

# DEVOLUTION ALLIANCE

A Business Perspective



York & North  
Yorkshire Chamber  
of Commerce

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## Foreword

**Sarah Czarnecki, President of York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**

*The Devolution Alliance was founded in December 2023 with the aim to gather key business insights for devolution, what businesses want from the new mayor and what their issues were in operating businesses in the region.*

*What has come out of the research has harnessed business connections, highlighted the opportunities available for businesses from all sectors and laid out what is at stake for the regional economy.*

This work has been a collaboration between the West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, York St John University and University of York, and paves the way for further collaboration between these organisations in the future.

As a business leader, the President of York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce and a proud York resident, I am inspired by the sheer work and the diversity of the sectors in the city and region. The West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce has been a long-standing champion of devolution, the benefits it can bring to a region and the opportunity to shape the identity of a region on a global stage.

In a landscape of greater regional powers and a diverse economy with plenty of space for growth, the need for collaboration between public and private sector has never been greater. From speaking with the mayoral candidates, they have all told us that this is an essential piece of work for York and North Yorkshire, to guide their economic policy and provide business insight from the commencement of their term.

Regardless of the mayor or their political identity, the Devolution Alliance and its contributing bodies are ready and waiting to collaborate, to deliver what is best for the region to make it an attractive place to do business and create an environment fit for those living, working and visiting it.

The mayor must use their platform to solve the issues that have stood in the way of large-scale growth; transport, connectivity and housing, to name a few. But they must also look to the future, to what York and North Yorkshire can be, and to bring innovation and creativity that compliments the great business landscape we have on our doorstep.

As York and North Yorkshire enters an exciting new chapter in its long and proud history and becomes a devolved region, the voice of the business community will be instrumental in shaping its successes.



# DEVOLUTION ALLIANCE

## A Business Perspective

*In a landscape of greater regional powers and a diverse economy with plenty of space for growth, the need for collaboration between public and private sector has never been greater.*

## Executive Summary

The Devolution Alliance is a collaboration between York & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, York St John University and The University of York. The Alliance was established to bring together the voices of business and sector leaders in the county to ascertain key asks from devolution.

The Alliance carried out a series of interviews with business and sector leaders across the region. The sectors covered included creative, heritage, culture and technology/ data, bioeconomy, hospitality and high street, as well as transport, property and professional services.

The aim of these interviews was to capture key asks and areas of concern about the devolution process. The conversations were audio recorded and transcribed, with key themes and quotes identified and presented in this document. The key strengths, challenges and asks are also in each sector section of this document.

### Cross sectoral asks included:

- Clear communication from the Mayoral Combined Authority about plans and use of finances across the region
- Focus on transport to ensure staff across the range of businesses in the region can get to/from work, and that visitors to the region can get to/from accommodation, shops and attractions
- Leadership and direction from the front about strategy and priorities from the mayor

### Areas of cross sectoral concern included:

- Political ambitions are prioritised over the pressing needs of the region
- Limited time and resources to support all areas in the region
- Not realising the importance of each sector to the fabric of the region

It is hoped that this document will help guide the strategy for devolution to assist the Mayoral candidates to develop their economic strategy after the election in May 2024, to position the Mayoral Combined Authority in the strongest position to represent the needs of the county. To support this vision, all those interviewed during the development of this report stated that they would be keen to act as an ambassador for their sectors, should the incoming Mayor choose to set up a business advisory board.



# Hospitality

**North Yorkshire's hospitality sector is a key contributor to the visitor economy which is valued at £1.5 billion annually. Leading chefs from across the nation such as Tommy Banks have underscored the significance of North Yorkshire's hotels and restaurants in driving tourism.**

**Beyond bringing in visitors, the sector employs at least 50,000 people across the region, with most of the firms operating in the hospitality sector being SMEs. In recognition of the pivotal role that the sector plays, the West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce established a York and North Yorkshire Hospitality Forum to represent and support the industry locally, nationally and internationally.**

## Strengths of the sector

### Variety of hospitality offers

"Our biggest strength is the number of industries and businesses we impact. Be that from local electricians, plumbers, labourers to the fruit and veg man that we get our fruit and veg for restaurants from. Right down to marketing, digital, print, the there's so many different industries that hospitality impact."

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

### Range of employment opportunities

"Hospitality really can be a place for everyone. You can have a career in it, but you're also more than welcome to get a job if it's just for six months whilst you've got some spare time or during uni while studying for a part time job. I think as an industry we've got that flexibility that others don't."

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

### Embedded within the community

"We've linked up with an organisation called Hospitality Connect which is backed by UK Hospitality and we're just about to launch in April a hotels and schools liaison programme. So, what that means is that hotels will link with a school and there will be a programme of activity during an academic year."

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

### Support other businesses and sectors across the region

"We are very supportive of other areas of recruitment or other areas of the community that needs support. And probably one of the biggest things we have been doing for about 3 years is to work with the local female prison, Askham Grange with a scheme called ROTL which is when prisoners are released on temporary licence. I currently employ about four ladies from there who come out on their release. Then at the end of the shift, they go back - this is a key part of their rehabilitation."

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

## Challenges for the sector

### Rise in the cost of utilities

"We've got some smaller properties in York from 8 bedrooms, 12 bedrooms, right up to 200. But the same challenges impact them all. Think about utility costs, for example. Yes, that's detrimental to smaller businesses, but it's detrimental to bigger businesses too, especially because the bills are bigger."

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

### Public perception of hospitality as a career

"The public's view of hospitality, as not being a great career, spans from council to central government to teachers and parents and which is something we are actively working on and need to improve the picture of the industry. That is a huge challenge. Yes, we have got the financial challenges, but our bigger challenge is recruitment. And that is only going to get harder in the future if people do not want to come into the industry. Last year central government referred to hospitality as low paid and low skilled - that is a very old school view and not up to date."

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

### Increase in the number of Airbnb's across the region

"Since the pandemic we have got an extra 1,500 bedrooms on Airbnb, which is equivalent to 10 large hotels. We need to highlight this to councillors and central government, who would not let 10 hotels just pop up with no planning. This is about having a fair playing field and ensuring short term lets have appropriate regulation. They have a direct impact on the housing crisis in the area."

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

## Key asks for Devolution

### Listen to the needs of the hospitality sector

"Look at Manchester combined Authority's nighttime economy. It is huge. They have appointed the nighttime economy advisor and they are the sort of conversations I have had with the two current, the Labour and Conservative mayoral people, is that they need to really put a focus on it and maybe even look at having a hospitality advisor as part of their team."

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

### Deliver on proposed plans

"It's all good saying it when you are trying to get the position but when you're actually in position are you going to deliver on it?"

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

### Focus on interconnected transport

"Transport is also a big topic that we talk about a lot in the association because you have got to bring staff in from other areas like Selby... further into North Yorkshire, the transport systems are bonkers. Busses that don't run very late. I've got some colleagues who have travelled from up North Yorkshire and together, train or buses is just a nightmare or excruciatingly long for the same distance as getting from Leeds."

