

Zoe Rawson – Visit York

Zoe : Hi everyone, my name's Zoe and I work for Visit York. We are the tourism organisation promoting York to visitors, throughout the UK and overseas as well. Can I ask first of all if we have any visitors or residents here, what do we have in the audience? Do we have any York residents, I'm assuming that's most of you? Yes, and any visitors to York? Ah, welcome to York! (Inaudible from audience) Beverley? Yes, technically that is a visitor; I'm guessing you know York fairly well. We welcome seven million visitors to York every year which is obviously quite a large number, and a huge mix of people. To make sure that we are doing our best job in making sure we provide a great experience whilst they're in York and also promoting York so people who want to come here can find all the right information and make their trip, we do various pieces of research, a big one being our annual visitors' survey. It's actually been running for nearly twenty years now and we interview on the street a thousand visitors every year whilst they're in and around York during their trip to ask them various questions such as where they come from, how long they're here for, what they're doing in York, whether they liked their trip, any things they didn't like that we could improve on, how much money they're spending here, a whole host of questions like that, and that gives us a really useful source of information so we can plan our marketing campaigns, so we can also advise on product development in the city and basic services and things like that in the city like signs and how to find your way around, provision of toilets, all the things that we take for granted but are pretty much essential for residents and visitors who are in the city. So as I said, one of the things that we like to find out is where our visitors come from, and as you can see up there a quarter of our visitors come from within Yorkshire, we get a lot of day trippers but quite interestingly we also get quite a lot of people who travel maybe only an hour or so but will stay for a weekend or longer because they love York and are intrigued by what we've got to offer them and they may not know it even though it's on their doorstep and come here for a holiday even though it's fairly local. About two thirds of our visitors come from elsewhere in the UK and we get quite a lot from the north east and north west and also from London and the south east, with good access points into York with both the A1, the M1 coming up past York and the east coast main line and going all the way up to Scotland. That overseas number is fifteen percent of our visitors, and as you can see from that little breakdown about six percent come from Europe, we get a lot of them coming from Germany and the Netherlands and also from France on various routes, either taking the ferry into Hull or coming on the Eurostar and coming up on the train or flying into Leeds, Bradford or Manchester, or taking the ferry and driving. Four percent of our visitors come from North America, a lot of them from the USA and a few from Canada as well and then a smaller number from Australia, Asia and the rest of the world. Asia is a market, although it's small in number at the moment, that is a big growth area for us. The potential if you think of the number of people who live in China for example, there's a lot of people there we could market to. So we've pulled our international marketing activity around the big established markets that we know we're getting a lot of visitors from, but also as I've said, China. These are our focus countries that our international activity is going to, North America, the Netherlands, Germany and China. We tailor our marketing messages according to country, for example we know that Chinese visitors tend to like shopping whilst they're here, especially luxury designer items so we will promote the big brand names and encourage them to come and spend a lot of money here and boost the local economy. US visitors are very much attracted to the heritage of York, which we've got a great package of here, we've got York Minster, the walls, the shambles, so much history and so it's easy to promote that message to them. Moving on now to our domestic

visitors, what do they like to do in York? The most popular activity is eating out, going out for a drink, 96 percent do that. It seems very intuitive as if you're spending the day in York you're going to get hungry, you're going to have to eat something at some point, but it's not just grabbing a sandwich on the run, it's actually enjoying a meal out and spending a reasonable amount of money on that. Visiting attractions, 86 percent of our visitors do that whilst they're here so we've got a great attraction base all of which are easy to walk around in the city centre so it's easy to see quite a few of them in a day as well. The third most popular option is simply strolling around the city and enjoying the views, the sights, the ambience of it. As you can see there we've got the shambles, we've got some great views to see and take photographs of. Shopping, three quarters of our visitors like to go shopping which obviously boosts our economy which is great and take home souvenirs. And then we get quite a few visitors who go to events and festivals, for example, Illuminating York, which is coming up next month, the Viking Festival is popular around February time, and the St Nicolas Fair before Christmas and so on. Visiting friends and relatives as well, we get quite a lot of people coming to see friends and relatives who then show them around the city whilst they're here.

Another question we ask is whether you've been before, whether our visitors are going to come again and you can see we've got some very loyal visitors. The first pie chart shows us that we've got 80 percent of our visitors have previously visited York. We've got a really loyal visitor base which is great, we know people are going to come back time and time again, we know they like York, they enjoy York, but there's always something new they want to see. In fact 78 percent of them say they are likely to return within the next two years, so it's great they're regular visitors as well. A wonderful 99 percent tell us they would recommend York to friends and family which is great because it does our marketing job for us, if other people are going to spread the word. Going back to that first pie chart, we've got 20 percent of our visitors are here for the first time, which is great, but what we want is to increase that because hopefully people who are here for the first time will catch the York bug and will come back again and spread the word and increase the pool of visitors. So this year we've done our first time campaign which we've targeted at people who have never been before and you may well have seen some online activity and social media. If you've been in London or Scotland you may have seen TV advertising or cinema advertising earlier in the year or on posters in the London railway stations or the tube. One of the things we've been providing alongside this campaign is 50 things to do on your first trip to York and here's an example of a few of them. But they're not just for your first visit to York, you might be on your second or third visit to York, you might not know that you could play croquet on the lawns at Goddards however many times you've been here, in fact you may not know that if you're a resident so hopefully that kind of information is helpful for our visitors but is also for our residents as well, 50 quirky things to enjoy while you're here, and we're actually looking to extend this list to 100 things so there's lots more little known things that we can do.

