goes some way to rebuilding trust and support from all stakeholders and funders.

Our conclusion is ultimately that the culture, governance procedures and management of WTY can be improved. We are pleased to find that positive changes are already underway and we hope that this report facilitates further improvements for the benefit of a hardworking and loyal team of people, and ultimately for the benefit of the Yorkshire region and economy.
APPENDIX ONE - THEMES

Remuneration, benefits and pay reviews
- 38% Could be improved
- 62% No comment

Policies, procedures, recruitment and human resources
- 19% Could be improved
- 81% No comment

Internal divisions
- 17% Could be improved
- 83% No comment

Culture
- 17% Could be improved
- 83% No comment

Recognition, progression and development
- 50% Could be improved
- 50% No comment

The Board
- 48% Could be improved
- 52% No comment
APPENDIX TWO - FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

This Appendix sets out the further suggestions proposed by participants, in order that they can be considered by WTY as potential options for the future.

We envisage that not all of the suggestions will be practicable to accommodate in the short to medium term, or possible. However, we hope that they provide useful and longer-term considerations. It will ultimately be for WTY to decide what is appropriate and to what extent.

1. Communications

We recommend that participants to our investigation receive a copy of this report.

Additionally, all employees should receive a copy before publication and be briefed on how to deal with any enquiries.

WTY should also consider sharing the report with stakeholders, to support the maintenance of relationships and funding moving forwards.

Employees clearly wish to be heard and to see their feedback acted upon. A step to help with this might be to run staff surveys at regular interviews, perhaps bi-annually or annually. Quarterly staff feedback forums may also be beneficial.

2. CEO Appointment and Interim Plan

We have separately provided WTY with a list of key attributes for potential CEO candidates, which have been identified by participants to our investigation. By way of summary, the key recommendations include:

- Someone with vision and energy, who is not stale or a token appointment.
- A people person and team player, that recognises everyone’s efforts.
- Someone commercial and creative, who will take measured risks.
- A real passion for Yorkshire but does not need to be from Yorkshire.
- Gravitas and a strong public speaker.

The newly appointed CEO should, as a priority, consider:

- Empowering all employees, and managers in particular, to have greater autonomy, decision-making authority and accountability.
- Training managers to increase their confidence and ability to manage people effectively. Reviewing the structure and skillset of the SMT to help shape it for the future.
- Shaping the business plan and strategy with input from the SMT and Board (taking on board ideas from more junior colleagues – perhaps with a Junior Board being established).
- Reviewing staff structures generally to improve efficiency of working and encourage skillsets to be maximised.
- Setting-up a framework through up to date policies and procedures.

During the course of our interviews, participants identified nine potential candidates. We have informed WTY and the suggestions have been shared with WTY’s recruiter.
It will be of critical importance for any new CEO to value HR and drive the people and cultural agenda, as well as the business agenda, with in-house or outsourced support as needed. By empowering the team and sharing responsibility, the organisation will become greater than any one person within it and allow for seamless succession in the future.

It is encouraging that interim plans are being established between the Board and SMT, sharing the responsibility.

Given that it is realistically likely to be a number of months before a new CEO is appointed and able to commence employment with WTY, it may be worth considering an interim appointment depending on progress of the current leadership plan between the Board and SMT.

There is a pressing need to support employees and the SMT, drive strategy and engage members. It is likely to be beneficial for any new CEO (whether interim or permanent) to visit as many members and stakeholders as possible to raise WTY’s profile and rebuild trust in relationships. Arrangements must be made, if they haven’t already, to engage with all parties.

3. The Board

Audit

We recommend that a regular audit is undertaken to identify the skills, experience, geographical and stakeholder representation and diversity of Board members. We understand that an audit has already commenced.

Consider whether the Board should include a member elected by private members, for added representation and communication with this stakeholder group.

Consider how skills and experience could be maximised and introduced to the Board, if not currently available. It was suggested that current commercial practice would be beneficial, together with greater tourism experience. Legal, financial and digital expertise were also suggested as necessary for the future.

Once the audit is complete, we suggest that the information is circulated to the full Board. Doing so will help to ensure that members are always representative, accountable and engaged.