**Adam Wardale, Chair of the Hospitality Association**

**"Look at Manchester combined Authority's nighttime economy. It is huge. They have appointed the nighttime economy advisor and they are the sort of conversations I have had... they need to really put a focus on it and maybe even look at having a hospitality advisor as part of their team."**

**Adam Wardale, Hospitality Association**



## High Street

*Most of the towns and cities across the region have high streets that boast a range of independent stores as well as well-known brands. In York alone, shoppers can find high-street names like H&M, Space NK and Browns on Coney Street, Davygate and Parliament Street, with the main shopping centre within the city walls found on Coppergate.*

*Shoppers can also explore other boutique shops on streets like Stonegate and Petergate. A similar variety of shops can be found across the region, from Northallerton to Richmond to Selby. It is this variety, which in turn pulls in a range of visitors, that is the sectors greatest strength.*

### Challenges

#### Affordability of the region for staff

*"Affordability is a big one. Since we have had Brexit and we have got less European workers coming over who sometimes you know might come and spend a year in York, you know, someone is going to come move to York to have a career in hospitality. It is a question of where you going to live because it's an expensive city."*

**Andrew Lawson, York BID**

#### Transport and accessibility

*"And then that kind of leads into accessibility to the city and transport because it can be quite difficult for a lot of workers to live in York because of affordability. But if you are going to target Selby or other areas to get your hospitality workers, then is it important to think how they can travel in by public transport?"*

**Andrew Lawson, York BID**

#### Complacency to date

*"There's a complacency in York, I think partly comes because we have got a beautiful city that people seem to come to no matter what it looks like, regardless of the issues I am talking about. We still got 8 million people a year visiting, and we still have businesses coming up."*

**Andrew Lawson, York BID**

### Key asks for Devolution

#### Focus on becoming a welcoming, safe and clean city/ region

*"How can York be a welcoming, safe, and clean city? Because if you, if you get the basics right, as it were and then the theory, the businesses do the rest."*

**Andrew Lawson, York BID**

#### Development of a local plan

*"It would be helpful to have a Local Plan because without businesses understanding what is demarked for housing, what land is available for commercial, you know, all those types of things, it is hard to keep trading. Businesses trade on certainty."*

**Andrew Lawson, York BID**

#### Clear communications about use of funding

*"How do we fill vacant shops in the city centre, how can we use the land we have available, we have a big land opportunity for commercial space. There's not loads of other places, but it is understanding how that's going to be used."*

**Andrew Lawson, York BID**

*"It would be helpful to know what the vision is for transport because that obviously affects how visitors come into the city, and their experience. It affects businesses in terms of how they get their staff in and out."*

**Andrew Lawson, York BID**

#### Strong leadership in York and across the region

*"The biggest criticism of York is a lack of leadership and ambition. We haven't even got a chief executive at the local authority, there's been no one really that businesses have been able to look to as a leader of the council over the last few years."*

**Andrew Lawson, York BID**

*"The biggest criticism of York is a lack of leadership and ambition. We haven't even got a chief executive at the local authority, there's been no one really that businesses have been able to look at as a consistent Chief Officer who is visible, available, and keen to communicate a vision."*

**Andrew Lawson, York BID**



# Heritage

**North Yorkshire is the largest county in England, with a land mass of 9,020 km<sup>2</sup> (3,480 sq mi) and a population of 1,158,816. The largest urban areas in the county are Middlesbrough (174,700) in the north-east and the city of York (152,841) in the south. Much of the rest of the county is rural, with Harrogate and Scarborough being the largest towns.**

**North Yorkshire has many places of historical interest such as Richmond Castle, Stanwick Iron Age fortifications, Middleham Castle, and Eden Camp Museum. York is a particularly important historical city with a 2000-year history. The city has been continuously inhabited since Roman times, showcasing its historical significance and prompting its submission for World Heritage Site status.**

## Strengths of the sector

### Fundamental part of the region's reputation

"The heritage sector in York is a fundamental part of the city's reputation as a heritage city. That's one of our unique selling points and why people visit us from all over the world. I think sometimes that's forgotten. It's not just the Minister, we've got the National Railway Museum, York Museums Trust. We've got York civic trust. And all the other heritage bodies in the city, so collectively they are an important factor within York. It is also the fact that the DNA of this city dates back to the Roman times, so the very fabric of the city is what people are coming to see and enjoy. And then you have this added layer of really strong heritage bodies."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**

### Diversity of offers for visitors and residents

"My thoughts also relate to Heritage. Whether it's the York Minster, whether it's English Heritage, they have a portfolio of properties, the National Trust with their equally big portfolio of properties in the county. But then the natural heritage landscape which is maintained by a whole range of people. You know, actually, I think that ties in very neatly with that green agenda. One of the great things about North Yorkshire and York. North Yorkshire is you don't have to go very far before you hit green space. Whether that's a straight in York or out in the country. I think we sometimes forget the cultural and the arts elements and the well-being element of that, of that space."

**Andrew Morrison, York Civic Trust**

## Weaknesses of the sector

### The challenge of adapting to the climate emergency

"It's an incredibly fragile building. We're going to great lengths to ensure that we can always create the funds to look after the fabric. But it would be nice the government actually recognised the work that was going on to care for these very precious heritage assets."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**

"We are trying to address the climate emergency, so adapting a heritage estate but with very little planning policy to support that. York Minister is slightly different because we've created our own planning policies through our neighbourhood and to help us deliver significant changes in our heritage estate, but other heritage bodies in Yorkshire Centre don't have that, so there isn't strong planning policy to support the custodians of these things."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**

### Navigating the difficult funding landscape

"I think there is certainly for us a distinct lack of funding support from central government so one thing I'd like to see this successful mayor do is support me in lobbying central government, particularly departments for culture, media and sports, about releasing funds to look after these very precious buildings in the DNA of our country. Embedded in our cathedrals and it cost £35,000 a day to look after your minister. We're entirely self-financed, so this building of international importance and we need to be pressing government and making them stand up and support the care of the fabric of this important asset."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**

### The necessity to raise the profile of York, and the wider region.

"And I think just raising the profile of York generally, I mean the city has so much to offer. Just an hour and 50 minutes from Westminster. Yeah. So, I think having a strong mayor with a voice who's prepared to lobby governments and whole government to account is going to be so important, not just for the heritage sector, but for all of us. I mean, look at York Central, for example, the potential of that development is enormous and not enough has been done at the moment to bring potential tenants up from London to create employment opportunities here."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**

## Key asks for Devolution

### To recognise the importance of the heritage of York and North Yorkshire

"We haven't had a person with authority and oversight, looking collectively and holistically at the whole county before, or at the county's capital, which is York. The public sector purse is under so much pressure at the moment that there are elements of the city that that need investment, but the pots of money are not becoming available. To have someone there whose job it is to identify and secure that investment in the county and in the city, I think could potentially unlock enormous potential. Back to my original point, people visit York because it's a heritage city. So, let's look after it and improve it and celebrate it. So, more people come and visit."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**

