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# Fairer Future For York

## Report 1

JRF

# Fairer Future For York

## Report 1

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# A 'Non-Executive' Summary

**York has a long and rich history. It boasts an impressive offering of culture, heritage, and hospitality as well as a high quality of life for many of its residents. However, its wealth, resources, and quality of life are not shared equally by all and if things continue as they are, this gap is only going to widen. Yet it's not impossible to change course, set our collective sights on something better – a Fairer Future for York.**

Originally conceived as a small-scale event to learn lessons from other local authorities as well as co-operative and alternative economy experts, the Fairer Future for York project snowballed into a somewhat bigger event with a much broader focus. Through conversations with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Emerging Futures Team, local councillors and council officers, as well as external collaborators, it became clear that to really grasp what a fairer future might look like, a more holistic approach would be needed.
On January 31st 2024, the first Fairer Future for York event brought together twenty-four co-operative development experts, strategic stakeholders, councillors, and grassroots community organisers from York and around the country.

Three key themes were set out to shape our thinking, planning, and discussion: **Health & Social care**, **Housing & Land**, and **Local economy & Community wealth building**. Across these themes, a set of avenues for enquiry were also developed. We considered the role of co-operatives and other social enterprises in generating and retaining wealth, potential social investment models, options and opportunities for more community-owned and controlled assets, how policy and practice needs to change to support community wealth building, ensuring a fairer future for York is also a fairer future for the planet and the environment. We questioned how we can safeguard and nurture a resilient community-led economy – one that is sufficiently robust to weather any storms to come.

The Fairer Futures in person workshop opened with an ice-breaker exercise that encouraged participants to consider their 'ambitions', within their work or lives, for a fairer future. We then encouraged them to consider the 'blockers' that prevent them from being made a reality. Following a presentation from City of York Council officers, supported by an excellent **'Snapshot of York in 2024'** briefing, which is included in this report, the main workshop activities for the day focused on 'Imagining a fairer future for York' and then 'Realising a fairer future for York'. Details of these workshops and resources used are included in the main report.

In **imagining** a fairer future, five areas emerged as common threads to the participants' visions: Housing, Community, Economy, Energy, and Transport. Cutting through these areas was the recognition that community ownership, and therefore some degree of community control and oversight, was vital to realising a fairer future for York. Ideas included new models of co-operative housing on land held by community land trusts, community resilience hubs, a fairer future learning academy, localised revenue retention schemes, York's own Eden Project, becoming a port once more with boats and barges moving goods and people in and out of the city, a new industrial revolution through sustainability, and, connecting it all together, community-owned renewable energy and transport networks of buses, trams, and taxis – both road and river.

In **realising** a fairer future, participants were tasked with focusing on one particular key theme to really get to grips with what it would take to make progress toward a fairer future – in 1 year, 3-5 years, and 10 years.

### Health & Social care

In 1 year, build a community and replace misery with pride and wellbeing. In 3-5 years establish a care co-op that empowers service users and provides good quality work for carers. In 10 years, York is “a disabled valhalla” – a wonderful vision for the future even if getting there feels exceedingly complex and difficult.

### Housing & Land

In 1 year, learn from others in Europe and beyond to understand their seemingly fairer systems, structures, and mechanisms. In 3-5 years, introduce rent control measures and lobby for public land to be transferred to community land trusts, enabling affordable housing to be built that will stay affordable and community-owned in the long-term. In 10 years, new legislation along with societal change – disrupting the habitual drive towards home-ownership, while recognising the importance of housing security.

### Local economy & Community wealth building

In 1 year, scoping and mapping of the economy and assets – set targets of doubling in 3 -5 years and quadrupling in 10 years. In 3-5 years, embedded use of social value policy to challenge the dominance and financial power of the private sector – prioritising support for social enterprises and community groups so they are able to take ownership and control of assets. In 10 years, a rebalancing of assets within the community, locking land, buildings, and other assets in community ownership to create baked-in community wealth.

## The key ideas which emerged from the day…

**1 A truly community-owned space** – Whether through buying an existing asset or building something new, a fully – and in perpetuity – community-owned and controlled space in the centre of York would make a real difference to the current landscape of community wealth in the city. It's not simply a 'buy the land, problem solved' situation but the existence of such a space seems to be a key ingredient to fostering and demonstrating a fairer future.

**2 A public transport renaissance** – One of the more surprising findings from the day, given the areas of focus, was the call for a new approach to public transport across York – both for getting around the city centre and for bringing people and goods into and out of the city. Ideas were plentiful, including greener modes of public transport, using the rivers for taxis and goods, and a community-owned tram network.

**3 Raising a community wealth fund** – While profits are being made by some individuals and businesses in York, there is a feeling that these rewards are not being shared by the wider community. Likewise, the demographics of York present a challenge to the capacity of the council to generate revenue from council tax. There was clear interest in and appetite for developing mechanisms for progressive localised taxation – following cities including Manchester, Edinburgh, Barcelona, and Amsterdam. Participants noted the importance of taking a balanced view, acknowledging that York's tourism creates jobs, trade for local businesses, and contributes to York's cultural vibrancy.

**4 'The Room'** – How do we create more spaces that enable more residents of York from all walks of life to engage in thoughtful debate and creative, imaginative conversations about a fairer future for the City? What would it take to create the conditions to bring busy councillors, parents, front line workers, students and others to engage in conversations about poverty, ecology, and environmentally sustainable models for change? 'The Room' is a call to create virtual and in person spaces for having these conversations. If we are to build a people's assembly, holding these spaces for continued meeting and learning would be a good place to start.

To drive these initiatives forward, participants identified the need for further public engagement, developing empowered, community-led groups around specific themes and projects, nurturing and sustaining relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders – residents, community groups and organisations, City of York Council, and other organisations and businesses in York, as well as creating learning opportunities and shared resources for use both locally and by others interested in building their own fairer futures.

We find ourselves in a unique moment where actual and potential political change – in York, the wider region, and nationally – offers opportunities for new, radical, system-wide rethinking and renewal. City of York Council is in 'listening mode', there is a combination of political will and enthusiasm but moving forward sooner rather than later is essential. This is a moment where the uptake of social value metrics, alternative civic infrastructure models, and community wealth building strategies can play a key role – actively supporting a more cost effective, community-led, sustainable, fairer future for York. It is imperative that we make this 'the vital issue' amongst the many others on the great 'to do list'.

> **"If we did nothing, where would we be in 10 years?"**

> **"If we did everything, where would we be in 10 years?"**

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# Introduction

**York is an unequal city. There is great wealth here, but this is not shared across the city. York Council's latest Council Plan emphasises the need to "find new ways so everyone who lives here benefits from the success of the city, targeting our support at those who need it most, supporting communities to build on their own strengths and those of the people around them." (City of York Council, 2023) The Council's commitment to building and retaining wealth in the community presents an opportunity to explore alternative approaches to delivering services and value to the residents of York.**

On the 31st January 2024, the first Fairer Future for York event was held in the main hall at the Priory Street Centre. With the support of Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), this event brought together people in York, co-operative and alternative economy experts, and local councillors and officers. We discussed the challenges faced locally and began the process of exploring possibilities and opportunities for laying the foundations of a future which supports more democratic and community-led economic approaches. It marked an initial phase of cross pollination and mapping towards what we hope will be a journey toward a fairer future for York through community wealth building.

This report provides a snapshot' of York in 2024, an overview of the event, details of the approach adopted, and the key findings and insights that emerged. It goes on to outline key opportunities and possibilities with a view to providing a springboard for our next steps on the journey.

COMMUNITY OWNED
EDEN PROJECT
Huntington
Dunnington
Murton
York
Fulford
Middlethorpe
Naburn
Asktham Bryan

## Focusing our attention

In our efforts to explore community wealth building, some of the areas we sought to explore included:

- The role of co-operatives in generating and retaining wealth in local communities and how we can build and support this infrastructure in York
- The role of social investment models and how socially trading organisations (STOs) can support the development of a fairer economy in York
- The role of community governed and owned assets and how these can support local generation of wealth
- The role of procurement and anchor institutions in supporting community wealth building
- Supporting an economy that works within the limits of our planetary confines, moving away from extractive growth-based models and towards more sustainable ones.
- Understanding what it would take to nurture and support a resilient community-led economy

To further focus our attentions on the day, three broad themes were selected:

1. Health & Social care
2. Housing & Land
3. Local economy & Community wealth building

## Supporting participation

To ensure the event is accessible to all participants, a fixed participation fee of £250 was made available for all participants who wished to claim it – that is, excluding the JRF delivery team and Councillors and officers from City of York Council. Within reason, travel expenses were covered for those travelling from outside of York. All participants were made aware that parts of this event would be recorded for the purposes of synthesising and navigating our next steps.

