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**Title:** Identifying and Overcoming the Barriers to Sustainability in York, UK.

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**Policy Recommendations:**

- York's anchor organisations favouring social benefits in procurement decisions such as asking providers to pay the Living Wage or create apprenticeships.
  - Favouring of the social economy (social enterprises, co-operatives, etc.) and SMEs within such procurement decisions to retain more wealth locally, increasing economic sustainability in York, thereby allowing a broader focus on the environment in the policies of the city.
  - Supporting of the social economy through providing credit, creation of supply-chains and aiding worker buy-outs when existing owners choose to sell.
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**Methodology:** 29 interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and policymakers in York to understand sustainability related issues in the city. From these findings, three barriers were identified to York becoming more sustainable: a cultural and economic conservatism stemming from the built heritage; the lack of a social economy; and, a political instability in City of York Council (CYC), resulting in the lack of long-term vision for the city. Furthermore, five related sub-problems were identified: a lack of affordable housing; insufficient sustainable transport; income inequality; inadequate recycling provisioning; and, a lack of renewable energy production. Consequently, case-study cities were identified from which lessons may be learned how to overcome these barriers in which, subsequently, 50 interviews were conducted: Bath (built heritage and political instability); Bristol (social economy); Edinburgh (built heritage, social economy and political instability); Plymouth (social economy and political instability); and, Preston (social economy).

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**Research Overview:** York's built heritage was frequently discussed to be providing the foundation upon which the city is a pleasant place in which to live whilst affording a tourism related economic base. However, these circumstances were thought to create a cultural and economic lack of drive for innovation. Meanwhile, the tourism related employment was said to be low-paid and, due to high house prices in York, was thought to be socially unsustainable. The Bath and Edinburgh case-studies demonstrate that when tourism contributes towards, as opposed to dominates a local economy, a city avoids many of the problems associated with, and enjoys many of the benefits of built heritage. Accordingly, economic shifts elsewhere in York may also reduce a cultural imperative to conserve, potentially allowing a more innovative culture.

In each case-study city, reaching a level of economic sustainability was a priority and, whilst nuanced, was a prerequisite for a city to be able to have a focus on the environment. For instance, the strong economy in Bristol was thought to allow the existing environmental culture, with foci around recycling, renewable energy, and cycling, to be prioritised. Therefore, should there be greater economic sustainability in York, in addition to cultural shifts, this may allow for a greater focus on the environment: within York there are concerns regarding flooding and air pollution around which to create an environmental imperative in the minds of York's citizens and gain support for wider environmental policies. Furthermore, the environmental culture in York has priorities around the lack of renewable energy production and poor recycling provision in the city, that may also be the focus of such policies. Meanwhile, in a feedback effect, cultural shifts may increase political consistency within CYC, therefore also increasing its ability to resolve the city's five related sub-problems.

The Bristol and Plymouth case-studies demonstrate the wider sustainability related benefits of the social economy, for example on economic resilience and income equality. This contrasts with the business culture in York that was thought to be almost exclusively privately owned and profit orientated. In Preston, however, there was a strategy led by the council, though also involving anchor organisations, such as the hospital and university, to consider wider benefits in the procurement of services, with a particular focus on encouraging co-operatives – that were thought retain more wealth in the local area whilst democratising the economy and providing greater social benefits – in what has been termed, 'community wealth building'. Consequently, between 2012 and 2017 locally retained spend within Preston increased from 5% to 18.2% and within Lancashire from 39% to 79.2%.

Whilst the encouragement of a social economy in York may reduce an economic reliance on tourism, it may also reduce what was a commonly referenced problem in the city: income inequality. This was thought to stem from the dichotomy of the highly paid, educated nature of much of the employment contrasting with the disproportionately large tourism related employment, in addition to a relative lack of middling, manufacturing jobs. Furthermore, by there being more of a focus on the potential wider sustainability benefits that may come from business in York, this may affect the existing business culture from being purely profit driven to have a social licence to operate.

Therefore, there are policies eminently available to York's policymakers to overcome the three barriers to sustainability and the five sub-problems the city was identified as possessing. Through an encouragement of the social economy in the procurement practices of York's anchor organisations this may lead to cultural and economic shifts away from an identity based around the built heritage. Accordingly, in addition to reducing income inequality, through such shifts there may also be broader cultural and political shifts that allows York to develop a more sustainable transport system, provide greater recycling provisioning, encourage more renewable energy production, and build more affordable housing in the city.