### Inward investment and a voice for the sector across the region

"We are realising the opportunities that are presented so particularly around inward investment and growth and looking particularly at the rural economy and the huge potential that has in North Yorkshire, given the size of the county, we haven't had that voice before. Like Manchester, with Andy Burnham more recently, having someone with that delegated power and authority to take power from Westminster into the county."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**

### To speed up decision making processes to reduce the barriers to investment and project delivery

"Hold the City Council to account and to put pressure on them. Bring the York local plan forward, so it's adopted as quickly as possible, and to continue to lobby and put pressure on the decision makers at the Council. So, we're speeding up the decision-making process because at the moment it's a major barrier to investment and project delivery."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**

### Prioritise and support efforts to achieve net zero, including funding and lobbying for change

"Another key ask is around sustainability and the drive to net zero. York city Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The heritage sector, including York Minster, have supported that, and acknowledged it. So, at York Minster we have secured several planning permissions for retrofit to our heritage assets. We're leading the way on that. But the issue that we face, and all the heritage bodies will face, or even private owners of heritage assets is how do you fund the decarbonization journey. The local enterprise partnership had £6 million pot of money this time last year for capital projects. Oven ready schemes that could be delivered and against that £6 million pot. But they had over £40 million worth of bids. So, in one sense, that's amazing that the county is waking up to the climate emergency, but government and funding bodies are not making the funds available to unlock these opportunities. And I think this has got to be at the top of the successful mayor's agenda. Because you know the message from COP 28 is we're doing far too little, too late."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**

"The successful candidate will need to lobby government for more funding, or tax relief. It doesn't necessarily have to be physical money but tax relief or removing VAT from renewable energy. There's different ways of enabling this investment, but I think that certainly needs consideration. And I think if we're looking at national investments and unlocking potential, sustainability has to be at the heart of that from day one. And I think if it isn't, that's a major shortcoming of any campaign or campaign commitment."

**Alex McCallion, York Minster**



# Culture

*The culture of Yorkshire has developed over the county's history, influenced by the cultures of those who came to control/settle in the region, including the Celts, Romans, Angles, Vikings, Normans and British Afro-Caribbean peoples.*

*The North Yorkshire region blends culture and heritage with a modern, innovative approach to creativity. In York, this integration reflects the city's history and its recognition as the UK's inaugural UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts.*

## Key employers and/or business within the sector

### The two local authorities and constituent councils within the region

*"There are two local authorities in the combined authority who traditionally have always had a culture brief. Now in York, that's over the last 12 months been reduced enormously. So, there's no direct provider now for York has a culture strategy. So North Yorkshire employees an awful lot more people in delivering that York does. I think there are two states in effect. So, you look at libraries for instance, the provision of libraries is a statutory thing, but York Explore within York does something very, very different in the sense of it. It's as if it is being set up as a charitable trust. I think the mayoral candidates to engage with and as well as the local authority providers."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

### Charitable trusts

*"I think there are some really interesting charitable trusts now that deliver museum services across the county, York Museums Trust being the largest. And they also have an Arts Council funding agreement to provide something called Museums Development Yorkshire which supports countrywide the museum sector."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

### Theatres

*"The theatres are one of those important parts of our sector, that sometimes get overlooked because we focus so much on cultural heritage and tourism. But actually, the theatres are something that are a really important provider of culture. Whether it's the Grand Opera House or York Theatre Royal for instance, as the two really the big ones, but also whole host of others. Whether it's Helmsley Arts Centre or the Richmond Georgian Theatre, they're amazing. So, engaging with that theatrical sector is important. There are huge numbers of small theatrical producers who don't have a physical base and work by grant to grant."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

## Strengths of the sector

### Cultural heritage and community development

*"There's a lot of cultural heritage that come to the city particularly and the wider area. But also, I think unlike other sectors, it also is something that helps to build identity, define roots and actually contribute to individual development, whether that's about skills, well-being or community development through place making. So, I'm really interested in how all of those things come together under a banner."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

*"I think culture touches people and offers opportunities for skills development that you probably won't find in the workplace, through team building and having that ability to engage. Engaging in arts-based activities reduces criminal behaviour and reoffending in a substantial way."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

*"Culture is so important for individuals. You see a film, you'll read a book, you go to museums, you get to see a play. You walk out and you go ohh, it's quite nice, isn't it?"*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

### Variety of creative opportunities

*"It's not just a factory. There's some really creative stuff going on. And when you look at where that comes from, what the outputs are, whether it's publishing books, going to the cinema or whatever. It's something that North Yorkshire does incredibly well."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

### Mass engagement

*'This sector touches more people than any other sector does, whether you are actively involved or you're a consumer. I think that stat from the DCMS stated that nationally 90% of the adult population in the UK in the last 12 months have joined in or participated in an art activity at least once in 12 months. That's more than football. It is something everybody does, whether you read a book, go at the cinema or whatever.'*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

*"There are about 67,000 national volunteer organisations, which represent about 10 million people actively taking part in some cultural activity or arts activity. And so, it has got mass engagement. The DCMS did a survey last year that suggested that something like 51 million people take part in an arts event at least once every 12 months. So, it's about 90% population."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

### Economic impact

*"It's a hugely important sector that is quite often seen as the icing on the cake, the fluffy bit, you know. There was a report produced in November last year by McKinsey and Company which looked at the direct contribution to the economy from the wider arts sector and it was something like £49 billion, which outstrips the telecom sector. And so, for York and North Yorkshire, culture is something that is a strong economic driver."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

*"If you think of suppliers, things like Screen Yorkshire, who are the people who do a lot of the work with promoting the county as a venue for filmmaking. The amount of money that culture brings in, and the amount of effect, non-business related, that's involved in that supply chain is enormous."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

### Place making

*"When you look at some of the work that the Land Policy Institute in the US is doing around strategic placemaking, yes, you can have jobs, housing, transport and internet connectivity - absolutely fantastic. But there's a triangle, the sweet spot in the middle and what that tends to show is that, actually, you want a thriving place and a liveable place that people really can engage with and live in and that's that has to involve that cultural element. What makes people care about a place, at the human scale, is culture. It is very much the glue that holds it all together."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

## Weaknesses of the sector

### Disparate nature of the sector

*"The culture sector is very disparate. At a national level, something like 95% of the 137 professional enterprises that are in the sector, are either sole traders or employ less than nine people. It's very granular and very disparate. It doesn't have a combined voice at all."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

### Funding difficulties – working grant to grant

*"So, there's no continuous income stream for a lot of the organisations within the sector, and they don't really have an overarching body that represents them either. And again, that's one of the big issues. You have the Joseph Rowntree Theatre, the Scarborough Theatre, there's some really big pieces. The candidates can't lose sight of the fact that huge amounts of the cultural sector and the art sector are volunteer led. So, getting to work and talking to those representatives or just those groups at that grassroots level is really important to understanding what their needs are and what they require. The mayoral combined authority can support with development funding and use that to maximum impact"*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**