## Structure of the day

**Figure 1:** Structure of the day

| Time | Activity |
|---|---|
| **09:30** | Participants arrive |
| **10:00** | **Things do not have to be the way they are!**<br>Welcome & housekeeping |
| **10:15** | Introduction: **Ambitions & Blockers** (it's an ice-breaker, of sorts) |
| **11:00** | **Framing York** with City of York Council |
| **12:00** | **Lunch!** (45mins) from Food Circle York CIC |
| **12:45** | Workshop 1: **Imagining** a Fairer Future |
| **14:30** | **Break!** (15mins) |
| **14:45** | Workshop 2: **Realising** a Fairer Future |
| **16:30** | **Break!** (15mins) |
| **16:45** | **Closing & Next steps** |
| **17:00** | This is **the end… for now!** |
| **17:15** | Social at the **Golden Ball Co-operative Pub** |

# A snapshot of York in 2024

**York is widely regarded as a city of outstanding heritage, beauty, and culture. It frequently tops polls as the best place to live and visit in the UK. It is easy to see why. Alongside its built and natural environment, it is a city with low unemployment, high adult skills and strong transport links across the UK. It is home to two world class universities, outstanding colleges and 94% of pupils attend a school rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.[i]**

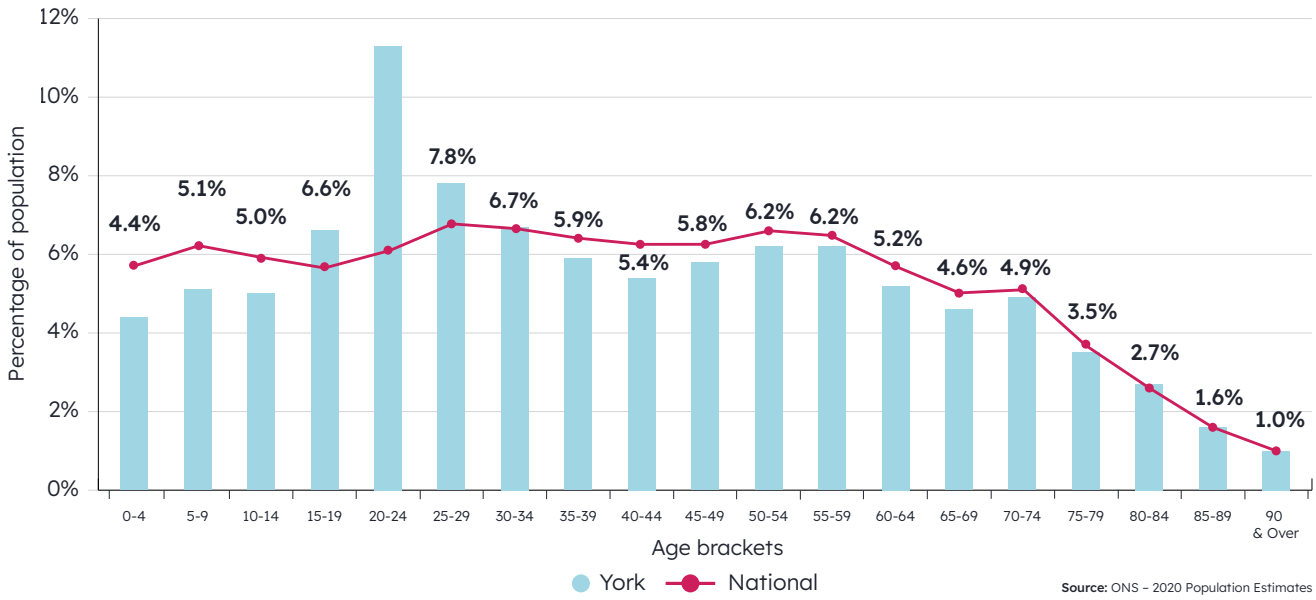
What is more, it has a long history of social justice and collective action and is a community orientated city, through strong partnership working between the anchor institutions of the city or in more localised settings with three quarters of people reporting that they 'belong' to their local area and 60% give unpaid help to groups, clubs and organisations in the city.[ii] However, we know that not all people share the full benefits of living in York. There is deprivation and inequality within the city, within its wards, and within its communities.

This briefing provides a snapshot of York at the beginning of 2024. It is intended to provide background information for those delegates attending the Fairer Future for York conference on 31 January 2024 with a view to considering how we all can work together to create a more positive future for ALL of York's residents.

It first provides a brief outline of the city's population and administrative functions before considering wider determinants of deprivation in the city. It then looks at specific issues – the local economy, housing, adult social care, and children and young people.

# Demographic and Administrative Overview of York

**Figure 2:** Age Profile – York v National[vii]




York is home to 202,821 people and is growing with a projected population in 2032 of over 215,000 people.[iii] It has a student population of 48,779 but is also seeing a significant increase in people aged over 80 with a 12.7% increase in this population demographic since 2011.[iv] Just over 7% of York's population is from Black, Asian and Racially Minoritised Communities and 5.5% are from white non-British backgrounds.[v] Around 17% of residents have disabilities and 7.7% of residents have carer responsibilities.[vi] The graph in Figure 2 provides an overview of York's age profile compared to the national average.

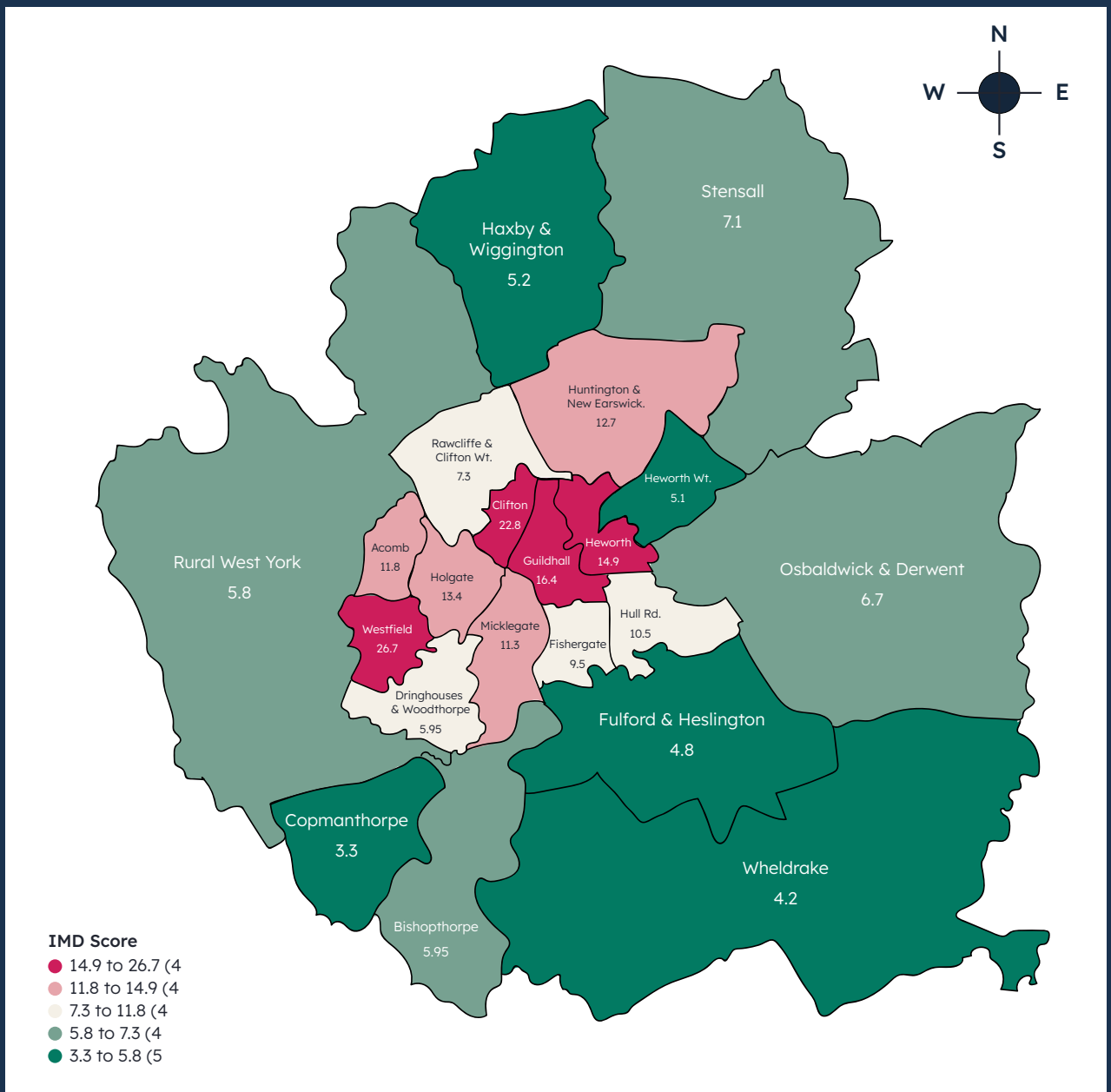
The city is administered by City of York Council, a unitary authority, which has a Labour majority following local elections in May 2023. The Council recently launched its new Council Plan with a focus on four core commitments: Equalities and Human Rights, Affordability, Climate, and Health.

It is represented in Parliament by two MPs – Rachael Maskell (Labour, York Central) and Julian Sturdy (Conservative, York Outer) and is one of two councils represented at a regional level by the York-North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) alongside North Yorkshire Council. A Mayor for the region is due to be elected in May 2024 with the MCA drawing down powers from the Government on regional matters including transport, economy, and regeneration.

# Deprivation and Poverty Indicators in York

The below map provides a visualisation of indices of multiple deprivation in York. This considers 7 measures of deprivation – income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing services, and the living environment. As the map in Figure 3 indicates, there is significant variation in deprivation levels across the city.

**Figure 3:** Index of Multiple Deprivation in York Wards[viii]



The below tables provide an indication of poverty (based on indicators of Universal Credit (out of work) claimants, fuel poverty (households) and children living in low-income families for 'best' and 'worst' wards in York. It is important to note that for all council wards given in the below tables (Tables 1, 2, and 3), for each indicator the direction of travel is positive with decreasing levels of poverty indicators for best and worst wards.