It may also be beneficial to share the Board’s skills and experience with the WTY team, to encourage greater collaboration and visibility.

Consider the optimal number, and duration of, Board meetings per annum.

We suggest that the Board sets down some written guidelines that are agreed by the full Board, including expectations around attendance levels at Board and committee meetings and agenda items. This will facilitate accountability and engagement.

Appointments

We recommend (having completed an audit) redefining each member’s role on the Board, and ensuring the full Board and WTY team understand those roles.

It will also be beneficial to agree how each member can contribute, including with regard to business development and collaborative working, internally and externally.

It is likely to help with governance and accountability. It may increase engagement levels and opportunities for WTY if the skills, experience and connections of Board members are maximised.
We believe the Board has already set down revised rules around the maximum term of Board members.

Establish a plan for rotation of the current Board (some of whom have been in post for a significant period) and ongoing, regular rotation thereafter.

Board rotation is healthy and expected from a governance and engagement perspective. It will also help to maintain the creativity and innovation of the organisation, by regularly introducing different perspectives to the Board. Introducing a greater private member presence may be beneficial.

Ensure that there is always a formal appointment process for Board members, to ensure independence and that appointments are representative in all respects. A selection panel should always take decisions on appointments to support the integrity of the process, ideally to include an external panel member.

Review the need for Board committees and ensure that necessary committees have clear, documented objectives and terms of reference in place, that are known by the full Board. The scope of commitment and the roles of committee members should also be clear and documented, for accountability.

Committee appointments and the frequency and duration of committee meetings should also be agreed by the Board and documented. This will ensure that the Board operates efficiently, and that information is shared effectively and with accountability, in a timely manner.

Visibility

We received feedback from participants that the current Board members were largely unknown to employees, until recently. Office attendance and visibility has been well-received.

Sustaining the Board’s visibility will be beneficial for a number of reasons, including improving the level of employee and Board engagement (with some Board members indicating that a lack of operational involvement has led to demotivation). It will also assist with governance.

Consider circulating a contact sheet that informs employees of the identity of the Board members and what their roles, skills and background/experience are.

Also consider implementing a regular drop-in session, where Board members attend the office to meet with employees, and the SMT. Board members could establish a rota to ensure the responsibility is shared, and to increase profiles with staff.

Creating a ‘Junior Board’ will also help to increase the profile of Board members with employees who may not ordinarily contribute to Board meetings. This is also likely to increase engagement of both Board members and employees.

Whilst unusual for a small private company, it is encouraging that a hybrid approach has been implemented to take account of the public sector interests in WTY. Publicising appropriate board papers (such as agendas and minutes) will be beneficial in the interests of transparency. Keeping this under review and considering any further appropriate public elements to Board arrangements in future would be a further positive step.
Transparency

We received feedback in support of the publication of appropriate Board papers (as discussed above). Participants felt this would help rebuild trust in WTY, given that some key stakeholders are in the public sector (where this open and transparent approach is familiar and considered good practice from a governance perspective).

The sharing of information is also likely to engage employees, who are keen to understand the strategy and direction of WTY and whose experience of information sharing varies at present.

4. Counselling and Welfare

We have placed counselling as a separate heading to other HR-related recommendations because there is an evident need for a number of employees to receive face-to-face support.

Many participants found the process of reflecting on WTY’s culture and sharing their account with us difficult and emotional. There is also evidence of stress for current employees at a time of significant change for WTY, where human and financial resource is particularly limited.

Consider training willing employees to become mental health first aiders. This would help to address the perception that wellbeing is not valued. Also, mental health is a topical issue generally, where a healthy work/life balance can be difficult to achieve in a fast-paced modern society.

Training mental health first aiders will no doubt increase employee engagement and ensure colleagues feel supported, with any risks to the individual or WTY identified at an early stage.

5. HR Strategy

There is an immediate demand for HR support and a sounding board for employees. It is recognised that full-time permanent HR is not a long-term requirement given the limited size of WTY’s team.

We understand that the HR strategy and needs are being separately reviewed in detail by a specialist external HR consultant, which has been well-received and is a positive step for the future. It is reassuring that remedial work has already started.