## Culture

### Key asks for Devolution

#### See the cultural sector as an important part of the fabric of the city and region

*"The culture sector cannot be identified as something separate from general business and corporate sectors. It has worked together really closely for years. Whether that's around that interconnectivity, around transport, around skills development. One of the things that the DCMS report showed very clearly was that skills in the workplace are so much more impactful if delivered through an arts and cultural organisation, because it's different and they transferred really well. So, I would think that these sort of areas would be really fascinating for the mayoral candidates to get a handle on and get involved with."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

#### Support to develop an interconnected place

*"The combined authority has a huge opportunity to bring York and North Yorkshire back together again. They're so interconnected. We see that with the cost of housing. Professional people work here and can't afford to live in York, so they're now living in Harrogate. They're even in Leeds. It's much easier, cheaper than get the train in Selby, they're commuting in and out all the time. I think the real opportunity for the combined authority is that interconnected nature of place, York and North Yorkshire working together."*

*"Looking at that strategically to see what is delivered by the two areas and how they can develop appropriate policy for the whole of the area. Think about active transport, volunteers etc. The mayoral development offers a great opportunity to achieve a huge amount for the creative sector, and for not much money. The American way; simpler, cheaper and quicker. You know the good thing about lots of volunteer groups, is that if you give them £50, they'll do a lot for you. I think there's huge opportunity there to deliver some of the real skills and adult education brief for instance."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

### Areas of concern or questions

#### Does not think of itself as a business/ money making sector

*"The creative sector is not one that thinks of itself as a business in that very corporate way, but actually, it is. It has something to do with how it sells itself and with something to offer at an economic level and it does all that fluffy stuff. Most people don't come into the sector because they want to be businesspeople. They want to do nice stuff. And so, the sector needs to readjust how it talks and learn from other sectors because it is a huge economic driver."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

#### Thought of as a nice thing to have, and not as an essential sector

*"When it comes to budget decisions by local authorities and central government, this sector is considered as a nice thing to have. But because it costs a lot of money, it is one of the areas where they feel they can chop, so there is a threat to it. But York is a city that thrives on culture. Ten million people a year coming to the city as a tourism industry, coming for cultural heritage, and a 200,000 strong resident population who live here, partly because of culture. So, we need to push for culture, if we want to keep it and think it is important."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

*"At the local authority level, it is currently running under capacity because it doesn't employ anybody. Yes, it has a culture strategy but on a very disparate and quite often voluntary basis. But I think there is a real threat there. It is seen as a noble profession. People put so much time and energy in because they love it, and they want to do it. But the sector needs to come together and think about how it can operate on par with other industries."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

### Relies on volunteers

*"There's a reliance on voluntary help and voluntary support. But that's always a worry for the sector. I run a historic house museum, and it can only open if we have six volunteers in the house every single time. Now the demographic for a lot of volunteering in the culture heritage sector is retired folk. So how do you get that new raft of volunteers. We can utilise and engage with the two universities in the region. We started a programme with the University of York and offering ten-week placements for any undergraduate and postgraduate student who wanted to come along. It is done in an orchestrated way. Again, the sector needs to really think about how it engages with those volunteers and how we can engage with ever increasing numbers of students who are a phenomenally brilliant resource in our region."*

**Andrew Morrison - York Civic Trust**

*"I think the real opportunity for the combined authority is that interconnected nature of place, York and North Yorkshire working together. Looking at that strategically. What is delivered by the two areas and how they can develop appropriate policy for the whole of the area."*

**Andrew Morrison,  
York Civic Trust**



## Property & Investment

*York and North Yorkshire has an abundance of property and investment companies, working in and around the region. As well as companies renovating and restoring existing historic buildings, there are also many development companies building new homes.*

*Large-scale city developments, like York Central, provide opportunities to develop brownfield sites into new neighbourhoods that will provide housing and economic boosts. New town deals in Whitby, Scarborough and town developments in Selby and at Catterick Garrison, will see property and development delivered by both national and local developers and consultants.*

### Strengths of the sector

#### Economic impact

*"The sector is hugely important for the economy, this sector particularly. The delivery of housing, for one. You can't have a viable or good area for business if you don't have the housing to house your staff to work there. Businesses – all businesses in the region need premises and needs property, a good mix of property. So, it's an essential element of the economy."*

**Max Reeves, Helmsley Group**

### Weaknesses of the sector

#### Planning challenges

*"Planning is a nightmare across schemes with heritage, affordable housing, business generation and city centre regeneration, that are just stuck. It's not getting better resourced, and there doesn't seem to be a particular plan to sort it out. You see this everywhere, and I hear the same story across the country."*

**Max Reeves, Helmsley Group**

#### Building costs

*"I don't think people have realised how much build costs have gone up because of inflation over the last few years. I built a Travelodge up on Monk's Cross in 2017, finished in 2018, I've just had the exact same building type costed elsewhere in Yorkshire and the price has doubled in five years. So, it has a huge impact on development. York is slightly easier because we have high sales values and residential values are punchy so you can make some development work, but I don't think people realise how much of a challenge build cost are to deliver, particularly to commercial property."*

**Max Reeves, Helmsley Group**

### Areas of concern

#### Delivering affordable housing

*"All the candidates are talking about affordable housing or building affordable housing, but how will that work? Will there be a pot of cash from central government to build affordable housing? Is that a pot of cash for them to go off and a mayor to go and build houses or is it to support developers? That's the element that I haven't quite got my head around."*

**Max Reeves, Helmsley Group**

### Key asks for devolution

#### City centre regeneration

*"I think city centre regeneration and town centre regeneration across the region should be a big push for the mayor, having someone that can come up with the wider ideas... York never gets any public money to support the high streets as it's seen as being well off and a Mayoral authority can push for some money to deliver projects that the city centre needs, say on Parliament Street, there are all these different elements that will make a massive difference to the city but there has never been anyone there to front it, push it forward and really make it happen."*

**Max Reeves, Helmsley Group**

#### Improving shop fronts

*"Maybe they could look at some of the wider things that could be done in the city, like standards of shop fronts, not just in York but other cities across the county, maybe producing shop front guidelines."*

**Max Reeves, Helmsley Group**

#### Connected transport

*"Transport plans and integrating the network have been discussed, but also can there be a wider plan put in for servicing shops and things like that, get some of the vans and lorries out of the city centre, moving towards pedestrian friendly routes, and again thinking in that wider holistic view which I think the mayor should be looking at."*

**Max Reeves, Helmsley Group**

*"The mayor has a really key role and a really interesting role, in pulling together some of the wider points around housing, around infrastructure development to make sure that the region is somewhere where people can move to, can afford to live."*  
**Hannah Richmond, Drax**



## Technology & Data

*Whilst there are only a handful of independent telecommunications companies in the region, they are an important asset and support other sectors to operate in a safe and sustainable manner.*

*York Data Service is the region leading business internet service provider (ISP) supporting with business connectivity, hosted telecoms and managed solutions for businesses and organisations. The organisation operates their own private, full fibre, fully secure and resilient network under AS43013, between York, Leeds and London.*

