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Hats off to an unforgettable 50+ Festival

As we close this year's 50+ festival, the memories live on

Eighteen days, more than 150 events and over 80 activities - what a celebration! As the 21st Festival draws to a close, we're reflecting on an extraordinary showcase of community spirit, connection and discovery that is helping make York a more connected and inclusive place.

From walking rugby and conservation activities to pub walking tours, choirs, yoga and even a Goon Show enactment, the Festival has offered something for everyone whilst celebrating the interests, talents and diversity of the 77,000 people aged over 50 who make up such an important part of our city.

Addressing the closing celebration event, Rachael Maskell MP said: *"The Festival is truly inspirational, bringing people together, tackling isolation and creating opportunities for older people to connect, learn and thrive. A third of the population in York is over 50. You are trailblazers, showing us what an age-friendly community can be.* ***Where else but in York could we see such a wonderful celebration of community*** *and possibility? Thank you for everything you do to make the city a wonderful place to grow older."*

Councillor Margaret Wells, The Lord Mayor of York expressed: *"**Some people worry about ageing, but not me - not here, and certainly not with you!** Ageing is about turning the page to a new chapter, embracing new opportunities and continuing to live life to the fullest. It's about discovering new interests and enjoying every moment. Every second, two people somewhere in the world celebrate their 60th birthday, and that's something to celebrate!"*

Matthew Knight, Chair YOPA and chair of the 50+ Festival organising committee reflected: *"At its heart, the 50+ Festival is about creating connections, trying something new and celebrating everything our community has to offer. None of this would be possible without the generosity and support of our volunteers and sponsors, to whom we*

extend our heartfelt thanks. Your support helps make the Festival such a special and meaningful celebration for our whole city."

Carl Wain, Deputy Chief Executive, Age UK York highlighted: *"The Mad Hatter parade has been described as the best ever! Having a theme really helped bring everyone together, and our Age UK York social clubs created some truly wonderful hats. It was also a lovely example of intergenerational working in action, with the tree created by the Knavesmire Cool Kids adding another special dimension to the celebrations."*

Jessica Forsdyke, Business Relations Manager, Clifton Park Hospital, Festival sponsors added*: "We're delighted to sponsor the Festival and recognise the huge amount of work that goes into delivering such a diverse programme. As a specialist orthopaedic facility, we support NHS and private patients with a wide range of services, from joint and back care to MRI, physiotherapy and surgery. For us, pain is about more than the symptom itself; it's about what it stops you doing and what matters most to you. The Festival is a wonderful showcase of everything happening in York and we're proud to be part of it."*

This year has seen some exciting new additions to the programme, including *Beat the Boat*, which brought together over 40 runners and a further 40 people on the boat. We also held our first Information Fair at York Theatre Royal, with two floors of stalls providing valuable information and opportunities for organisations across the city to connect and network.

Our IDOP day was hugely successful, too. The Mad Hatter parade was a particular highlight, with everyone looking resplendent in their wonderfully imaginative hats. It was a real joy to be part of, bringing smiles to faces and prompting some wonderfully bemused expressions from those watching us pass by!

Our friendship lunches at the Chopping Block were another lovely way to bring people together, while OCAY hosted a community advocacy forum, creating valuable opportunities for discussion, connection and collaboration.

We were delighted to be joined by the Musical Connections Rolling Tones choir at our closing celebration, who treated us to a wonderful selection of songs, including the African welcome song Funga Alafia, a Canadian folk song, On Ilkley Moor Baht 'at, Cat Stevens' Moonshadow and the gospel favourite Down in My Soul. It was a joyful reminder of the power of music to lift spirits and make everyone feel good.

Festival reflections: Highlights and memorable feedback:

- We're involved in the festival because it shows we're not dead yet!
- It's quite remarkable what YOPA achieves.
- Thanks to the Festival, I've updated my will following the excellent Crombie Wilkinson solicitors sessions
- My own mother celebrated her 89th birthday this week, so supporting and celebrating older people is something that feels very close to my heart.
- The Festival is a wonderful showcase of everything happening in York and we're proud to be part of it.
- The sunny afternoon in the Museum Gardens created such a lovely buzz, and it was a real pleasure to share what we do with people passing by.
- Hearing the choir sing brought such an incredible sense of joy.
- Growing older shouldn't mean simply getting old and slowing down; it should be about living life to the fullest, staying connected with others, and doing things that lift our spirits and make us feel alive.

Find out more https://www.yorkassembly.org.uk/50-festival-26/

For latest updates, follow us on

Ends

Contact ali@hornseyconsulting.co.uk for individual photos



L-r Rachael Maskell MP, Councillor Margaret Wells, Jessica Forsdyke, Carl Wain, Dianne Willcocks

About YOPA
York Older People's Assembly (YOPA) is an independent local charity which has advocated for, celebrated and supported older people across York and North Yorkshire since 2001. We are an organisation of older people, for older people and we work to achieve full citizenship for diverse older people across and within the wider community.
We aim to:

- Represent the views of older people in York to decision makers locally and nationally.
- Inform older people about services that are available.
- Identify where needs are not being met.
- Work with the local authority and others to make York an age-friendly city

As part of the 50+ Festival, this is the third year in which YOPA has successfully led a city-wide collaborative for International Day of Older People.

About Age UK York
Age UK York is an independent local charity which has been working in the local community to help older people for over 50 years. We have 100 dedicated staff and over 400 volunteers helping us to deliver services and activities for older people in York. Age UK York provides free, confidential and impartial information and advice on a range of issues relating to older people and those who care for and support them.

We offer a wide range of services to older people in York to enable them to live better lives. This includes information and advice, benefits and money advice, befriending services, carer respite service, Day Clubs and Home From Hospital support. All our work is aimed at improving the lives of older people in York. Age UK York encourages older people to speak out about local and national issues. We are here to make more of life in York.

About the International Day of Older People
Each year on October 1, people across the world mark United Nations International Day of Older People to raise awareness of opportunities and challenges faced by ageing populations, and to mobilise the wider community to address challenges faced by older people. The theme for 2025, is the role older people play in creating resilient, sustainable societies.