**Table 1:** Best and worst wards for Universal Credit (out of work claimants)[ix]

| Ward | Universal Credit (out of work) claimants |
|---|---|
| **Best:** Wheldrake | 0.60% |
| **Worst:** Westfield | 3.50% |

**Table 2:** Best and worst wards for Fuel Poverty (households) in York

| Ward | Fuel Poverty (households) in York |
|---|---|
| **Best:** Rural West York | 8.72% |
| **Worst:** Hull Road | 28.88% |

**Table 3:** Best and worst wards for Children (0-15) living in low income families

| Ward | Children living in low income families |
|---|---|
| **Best:** Copmanthorpe | 2.80% |
| **Worst:** Westfield | 19.80% |

## Healthy life expectancy

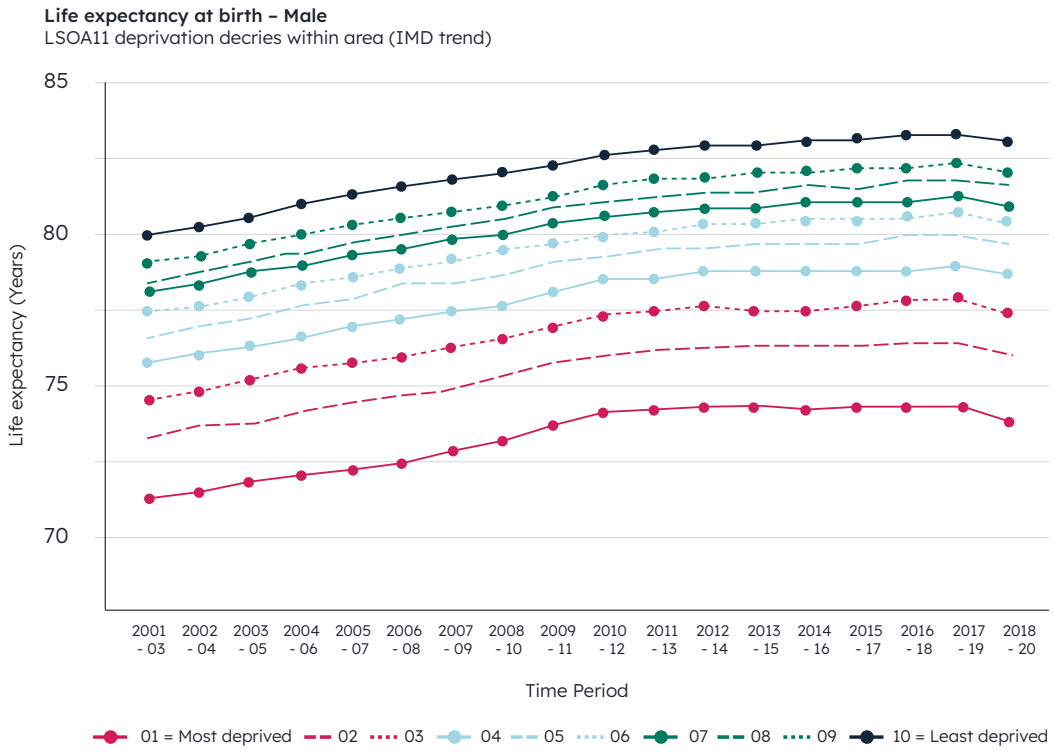
The life expectancy for males in the city is 79.9 years and for females it is 83.6 years – roughly 0.5 years longer than the national average. However, healthy life expectancy is 65.3 years for males and 64.6 years for females – this is 2.2 years and 0.7 years longer than the national average. However, this still means that in York, men can expect to live on average 14.6 years and females 19 years in 'bad or very bad' health.[x]

Five-year aggregated data shows that in 2020-21 there was a life expectancy gap of 11.1 years for females and 11.7 years for males between the highest and lowest wards in the city.[xi]

The graphs in Figure 4 identify trends in life expectancy over two decades between 2001 and 2020. Each line of the graph represents 10% of York's population according to deprivation levels. Three long-term shifts can be seen: first the gap in life expectancy has grown between the most and least deprived deciles. Secondly, improvements in life expectancy were made in the first decade of the century and stalled in the second. Thirdly, the gap between the most deprived decile and second most deprived decile is larger than all other decile gaps.

Around two thirds of the life expectancy gap in both females and males comes from three areas: cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), cancer, and respiratory diseases.[xii]

**Figure 4:** Trends in life expectancy[xiii]




**Source:** ONS – OHID Health Inequalities tool

**Source:** ONS – OHID Health Inequalities tool

# Local Economy

As measured by Gross Value Added (GVA), Real Estate is York's largest employment sector (£840 million). This is followed by human health and social work activities (£776 million) and financial and insurance activities (£685 million).[xiv]

York's largest employment sector by employees is retail and wholesale, followed by health and social care, and education.[xv] The sectors in which part-time employment is highest are retail and wholesale, health and social work, and accommodation and food.[xvi]

Long-term trends indicate that York has become more of a service-based economy. Between 1998 and 2020, the industries which saw the most employment growth over the period were administration and support, health and social care and education.[xvii]

86% of working-age residents work in the city. The main commuting flows are with neighbouring areas – Selby, Hambleton, Harrogate, Leeds, and the East Riding with a net outflow of 7,500 workers (16,800 commute out, 9,300 commute in).[xviii]

High level data indicates that York is a prosperous city:

- Just 0.1% of the working age population are JSA claimants – the lowest in the region[xix]
- The JSA/UC claimant count for York in December 2023 is 2,300, a decrease of 100 since December 2022. This represents 1.7% of the working age population compared to 4.1% regionally and 3.7% nationally[xx]
- 80.6% of the working age population are in employment – the highest in the region[xxi]
- Median earnings (gross weekly pay) are £611 – the highest in the region – compared to a regional benchmark of £594.50[xxii]
- York has the smallest gender pay gap in the region – £44.70 – compared to a national average of £99.70 and a regional average of £113.20[xxiii]
- The average gross disposable household income in York (2021) is £20,884 compared to a regional average of £18,363.[xxiv]
- GVA per head is £30,684[xxv]

However, this only presents part of the picture. Broadly across the city:

- Median earnings of residents increased by just 1.8% between 2021/22 and 2022/23 compared with a peak inflation rise of 9.6%.[xxvi]
- Median earnings are £33 per week below the national benchmark (£644 v £611)[xxvii]
- Of those in work, 29.1% of people are employed part-time, an increase of 2% since 2020/21 and 7% higher than the national average.[xxviii]
- 6.8% of children under 16 live in workless households, a 4.5% increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23.[xxix]
- 11.5% of children live in low-income families[xxx]
- 13.5% of households are in fuel poverty[xxxi]

At a more ward level, we see significant variation in income levels. Nearly 75% of households in Westfield have a household income of less than £30,000 compared to just 8.3% of households in Fishergate.[xxxii] Moreover, Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) / Universal Credit (UC) claimant count varies significantly between wards – the highest claimant count is in Westfield (300) with the lowest in Bishopthorpe (10).[xxxiii]

# Housing

65% of York residents own their home (either outright or with a mortgage), 20% are private renters and 14% are social tenants.[xxxiv] There are 7,394 Council Houses in York.[xxxv] There are also a range of housing associations in York.

More information is available at: **https://www.york.gov.uk/HousingAssociations**

York is the most unaffordable place in the region to own a home. The average house price in the city is £320,683 with a housing affordability (median house prices to earning ratio) of 8.85 and a housing affordability (lower quartile house price

to earning ratio) of 9.74 in comparison to 7.85 nationally.[xxxvi] Table 4 provides an indication of housing cost by type to year ending March 2023.

**Table 4:** Average Price by Housing Type[xxxvii]

| Type | Price paid |
|---|---|
| **Flat/maisonette** | £195,000 |
| **Terraced** | £280,000 |
| **Semi-detached** | £306,002 |
| **Detached** | £430,000 |

Average rents in the city are £937 per calendar month compared to a regional average of £709 per calendar month and a national average of £960 per calendar month.[xxxviii]

City of York Local Housing Needs Assessment indicates that there is a net need for 592 affordable houses (social/affordable rented) per annum.[xxxix] In 2022/23, 109 new affordable homes were delivered with 459 additional homes provided for (net).[xl]

We know that changing demographics in York will have an impact on housing need in the city. The table below provides the projected change in age bands in York from 2021 to 2033.

The increased age profile of the city, coupled with economic matters such as affordability, led to City of York Local Housing Needs Assessment to suggest the following future mix of housing by size and tenure in York.

Housing stock is generally to a good standard although over half of properties have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D and below.[xliii]

**Table 5:** Projected change in age bands in York 2021-2033[xli]

| | 2021 | 2033 | Change in population | % change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Under 16** | 32,842 | 30,293 | -2,550 | -7.8% |
| **16-64** | 139,063 | 139,749 | 686 | 0.5% |
| **65 and over** | 39,702 | 47,746 | 8,044 | 20.3% |
| **Total** | 211,607 | 217,787 | 6,180 | 2.9% |

**Table 6:** Projected Housing Mix Need[xlii]

| | 1-bedroom | 2-bedroom | 3-bedroom | 4+-bedroom |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Market** | 5-10% | 35-40% | 35-40% | 15-20% |
| **Affordable home ownership** | 15-20% | 45-50% | 25-30% | 5-10% |
| **Affordable housing (rented)** | 30-35% | 35-40% | 20-25% | 5-10% |

**Source:** Derived from a range sources

## Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care provision continues to be a source of significant expenditure in local authorities due to ever-increasing demand.