### Strength of the sector

#### Large customer base

*"Our strengths are our customer-based, at the end of the day. People need connectivity, and that's what we rely on as our main product. So, we rely on a buoyant economic platform across the region. Businesses need to be in profit to be able to buy those products at the end of the day. We're a B2B organisation, so we rely on businesses being profitable. So, the larger customer base we have, the more robust the platforms we can deliver, and that allows us to give the business stability. If the customer pool goes smaller, we can't invest as much on it, so therefore we're giving an inferior service and that becomes like a self-fulfilling prophecy."*

**Mark Fordyce, York Data Services**

### Weaknesses of the sectors

#### Relies on its customer base

*"We are a Tier 2 ISP, so we're very much in charge of our own destiny and our network and how we build it. So really everything comes down to the potential of a customer base. It's as simple as that really. If we don't have the customers, we can't invest in the network, but the usual things apply really."*

**Mark Fordyce, York Data Services**

### Areas of concern

#### None. See the change as highly positive.

*"I always come from the angle that all change is good in any business. So, it's an opportunity for change, and I think the ability to have a better combined authority, better than the separate regions we have now, to have a mayor as the head of that combined authority, it gives leadership, and it gives structure. And hopefully that translates into being able to deliver things for the benefit of the region."*

*"And certainly, for York, if we're looking at some of the candidates have mooted that they were looking at bringing the mayoral office into York. And if that happens, that's great for the city because it brings the*

*spotlight back on the city itself. It means that we're closer to that kind of halo effect of money being spent. So again, the combined authority and the mayoral role having the overseeing of that budget from central government to be distributed on a local level. It would benefit the city if that was the case, if the offices were from York and York had that kind of sway to be able to influence things a little bit better than it has done in the past when it's been kind of separate entities scattered across the region. In the past, a lot of the power has come out of Northallerton, for example. Which means that a lot of money gets spent into the region and it bypasses York. York has always been deemed to be a successful city, it's a high employer, so therefore it tends to kind of be the kind of the poor relation when it comes to inward investment."*

**Mark Fordyce, York Data Services**

#### Listening to businesses

*"There are good signs that the candidates are listening to businesses and wanting to interface with what's happening in the region on a business level. So, I think it's reassuring as a business owner that businesses are very high on the agenda. They get the fact that companies like ourselves are the ones that generate the cash in the economy for people to spend in the shops in the region. So, it's that circular economy that works very, very well. Everyone is showing the right signs of listening."*

**Mark Fordyce, York Data Services**

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# Bioeconomy

*The bioeconomy comprises those parts of the economy that use renewable biological resources from land and sea to produce products. BioYorkshire will bring 4,000 jobs to Yorkshire and Humber, through work that is led by University of York and Askham Bryan College.*

*Drax, based outside Selby, is the largest biomass plant in the UK, and committed to becoming carbon negative by 2030. There are smaller companies investing in renewables, with a booming bioeconomy in Scarborough.*

## Key businesses within the sector

*“As well as Drax power station, there is the Northern Power Grid who were more on the utility side of it. And then if we are just sticking to York and North Yorkshire region, I think that’s probably it. Other than if you go to utilities, Yorkshire Water and into mining and see potash people up near Whitby.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

*“Whilst we are just one sector, it is a pretty important area. Drax is important for energy security as well. Drax power station provides power for 5 million homes that’s entirely dispatchable. So that when the wind isn’t blowing or the sun doesn’t shine, Drax can be directly turned on and off. We’re a key aspect of UK energy security with our location.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

## Strengths of the sector

### Jobs

*“Our strength is that we are we are one of the biggest businesses in York and North Yorkshire. We have a big regional impact and certainly for the Selby region, we’re supporting nearly 1,200 jobs. For the wider Yorkshire region, we’re looking at around 2,500-2,800 job with added value of £360 million. So quite significant and nationally significant business as well.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

### Renewable energy and carbon capture

*“We are providing 11% of the UK’s renewable power from the single site or about 6% of the total power needs.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

*“A couple of useful points to mention, the carbon capture, carbon negative reductions that could be delivered here and are equivalent to all UK households having to go completely meat and dairy free for 1.5 days a week, which I don’t think is particularly popular in the rural vote. Or equivalent to cancelling all departing flights from Heathrow. So, it’s enormous. That’s how that would happen in the mayoral authority’s region. So, you know it’s a globally significant project the quest for net zero, but it would be happening in*

*the mayor’s region and that’s what we’re going to be hopefully reaching out and getting across to them.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

## Key asks for Devolution

### Support for skill development

*“We have got to 4 to £6 billion worth of investment down the Humber just in the first stage of carbon capture and storage. Those plants will only be built by skilled people, and we need to make sure that those skilled people being developed from now through to 2030 and to be able to go and do those jobs and those, those we’re looking at 10,000 supply chain jobs, direct jobs from our project alone.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

*“The role that mayors can play is in pulling all the strings together. At Drax, peak construction will look to have around 10,000 jobs. A lot of them we hope would come from the region. And part of that would be tying in plans with things like the adult education budget and local skills improvement plans. The mayor has a really key role and a really interesting role, in pulling together some of the wider points around housing, around infrastructure development to make sure that the region is somewhere where people can move to, can afford to live. And there’s the social and cultural aspect as well as the good economic aspect. And I think that’s the thing that really comes from a combined authority that no one else kind of operates at the scale to deliver and offers a really good opportunity for the region.”*

**Hannah Richmond, Public Affairs, Drax Power Station**

*“What we want to do is to set up a carbon capture skills group to try and work with bodies like the LEP and the new Mayoral authority to make sure we have the people for those skilled jobs for the future. We think there’ll be thousands of new roles needed and that’s what can come through successful collaboration with local government and the Mayoral Authority. We want to help lead from an industry point of view along with some of our other colleagues in the in the same sector and we want to work with the public sector because the market doesn’t know these jobs are needed yet because the projects*

*aren’t signed off. So, the only people that can really provide the advanced reskilling of the workforce is the public sector. That would be utilising things like the devolution deal to make sure that that funds those skill sectors that some of that can be put towards.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

### Involvement of the sector in carbon removal

*“Our key interest is both renewable power and carbon removals. Carbon dioxide removal from the atmosphere from 2030 and allowing York and North Yorkshire to become the first truly carbon negative region in the country. This is why it’s fundamental to the devolved administration now and a key part of what we want to discuss with the new Mayor and executive bodies as we want to ensure that they don’t lose out on this opportunity. It will also attract more inward investment as people become attracted to being in a carbon negative region.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

### Having a voice at Whitehall and beyond

*“We view devolution is very positive, especially after what we’ve seen in Teesside, Birmingham and Manchester. We believe that it will be a step forward for York and North Yorkshire. Having a single voice into government to champion the region is critical. In our opinion, one of the drawbacks of the Humber Yorkshire region being so fragmented politically that it has meant that Teesside has been able to move ahead much more quickly than Humber and Yorkshire. That’s one area where we think that will address a major shortcoming that we are dealing with currently, we have the representation of Whitehall and influence.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

## Areas of concern

### Coherent investment strategy

*“It is important to have a coherent investment strategy for both inward and external investment for the region. I have seen the detailed documents, and it all makes it all makes a lot of sense if that that strategy gets carried forward. That would*

