



YHA Strategy 2020

Conversation document

YHA's Strategy 2020 is a 10-year journey to our centenary in 2030, and the outline of our priorities for the next five years. This is the first step in that direction of travel.

We welcome your views on the draft proposals set out here.



Working towards Strategy 2020

Welcoming almost one million guests each year, YHA's network of hostels is the route to a world of experiences, providing affordable places at which anyone and everyone can find adventure and enrichment.

YHA is a leading charity in a strong financial position. We have a history to be proud of, a trusted brand and a loyal membership. We are a youth organisation, but we serve all ages – providing adventures, opportunities and employment. We own and maintain properties of local significance and protect access to heritage.

We are not primarily an environmental organisation, but we are well placed to contribute to the protection of the natural world. We are not a mental health organisation, but residentials, physical activity, being outdoors and culture all lead to greater wellbeing. We are not a hotel chain, but we must maintain the highest standards for overnight stays, food and customer service.

We are big, we are diverse, and we are stable. This strategy focuses on making the most of our assets and capabilities to achieve greater impact for all we meet – but we will target especially those who would benefit from our effort the most.

Finding our future in our past

In 2020, the year of our 90th birthday, we will return to our roots. In 1930, we were born of social reform – a determination to improve the lives and life-chances of young people living in crowded, polluted cities, and lacking access to activity, adventure, fresh air. Today, that's a situation many young people still find themselves in. The issues that faced our founders are still relevant today.

Building on all that's been

Our last strategy has been a real success. It focused on putting YHA on a firm commercial and operational footing. This foundation allows us to lift our sights for the future. We're in impressive shape: we top the

Hostelling International list for customer satisfaction. We can already see – in our hostels, in our people, and in our supporter base – the potential to achieve even more.

If the last 10 years has been about modernising our business, the next 10 will be about modernising our mission and becoming a leading national charity for young people.

Strategy 2020 is based on a review of our existing impact – launched in tandem with this conversation document – and on ongoing discussions with staff, beneficiaries, members, partners and funders. YHA's Board has approved the direction of travel. What we need now is a conversation with you, and all others with an interest in YHA, to help determine our next steps.

We remain committed to our charitable object:

To help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside, and appreciation of the cultural values of towns and cities, particularly by providing youth hostels or other accommodation for them in their travels, and thus to promote their health, recreation and education.

Refreshing our vision and mission will see us into the future

We want revised versions to reflect our ambitions for the strategy. We are looking to refocus/refresh our vision and mission to see us into the future. These need to be aspirational but achievable. We are exploring whether that could or should be as bold as to say that:

Our vision

In 2038, every 18-year-old in England and Wales will enter adulthood having experienced the positive impact of YHA. They will have lifelong access to hostelling as their route to a world of affordable, sustainable travel.

Our mission

To significantly enrich the lives of all, especially young people, through the provision of brilliant hostel stays and experiences.

Our established messaging remains

We are YHA.

We transform young lives forever through travel and real adventure.

Because where you go changes who you become.

We have a 150,000-strong membership base, very many of whom are older, established adults with a lifelong relationship with hostelling. Our members know first-hand that where they have been has changed who they have become.





Our theory of change

Access to the outdoors, nature, culture, volunteering, training and employment opportunities all have an evidenced positive impact on life outcomes.

Evidence also shows us that many people are increasingly disconnected from these things.