For York, the total Council budget for Adult Social Care (ASC) is over £45 million per year.[xlvi] CYC commissions the majority of its care from the independent sector where the cost of providing care has been increasing through uplifts to the National Living Wage and other inflationary pressures.

York, on average, spends less than national, regional and Statistical Neighbour Local Authorities (SNLAs) (similar local authorities to York in terms of economic activity and demographics) on ASC – a net of £19 per head compared to £33 per head nationally and an increase in the gap between local and national gross spend from £10/head to £25/head.[xlvii]

Whilst requests for support across England fell, requests for support in York received from new customers per 100,000 population (aged 18-64) was 9% higher in 2022-23 than in 2021-22.[xlviii] For those aged 65 plus, requests fell in York by 1% compared to 6% regionally and a 2% rise in SNLAs.[xlix]

Total numbers accessing long-term support in-year per 100,000 population aged 18-64 is typically lower in York than other areas but rose by 4% during 2022-23 whilst it remained virtually unchanged for those aged 65 and over.[l]

## Children and Young People

City of York Council works closely with partners via the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership to improve the wellbeing of children in the city. This partnership has responsibility for a Children and Young People's Plan, a new iteration of which is being developed presently for the period 2024-2027.

The partnership engaged with children and young people as part of the development of this plan. It found that over half of pupils (56%) are happy or very happy with their life.[li] However, 31% of children say that worry stops them from doing things in their lives. In younger pupils worry about the environment/climate was common, in older pupils worry about schoolwork or exams was common.[lii]

York scored 39.2 on the Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (a questionnaire designed to measure emotional and psychological wellbeing in children aged 8 to 15 years). The scale measures from a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 60.[liii]

Turning to disadvantage, York ranks 253/317 (where 1 is bad) in terms of the income deprivation affecting children index.[liv]

However, 4,006 of York's 23,093 pupils considered for Pupil Premium are classified as disadvantaged; this is 17.3% of the cohort. This is 9.4% lower than the national average of 26.7%.[lv]

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the gap between disadvantaged children and young people and their peers was narrowing; however, since the impact of the pandemic, the Gap continues to widen, apart from where specific strategies are in place, including Early Talk for York which is a programme that aims to improve the speech, language and communication outcomes for disadvantaged children.

15.88% of children are eligible for a free school meal in the primary sector (compared to a regional benchmark of 25.86% and a national benchmark of 23.99%. 12.72% are taking a free school meal.[lvi]

14.26% of children are eligible for a free school meal in the secondary sector compared to a regional benchmark of 22.69% and a national benchmark of 25.39%. 10.2% are taking a free school meal.[lvii]

There is a 24.11% gap between Free School Meal and Non-Free School Meal pupils at 15 who attain a level 3 qualification by the age of 19 compared to 25.52% regionally and 25.26% nationally.[lviii]

Finally, there are currently 246 children in care in York.[lix] 33 children per 10,000 are subject to a child protection plan in the city, compared to a regional benchmark of 50 and a national benchmark of 43.[lx] There are currently 28 homeless households with dependent children in temporary accommodation (41 children).[lxi]

# Insights from the day

## Ambitions and blockers

### Ambitions

As a 'sort of ice-breaker', participants were first asked to think about their 'one big ambition' – something they would like to see for themselves or their community in a fairer future for York or other local area if from outside of York.

Participants were given some time for individual reflection before being asked to share their ambitions with another participant who they hadn't met before – they were also encouraged to find out each others' name and organisation affiliation. After allowing some time for conversations, participants were asked to put their ambition post-its on the 'ambition wall'.

The dream of affordable housing, whether through community or individual ownership, was perhaps unsurprisingly one of the most common ambitions identified. From calls for "Accessible housing for all!" to a future where "community-led housing is 'the norm'", it was clear that good quality housing from people who work, create, raise children, dream, and build their futures in York is a shared goal.

> **"Every person able to do work they value and work in spaces where they are valued."**

Finding means of leveraging the existing economy and creating new ways to work, generating revenue for the city and its community, as well as achieving goals such as eradicating fuel poverty were also prevalent across participants' ambitions. If the ultimate aim is to provide financial security and prosperity for everyone in the city, ambitious mechanisms such as tourism taxes and requirements for profitable businesses to give either skills, energy, or money to support community growth might just get us there. Likewise, removing the burdensome reporting requirements and additional 'red tape' for grassroots organisations and social enterprises would help.

> **"To live in a city where I can focus on making the community better and stronger instead of having to focus on my own survival..."**

There was a clear desire to see greater community ownership, both of 'key assets' and of service organisations, such as a disabled people's co-op for social care. Other ideas included garden co-operatives for creating local sustainable relationships with food, an idea which linked in with another ambition for no allotment waiting lists. However, it was recognised that such assets and businesses must also be caring and compassionate spaces, nurturing connections so that all communities and groups have equal and accessible opportunities to participate. It was clear that a fairer future for York is "one where no one feels excluded or alone". With regards to keeping people connected, the need for good quality, affordable public transport across the city was highlighted by several participants, "To make York the easiest city in the world to get from A to B".

"Take action!", "Re-awaken radicals!", and "Equality for all!" were the clarion calls but participants had plenty of other ambitions relating to participation and approach.
A focus for some was the potential for a 'people's assembly', funded through mechanisms such as tourism tax, to enable real ownership and control of the city's future by its residents. Such spaces might be the key to achieve others' ambitions, including moving away from individualism and engendering more creativity, imagination, and bravery in our experiments in practice.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants were also conscious of the need for learning, in terms of personal ambitions, "meeting and learning with people making a difference", and with regards to the importance of learning from processes and sharing knowledge and models so that people aren't starting from scratch each time, but instead can adapt, develop and improve. The ambition to "develop a learning culture" connected with other comments regarding how many times these conversations might have taken place but without distributing knowledge and disrupting the status quo, these conversations will not lead to tangible action. Could part of the answer lie in the ambition for "free, lifelong, education and learning"?

Although we were only at the start of the day, many of the ambitions and subsequent conversations orbited around the notion of "a new model". Could York prototype and work its way towards a "Preston-style model for local economics"? If so, perhaps it could become a place "where everyone can own a part of it", where people could "live in a city and society that has managed to decentre market institutions in favour of a more 'human' way of living", "a local economy by and for local people" – a model for pre-distributed wealth as well as re-distributed wealth.

## Blockers

> **"It's refreshing to be in a room where we can say these things."**

The second movement of the 'sort of ice-breaker' involved a similar process but asked participants to think about the things that individually hold them back – orthodoxies, tendencies, avoidances, apathies, axiomatic truths. The things we need to 'unlearn' in order to be able to imagine and work towards a fairer future.

Again, participants were given some time for individual reflection before being asked to share their blockers with another participant who they hadn't met before. They were also encouraged to find out each others' name and organisation affiliation. After allowing some time for conversations, participants were asked to put their ambition post-its on the 'blocker wall'.

There was an overall sentiment of there being the desire to see and contribute to a fair amount of change, both institutionally and in personal behaviours. However, people's limited time and resource capacities make a lot of the changes difficult to execute, e.g., when you can barely afford to pay rent you don't have a lot of capacity to focus on other issues. Moving beyond survival mode and shifting into a space where community strength can be valued and executed is integral.

Issues that were raised in the blockers exercise that filtered into the other activities included the challenges posed by 'metrics' and whether we're valuing and measuring the most appropriate things. This included the broad emphasis placed on economic growth but also more narrow metrics such as those used by funders – value and data remaining very top level focused as opposed to being concerned with the depth and quality of individual and shared experiences.

The other main blocker that filtered in throughout the day was the challenge posed by 'bureaucratic red tape' and systems as a barrier to entry and retention with respect to participating in actions that lead to a fairer future. Likewise, co-operatives and other alternative structured groups struggle to 'play the game' as it is currently arranged and devote a lot of effort and resources away from providing community value to just trying to enter or exist in the sector at all. Tying-in with the challenge of bureaucratic red tape, political cycles at both national and local level were also noted as presenting challenges to long term planning, commitment, and funding – especially on the part of smaller community organisations. If the ground keeps shifting beneath you, it's hard to have the confidence to build something new – that is, to invest both materially and emotionally.

Being with people costs money, "you have to pay for collective experience", but that is what makes people come alive. As such, we need to move beyond individualism and share resources, knowledge and power. This links to ideas presented later in this report regarding the need for neutral, free community spaces where people can come together – community allotments, disused shops, outdoor events spaces, the rivers, sports clubs, and other existing spaces.

# Workshop 1

## Imagining a fairer future for York

For the first of the main workshop sessions, participants were asked to imagine the year was 2040, "you are not the person you are now and the city has transformed in amazing ways…" Anything was possible. They were to dream, co-create, and build.

Each group of approximately five participants was given a 'map' to work on (see Figure 1). The participants were told they didn't have to stick to geographical accuracy and were encouraged to consider some of the prompts on the left hand side and to try to develop a 'key' as their mapping developed.

In this workshop, activities included: imagining and sharing, combining and connecting, milestones and headlines.