So going on that, how much do our visitors spend? As I've said we get over 7 million visitors every year and they spend over £600 million per year which is a massive boost to York's local economy. Our day visitors spend on average £35 a day per person which, when we do the maths, times by the total number of day trippers comes to £200 million a year and our staying visitors spend on average £244 a trip, again doing the maths comes to £400 million a year, obviously really valuable, staying visitors in particular so we do try to encourage people to stay a bit longer and maybe if you're thinking of coming for the day, why not stay overnight and if you're thinking of staying two nights why not try a third night? All that money supports 20 000 jobs in the city and people working in

tourism businesses, which is one in five of all the jobs in York, so that's a lot of people employed by tourism and dependent upon it for their livelihoods. Now obviously it's very important to keep promoting York and don't rest on our laurels. So, talking about those one in five people who work in York the other four in five live in York work elsewhere obviously go about their daily business here, how does it benefit our residents? You may well have seen our resident's festival; an annual weekend festival that's been running for nearly twenty years now, it's the twentieth celebration next year isn't it, which is great. Basically, if you're a York resident and you have a York card, you get free entry to all of the attractions in the city for one weekend in January, and it's a thank you from us, from the attractions in York to the residents for welcoming the visitors to York and actually one of the things we would like to thank you for is we won a few years ago Britain's most friendly city, didn't we, so that's one good draw to our visitors that you're coming to people who are going to welcome you with a smile, so we want to thank you for that. The good thing, not only about our residents being friendly, but we know that they will spread the word to York, they will have friends and relatives who will want to come and visit with them, and when their friends and relatives visit, almost all of them, 86 percent, will either recommend attractions or go and visit attractions so they are, all the time, keeping the interest alive in those. They will eat out for a meal, they will go shopping, so therefore they are encouraging their friends and relatives to spend more money, boosting the economy and giving new jobs again, and in fact one pound in every thirteen pounds that's spent on tourism by our visitors are people who are visiting friends and relatives so they are really valuable to the economy. So this is what some of our residents tell us they think about York, and tourism in York, because they know it boosts the local economy and creates jobs and they recognise it maintains the historic buildings within the tourism income from ticket receipts from the like of the minster or various other things that otherwise simply couldn't be maintained their current standard. Events and festivals that are put on are for everybody, we don't care where anyone lives as long as they want to come here and enjoy themselves and it does mean there are more facilities for everyone to enjoy as well. Unfortunately tourism is not perfect and we do recognise it causes problems as well and some of the residents tell us they feel there is more litter as a result of tourists, there's more traffic congestions, there's problems with parking and we all know parking's not great in York and the car parks are getting fuller, quicker. Knowing that this is a recognised problem by the residents means that we can go with that information to the council and try to suggest improvements for those sort of things. Crowded streets, obviously at busy times of the year the streets are going to be crowded. If anyone was here on the Tour de France day when they estimated 100,000 people in the centre of York on that day, I don't think anyone was moving very far at all, but it was a great thing to be part of. But one of the things we try to do with that is obviously we want people to come to York, but we try to suggest that they come at maybe quieter times of the year so we're not just adding more and more people on those peak days. Maybe suggest in January when the streets are quieter you can actually get round the streets a lot quicker because there are no queues., so we try to spread the load a bit. So pretty much, in a fifteen minute nutshell, that's a summary of some of things that we learn about our visitors and how we can use it to market both to York's visitors and also to help the local residents enjoy York themselves as well. I think we've got time for any questions before the next speaker arrives? Have we got any questions? Oh hello!

Audience member: Yes, has all the marketing stuff had any measurable affect?

Yes, I'll let Kate take that one.

Kate: Hi, yes it has actually, I'm delighted to say, over the last three years, beginning technically in January 2013 we've secured some funding through central government which is quite rare for us as a city marketing organisation so money's been available through the regional growth fund funded by the department of business which has facilitated the first time campaign. We measure economic impact – their measures of the success of the campaign is the number of jobs created – so that's what we're targeted to achieve. We measure that through economic impact and there's a figure developed by the Caledonian research group which says for every £54,000 spent in York equates to one new job creation. The campaign has, to date, so from January 2013 to early summer 2014, generated an additional £24 million worth of economic impact in the city, additional traffic, additional visitors that wouldn't have come had we not received that funding. So we've already beaten our jobs target, which is a massive relief because we've still got the third year to go, so it's still been a very interesting exercise and it's been independent research, clearly important that it's not just us telling our funders that the campaigns worked, but it's been carried out independently, so we've been really really pleased with that result.

Zoe: One of the other messages we had was 'travel by train', particularly with the adverts we had in London, because as we saw there, car parking is a problem, but if people are coming on the train then they're not filling up the car parks. On average about a quarter of our visitors arrive by train, but of those who saw our first time campaign and booked through that, it was over a third, so we clearly hammered that message home, 'travel to York by train' and people took it on board and booked themselves a train ticket.

Kate: And overall that's hugely important to us as east coast, the current train operator of that mainline, sponsored the campaign, so we've got some great results to give back to them, so that encouraged them to liberate more of their marketing spend with us. York performs way above average in terms of visitors by train, it's just under a fifth I think the average, and we're at a quarter to a third, which is great. Any more questions?

Zoe: Great, well thanks very much.