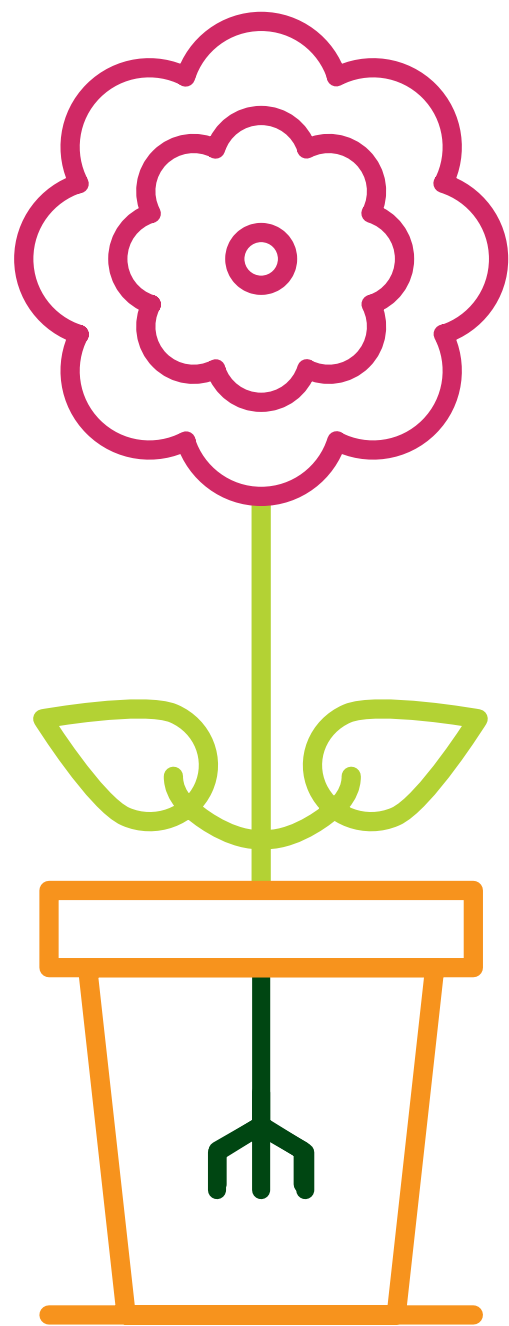
Using our places and spaces we connect people to each other, to nature and heritage, and to activities that support the development of essential skills for work and life.

By doing this we support improvements to people's physical health, sense of mental wellbeing, life skill development and employment prospects.

Through our network of hostels and as part of a worldwide movement we will:

- offer inclusive experiences that enable access to the outdoors, nature, culture and heritage for all, especially young people
- target additional support to reach those with the fewest opportunities and the most to gain
- offer more programmes that develop life and work skills – through residentials and a varied programme of work experience, volunteering and flexible employment
- ensure our places and spaces foster connections between people – young and old, across all sections of society in England and Wales and beyond

Overall, we want to grow so that more people stay with and experience YHA - including a higher proportion of young people, especially the most disadvantaged - and we make greater impact with each stay and experience.



In the next five years we will focus our impact on four core areas:

Developing the individual	Strengthening community
improving wellbeing, lifeskills and employability	growing community cohesion
Building our sector	Responsible YHA
building charitable trust, growing the hostelling movement	taking care of our places and spaces, ensuring we are sustainable

Underpinning this is the principle of social inclusion. All must mean all.

The top priority driving our work over the next five years will be to ensure that YHA is for everyone, particularly focusing on under 26s and proactively targeting our efforts on those with challenging lives.

Explaining our priorities and examples of what they might mean in practice

Developing the individual: improving health and wellbeing, life skills and employability

Our primary output, this is our core social value and the greatest measure of our success.

We will:

- have a universal self-led offer in every hostel that encourages a range of physical activity for every guest
- develop programmes that can support access to the outdoors and heritage building on the 110,000 young people a year that already access education and youth work with us
- build the YHA Campus, linking together our offers across work experience, traineeships, apprenticeships, volunteering and career paths within YHA

Strengthening community: growing community cohesion

In a disconnected society, we will bring people together in our places and shared spaces. Because developing the individual goes hand in hand with bolstering the community in which they live, work and play.

We will:

- consider where our hostels are located, their accessibility, affordability and the way their design is reflective of a broad range of worlds, language, images and concepts
- offer specific programmes around supporting intergenerational and cross-community interaction
- look at how more hostels can develop as community assets supporting wider participation

Building our sector: building charitable trust, growing the hostelling movement

How we do things matters. By being transparent and responsible we will become a model for the sector, building faith in charity again and growing our supporter base. We will play a leading role in building the hostelling movement at home and internationally.

We will:

- benchmark ourselves against the very best of the sectors we work in – including charity, social enterprise, hospitality, capital infrastructure, youth, education and outdoor activities – and publish our results
- be the leading hostelling organisation in the world and support the international movement
- rebrand the hostelling cause for the contemporary context, holding onto our historical values and taking them to a new generation

Responsible YHA: taking care of our places and spaces, ensuring we are sustainable

We are one of the largest social enterprises in England and Wales, managing a portfolio of extraordinary properties for the benefit of all. We will build on this, efficiently and sustainably.