To support that process, we suggest the following with regard to the broader people agenda:

- Policies and procedures should be reviewed and updated, both from a legal perspective and to ensure they are fit for purpose in a practical sense.
- Key policy/procedural areas for review according to investigation participants include: lieu time/flexitime, family friendly rights, sickness absence, recruitment and induction, appraisals and performance management, remote working, secondments and family friendly policies.
- Discipline, grievance and whistleblowing procedures and training on the same are also required in the context of our key findings, set out above. All staff should receive the training.
- The introduction of an appraisal system and more structured one-to-one sessions with line managers will be key to improving dialogue about performance and development.
- In addition, there are broader HR training needs. All staff should be trained on equality and diversity. There is evidence of inappropriate comments and short treatment of others throughout the organisation, which is indicative of the current culture. Training will be an effective way to measure and drive positive change.
Further, managers of all levels should be trained on the new HR policies and procedures, to empower them to manage and support their teams effectively. Many of the middle managers and SMT do not appear to feel confident in addressing HR issues, which is leading to inconsistencies between teams, and creating the potential for people issues to escalate unnecessarily.

Employees also wish to develop their own skills and experience. Training in soft skills and exposure to different work types and/or work of increased complexity would benefit the organisation, both in terms of performance and engagement, and efficiency of output by employees. Introducing a ‘Junior Board’ may also assist in these respects.

Reward and recognition were consistently raised as an issue. Whilst funding limitations are acknowledged, it appears that some employees have not received any pay review or increase, even incremental, in a number of years.

A benchmarking exercise may be beneficial to assess whether employees are fairly remunerated for their role compared to industry standards, alongside consideration of some basic pay scales so that employees’ expectations are managed.

Non-financial recognition would have a significant positive impact. Consider ways in which colleagues can recognise and appreciate each other’s efforts and achievements. For example, quarterly awards where employees can nominate each other for their achievements, with nominations aligned to the refocused values of WTY.

Consider harmonising terms and conditions of employment – to ensure that all employees have a contract and also so that they are engaged on the same version – but also to ensure that entitlements are consistent and aligned to the values of the organisation.

Feedback was very negative in respect of sick pay, in particular. Employees felt that their wellbeing was not valued, and there was a division due to different entitlements existing. We are pleased to report that a scheme is now in place for those who did not previously have access.

Consider whether any affordable benefits could be introduced to reward and engage employees, and attract new talent. For example, subscribing employees to Perkbox or similar.

Initiatives with members could also be explored to reward staff. For example, there could be a prize draw to win a free stay at a Yorkshire hotel or to eat at a local restaurant (which could then help increase WTY’s brand awareness, assist with selling the member to tourists, and enable WTY colleagues to produce online content such as blogs and reviews).

Track basic HR data and measures (including diversity data and employee turnover rates). Report the data at all Board meetings, so that any potential trends or risks are quickly identified and able to be addressed.

Ensure that a degree of flexibility is retained with regard to lieu time and home working, and other ways of flexible working, given that employees often work at events out of hours.

Consideration should also be given to health and safety issues. We understand that a number of employees travel significant distances outside typical office hours, sometimes lone working off site where they can be vulnerable. There is also a manual element to working on some events and initiatives.

Such working arrangements should be assessed for health and safety risks in order to protect WTY in the event of an accident or incident.

Pregnancy risk assessments must also always be carried out. These are a legal requirement and it appears that they are lacking at present.
6. Cultural Work

Morale is low at present but could readily be improved with some work on engagement and culture.

There are specialist HR consultants who can assist with this type of project. However, whether you undertake the work internally or externally, you should start by identifying WTY’s vision and purpose, cultural DNA, its core values and belief system, and then work on how to integrate them into the strategy, policies and procedures, including by reviewing roles and structures to bring the strategy to life.

7. Business Strategy

We recommend that WTY refocuses on, and clearly identifies, its values and vision - which must have the promotion of Yorkshire tourism and collaborative working at its heart.

The agreed values and vision will then underpin the business strategy, and all management decisions. It will also underpin the HR strategy and processes (in respect of which recommendations are set out separately below).

