

# York Museums Trust



**Background Information  
Non-Executive Director  
York Museums Trust & Enterprise Ltd (YME)**

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# Background

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York Museums Trust (YMT), one of the most successful leading regional Museums and Gallery services in the UK, is seeking to appoint two new Non-Executive Directors to York Museums Trust & Enterprise Ltd (YME).

York Museums Trust was formed on 1 August, 2002 as an independent charitable trust to manage the museums and gallery service previously run by City of York Council. All the collections are designated and include Art, Science, Social History and Archaeology. Our museums and galleries attract about 400,000 visitors each year with an additional c1.2m visits to York Museum Gardens.

York is changing rapidly with significant capital development at York Central on the south side of the River Ouse and opposite York Museum Gardens, with development activity happening to the north too, with York Minster's visionary Neighbourhood Plan. YMT is at a pivotal point in its own development. Funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) enabled the creation of a feasibility study which forms the foundations of a long-term, estate-wide Masterplan which would give YMT the financial, operational and environmental sustainability it needs to continue to be an anchor institution within the City. Creating this study strengthened existing partnerships and forged new ones both in the City and beyond, and there is a clear route map for the capital development of the Trust over the next decade. The Trust is responsible for:

## Yorkshire Museum

The Yorkshire Museum, set in twelve acres of Museum Gardens, was founded in 1830 by the Yorkshire Philosophical Society. It is home to the Trust's collections of Archaeology, Numismatics, Biology and Geology. These collections are geographically-focused, overwhelmingly drawn from Yorkshire, and are amongst the finest in Britain. The collections of first millennium Archaeology, from Iron Age to Viking Age, and Jurassic Palaeontology are internationally significant.

These collections are displayed across three floors within the museums. Highlights of the Yorkshire Museum's archaeological displays include the only marble bust of a Roman Emperor from Britain, the Anglo-Saxon York Helmet, the Vale of York Viking hoard – co-owned with the British Museum – and the Middleham Jewel, the finest piece of goldwork from Medieval England. The Geology collection contains the Middlesbrough meteorite, the same age as earth itself, and the earliest specimens of Jurassic 'Sea dragons' ever described by science. The most remarkable recent acquisition is the Melsonby Hoard, the largest Iron Age hoard from Britain and a unique archaeological time capsule from 2000 years ago.

The Yorkshire Museum remains at the forefront of discovery, working with academics to shed new light on the collections in our care. The museum has partnered on research project worth more than £2m over recent years with projects including shedding new light on the first settlers in Britain, investigating life in Roman York, analysing uniquely York Roman burial traditions, digitally recreating people in the past and exploring money and power in the Viking Age. The Melsonby acquisition is likely to become a major, multi-year research project in its own right.





## York Castle Museum

Housed in two former prisons, York Castle Museum was founded by Dr John Kirk in 1938 and is home to an extraordinary collection of objects reflecting everyday life. Inspired by Kirk's original vision the collection spans the breadth of Yorkshire Life – urban and rural, working and personal – across the past three centuries.

These collections are displayed in a range of immersive spaces across the site, including the pioneering Kirkgate. This was the very first streetscape created in a museum and remains one of the most outstanding and beloved heritage experiences in the North. There are also a range of immersive room sets alongside more traditional displays which highlight both periods (World War One, 1960s) and themes (Games, Dress).

The site and its collection are particularly connected to our audiences, with inter-generational visits to the site common. Parents and grandparents will visit to show their family the much loved 'Victorian street'. The Castle Museum is also the focus of much of our participation activities, hosting regular co-curated displays with our community partners.

## York Art Gallery

York Art Gallery is one of the best regional galleries in the country, with collections spanning over 600 years. These range from 14th Century Italian panels and 17th Century Dutch masterpieces to Victorian narrative paintings and 20th Century works by LS Lowry and David Hockney. While these collections are rooted in city and region, they are the broadest of all of those of the Trust incorporating art and artists from across the UK and beyond.

A refurbishment in 2015 saw public space increase by more than 60 per cent, with spaces transformed to create both temporary and permanent gallery spaces. The permanent galleries are curated in a bold manner, mixing media and period in spaces with displays following thematic lines. The temporary exhibition spaces play host to a bold and award-winning exhibition programme which has brought brilliant art to York, displayed in innovative and creative ways. Recent highlights include *Monet in York: The Water-Lily Pond* as part of the National Treasures programme in conjunction with the National Gallery, *Making Waves: The Art of Japanese Woodblock Print* and *Grayson Perry: the pre-therapy years*. The gallery is also the host venue for the Aesthetica Art Prize.



YORK ART GALLERY

AWARD WINNING GALLERY  
EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Great Exhibitions  
at York Art Gallery

Ceramics and Buttons

## York Museum Gardens

York Museum Gardens are a registered park and garden and encompass a number of listed buildings as well as scheduled ancient monuments. They are one of only two public green spaces within the heart of the city of York. The Gardens were laid out alongside the Yorkshire Museum in the 1830s and are unique in their depth and breadth of history and archaeology they contain. They encompass outstanding Roman and Medieval Archaeology, including the standing remains of Saint Mary's Abbey. They include important botanic specimens including champion trees and a fernery with specimens from around the globe.

The Gardens play host to a range of events and activities in the city. These include York Proms, York Mela Festival and a series of Future Sounds concerts which have brought artists such as Elbow, Shed Seven and Nile Rodgers to the heart of York. They are also host to the annual Roman Festival, and a range of interventions which have connected exhibitions at York Art Gallery and Yorkshire Museum with the outside spaces beyond their doors.