We will:

- continue to create an annual surplus that allows us to maintain world leading hostel standards, invest in our capital portfolio, develop our people and introduce new programmes for impact
- invest in sustainability as a strategic priority and consider environmental impact across all of our work
- work in partnership with environment organisations to connect those that stay, visit, volunteer and work with us to existing environmental campaigns and programmes

Where does our confidence come from?

- We already run 150 hostels, wonderful places and spaces, and we're rated as the number one organisation in the world for guest satisfaction by Hostelling International.
- We are one of the largest and most successful social enterprises in England and Wales. Through efficient operation of our network, the revenue we make covers the bulk of our costs meaning we are stable and, with this, able to use fundraised income to further support our impact and ambitions.
- We already work with almost one million people a year. Almost half of these guests are under 26 and we provide activities to over 110,000 young people each year.
- We have more than 150,000 members whose contributions support our work and whose voices shape our governance.
- We are part of an international hostelling movement and have 90 years of experience.
- We have 1,341 amazing employees and 3,679 active volunteers.
- We work with wonderful partners.

So what's next and how can you help?

We welcome your views and feedback on both our impact review and this, our emerging strategy.

You can share your thoughts, questions and comments:

on Twitter [@YHAOfficial](#) using [#YHAStrategy2020](#)

at yha.org.uk/strategy2020 or via email to strategy2020@yha.org.uk

All feedback is welcome, but in particular:

- Are these priorities right? Are they in the right order? Are we missing anything?
- What do you think about the vision and mission?
- How ambitious should we be?
- How could you or your organisation help us achieve or goals?

We'll publish a summary of feedback in autumn and will use this to shape our final strategy and business plan. These plans will be approved by the YHA Board of Trustees – who are elected by our members – and will form the basis of our work from 1st March 2020.

Look out for the final strategy in spring 2020, the first milestone in our 90th anniversary celebrations.

Thank you for continuing to support YHA.

Ready to play a bigger part in helping us realise our ambitions over the next 10 years?
Get in touch, we'd welcome a discussion.

Visions of 2030: What we could be saying about YHA in 10 years' time

"YHA provides inclusive adventures in unique buildings in amazing places. We connect people to each other, to nature and to heritage. We are the leading hostel provider in the world.

We are one of the largest social enterprises in the UK. We are proud to be a charity. We are proud to have pioneered sustainable tourism and to have reinvented it for our times.

We are one of the leading youth and education charities. We have a presence in every school in England and Wales and work with teachers and youth workers to support access to a rich and rounded curriculum and learning outside the classroom.

We have supported the personal development of young adventurers leading them to new interests in nature and heritage; skilling them to support both themselves and their communities and connecting them to others who share the values of the hostelling movement.

At a time when it is increasingly difficult to navigate careers - and with growing gaps in life chances - we have led the way in developing the skills of young people. We have helped them support their own employability. We have helped them develop as active and connected citizens; citizens of their community and their country, Europe and the world. Thousands of young people have used the YHA Campus to develop their life chances and many have secured jobs across the charity, hospitality, outdoor activities, heritage and education sectors.

In a world where people were increasingly disconnected from each other, from nature and from heritage, we have used our shared spaces in a network of both historic and contemporary buildings to help people find themselves, find each other and find new passions.

We can evidence that our work improves mental wellbeing and physical activity and we now play a key part in the health of England and Wales.

We have introduced a generation of citizens to the outdoors and to a fierce desire to protect the environment. We have done this through our presence in the National Parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty; through the access to the outdoors that all our hostels provide - across cities, countryside and the coast; and through our partnerships with environmental charities.

We are recognised as one of the leading guardians of access to heritage and our places and spaces are loved across all parts of society.

We have raised the bar on charity transparency and efficiency. We are one of most trusted charities in the UK.

Our workforce and Board reflect the communities we serve. We have bridged not just the gender pay gap but the gap across all protected characteristics. Our investment in people has benefitted us, the wider community and the industries that we are part of.

And we have redefined the hostelling movement to be a high profile and well-connected cause-based community - placing hostelling at the heart of civil renewal."