A number of participants suggested the following in respect of the business strategy:

- Bring together groups of private members and other stakeholders with shared interests or sector experience, to shape tailored initiatives and events that promote collaboration and greater benefit the region. For example, create a focus group of National Parks to maximise the tourism strategy for that group and sell WTY to them more effectively.

- Consider reinvigorating the private member forum, beyond the Y30 partners, to ensure they can provide feedback and see value for their investment.

- Focus on large-scale initiatives and events that unite local authorities across Yorkshire and encourage collaboration, both with WTY but also between local authorities. Suggestions include The Olympics and other world class sporting events, beyond cycling.

- There is certainly value in cycling events but the majority view seems to be that greater diversity and innovation is required in respect of the future events programme, to keep it fresh and reduce the risk of alienating some regions, members and, ultimately, tourists.

- Look at increasing sponsorship for established events, including the cycling.

- Return on funding, investments and events should be better measured, frequently and scientifically, in detail, to ensure that the right number and type of events are being delivered to the right audience, in the right way, at the right frequency and cost.

- An internal research and analytical resource may be beneficial with regard to measuring return on activity and shaping strategy.

- Consider technological and digital developments to maximise and engage members and offer a greater return for their membership fee; perhaps an ‘app’ for use on smart phones and tablets.

- Diversifying and increasing private members will assist with governance and reduce risk, should any single large stakeholder cease to support WTY for any reason.
Always consider engaging members when producing content and press relating to a particular area of knowledge or experience. This will help to engage them, offer a return and ensure the accuracy of content.

Subject to funding, consider greater project-based funding, such as the building of a new tourist attraction, to increase innovation and promote creative events and initiatives.

Strategic decision-making should be shared and delegated, where appropriate. This reduces pressure on any one individual and reduces risk in the event of absences or departures. It also fosters an open, supportive culture of collaboration.

The strategy should also be cascaded down (at the appropriate level of detail) to all employees to ensure everyone is clear on their contribution and that they buy into it with an emphasis on promotion of the region, rather than the organisation and/or any one individual.

There is a largely millennial workforce who will respond well to receiving increased information; their maturity and professionalism should not be underestimated. Consider implementing a Junior Board to engage this group, support progression and plan for succession.

Giving a name, brand and packaging the ‘Junior Board’ initiative may be helpful in maximising engagement levels.

Consider quarterly all staff meetings, supported by weekly departmental meetings. This provides a platform for sharing strategic information and business updates, but also increases accountability and promotes employee engagement.

Regularity and structure around SMT and project meetings would also be beneficial. The SMT should drive the strategy forward.

Increase Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by identifying ways in which WTY can give back to communities across Yorkshire. CSR is high on millennial and political agendas and will help to engage employees, as well as potentially having a positive impact on WTY’s brand and reputation with stakeholders – and ultimately tourists. It may also be a way to collaborate better with stakeholders.

Ensure that the green agenda and environmental impact are factored into strategic decisions, partnerships and event planning, and that the environmental impact of WTY’s activities is measured. Not only will this align with political agendas and ensure strategies are effective in all respects, but it may have a positive reputational impact as tourists are more environmentally aware than ever before.

Review and update commercial documentation, such as service level agreements, to ensure that they are legally up to date, and align with the business strategy. Ensure they are understood internally and applied consistently in the interests of good governance.

Ultimately, ensure that WTY’s strategy for the future enables it to retain its reputation for being creative, commercial and fun.
8. Office Space

We understand that the premises currently occupied by WTY are listed and that physical alterations or a relocation may not be feasible or affordable (subject to funding).

However, we received feedback from participants (past and present) that there is no space for quiet work or confidential meetings, which is perceived to cause inefficiencies and contributes to the culture of mistrust. Some complained that there is no privacy, which leads to an unwanted feeling of always being watched.

There is evidence to suggest that more sensitive work has been carried out in toilet cubicles which is not an ideal work environment. We also understand that some teams who are required to interact frequently are not necessarily sat together, which could be leading to further inefficiencies and/or divisions.

Consider reconfiguring the seating layout and arrangements to the extent practicable to address these issues.

Additionally, introducing meeting room facilities may also enable Board meetings to be held on site, increasing Board visibility, promoting engagement and assisting with governance.