

Immediate Release

Strengthening Our Yorkshire Together Message with an Online Yorkshire Marketplace – a message from James Mason, Welcome to Yorkshire CEO

With the second lockdown underway, with the control of Covid-19 paramount in everyone's minds, these are tumultuous times. It is critical that we unite in our efforts and do all we can to protect and future proof our businesses and inter-connected industries, whether that's promoting our destination for tourism, a lifestyle, work opportunities or places to study.

I have met with so many business owners over the last nine months that have had to shift/bend/pivot their business models in order to survive the impact of Covid. Their tenacity, creativity and relentless passion has shone through every time, which is inspiring and just goes to show, that if we can get through it once, we can get through this again.

The most recent announcement by the Chancellor on the furlough scheme extended to March 2021 will go a long way in providing a safety net that will hopefully see many businesses continue to survive the next five months, along with projecting jobs for their skilled and dedicated teams. The most relevant KPI (Key Performance Indicator) for most businesses right now is survival.

Here at Welcome to Yorkshire, our role is to support our members and the tourism industry now and into the future. As an immediate measure, we have created a market place on our website, which receives over 250,000 visits each month, and can be promoted across our social media channels regularly reaching millions of people. On here, members can promote their online commercial opportunities, be it products to buy now for Christmas and birthday gifts, or vouchers for future visits and stays when out of lockdown.

Analysing our own website traffic and when speaking with many of you, we know that amid uncertainty, travellers are placing greater importance on pre-trip planning. Yorkshire is poised for rising demand, with our county celebrated by the travel media for our wide-open spaces, arts, culture, heritage, culinary excellence and emerging wellness centres. I truly believe, that despite the immediate challenges we face, there is much we can get excited about.

International travel corridors continue to be restricted or opening precariously, which means our focus for the next six months must ride on the success of this year's

domestic staycation. What we can observe in this new context, is that travellers are looking to optimise their limited travel opportunities, opting for longer more meaningful holidays over shorter trips. Short-term rentals, which were once being booked for 3-5 days, are now trending at 8-9 days with a focus on multiple day trips from one hub, and with experiences at the core of those decisions. Yorkshire delivers this in spades.

We will look to amplify that message through VisitBritain's campaigns over autumn and winter months. We will also be launching our own #Walkshire campaign for 2021 to confirm Yorkshire as the Walking capital of the world. We will continue to promote the great outdoors as well as shine a new light on many familiar visitor attractions, towns and cities, with suggestions for every day of the year that will appeal to short, medium, long and challenging walks exploring every corner of our wonderful county.

On Yorkshire Day this year, we launched our Personal Membership scheme, aimed at people who have an emotional connection to the county. In the first month alone, we attracted over 1000 personal members, with Welcome to Yorkshire planting a tree on behalf of these members at a site in Yorkshire. While the scheme was initially designed with the aim to promote responsible tourism, transpiring out of this are the heart-warming stories behind the tree dedications on behalf of loved ones near and far, present or passed away, whereby that compassionate connection to their "own little piece of Yorkshire" goes a long way and forges future loyalty to the county.

Longer term, with a view to attracting the international traveller to the UK, and in our case specifically to Yorkshire, it's imperative that we work collectively to bring the spread of the virus under control and show the world that we are covid-secure environment in which they can feel safe and reassured. Instilling confidence in the domestic and international remains crucial and as long as we all work together, this challenge can and will be overcome. Our 'Yorkshire Together' attitude has never been so important.

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Images:

Welcome to Yorkshire- Director of Strategic Delivery – James Mackenzie

Editors' Notes:

- **Welcome to Yorkshire** is the official destination management organisation for Yorkshire, working to grow the county's visitor economy.
- **Welcome to Yorkshire** is a not-for-profit membership organisation, funded in part by grants, sponsorship and Welcome to Yorkshire members. All money raised is reinvested directly back into promoting Yorkshire.
- Key facts include:
 - Tourism in Yorkshire is worth £9 billion annually with the county's tourism and hospitality industry employing almost 225,000 people
- Tag **Welcome to Yorkshire** in any coverage on Twitter and Facebook using our handles: @welcome2yorks and <https://www.facebook.com/welcometoyorkshire>

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