*be a good thing for the region. It’s a very solidly built strategy and my input on this would be to that the mayoral candidates should back that. Yes, they will their own tweaks to it, but fundamentally don’t go rip it up and start again. But very solid strategy and it’s signed on to both the leaders of York and North Yorkshire council.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

### Work across the political spectrum

*“What is fundamental to the success of this devolution deal is that the mayoral candidate can work across the political spectrum, and I have witnessed it working extremely well and they should continue to build on what’s already been set up. I think the last thing that North Yorkshire and York need is a is a political, internal battle because they weren’t doing media any good, particularly not business, and it will just turn business off.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**

### Losing the local connection

*“We’re in danger of losing the local connection. We are the biggest business by a factor of X in their region. And as North Yorkshire and York are further geographically and much larger, we have to make sure that the combined authority keeps that local contact point. And then so far what we’ve seen is actually very positive and they’re keeping the old council offices and they are keeping people here. And we also have got good contact points in Northallerton, North Yorkshire and also in York, largely through my points with the LEP board, but we are hoping that that sort of thing continues. I think for the smaller businesses they may well feel that there’s a bit of a loss of local contact. This is all a concern for businesses, for example because it could be a bit harder to find who you need to speak to. Selby is a long way from Northallerton, and I think people in Craven have similar concerns and Scarborough.”*

**Bruce Heppenstall, Drax Power Station**



# West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce

*The West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce covers the cities of Leeds, Bradford, York and the region of North Yorkshire. We represent 2,500 businesses across the region.*

*The York & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce is a long-standing business representative group that principally exists to provide support to businesses, help them to start, help them to scale up, help them develop. We work alongside City of York Council, and North Yorkshire Council. We act as that critical friend. And liaising between businesses and the public sector on these challenges of transport, education, skills, environment, economy.*

## Strengths of the businesses and sectors within the Chamber

### Variety of businesses and sectors

*“North Yorkshire and the businesses within it, have the benefit of a real variety of sectors from hospitality, food processing, data, farming etc. And therefore, it a real microcosm across a vast area of UK plc. And that is a real strength. We have a cross section of businesses that are a good bellwether of the UK economy.*

*“The variety can also be a challenge. How can we bottleneck that into one offer.”*

**James Mason, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**

### Diversity of communities and people living within the region

*“Within this region we have a real diversity, and inequality, of people from big cities to rural communities that haven’t benefited yet as much from levelling up. So that gives us the ability to speak with real authority across a number of issues like public transport, education etc. Then within that, we have some real-world class businesses and sectors. Take food and drink, it is some of the best in the world.”*

**James Mason, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**

## Key asks for Devolution

### Support businesses

*“We would like the candidate to support business. Use the committed funds and have some long-term thinking. That will be brave as politics works in cycles, winning your seat and then working for long periods of time. And then trying to win again. Long term infrastructure plans around transportation and business hubs. Freeing up businesses to grow. Also freeing up inward investment opportunities. See North Yorkshire as a place that they can invest in.”*

**James Mason, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**

### Promote investment in the region

*“They need to work to show that York and North Yorkshire is and could be a place for good external and inward investment. To invest in long term. There is land. It is a big place. Much of it is not suitable for development. But it is vast. Anyone that wants to invest wants a conurbation, a workforce. We could have a long-term plan. Create new towns, new places that you could not do in other parts of the UK.”*

**James Mason, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**

### Support skill development

*“A long-term commitment to skills development, working with the education sector to ensure that the people are there. We need all sectors to feed in to develop the strategy for growth.”*

**James Mason, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**

### Make sure people are aware of the Mayoral Combined Authority

*“For the combined authority to really work, it is important that over the next few months, as the mayoral race takes shape, just making people aware that this has happened. The lay person on the street should know but it may not come into their thinking with everything else going on, cost of living crisis, wars etc. Getting people to be aware and care about it. Explain that this is a big opportunity and that it is a vote at the end of the day. If they don’t vote, or they don’t read the manifestos, they can’t come back and say that the wrong person is in. I think there is a big piece of work pre mayor being announced. And to continue banging that drum to say that the mayor will be the voice for the region at Westminster and beyond. We all have a responsibility to amplify this opportunity and to make sure that the mayor stands by the manifesto they set. We also need to explain how devolution can be a life changing opportunity. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity because of devolved power.”*

**James Mason, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**

### For the Chamber to be included in discussions

*“A key ask would be, as we’ve seen in West Yorkshire, where we have a mayoral combined authority, and in other regions, chambers of commerce have been going for 100’s of years, and we have been that trusted voice. We are independent in that we are not for profit, but are private sector led. Our boards are business owner led. We can be that voice, and any mayor could lean on us for insight, advice, opinion and constructive support and criticism when needed. Also being brought into conversations about economic strategy and policy before decisions are made. And I think we have seen in other parts of the country where that has worked well, and where it hasn’t worked well. We are well placed to be a petri dish, a test bed of thing that they are thinking of. We can also go away and do research. Along with our colleagues at the Federation of Small Businesses, and the CBI, so three business representative groups, all representing businesses of different sizes, but all important.”*

**James Mason, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**

## Areas of concern

### Importance of celebrating and maintaining diversity

*“North Yorkshire is complex. The political landscape prior today was made up of York council and North Yorkshire County council, and then they were made up of lots of smaller councils as well. Devolution has taken a period of time. It is complex. We had to win hearts and minds to make people see that this was a good thing, and that a range of places would benefit. It is important to celebrate commonalities and differences.”*

**James Mason, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**

### Ensure that the authority works together, despite political differences

*“We need to make sure we recognise that not all parties and communities will be singing from the same hymn sheet. That would be foolish. I think that there will be a lot of work, partnership working and collaboration. We need to put past differences to one side. Think of people and place first. Think about what is best for the region. What the chamber would like to see is that the mayor thinks of the region first, ahead of political ambitions and national or local politics.”*

**James Mason, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce**



## Professional Services

*The professional services sector includes businesses that require employees to have specialist training. Examples found in York and North Yorkshire include architecture practices, marketing businesses, accountants, engineering firms, and law firms.*

### Key businesses in the sector

*"There are many businesses in the sector across the region, including Andrew Jackson and Harrell in York. Knights has a presence in the accounting area. We're familiar with BHP, Clive Owen. Other professional firms, Barry Crooks and Co, I'm aware that Carter Jamison have a significant presence. I'm aware that Garness Jones have been buying into York and North Yorkshire."*

**Adam Sinclair, Andrew Jackson Solicitors**

### Key asks for Devolution

#### More investment in the city centre

*"The sector needs to get stronger and I'm hoping that devolution will allow the sector to get stronger and give York and North Yorkshire a greater prominence. It would need more investment, and more emphasis on the national stage."*

**Adam Sinclair, Andrew Jackson Solicitors**

#### Include local people and businesses in decision making

*"It will be good if local people exercise some of the local decision making. I think a little bit more about business and inward investment and strategy rather than parochial point scoring and politicking. So, I think that's a good thing."*