Within the visions for York's future that were generated, five key areas emerged as being particularly prevalent and important to a fairer future for York: **Housing, Community, Economy, Energy,** and **Transport.**

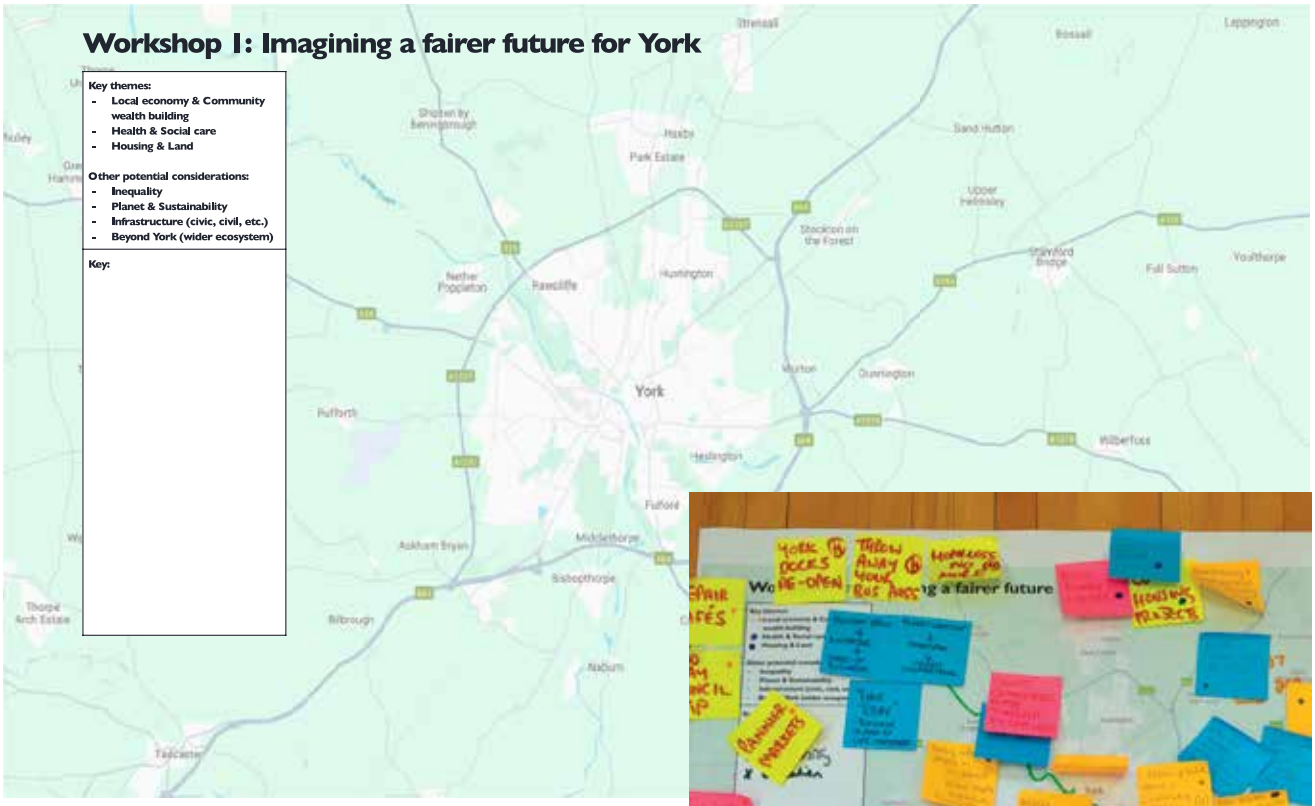
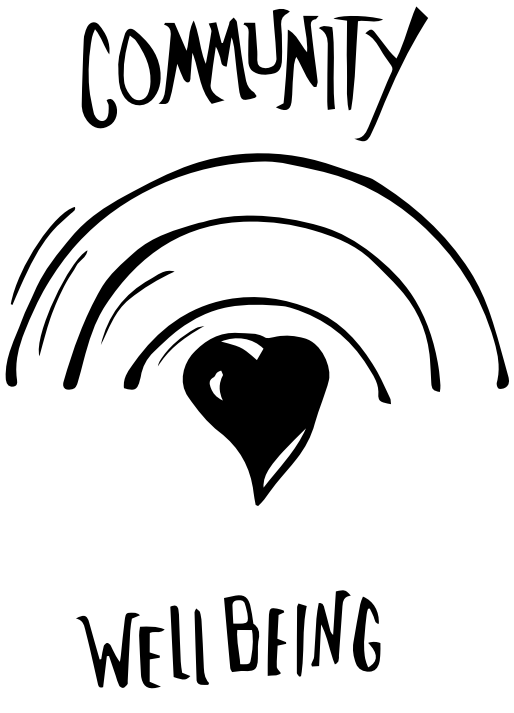



**Figure 5:** Worksheet 'Workshop 1: Imagining a fairer future for York'

**Figure 6:** Example of a 'map' created by participants as part of Workshop 1

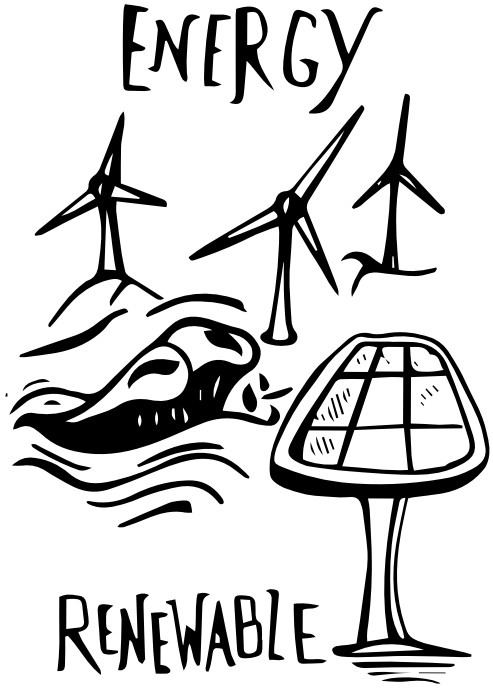



With regards to the theme of **housing**, recurring proposals focused on the need to increase not only the availability but also the diversity of affordable housing models – be these rental, equity based, community-owned, or council-owned. Council ownership was highlighted as a preferred but currently untenable and unsustainable option as long as 'right to buy' legislation remains in operation. Approaching 'housing' more holistically through co-design both with residents at large and with minority groups, e.g., giving gypsy traveller communities a choice and stake in design and planning of suitable sites. The challenge posed by the growth in houses being dedicated to temporary and holiday accommodation was likewise a recurring issue, with some participants suggesting alternatives such as 'Fair BnB' might work but others noting that this doesn't resolve the issue of losing core housing stock to 'tourism'.

With regards to the theme of **community**, there was recognition of a need for engendering cultural change at a local level but also that this must necessarily connect with a broader societal message around giving when you can and receiving when you need, nurturing diverse, multi-generational, connections between people, and careful consideration of how we collectively "build democratic citizens and citizenship". Solutions to these challenges and opportunities included framing York as "wellbeing city", developing "community resilience hubs" in every council ward – not prescribing what they do, but integrating communities to decide what happens, creating a "Fair future learning academy" – open and free, to inspire people to bring on the change and generating the culture we need to progress, and at a most basic level providing access to space and opportunity for people to make meaning of that space. Ultimately, there was a sense that the solutions aren't going to 'come from beyond' but instead manifest as "local solutions for local issues" – while also drawing on the wealth of knowledge, experience, and practice from 'beyond'.

With regards to the theme of **economy**, there was a shared understanding of the need to somehow "break the consumerism cycle" and move away from "always thinking about profitability". Transitioning from being 'economy led' to 'wellbeing led' was seen as key to unlocking the capacity and resources of the city, changing our approach to community capacity, housing affordability, and the quality of employment. Linked to this were ambitious proposals for a "mandatory 4 day week" to give people time to themselves, their families, and the wider community as well as working towards greater wealth retention wherein "the majority of income stays within 20 miles of the city". As part of this vision, the role of co-operatives and employee ownership models was emphasised – different types of co-op for culture, care, freelancers, workers, and more. One group dreamed of building "York's own Eden Project", producing food for the whole city and creating another hub for tourism outside of the city centre.

While all of the groups saw the river as being a key feature of their vision for a fairer future in terms of connectivity and transport, two groups went further with their proposals (see example in Figure 2). They suggested York could become a 'port' once again, with fruit, vegetable, and other goods being moved into the city by boats and barges. These combined with a diversified local economy might be part of a "new industrial era" akin to the Industrial Revolution but green and with community at its heart. With respect to funding these developments, the creation of a 'community wealth fund' and a progressive tourism tax akin to those encountered in European cities such as Berlin were common across all groups present.




> **"Projects, initiatives, and events only work if people can get there!"**

With regards to the theme of **energy**, all of the groups' visions involved more effectively harnessing the range of potential renewable energy sources available – solar, wind, and hydro – to power the city and make life in York more affordable and more sustainable. As part of this thinking, groups considered what could be developed through "learning from before" to integrate into the future; for instance, could becoming a low energy society see the return of water-wheels and other mechanisms from pre-industrial Britain? Central to these proposals was the need to ensure community ownership of the energy supply, avoiding the short-termism of private finance initiatives and the extractive, exploitative, and expropriative practices of external investors. The shared understanding was that once you have paid off the initial capital, energy can be free or at least very cheap – with maintenance costs potentially being covered by selling energy back to the national grid or perhaps to private businesses.

