

## **Draft Economic Strategy for York 2022 – Comments from York Environment Forum.**

### **1. What do you like about the strategy?**

Links with the Climate Change and Health and Wellbeing strategies, so that all three can be looked at together. This is positive in that a person specialising in one field will expand their knowledge and possibly amend their outlook. On the other hand the weaknesses in one could be accepted as orthodoxy rather than being challenged.

### **2. What needs improving with the strategy?**

Understanding the economy as a system. There is little analysis of the interconnections in the economy. It requires thinking through the impact of actions – there could be negative as well as positive results, and if other necessary actions are not included the whole thing would fail. For instance this would apply to the example of low-paid hospitality job – a systems approach would look at all aspects that account for the current situation.

Look more from the perspective of people rather than the more abstract ‘businesses’, the ‘economy’, ‘workforce’ etc. People could be seen as assets and part of the solution if there are issues to be tackled. The consultation in July / August was for all residents but the strategy did not start from residents’ point of view. And remember that residents have multiple roles within the economy eg employee and consumer.

Be clear about the ‘levels’ of analysis and commentary. For instance, York is a well-connected city with good transport infrastructure for people travelling north / south on high speed trains, but not for someone finishing their hospitality shift after the last bus has gone or for anyone wanting to go east or west by train.

Concepts from Doughnut economics would be useful to analyse how reliance on outside financial investment such as for York Central will be ultimately unhelpful in tackling inequality in the city.

The issue of productivity can be seen as a failure to invest in IT or machinery, and a facet inherent to a kind of industry sector, rather than implying there is a mismatch or lack of skills amongst residents.

A greater focus on ‘green jobs’ is needed. One issue here is that traditional measurement of ‘value’ are not necessarily appropriate. The strategy needs to address this. cf Health and Wellbeing Strategy which has a more holistic analysis of impacts on health, for instance. By rethinking ‘value’ there would be a better way to compare options, such as the development of hydrogen as fuel, genetically-modified seeds, free bus travel and so on. For instance social accounting assesses outputs and outcomes on environmental, health, and social dimensions.

### **3. Is there anything lacking or that needs to be expanded on in the strategy?**

Community wealth building techniques – one would be to refer to more social enterprises and mutuals and the third sector in general, where the motivation differs from micro businesses and SMEs. And there would be local solutions to big problems that are not going to be addressed by traditional approaches, such as insulating homes, ‘staycations’ by UK citizens rather than

tourists from abroad, a circular economy approach to the food chain. This would retain money flowing around the city and neighbourhoods.

4.

Furthermore, the strategy would investigate neighbourhood approaches. There are well-established neighbourhood organisations, including Tang Hall Big Local and Clements Hall. This is one route for residents to be more involved in determining what happens in the area in which they live.

#### 4. What are your thoughts on the 5 themes?

We have reservations about some of the detail, These include:

Thinking through what a Global City means, when the next theme is a greener economy. The concept of Global City in practice needs elaborating to explain how such a city can function and stay true to the Carbon Reduction strategy.

The implication for residents not in paid jobs is that whether they thrive or not is irrelevant. This is a point for the whole strategy – how do young children, retired people and people with disabilities fit into it? There is not really any mention of social justice in the strategy.

Similarly, in the last bullet point, an ethical approach to business would look more widely than a thriving workforce and businesses. There are consumers / customers and the general public who are impacted by the actions of businesses, in both positive and negative ways..

#### 5. What are your thoughts on the key actions?

As it is a strategy for ten years, the key actions seem to fall short. Presumably there will be a more nuanced action plan, which will be clear about assumptions. For instance, to what extent will there be 'employment sites' when we have high standard digital infrastructure and York is a global city? Is there agreement on what constitutes flexible working options? In what respects are economic and social trends affected by covid, and more recently by Ukraine / Russia conflict?

6 York Environment Forum would consider being involved.

#### 7. Is there any organisation or business you think we should specifically approach with to consult with on the strategy

Women's groups, disability rights groups, trades unions if not already involved.

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