



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

York Minster's newly refurbished Grand Organ will be blessed on Sunday (7 March) and played at services throughout Lent following the completion of work on a once-a-century project.

A prayer will be said for the organ during the cathedral's livestreamed Eucharist service at 11am, before it is played for the first time during worship since 2018.

The blessing is the first step in marking the completion of the £2m refurbishment project, allowing the instrument to be played at services throughout Lent before the dedication of the organ by the Archbishop of York at Evensong on Easter Day (Sunday 4 April).

The instrument was last played during worship in October 2018 before work began to remove the organ, including nearly all of its 5,000 plus pipes, so it could be taken to organ specialists in Durham for cleaning, repair and replacement.

The work has included bringing the majority of the organ's 102 decorative case pipes back into use, which have been silent since the last major refurbishment in 1903.

Robert Sharpe, York Minster's Director of Music, said: "We're delighted to be able to bring the Grand Organ back into regular use at the heart of worship at the cathedral. It will be a gentle return in March due to the solemnity of the season of Lent, but building to a celebration on Easter Day when the organ will be dedicated by the Archbishop of York.

"The refurbishment preserves the unique sound of the Minster's organ whilst renewing its mechanism. Work has included bringing many of the 102 case pipes which have been silent since 1903 back into use and restoring the grander, imposing qualities of the instrument which were altered during work in the 1960s.

"Organ music has played a central role in worship at York Minster for nearly 1,000 years and we hope this project will help ensure that tradition continues throughout the 21st century and beyond."

The work to refurbish the organ, which dates from the early 1830s and is one of the largest cathedral organs in the country, weighing approximately 20,000kg, has been completed by Durham-based organ specialists Harrison and Harrison.

The team removed the organ in October 2018 and transported it to their warehouse in Durham so they could undertake work to replace the organ's mechanism and clean and overhaul the instrument.

In 2019 and early 2020 parts of the organ were returned to the Minster, including the 102 decorative case pipes which are among the oldest surviving pipes in the organ, dating from 1832.

During the refurbishment 30 of the original case pipes were found to be beyond economic repair and were replaced, with the originals auctioned to help raise funds to support the project.

In autumn 2019 and early 2020, graining and marbling specialists Robert Woodland & Son cleaned and repainted the original case pipes and decorated the new, replacement pipes to match the originals.

Work on the refurbishment project briefly paused in March 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, before the instrument was rebuilt between June and October 2020.

Between November 2020 and February 2021 experts worked to 'voice' the organ, a process which involves making sure all 5,000 pipes play the correct note, pitch and volume.

The project has also included creating a new music library underneath the organ, behind the Pulpitum – known as the Kings' Screen - the 15th century stone screen which separates the Minster's Quire from the Nave.

The organ will be dedicated by the Archbishop of York at an Evensong service on Easter Day (Sunday 4 April) and a programme of events to celebrate the organ's return will be announced later this year.

York Minster is currently livestreaming its Sunday services at 11am and 4pm each week via its website at www.yorkminster.org and will reopen for public and private worship from Sunday 14 March.

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