

# THE **YORK** NARRATIVE

How to support the York Narrative:  
Copy and tone of voice guidelines

York's rich and unique history has created many incredible stories. To do our best for the city, and help York stand out from the competition, we need to describe the stories about York in the same way. This will help people remember York the way we want to be remembered; attracting investment, funding, business and talent to make York an even better place to live, work, study, visit for everyone.

The York Narrative is a story and set of values about York which residents, visitors and businesses have told us are what York means to them. The York Narrative is York's place brand which we can use to help tell our stories and shape our actions.

Actions speak louder than words – but both matter. These value-based stories of York shouldn't be told explicitly, but be woven into what we do, what we organise, and what we say about our city. It's up to you to make this happen. These guidelines are designed to help you put the narrative into action.

Please take the time to familiarise yourself with the story behind the narrative at [The York Narrative website](#). This will help to explain why it matters, how the narrative was developed and what difference it can make to our city.

On the following page you'll find a reminder of the core values.

## **Making History Every Day**

York is abundant with cultural history and beautiful built heritage and has learnt from its past how to build better futures. When we make plans for our city, we reflect and build on these stories and are always driven to consider how today's actions will impact future generations.

## **Prioritising Human Experience**

York is a city on a human scale; large enough to have ambitious goals and provide opportunities for everyone and intimate enough that every person can make their mark. We are working together to create fair, compassionate and welcoming communities where collaboration and social vision spark grassroots action.

## **Pioneering With Purpose**

In York we lead the way, innovate and experiment with a common purpose – to make lives better at home and around the world. We have bold ideas and form local, national and international partnerships to help bring these human-centred ambitions to life.

What is tone of voice?

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Our tone of voice is how we communicate our values to our audiences. It's the language we use and the words we choose – whether we're writing or speaking.

Why does it matter?

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The way we speak influences how people think and feel about our place. If we want all of our audiences when talking about York - from residents to visitors to investors - to really understand who we are and what we stand for, then we need to communicate with them in a way that brings our values to life.

When do we need to think about it?

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Always! Tone of voice (or personality) matters for every single communication opportunity that we have with our audiences – from websites and press releases to social media messaging, emails, and face-to-face interactions. Because it has such a big role in how our place is perceived, so paying attention to personality and tone of voice is really important.

The Plain English Campaign's language rules help brands avoid unnecessary jargon and clunky phrasing that can confuse or alienate people. Referring to these rules will encourage consistency and an accessible voice across all communications – no matter who you're talking to.

- Use friendly pronouns
- Use 'we' and 'you' to help build an emotional relationship with your audience.
- Be clever with the turn of phrase rather than relying on multisyllabic words.  
If you can't say what you want in simple terms, try rearranging the sentence.
- Use everyday English whenever possible
- Use active verbs as much as possible - eg 'York declared a climate emergency in 2019' rather than 'a climate emergency was declared in York in 2019'.



## What's the best tone of voice for talking about York?

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The way we communicate should align with our narrative, and be designed around the emotions that we want to evoke in our audiences. Based on the core values, we need to show that we are:

- **People-focused; welcoming, approachable, honest, straightforward and trustworthy**
- **Focused on our future, and how it has been informed by our heritage** - can you link an event from the past with the work you are delivering now? Maybe you are following in the footsteps of a famous philanthropist or building on a history of trailblazing, maybe your event is celebrating its 10th year or your organisation its 50th, whatever it is, bringing a sense that you are building on history helps to demonstrate how you are “making history every day”
- **Always looking to improve our city for the people that live, work and visit here**
- **Always keen to tell stories of the achievements of our city** - can you introduce other voices, maybe case studies or testimonials from people who support your activities? Showing the positive impact you have on people demonstrates how you are “prioritising human experience”.
- **Forward-thinking every step of the way** - are you able to make a link to how you are changing society for the better? Maybe through a great experience, providing special facilities or because you are building relationships with entrepreneurs or innovators, if you can say how your work has made a difference to the people around you, you can demonstrate “pioneering with purpose”

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## **MAKING HISTORY, EVERY DAY**

Evolving  
Stimulating  
Beautiful  
Timeless  
Storyteller  
International reputation  
Responsible  
Multi-sensory  
Longevity  
Legacy  
Everlasting  
Historic  
Important  
Progressive

## **PRIORITISING HUMAN**

### **EXPERIENCE**

Conscious  
Humane  
Considerate  
Nurturing  
Unity  
Creative  
Grassroots  
Friendly  
Welcoming  
Social  
Personable  
Inclusive  
Generous  
A Compact City

## **PIONEERING WITH PURPOSE**

Socially Aware  
Visionary  
Independent  
Determined  
Influential  
Open-Minded  
Knowledgeable  
Proactive  
Productive  
Global Impact  
Bold  
Innovative  
Benefitting Society  
Brave  
Risk-Taking