## York St Mary's

This is a deconsecrated medieval church, situated in Coppergate. It has been home for immersive digital art experiences over recent years. Currently it is the home for the Van Gogh Experience.





## Collections

We curate the collections of the City of York, and these cover a broad spectrum; Archaeology, Numismatics, Biology, Geology, Fine and Decorative Art, Dress and Textile, Social and Military history. The Trust is one of just a handful of UK museum services which has all its collections Designated by Arts Council England, meaning these are of national significance. The archaeological and palaeontological collections of the Yorkshire Museum in particular are of international importance.

These collections number approximately one million objects. Only a small proportion are on display, with the remainder stored across a number of sites within and beyond the city. The Trust is active in seeking to develop these collections to better reflect our current vision and mission, as well as to find a single place for their storage and access. These collections underpin an active programme of research collaborations and are loaned to more than 20 other venues, nationally and internationally, every year where they are viewed by millions of visitors beyond York.

## Other Matters

York Museums Trust has an excellent track record in its learning and engagement activity from formal education workshops for schools to family learning to activities and events for a broader public. Reaching out to communities, bringing opportunity to those, for example, with mental health issues or who are homeless are all part of YMT's imaginative programming.

Last year the Trust contributed £18m to the economy and 31 loans were seen by 3.4 m people in six countries. There were 500K engagements on social media, 1.4m visitors to our website and over 800 pieces of local, regional, national and international media coverage. In 2025 York Museums Trust won a Visit York Tourism award for an 'Event, Festival or Cultural Experience of the Year' for the National Treasures: Monet in York exhibition and the Gardens won an RHS Britain in Bloom Platinum award.

# The Purpose and Activities of York Museums Trust

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## Mission

Championing curiosity, inspiring creativity and creating opportunities for people to flourish as we collaborate to tell stories about our collections and places.

## Vision

Connecting and inspiring people with the stories, history, art and culture of York and North Yorkshire.

## Values

**We value curiosity, creativity, generosity and responsibility equally and together.**

<b>We are curious</b>	We ask questions, we don't assume, we learn and we encourage different perspectives to be heard.
<b>We are creative</b>	We have fun being creative, driving positive change and exploring potential.
<b>We are generous</b>	We care for people, collections and places inviting everyone to develop knowledge, to take delight in and enjoy our spaces.
<b>We are responsible</b>	We make informed decisions today for a better tomorrow and for a sustainable future.
<b>We are supportive</b>	We collaborate and seek connection to grow a thriving community where we celebrate one another, cheer on progress and are heartfelt with feedback.

## Our priorities are:

### Building and sustaining a flourishing organisation by:

- Delivering innovative public programming supporting an audience-focused, inclusive, visitor-first approach;
- Driving visitor income, meeting and exceeding enterprise and fundraising targets, managing expenditure;
- Identifying, developing and delivering a Masterplan and associated capital projects, to provide the best care for our collections, places and business;
- Investing in our people ensuring we recruit, retain and develop a high performing team which celebrates diverse experiences and voices.
- Tackling and adapting to climate change, understanding our carbon footprint and making incremental changes towards a net-zero future.
- Raising our profile through cultural leadership and partnerships working locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

# Funding and Organisation

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## Funding

In our latest published financial statements, York Museums Trust shows an annual unrestricted income of c£5m. It is an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation as well as a Sector Support Organisation, delivering Museum Development North, with funds also granted by ACE. This service provides information, advice, guidance and consultancy to small and medium sized accredited museums across the North of England.

The Trust benefits from funding from its landlord, City of York Council, with an annual contribution of c£300,000.

The single most important source of income is provided by ticket sales and the associated Gift Aid. York Museums Trust generates around 75% of its own income through ticket sales, secondary sales through its shops and cafés and through fundraising and donations.

Commercially generated income is run through the well-established trading subsidiary company, York Museums Enterprises, and as well as retail and cafés, runs events and a venue hire business, with a significant proportion of the latter income generated in the Hospitium, a dedicated venue space inside York Museum Gardens. York Museums Enterprises contributes around £400k of profit to York Museums Trust annually.





CASTLE MUSEUM

## Organisation

York Museums Trust has a loyal and committed staff of c 140 (fte). The Executive team is led by the Chief Executive, Kathryn Blacker who was appointed in January 2023 and who is responsible to the Board for the effective running of the organisation, supported by the Chief Finance Officer & Director of Corporate Service and members of the Senior Leadership Team.

There is also a very active volunteers scheme with c160 volunteers working with the organisation at any one time, providing invaluable support to the work of the Trust in visitor engagement and curatorial, and supporting volunteers to increase their skills and wellbeing.

The Trust is governed by the Trust Board, chaired by Angela Dean.

## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Trust is actively and positively committed to make itself ever more fully engaged with all parts of the community it serves, including those groups who have historically, not been particularly involved with the Trust's work. This applies to both audiences and colleagues. of representatives across our workforce.

For further information on York Museums Trust, please go to [www.yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk](http://www.yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk) and [www.yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/about-us/our-people/annual-reports-and-reviews](http://www.yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/about-us/our-people/annual-reports-and-reviews).





## Appendix I: CEO

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Kathryn Blacker became Chief Executive of York Museums Trust in 2023 and is responsible for the strategic leadership of the Trust and its trading subsidiary.

Kathryn joined York Museums Trust from York Minster where she had been Chapter Steward. Prior to this Kathryn worked in the cultural sector for 15 years initially at the BBC and later at the National Science Museum group.

Kathryn holds a MA in modern history from Oxford and is passionate about the arts and heritage sector and city of York.