# TRANSPORT

# CONNECTED

With regards to the theme of **transport**, there was broad recognition that York's population is only set to increase and that tourism will likely follow a similar direction. As such, we need to be more creative with our transport system and make bold changes now in order to prepare for the future. The costs associated with maintaining a car-focused transport system in the city centre and surrounding area simply don't make sense – "money needs to be redirected to getting people around more effectively, efficiently, and sustainably". There was also acknowledgement that "transport to get around the city is good but we also need to get people in and out" and "not everything should be focused in the city centre, things on the edge of the city and the transport to those things is important". The relative flatness of York was noted as providing an opportunity for a tram network across much of the centre and into surrounding areas which would enable people to get around – "trams through and around the city and park and rides coming out of the city". Utilising the two rivers was also a noted opportunity, e.g. river taxis like the one now operating in Leeds. As with energy, the general consensus was that public transport should be community-owned. Again, once you have paid off the capital, public transport could be free or at least very cheap for residents.

A series of key questions emerged from the reflective discussion at the end of the first workshop:

- What is it that's costing people time?
- How can the markets work better for local people?
- How do we create space in areas that don't have any?

# Workshop 2

## Realising a fairer future for York

**"York is notoriously bad for not joining the dots and working together. How do we amplify and support what else is happening and support each other? Making it more inevitable that this stuff will come into being. Things haven't been perfect but we know more than we did then. We need a collaborative network where we share learning and experiences, meaning things get better and better..."**

For the second of the main workshop sessions, participants were given this prompt, "We are shifting gears, coming out of that dream state, so shake it off." We were moving into a more practical aspect of the day and wanted to download as much of the expertise, knowledge, and experience in the room as possible.

Three groups were assigned one of the three core themes of the day – Health & Social care, Housing & Land, and Local economy & Community wealth building – while one group was left to choose which they focused on – Local economy & Community proved most popular.

Each group was given a new worksheet, this time a table (see Figure 7), designed to encourage participants to consider the three main themes along with some of the scaffolding that might be necessary.

Throughout this activity, the kinds of questions we wanted participants to consider were:

- What is needed to progress the vision?
- Who needs to be involved?
- What infrastructure do we need?

First, participants were asked to individually spend some time reflecting on Workshop 1 and the milestones/headlines generated. Then, with a focus on their group's chosen area, start to consider what this looks like in the short (1 year), medium (3-5 years), and longer (10+ years) term. After this, the groups were asked to integrate these contributions into their worksheet.

Next, participants were asked to individually consider the 'scaffolding' required to support the developments they had identified within their area of focus: Infrastructure (Civic, Civil, etc.), Policy & Decision-Making, Resources (Money, Time, Materials, etc.). After this, the groups were asked to integrate these considerations into their worksheet.

Finally, participants were asked to discuss and start mapping what the implications and requirements of or for the developments within their focus area with respect to the other two thematic areas we have been exploring.

**Figure 7:** Worksheet 'Workshop 2: Realising a fairer future for York'

| | HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE | HOUSING & LAND | LOCAL ECONOMY & COMMUNITY WEALTH | INFRASTRUCTURE (CIVIC, CIVIL, ETC.) | POLICY & DECISION-MAKING | RESOURCES (MONEY, TIME, MATERIALS, ETC.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 YEARS + | | | | | | |
| 3-5 YEARS | | | | | | |
| 1 YEAR | | | | | | |

## Health & Social care

**"I was in that group and it was quite tricky to conceptualise and review. Hard to imagine alternative models that felt realistic for things like care and there are a lot of capacity issues with health and social care."**

**1 year...**

Build-up a community of people who use social care and family carers (large unpaid work force that saves the state a lot of money) to do something hopeful – develop pride and wellbeing not the misery of social care that fuels the headlines.

**3-5 years...**

Set up disabled care co-op or care co-op – using social care at home set up a co-op to make the most of the resources available, made up of service users and care providers so people want to go into those jobs.

**10 years...**

York is "a disabled valhalla", which is a wonderful vision for the future, even if getting there feels exceedingly complex and difficult...

For an event that at one stage was going to be entirely focused on the reimagining and developing solutions to the health and social care challenges facing York – and other local authorities around the country – it was both surprising yet perhaps also unsurprising that this proved to be the least popular theme for the workshop activity.

There was broad acknowledgement that the system of social care is in dire straits. The quality of care needs to improve but the workforce is undervalued, both in terms of fair remuneration (wages) and at a more human, emotional level. There was also a big emphasis on the social and cultural value of social care needing to be reconfigured. Unlike in other areas, this was a topic where 'mapping' the problem didn't feel as necessary a step because despite our awareness of the problems, identifying and visualising the solutions is sticky, emotionally taxing, and difficult to engage with.

In approaching the "entanglement" of health and social care, the group noted difficulties with defining and drawing boundaries around the terms used – 'health', 'care', and 'social'. Where do the lines get drawn between healthcare through the NHS, adults in long-term care, children in temporary care, drugs and recovery, and older people?

So much is encompassed. Likewise, there are assumptions made with regards to social care specifically with respect to where it starts and ends. For the participants, this task felt overwhelming as there are so many different moving parts to contend with but they recognised a need to look at the whole culture in order to really realistically tackle what a care economy would look like.

When looking at the wider health and social care system across the UK, at least one participant raised the issue of an apparently prevelant 'fetish of officialdom'. Exploring the realities, there are discrepancies between what is theoretically 'promised' and what is practically 'delivered'. The rights and guarantees for health and social care do not actually get offered in practice so the policy and legal aspect is really an addressable element, albeit challenging. Standards need to be set, promises made and delivered, collaborative and fair processes determined and put into practice – "we talked a lot about the blue badge debacle in York as part of this."

'The cost of care' was a key area of focus, including the role played by unpaid carers and the hidden economic value of this group and what they are contributing to and propping-up in the welfare economy elsewhere. Likewise, participants highlighted the 'hidden wiring' of the care system, what appears to be public is often private – be this staffing, property, or supply chains. For example, in supported housing, systems are meant to be 'not for profit' but people businesses and certain individuals are in fact profiting from it. Furthermore, people aren't receiving the right or best quality care. It was also noted that in York, most pay the cost of care through sale of homes etc. but this system will break down as more people don't have these assets to sell because of housing affordability issues in the city – we have a whole generation coming through that don't own a home or other assets that can be liquidated and absorbed to pay for care.

> **"I can't see this being resolved in 10 years but I think we really need to commit to it"**

Moving forward, there were calls for an approach that is hopeful, human, easy, and imaginative. It's important to think about how people can be enabled to use their lived experience to shape care. We need to reclaim our futures and be more assertive in reshaping our local systems and, ideally, a national social care service. The future of social care requires its embedding within a human rights framework, making it free at the point of access and limiting the potential for extraction and exploitation by private interests. In the absence of a national system of guaranteed health and social care, we can take inspiration from where we once were with respect to mutual aid before the NHS but so much has now been given away to the private sector. It's time to take ownership and develop the necessary infrastructure through community wealth building, care co-ops, and progressive local policy and practice innovation.

> **"All bodies, all minds are diverse, we need to stop thinking about it as us and them."**

## Housing & Land

**1 year…**

Look to our friends in Europe – they create affordable homes… How can we emulate their systems, structures, and mechanisms?

**3-5 years…**

Rent control measures and lobby for public land and transferring assets which can allow affordable housing to be produced.

**10 years…**

Policy and societal change – disrupting the habitual drive towards home-ownership while recognise the ongoing importance of housing security.

In this theme there seemed to be an emphasis on drawing lessons from Europe and looking at schemes that have successfully rebalanced housing systems to reflect what communities need. How land is used and allocated came up as well – enjoyment of place, community spaces that are well utilised and bringing culture and fun to communities. However, again, the point around capacity filtered into this. Overall, this theme seemed to be the most open to the visualisation of solutions.

There was consensus regarding the need to "strip out the profit" from the game of housing people and providing community space. If this can be achieved, affordable homes can support infrastructure and community spaces, people will have more time, less stress, and money to spend in the local economy. Concurrently, with more resources and capacity comes the momentum for even greater systemic change. Ultimately, the availability of affordable housing contributes to reducing the challenges faced in other areas – housing care workers helps to staff care homes.

Progressing the vision requires being experimental with housing options, collective lobbying to get funding in place. If necessary this could involve private finance combined with community share offers. Meanwhile, social value metrics can be used to further persuade local authorities. 'Renting' itself isn't necessarily the problem, nor unappealing to many people, it's renting from private landlords that is the problem – we should only be renting from the council or the community.

## Local economy & community wealth building

**1 year…**

Scope and map of the economy and assets – set targets of doubling in 3-5 years and quadrupling in 10 years.

**3-5 years…**

Embedded use of social value policy to redress monetary power of the private sector. Prioritise support for social enterprises and community groups so they are able to take ownership and control of assets.

**10 years…**

Balance of assets within the community – locking land, buildings, and others assets in community ownership in perpetuity. Baked-in community wealth.

This was by far the most popular of the themes on the day, and noteworthy for how its ideas migrated across boundaries to the other themes. It seems there is an implicit, if not explicit, understanding that redressing the balance of the economy and promoting community wealth building hold the keys to castle in terms of a fairer future.