**Adam Sinclair, Andrew Jackson Solicitors**

#### Celebrate the services in the region

*"It may also be good to be more outward facing and to get York and North Yorkshire on the international stage to a greater extent. They have got some great attributes and great connectivity, being better known about needs to happen."*

**Adam Sinclair, Andrew Jackson Solicitors**

### Support the development of local areas

*"I'd like to see our towns and cities receive higher priority in terms of the public realm and their own sustainability, vibrancy and presentation. I know that towns and cities have had a hard time in recent years and I think that they are the lifeblood of our professional sector but also our business sector and the like. York is world-class. It is one of the region's biggest assets. But we could do better. We need to get rid of mediocrity and help York as well as places like Scarborough. Help them with investment and efficacy."*

**Adam Sinclair, Andrew Jackson Solicitors**

*"York needs to become less of a theme park and more of a business centre, more of a professional centre. And I think that's quite an exciting opportunity for it. And I think a lot of people want to live in York. We want to commute to York, they want to base their families here, and they want to study here. We need some better office space. We want York to look attractive."*

**Adam Sinclair, Andrew Jackson Solicitors**

### Improved transport network

*"We're relatively well served in a poor rail network, aren't we? In this country, York is well connected. There's no, there's no question about that. But we'd all like to see the train service improved and it has deteriorated in recent times, for various reasons. That impacts our public services. When people are coming from Selby or Richmond or Northallerton or whatever then it is challenging. York is relatively well served but other locations are not. Even in York, transport has deteriorated, as it has nationally in the last couple of years for various reasons."*

**Adam Sinclair, Andrew Jackson Solicitors**

*"I'd like to see our towns and cities receive higher priority in terms of the public realm and their own sustainability, vibrancy and presentation. I know that towns and cities have had a hard time in recent years and I think that they are the lifeblood of our professional sector but also our business sector and the like. York is world-class."*

**Adam Sinclair, Andrew Jackson Solicitors**



## Creative Sector

*The North Yorkshire region boasts a strong creative sector. Demonstrating this, York was selected as one of 25 cities worldwide by UNESCO because of its outputs in Media Arts.*

*Other global destinations that share this status include Austin, Texas; Sapporo, Japan; and Toronto, Canada. Creative outputs in York are on a par with these global destinations. Key businesses in this sector in York include Viridian FX, Orillo Films, Revolution Software, Pilot Theatre and XR Stories.*

### Strengths of the sector

#### Delivers a range of community benefits

*"The creative sector in the region can deliver different strategic outcomes beyond intrinsic values including economic development and social cohesion, job creation, talent development and innovation. Right now, the creative industries contribute £109 billions pounds to the UK economy and employs 2.3 million people. Most media arts jobs are based in London and the Southeast with 62% of the sector being located there and less than 5% of jobs in Yorkshire and the Humber."*

**Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Magazine**

*"York has a unique cultural heritage and a set of conditions that define it, and there is untapped potential, which needs collaboration, ambition and aspiration. We are regional city that needs to think nationally and internationally. The sector must be embedded into the ecosystem of the city through wide-scale visibility and genuine advocacy. We need to reinvent ourselves as a regional city that thinks nationally and internationally."*

**Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Magazine**

### Weaknesses of the sector

#### Limited investment and few long term career opportunities

*"One of our barriers is that creative industries and by extension, heritage, are not placed under the same umbrella as sectors such as retail, hospitality, transport and services. I am calling for a new focus and a reframing the sector within those parameters. I run my business just the same as any other. We all rely on supply and demand."*

**Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Magazine**

*"There are not enough jobs at present in the creative industries. Its economic impact is not understood by those in power (although that is changing) and we need to demonstrate to residents that this is a growing sector in the city. We need to legitimise careers and invest in talent development and build an environment that will support an uplift in employability."*

**Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Magazine**

### Key asks for Devolution

#### Investment in infrastructure

*"We need significant investment in the infrastructure around the creative industries to develop jobs and skills in the city to support sector development."*

**Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Magazine**

*"I am keen to look at what budget is going to be allocated to culture, creative, digital and new tech. How will that budget be allocated? What are the aims, ambitions, output and outcomes?"*

**Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Magazine**

*"We need to build a strategy around developing the Creative Industries, look for opportunities and empower people. York is a UNESCO City of Media Arts and we need to leverage that to underpin inward investment into the sector."*

**Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Magazine**

### Did you feel listened to?

#### Optimistic about change

*"I am an optimistic person, and I do think that change is happening here - there is a momentum, but we need to capture the energy and embed the sector into the fabric of the city - get residents to understand why it is important and what it means for the city. I think a lot has changed in 12 months but there needs to be more and in some ways I am the person who is driving much of this, but my time is also spent running my organisation and so I am working double / triple time to focus on sector development in the city but also run my organisation. It's a lot of work!"*

**Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Magazine**

**"York has a unique cultural heritage and a set of conditions that define it, and there is untapped potential, which needs collaboration, ambition and aspiration. We are a regional city that needs to think nationally and internationally."**  
**Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Magazine**



# Transport

*Transport is a major sector across the region. Not only is it a key employer but it also enables people to get to and from different locations for work, leisure and education.*

## Key businesses within the sectors

### Many transport organisations and support agencies

*“We work across transport with our rail colleagues, different train operating companies, the likes of Network Rail but also serving the business community as well, and along the route part of my role is working with our business groups some of our local chambers, some of the large employers to make sure that we are providing the right service for them.”*

**David Boot, LNER**

*“First Bus is the largest operator in the York market and operates the Park and Ride in partnership with City of York Council and services for the University of York. Our York depot will have a fully electric commercial fleet in spring 2024 comprising of 86 buses in a depot electrification involving investment of £13m by First Bus together with Government funding of £10.2m. In February, parent company FirstGroup completed the acquisition of York Pullman which will remain a standalone business.”*

**Andrew Cullen, First Bus**

## Strengths of the sectors

### Number of employment opportunities across the supply chain

*“Investment in electric busses is supporting continued growth of green jobs and new skills across the region.”*

**Andrew Cullen, First Bus**

*“We recruit regularly, and we see that many join and move around the business. Saying that, we are keen to do more so one thing I want to do more in the engagement role is talk to our communities more when it comes to that skills pipeline, talking to colleges, schools, people who haven’t considered a career in rail. We do get great people but we need to continue to get great people to ensure that we continue to grow as an organisation.”*

**David Boot, LNER**

### Take people where they need to be

*“Buses are key to getting people to work, education, training, social activity. Busses play a crucial role in tackling congestion and promoting modal shift.”*

**Andrew Cullen, FirstBus**

*“I guess the key strength we have is providing a fast reliable service so connecting people in the region to wider centres including London, Edinburgh and providing a network across Yorkshire and the North as well, so our great strength is providing particularly long-distance travel.”*

**David Boot, LNER**

### Improving air quality

*“Electric busses support the carbon reduction targets of the region and locally (e.g. CYC voluntary CAZ) helping improve air quality.”*

**Andrew Cullen, FirstBus**

## Weaknesses of the sectors

### When things go wrong, they go wrong spectacularly

*“Coming back from COVID, we were the first train operating company to get back to passenger numbers that were comparable to pre covid. It was great that we achieved that but the impact of COVID was severe across transport more widely. That was a huge blow to our organisation, as well as others.”*

