

Leisure, culture and heritage



What we stand for

- A wide range of leisure and cultural activities, easily accessible and available to all, no matter where they live in the city.
- We believe that high quality sports and leisure facilities, including a swimming pool, should be available to residents in the centre and east of the city and will make this a funding priority.
- Encouraging participation in outdoor and indoor, formal and informal sports and physical exercise for residents of all ages – for health and enjoyment.
- A diverse and vibrant social and cultural landscape providing for residents of all ages as well as for the many tourists who visit the city.
- The preservation and valuing of York's very special historic heritage for the tourists who contribute to the local economy and for the residents who live here all the time.

What's happening now

Sport and exercise

Funding for Leisure in the city has been a problem since 2000 when Labour first proposed closing the Barbican pool and Leisure Centre to fund improvements at Yearsley and Edmund Wilson. Ironically the Lib Dems in opposition pledged that if they gained power they would maintain three pools. In 2006 after a long legal battle with the 'Save Our Barbican' group the Lib Dem council announced that they would not be a replacement pool in the Barbican development. The loss of the Barbican facilities has been a tragedy, caused mainly by a complete failure by the Lib Dem leadership to properly consult the local residents and Barbican users. The scale of the flats in the redevelopment triggered further community opposition that has prevented a resolution ever since.

Assurances that the wide range of sporting activities previously available at the Barbican would be provided elsewhere, have in practice fallen well below what was promised.

Overall, despite the "Active York" Community Sports Network, sporting provision in York is patchy, with many people having to travel across the city to swim or participate in the sport of their choice.

Play facilities for younger and older children are also patchy with some good facilities in some areas, but very mediocre provision in others.

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Arts and culture

York benefits from an impressive array of city centre festivals, large numbers of theatre groups and a lively cultural scene, only partly arising from its rôle as a tourist city. These activities are a huge benefit for those local residents who are able to participate and some very good community arts and outreach activities are funded by the Council to reach people with less easy access.

However, there have been cuts in these activities in recent years and Council funding to some youth theatre groups such as Stagecoach has also been cut. Impressions Gallery moved to Bradford where it could access better public funding.

Youth provision

Nor is everything so rosy in terms of youth provision. The Youth Service was restructured during 2004/2005 resulting in the majority of youth centres now being located in the outlying areas of the city and provision elsewhere being very patchy. A scrutiny committee set up to look at provision for young people spent over a year coming up with very little. There is still no city centre facility for young people and no sign of one being in the pipeline. Very limited provision is on offer for young people too young to legally go in a pub, but old enough to want to be out with their friends.

Heritage

Over the 2000 years of its history York has grown slowly to form what is now a jewel of civilisation and culture. It is a British tourist magnet second only to London. Its present human scale and architectural diversity is now threatened by over-development. Planning decisions have been allowed to go forward in blatant contradiction of the notion that we value our historical heritage, for example the Coppergate proposals, the flats going up adjacent to the Merchant Adventurers' Hall and the demolition of Burton Croft, the home of one of York's great benefactors JB Morrell. Major development proposals threaten the overall setting of the city.

In spite of all this the staffing for conservation work has been cut, a fact that has led to very slow progress being made on reviewing Conservation Area boundaries, adopting Village Design Statements and implementing a 'local list' of much valued buildings.

What we will do

Sport and exercise

- We will make the provision of high-quality sporting facilities for local people, including a swimming pool, in the centre and east of the city a funding priority.
- We will work to ensure that the full range of sporting facilities previously available at the Barbican is replaced as was originally promised.
- We will build on the work started by the Active York partnership to make the most of existing sports facilities of all kinds in the city including those in the voluntary, community and private sectors. We will ensure the partnership is properly funded to effectively promote access as much as possible. However, this is not an adequate substitute for proper public facilities.
- In view of the vital role of physical exercise in children's health and wellbeing, we will promote children's play and sporting activities within schools.
- We will promote improved play provision around the city, including a city centre playground, and more provision for older children and teenagers eg: adventure playgrounds and challenging sports.
- We will continue to work for a reduction in motor traffic to allow safe walking and cycling to and from school and work.

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Arts & culture

- Oppose funding cuts to youth theatre groups and voluntary/community arts organisations.
- Promote community arts and cultural activities which are accessible for all residents.

Youth provision

- We will make improved youth provision a priority. This is not only something we owe our young citizens, it can also make a major contribution to dealing with perceptions of safety in the wider community, as young people will need to hang around less if they have more to do.
- We will look again at youth service provision across the city, with the aim of restoring regular youth clubs where there is a local demand for them.
- We will work with the voluntary and community sectors, and with young people themselves as much as possible, to provide a wide range of youth facilities and activities.
- We will seek funding for a city centre youth facility.

Heritage

- We will instigate an environmental capacity study for York, to ascertain the levels of development the city can stand without losing its special character.
- We will develop policy proposals for the new Local Development Framework process, which place a greater value on our built heritage.
- In the meantime, we will develop local planning guidance to the same effect, including supporting the implementation of a “Local List” of particularly valued buildings.
- We will support the proposal to bid for World Heritage status for the historic core of the city including Clifford’s Tower, the Minster and the City Walls.
- We will work with other organisations and partners to identify funds to reinstate the Conservation Officer and Urban Design Officer posts cut by the Lib Dems.

Green councillors have:

- Opposed the closure and redevelopment of the Barbican site.
- Saved the Melbourne Centre as a Community Arts venue when the council closed the Youth Club in the building.
- Supported the use of ward funds to run summer activities, promote youth provision and upgrade play facilities.
- Worked with local residents to secure Fenby Field, Fulford as leisure open space, with new goal posts to promote active sports by young people.
- Opposed council funding cuts to Stagecoach Theatre.
- Opposed felling of mature beech trees at Connaught Court and Fulford Cross.
- Successfully campaigned and worked with residents and council departments to retain the Fulford Cross Nature Reserve as a wildlife area.
- Worked with the Friends of New Walk to secure the area as an attractive well-managed facility for residents and visitors alike.
- Liaised with the Council and private bodies responsible for the upkeep of areas such as the masts field on Broadway West over grass cutting and fencing issues.
- Fought to protect the site of the Battle of Fulford from building at Germany Beck.