There was a real sentiment of harkening back to the past and to decentralising services and economic areas in this theme. However, participants were also conscious that old models would need updating to be applicable to the contemporary world – one constrained by limited resources, capacities, and apathetic tendencies. Furthermore, there was a feeling that the scales have tipped too far towards profit, individualism, and privatisation of public and community assets

# Opportunities, possibilities, next steps

> **"I came here today thinking we would leave today with a care co-op, a housing co-op, and solutions to immediate problems. We need to create the conditions for that movement, encourage, foster and grow – developing community wealth building and retention should be an easy sell to our communities."**

## Developing working groups

Overall, participants' feedback was positive, enthusiastic, and encouraging. They reported feeling a sense of alignment regarding values and thinking as well as it being, "amazing to be in a room with people with great ideas and expertise." Participants were interested in hearing experiences and stories from councillors, officers, and other experts trying to work creatively in the systems that exist as opposed to having to fully break or revolutionise the system. Likewise, it was good to have perspectives from both inside and outside of the city and some feedback suggested it would be useful to hear more from the people who have tried to change things in other local authorities – successfully or otherwise.

However, it was also clear that while the event had offered space to meet, share, and imagine a fairer future, it had remained fairly conceptual, theoretical, and that to some extent we had been "talking up in the air with no clarity as to how we achieve this change". Indeed, the most obvious message to be drawn from the day is the **need for action combined with continued learning** to start exploring the 'how' questions, focus on the more practical things that were missing from the day, and "to get down to the nitty gritty". There was a sense of urgency around the need to make the shift from thinking about what we or others could or might do toward being in a position where people are saying, I would like to set this up, how can I do it?

> **"We come up with original ideas and combinations but a lot of this has already been talked about – how do we stop the wheel of reinvention and feeds in everything brings together the learning"**

It wasn't so much that we hadn't tried to include a more practical, nuts and bolts, component within the day's activities, – it was that the knowledge sharing, learning, and time required to get into this is too much for one day and involves a longer collective journey. In addressing the need for building momentum, we need to develop a coalescence of, "People that know things, people that know people, and people that want to do the things." We must draw on those who know things to avoid reinventing the wheel, as has already been done many time over, or making the same mistakes again, we must draw on those people that people to avoid missing out valuable voices, stakeholders, and potential allies, and we must involve and be led by the people who want to do the these things because without them we lack purpose, direction, and a sustainable future.

> “It is vital to invite and enable the quiet voices to join the conversation”

There is clearly value in creating mixed spaces where individuals with diverse knowledge, lived experience, and interests can mix, share, and imagine. However, it is also apparent that more streamlined spaces where progress can be made in different directions are likewise going to be of importance and value. A good example of this is the distinction between practice (“community organisations and grassroots initiatives”) and policy development (“more technical policy stuff”) – the latter being necessary to further the former but also likely to slow down the pace of engagement, progress, and change. While it may seem reasonable to move on to the ‘next phase’ with a clear idea of what to focus on in mind, it was noted that when we invite people in they deserve the opportunity to have their own time to ‘imagine’ and have the space to think freely. As opposed to it being a case of, “a bunch of experts and other people who aren’t here right now have told you to focus on ‘this’ particular thing” That said, it’s also clear that we can’t keep going round and round in cycles of imagination and still hope to make meaningful progress.

As such, to **take things forward** we need to offer both space to imagine and at the same time at the same time carefully focus the scope of the conversations we are having within a specific ‘working group’. What do you want to make happen? How can we make this happen? What support is needed and when is it needed? Within such a process, we could bring in experts as the working group develops. An approach such as this would most likely require paying people to a) be involved in the group and b) provide support to the group as/when needed. The aim would be to give direction, resources, and knowledge sharing without constraining or controlling. Other involvement challenges were noted, such as how to get people engaged without having to take too much time and how to minimise any potential ‘risks’ to those involved given the experimental and unpredictable nature of some of the potential projects and initiatives. Without getting too far ahead of ourselves, another potential issue was flagged regarding ensuring that communication and engagement is accessible and open.

Alongside the main working group or working groups, participants also suggested it would be useful to build up to and then continue to frame this ongoing work with a series of workshops and events that develop over time, providing more diversity of content including case studies, stories, and other examples of what has worked and what hasn’t worked. Likewise, there was acknowledgement of the potential need for a strand of work aimed at developing plans, proposals, and funding bids to support and drive this forward. With respect to the policy and technical dimension, participants noted the opportunities for synergies and mutual learning across local authorities that are or could be interested in finding new ways of working in the face of resource limitations, fatigue, and apathy (e.g., do-ocracy), embedding social value in procurement, driving greater disposal of assets to communities, and linking with business growth networks to ensure learning opportunities are being promoted and made available to the wider economy. If we are going to see real change, we will inevitably need to challenge the prevailing and thoroughly entrenched ‘corporate mindset’ in businesses but also more pressingly in large public and pseudo-public institutions – local authorities, academies, schools, universities, hospitals, and others.

## Four ideas for a fairer future

**1. A truly community-owned space**

> **"How many people at the moment are looking at old social clubs and empty shops thinking, this should be owned by the community?"**

It seems obvious but bringing people together leads to more things happening. While it may not be the lowest hanging fruit, if there's funding and people behind it that want to try something different then securing a space in the city centre that can serve as a long-term hub for change is an important step. Whether through buying an existing asset or building something new, a wholly community-owned and controlled space would make a real difference to the current landscape of community wealth in York. True, sustained independence means no rent, no lease, no mortgage, and perhaps even a long-term rates relief agreement.

Admittedly, it's not simply a 'buy the land, problem solved' situation. More would be required to nurture and develop the community or communities that occupy and use this space.

> **"People might have different visions and opinions but if we got them all in a room and sought a way to align, combine, and integrate these ambitions then amazing things could happen."**

**2. A public transport renaissance**

Perhaps one of the more surprising findings from the day was the emphasis placed on the importance of transport and the number of times it came up while talking about other things. It really felt like the universal touch-point for systemic change. There's clearly a desire to see something shift in York's transport system so what would it take to make this happen in a community-owned way?

The ideas were plentiful, ranging from green transport, cycle routes, using the river, to community-owned trams. Likewise, there were lots of ideas about what works well and what doesn't.

This could be a good issue to get people engaged, coax some quiet voices out, and develop a transport system that works for everybody in York through high quality public consultation and democratic practice.

24 Pack
Brush Pens

**3. Raising a community wealth fund**

> **"We can't keep raising council tax and we can't get money out of retired people and students... so we need to tax the tourists, tourism industry, and others who are making money."**

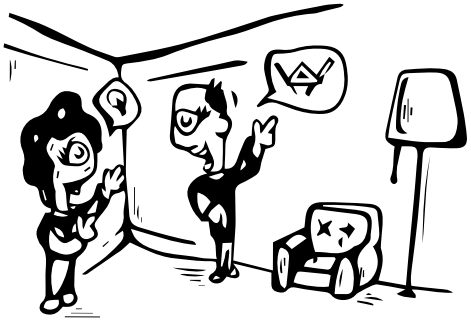
It's undeniable, money is being made hand over fist by some individuals and businesses in York and there is a sense that these interests are benefitting from the city that is sustained by and lived in by many who don't reap these rewards –or at least experience an unequal distribution. Unsurprisingly, there was clear interest in and appetite for developing mechanisms for progressive localised taxation.

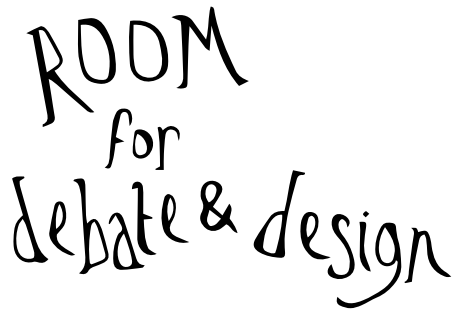
Tourism and 'AirBnBs' were the most common targets of such proposals but open minded thinking might lead to other fruitful avenues as well as other options for raising capital for community ownership. However, participants also noted that it is important to take a balanced view – acknowledging that tourism-driven businesses pay people's wages, purchase business-to-business services from other local businesses, and contribute to York's vibrancy. Likewise, taxing 'AirBnBs' wouldn't solve the wider issues of losing housing stock to short-term lets as well as the inflationary effects they can have on house prices in popular tourist destinations.

Ultimately, the creation of a tourism tax would require legislation from the central government. Other places (e.g., Manchester, Liverpool) have Business Improvement District (BID) charges but these are voluntary. Options for a 'tourist tax' – also known as a 'transient visitor levy' – have been explored in earnest by both the Scottish and Welsh Governments. The Scottish Government has decided that local authorities should be able to place a charge on visitors paying to stay in overnight accommodation if they would like to (Scottish Parliament, 2023). "At present, in England, neither the central government nor local councils have the power to introduce a tourist tax." (Sandford, 2023) To change the state of play, primary legislation would be required yet, as of September 2023, the Government has no plans to do this.

In the absence of legislation, the discussion might feel somehow empty and yet participants at this event and others remain enthused and engaged when it comes to thinking about how such a tax could be used. Questions about who pays the tax (the tourist or the business), how the tax is paid, how it is regulated and enforced, and – perhaps above all else – how the value levied is managed and redistributed. There's good reason to use some of it to protect, maintain, perhaps even

renew, services provided by the local authority – in this case CYC. However, strong arguments were made for the community having ownership and control of the funds and using them in ways that benefit local people and the local area without 'wasting' it on covering council deficits or ending up in coffers of central government – propping up a broken, unsustainable system. Of course, there are ways the funds could be split, supporting the local authority to deliver services and value whilst also empowering the community to develop its own wealth through the purchase and management of community assets – true community wealth building.






