

Welcome to Yorkshire

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Report: Welcome to Yorkshire – Report from James Mason, Chief Executive

Report to: Welcome to Yorkshire Board

Date: 17th September 2020

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide board members with an update on the work of Welcome To Yorkshire and progress since the last Board meeting.

Overview

August has seen Welcome to Yorkshire gather some momentum following the recognition from most local authority partners that the organisation is much needed now more than ever as the tourism economy faces a lengthy period of rebuilding. A series of constructive and successful presentations with various groups has meant that our funding position although not yet confirmed does look much more positive than four weeks ago.

Once approved and the money received, we will be in a position to add concrete plans to our 12 months marketing and events schedule. What has been very pleasing has been the reaction both publicly and privately to the work we have been doing in recent weeks and months to ensure that Yorkshire is at the forefront of people's minds as a place to Visit, Live, work and Study. Whilst many students have not yet returned to universities in our region we have started meeting with university representatives as well as the organisation 'Yorkshire Universities' to ensure we are attracting the best young talent in the UK and overseas to the region.

Staffing

A period of consultation and redundancy is complete, and we now have a staffing level of 20. We are looking to recruit up to three more members of the team in the next few weeks including a Director of Strategic Delivery. This position will be key and will add essential support to the senior management team whilst leading on the commercial delivery of our strategy. In the short term we have enlisted the help of tourism industry consultant who is working across all teams. Her experience, expertise and knowledge is being well received and her ability to provide regional, national and international insight has been recognised by many of the followers of our industry accounts on social media and LinkedIn.

On the whole, the staff have reacted well to the new structure and although we now have less than half the personnel we had this time last year, they are all clear on the strategy and what we need to achieve as a new organisation. What hasn't helped and is commonplace across all sectors is that the working from home situation means we are rarely in one place together and this is something we are working on. The uncertainty around our future funding is a source of concern for many staff as is to be expected. Whilst this uncertainty exists, we have lost some staff as they have accepted employment elsewhere.

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Tourism Recovery plan

Nationwide advertising campaign

Our recovery plan is in the second phase as most businesses within the tourism industry have reopened and are starting to recover.

As part of this plan we committed to an out of County advertising campaign and we were delighted that our submission for a grant to fund some of this advertising was successful. We have received £300,000 worth of advertising spend across a host of media from billboards, bus stops, newspaper advertisements, social media advertising and sponsored website and digital marketing. This inventory will be seen across the country promoting Yorkshire as a destination to visit over the next few months as part of the DCMS's 'Enjoy Summer Safely' campaign with a view to extending the tourism season well into Winter.

This investment although it doesn't directly benefit Welcome to Yorkshire is testimony to the hard work the team have put in over the last few months to demonstrate our viability as an organisation supporting the tourism industry in Yorkshire. Had we not been here, or had we hibernated, the securing of these funds would not have been possible.

We have introduced a Strategic Services team, with each sub region of the county now having a nominated area manager.

These area managers are responsible for covering North, South, East and West Yorkshire. They are in the early stages of building upon existing relationships with both local authority and private sector partners to demonstrate a better understanding of what is happening in each part of the county.

Media coverage

We continue to produce content that is finding its way into both the mainstream media and industry specific titles. In addition, as part of our strategy we are continuing to grow our digital platforms and are seeing month by month growth across all of them. By connecting Yorkshire folk around the world, we can build up a community that will in turn enable us to offer feedback and insight to the tourism businesses in Yorkshire. Regularly uploaded content to YouTube and evocative, inviting images on Instagram and Facebook have a direct correlation with website hits on member and destination pages.

Our relationship with Yorkshire celebrities is helping us to produce digital content for 'This is Y magazine' and our in-house camera team enable us to produce high quality output such as this video with Amanda Owen that has already received over 40,000 views. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xD2ps1zqNnQ&t=4s>

We have had a bumper month in the national press with The Times, Guardian and Telegraph all conducting interviews with regards to our insight and trends within the tourism industry. Whilst the headline below is satisfying recognition for lots of hard work. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/yorkshire-1-cornwall-0-surprise-winners-and-losers-of-summer-holiday-2020-kmwkpm6x5>

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We believe the collaboration between regional DMO's such as Cornwall and Cumbria but also our own smaller Yorkshire led DMO's and businesses and organisations such as the LEP's, the FSB and CBI have really helped us serve the Yorkshire tourism industry better.