**David Boot, LNER**

### Recruiting and training staff

*“The challenge of bus driver recruitment has settled down since the pandemic, but we still need to bring greater diversity into the workforce.”*

**Andrew Cullen, First Bus**

### Need to adapt to changing needs

*“The commuter market has changed considerably, and we have seen an increase in the leisure side particularly, but also the business side. Businesses are more aware of their impact on the environment and rather than choosing to fly from London to Edinburgh for example, they will opt to use the train, which is faster, reliable and better for the environment.”*

**David Boot, LNER**

### Rurality of the region

*“Large parts of North Yorkshire are rural. That makes it a challenge for making public transport well connected and makes it difficult to encourage people out of cars.”*

**Andrew Cullen, First Bus**

## Key asks for Devolution

### Promote collaboration

*“Embrace the existing partnership approach with other bus and transport operators. Continue to promote the collaboration between local authorities. This will be the quickest way to introduce further improvements to bus services across the region.”*

**Andrew Cullen, First Bus**

### Reduce congestion

*“It is important that the new Mayor prioritises tackling road congestion. They can do this by making bus travel a priority in towns and cities. This will also improve the reliability of services and help modal shift from cars.”*

**Andrew Cullen, FirstBus**

### Recognition of the economic impact of transport

*“What I would like to see is consideration of the importance of economic hubs. Stations have an economic benefit, with shops, it has economic activity and people moving within a region, so it’s part of that assessment of the economic impact and the benefits of having a good train service and a good train station, what does that mean for a community when it comes to economic development? So, as I say it is something we are investing money into research to understand the economic benefit of our service to a station and a region more, but anecdotally we know that there is a big impact when it comes to driving economic regeneration.”*

**David Boot, LNER**

## Areas of concern

### Need for clarity in strategic priorities

*“My question would be what the strategic priorities are when it comes to transport. I think quite often you read in the press about the particular push towards better bus services, which we would certainly support, but how does rail fit into the wider agenda because as well as providing access to a rail system, rail stations are hubs for other types of transport, so hubs for buses, cycling, other forms of transport within a community. So, my question would be how train stations, which are economic and transport hubs, fit into a wider strategy when it comes to connecting a region.”*

**David Boot, LNER**



## Summary

**There are many different sectors present in the York and North Yorkshire region, with an equally diverse array of strengths and asks for the devolution process.**

Several that arose from conversations with sector leaders were cross sectoral, with many reflecting the array of challenges that businesses in the region face. These asks include greater investment in transportation to support businesses to grow and people to access places of work, greater internal investment in the cities and towns across the region to help drive tourism, economic growth, and get the region recognised on the world stage, as well as the development of longer term strategies to support sustainability ambitions and enable business to adapt to changing environments.

## Acknowledgments

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**Andrew Morrison**, York Civic Trust

**Adam Sinclair**, Andrew Jackson Solicitors

**Bruce Heppenstall**, Drax

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**Gemma Bridge**, York St John University

**Joan Concannon**, University of York

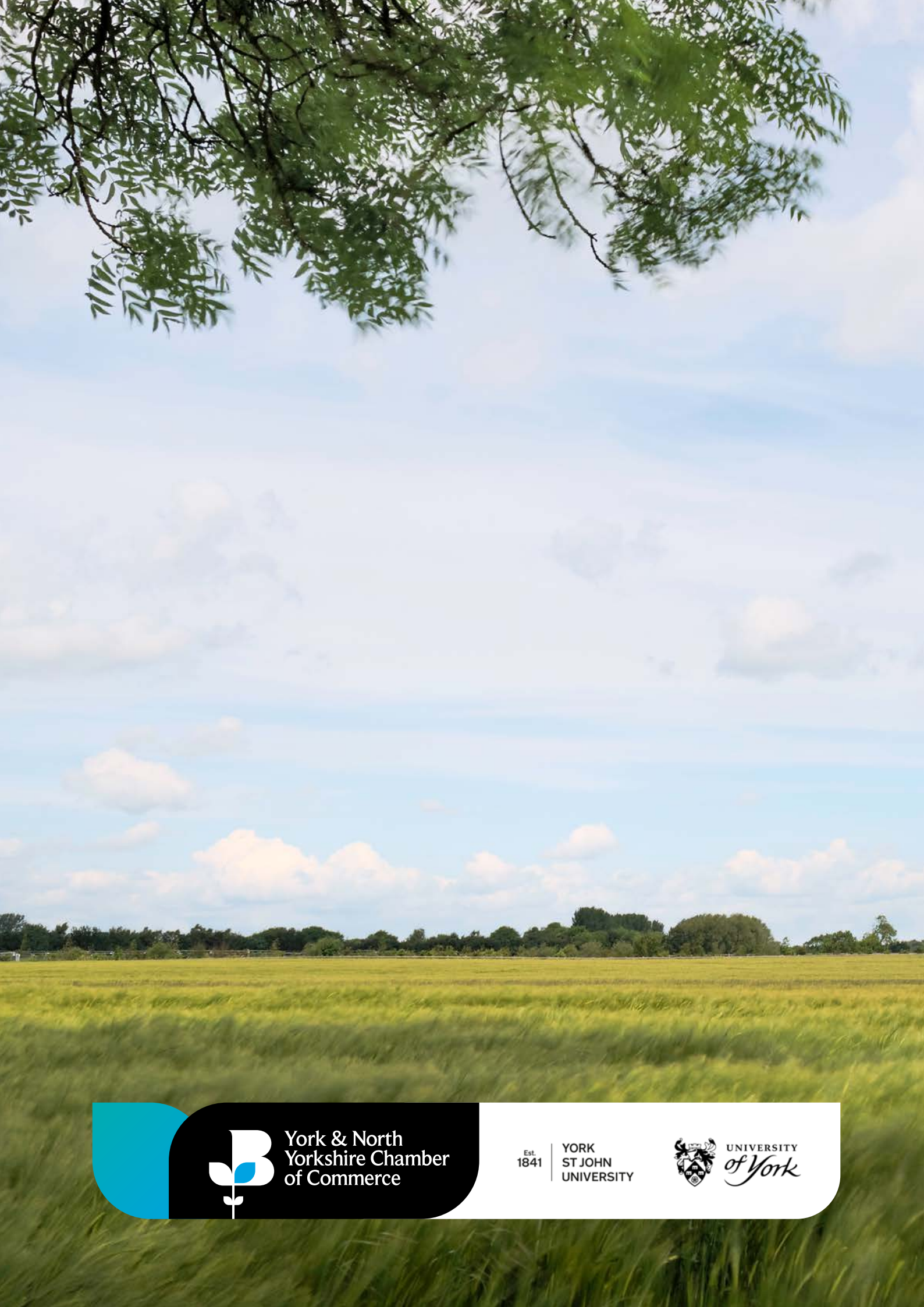
Kiran Trehan, University of York

**Mark Casci**, West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce

**Robert Mortimer**, York St John University

**Sarah Czarnecki**, York St John University





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