**4. 'The room'**

While in the process of developing working groups, buying land, facilitating a public transport renaissance, and taxing the tourism industry, it is important not to lose sight of how significant it was to have the range of organisations we had represented on the day discussing and exploring a fairer future. Indeed, the buy-in from City of York Council was noted on a number of occasions as being important and beneficial to this event and any future conversations. As such, how do we create more spaces where we have council officers and community members engaging as genuine thought-partners.

'The room' is a proposal for creating virtual and in person spaces for having all kinds of conversations around wealth and poverty, ecology and the planet, land and housing, and health and social care.

Questions these events could explore might be:

- How do we keep this on the agenda?
- How do we get this sorted?
- What might this look like in 50 or 100 years?
- What can we reasonably do in the now?

## Future reporting

**"Yeah, I really agree that having something so that people don't feel left behind and what we're doing feels transparent feels really key, super accessible language would be great... it would be a shame for it to be quite academic or policy-oriented"**

While this initial project had modest origins and relatively humble ambitions, one of the recurring ideas from collaborators and participants has been around communicating the projecting the process, findings, insights, and more.

Ideas for developing this reporting and building a means of tracking future activity include:

- Film
- Photography gallery
- Illustrated storybook
- Microsite
- Digital mapping of community assets and initiatives

The aim of this reporting is twofold. One, to remember what we have done. Two, to pull people in, enable them to access and digest information, and get them on board. However, there are also audiences who need to be able to access and effectively benefit from this reporting: CYC and the powers that be, people who are already running things, people who are trying or want to try to set things up.

# Conclusion

# Conclusion

> **"People might have different visions and opinions but if we got them all in a room and sought a way to align, combine, and integrate these ambitions then amazing things could happen."**

**In conclusion, we delivered an event that engaged and enthused participants, generating a range of ideas for progressing a Fairer Future for York. In brief, moving this initiative forward will involve: 1) Further public engagement, 2) Developing 'working groups' around specific themes and projects, 3) Nurturing and sustaining engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders (residents, community groups and organisations, City of York Council, and other organisations and businesses in York), 4) Creating learning opportunities and resources for use in York and by others interested in a fairer future.**

We find ourselves in a unique moment where actual and potential political change in York and the wider region, as well as nationally, offer opportunities for new, radical, system-wide rethinking and renewal. City of York Council are in 'listening mode' and if there is a way of highlighting the value, social or monetary, which would benefit the residents without straining the resources of the Council, these may provide quick wins. We could position Fairer Future for York as an incubator to inform and drive change but there is limited time to seize this opportunity. Right now, there is political will combined with enthusiasm but sooner rather than later moving forward is essential. Indeed, progress and momentum may well start winding down towards the end of the political cycle. Likewise, it is imperative we make this the 'vital issue' amongst the many that are on the great 'to do list'.

In order to bring others along with us, being clear in connecting with and seeking shared answers to big questions that cross perceived political divides can help to build wider support. One noteworthy point of connection and synergy is likely to be the York and North Yorkshire Economic Framework (2024) which was released in March of this year. It is only a framework and not the final product in terms of a strategy but it is important to find means of engaging with this across both political and geographical distances.

# Resources

## Fairer community wealth building

**Space York CIC**
Space York is a community-led co-working Space located in the heart of York. We offer affordable workspaces and community for individuals and small businesses in the creative, cultural, and nonprofit sectors. Our goal is to serve as a hub promoting social and cultural innovation in York. We work on a monthly membership basis with a dedicated desk for each member. (We don't offer hot desking.) We're located in a light, spacious loft area above Brew York, on Walmgate. We offer desks on a monthly membership basis, as well as meeting rooms for casual hire. Space York is run by volunteers and is a nonprofit community interest company (no. 14421890).

**Spark:York**
Spark C.I.C. emerged in 2016 as a community-driven initiative and idea, born out of a collective desire to revitalise an underdeveloped space in the city. The project was inspired by a vision to create a vibrant and inclusive destination in a forgotten part of York city centre, on Piccadilly. The project is now embedded into York's way of life as it feels more permanent as a destination and community asset that populates the city with new start-ups, jobs for individuals and 100s of hours of community give back, events and activities. We have been guided by our passion for community and locality and this continues aiding our learning as we grow. We believe that SPARK* is a creative microcosm that works for everyone. It has created a precedent for new ideas that allows social impact to come to fruition. While many towns and cities have vacant premises, we find that these buildings are often too long in lease tenure and the financial commitment to commit upfront at an early stage is too great. We believe that the solution to these deeper city-wide problems of shop vacancy and dereliction is by increasing successful business incubation opportunities in lower-risk, flexible environments and one where the landlord works closely in supporting the business through bespoke business support, signposting, listening and support to the next step – quite often a more permanent setting once they've had chance to test their business.

**The Golden Ball Community Co-operative Pub**
Welcome to The Golden Ball, York's first community co-operative pub in the heart of Bishophill. We are a Grade II listed free-of-tie pub with a well preserved Victorian layout and beautiful tiled bar, and are listed in CAMRA's national inventory of historic pub interiors.
The Golden Ball was in the 2020 Good Beer Guide. We have a range of hand-pulled cask ales with an emphasis on good quality locally produced beer. We aim to keep a well balanced and regularly changing range of ale. The Golden Ball supports local independent businesses.
We sell locally sourced pies, scotch eggs, savoury nuts and snacks. We are still selling fresh, local, free range eggs from Johnson's in Terrington delivered directly to the pub each week. If you're visiting the pub why not donate a box of eggs to HOPING Street Kitchen to help them provide free meals for those in need? Our focus is on the community and we have in the past had a range of events and community groups using the pub. We have hosted weddings, christenings, weekly baby groups, choirs, Christmas parties, local history groups, gardening events, art exhibitions, craft fairs, clothes swaps and charity fundraisers.

**York Explore Library and Archives**
Explore has a contract with City of York Council to provide the statutory public library and archive service for the city, with 15 libraries including York Explore – our flagship library and home of the City Archive – a mobile library, a home library service and 7 Reading Cafes. The City Archive tells the story of over 850 years of York's history, the most significant continuous civic record outside London. We employ more than 100 people. Last year Explore welcomed over 724,717 visitors, engaged 79,118 people with our Archive, held 2,571 events attended by 39,578 people, registered 10,628 new library members, saw 430,712 visits to our website, and loaned more than 1,808 books every single day. Volunteers gave over 18,914 hours of their time equivalent to around £250,000 of staff time. Explore is a different kind of public service – an independent mutual society owned by our staff and community members, with membership open to anyone over the age of 16. Staff tell us how proud they are to work for Explore and they believe they make a real difference to the community. Explore is two thirds funded by City of York Council and the remainder we need to raise ourselves through trading, grants and other fundraising. The cost of running Explore this year is approximately £3.1m. Collaboration is at our heart. Every day we hear how much Explore means to the people who live in our city. Our libraries, archives and cafes are places to belong, where people of all ages can connect with each other or with the history of York. Places to discover the joy of reading, find trusted information, and encounter new ideas. Our spaces are free and open to everyone.

## Fairer land and housing

**YorSpace**
As a Community Land Trust, we're a non-profit organisation that owns and develops land for the benefit of the community. That benefit can come in lots of different ways – from providing affordable homes, to protecting green spaces, to building community services and more. YorSpace has a track record of generating revenue and accessing grant funding, which when combined with our sector knowledge, will make community led projects come to life. We are proud to be a member and part of the wider CLT network, which is made up of over 175 organisations across the UK.

**Lowfield Green Housing Co-op**
New build, low carbon homes designed to create a sustainable and affordable new way of living in Acomb. We're pioneering a co-operative Mutual Home Ownership model that will create 19 sustainably built and permanently affordable homes for the York community.

**Morrell House Housing Co-op**
Retrofitting a former care home to create sustainable, affordable flats in Clifton. We plan to renovate and repurpose the Morrell House care home to create 13 dwellings for affordable rent – along with plentiful communal and community space.

**YoCo**
'York Central' is one of the largest sites currently under development in Europe. In collaboration with people who live, work, and play in York, we created the YoCo Community Plan for York Central. It's is a strategic vision to develop the site in a community-focused way that addresses housing, transport, public spaces, and the economy. Anyone who wants to see this sort of good stuff happening in York can join YoCo to express support; membership implies no greater commitment than that.

# Fairer social innovation

**Good Organisation**
Good Organisation (Social Ventures) CIC is an award winning Community Interest Company (Reg No 11555159) which supports marginalised people to share in the positive benefits of tourism within York. Under normal circumstances, the city attracts over seven million visitors each year, contributing in excess of £600 million to the local economy, and our ambition is to leverage the potential of that growing sector for social good. Our aim is to effect positive change with speed and passion, by offering training opportunities, managing micro-enterprise projects and providing personal development support to individuals affected by homelessness, addiction, and those with experience of the criminal justice system. As one of only a handful of specialist social enterprises working within tourism across the UK, we are currently shaping a manifesto for inclusive economic growth whilst simultaneously contributing to new thinking which promotes authentic community engagement across the heritage sector.

AMBITIONS
HOME COMMUNITY FOOD
LOVE FREEDOM HUMAN
BLOCKERS
WHAT METRICS, VALUES
ECONOMY REALLY
MATTER? WHO TO?
AND WHY?
More Do-OCRACY
Framing
York
Opportunit
MAKING

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# Thanks

Participants
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City of York Council
Food Circle York CIC
Priory Street Centre
Stir to Action

Scan me for future events and updates

JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

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