Our website traffic continues to grow with some huge increases in web traffic in recent month, helped by our partnership with Screen Yorkshire to amplify the TV locations of programmes such as All Creatures Great and Small, the Yorkshire Vet and many others

<https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/18743043.dales-vet-tv-series-sees-web-increase-welcome-yorkshire/>

Communications

As we grow our databases, I have set the team a target of 16 pieces of communication a month across all channels which are categorised as follows:

- Consumer comms (What is happening in Yorkshire?)
- Industry comms (What is important for businesses within the tourism industry to know?)
- Community comms (membership updates, competitions, offers etc)

The communication platforms range from text and image only newsletters, videos, polls and soon audio podcasts.

We have decided to trial the 'This is Y' magazine as a bimonthly digital edition. We have seen through our new e-commerce site that people do have an interest in buying the magazine which has always been a free publication. However, if we can build demand for a subscription model this is something we can take a view on post December 2020.

The latest September copy will be uploaded in the next few days but to view previous copies please click here. Any feedback would be welcome

https://issuu.com/welcometoyorkshire/docs/this_is_y_digital_-_july_2020

Membership

Business

Our new business membership model needs some final design tweaks before we launch which will see the entry level for any business that wants to join reduced to £180 plus vat. In addition, there will be a menu of products introduced to offer a much more varied offering which will allow businesses to tailor this to their needs. For example, we will offer specific marketing services such as video production and creative design.

The examples below were made for the Yorkshire Wildlife Park highlighting a day we shared with the Amin family from Doncaster on their family day out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxfF1LnVTz4> and a corporate video to highlight Runswick Bay as the Sunday Time Best Beach of 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8HSSpGSRau&t=47s>

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Personal membership

Our personal membership was launched on August 1st (Yorkshire Day) with Captain Sir Tom Moore, Sir Patrick Stewart and Amanda Owen (the Yorkshire Shepherdess) as honorary recipients.

Within the first month we received 1000 commitments to plant trees in Yorkshire via a combination of paid for memberships and donations.

There have been many heart warming stories so far as to who and why people have dedicated trees. From family members buying as presents or in memory of passed loved ones. One group of grandchildren wanted to dedicate a tree to their grandfather who died in WWI and his remains are buried in Gaza. They wanted a permanent memorial for him that they could visit.

We recently met with Paralympian and proud Yorkshire woman Hannah Cockcroft from Halifax who helped us award staff at Overgate Hospice in Elland with trees and certificates to recognise their hard work during Covid-19. Please watch the video below that shows just how much this meant to them

<https://twitter.com/Welcome2Yorks/status/1299437243569000450?s=20>

As we have surpassed the 1000 mark we are now looking for sites in West, East and South Yorkshire as the early feedback has been that exiles would like trees planted near to their place of birth. In addition, we are working with a few groups that have expressed an interest in legacy giving to support other good causes.

Our strategy and motivation remain the same. One of the main reasons for the personal membership is to connect Yorkshire folk around the world to build a community that will in turn enable us to offer feedback and insight to tourism businesses in Yorkshire.

Walkshire

This campaign is dedicated to 2021 and has already received interest in from high profile walking, outdoor and lifestyle brands wanting to partner with us.

The domain www.Walkshire.com has been registered and we have already uploaded a host of walking related material to the pages but in time we hope to build a new microsite all on its own.

Our official charity partner Yorkshire Cancer research are very excited about the events we have planned for next year including our 'Get Yorkshire Walking – weekend' that will see a mass participation event encouraging everyone in Yorkshire to walk for one weekend next year. In addition, we plan quarterly walks in the North, South, East and West of the county in all four of the seasons to demonstrate Walking as the most inclusive activity all year round.

The LNER Song for Yorkshire

This competition which is aimed at celebrating Yorkshire's diversity has just launched in line with schools reopening. We would really appreciate as much support as possible from all our partners to push this message out and share what we believe is the perfect feel good campaign for a long winter ahead. The message is really to celebrate our diverse communities within our community and all details can be found via the following link <https://www.yorkshire.com/song>

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Ian Woosnam Golf Classic at Ilkley Golf Club on 15th and 16th September

This was our first major event of 2021 and despite the back drop of COVID-19 this event held over two days was a huge success. A host of former Ryder Cup and international tour players competed in the biggest tournament held in Yorkshire for over 30 years. Golf tourism is a multi-million pound industry with Scotland at present the rightful holder of the UK's crown. Yorkshire has many stunning courses and although we have a long journey ahead, there is no reason why we cannot attract golfers to Yorkshire going forward and the obvious monetary benefits these visitors bring.

<https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/sport/other-sport/solheim-cup-part-plans-make-yorkshire-international-golfing-hotbed-2936741>

<https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/18726098.ian-woosnam-senior-classic-held-ilkley-golf-club-hailed-hit/>

Recommendations

The Board are recommended to:

- I. Note the content of this report