



As COP 27 today draws to a close, major plans for York Minster to generate its own electricity through renewable energy have taken a step forward.

The first of the major cathedrals to do so, the Minster proposes to install 199 photovoltaic panels on the roof of the South Quire Aisle, which originally dates from 1361 but was renewed after the 1829 fire, producing 75,000 kilowatt-hours of power every year.

Light captured from the sun by the panels during daylight hours will be converted into electricity and used to power the cathedral's evening services and events.

A planning application for the installation, led by historic building specialists Caroe Architecture, has today been submitted to City of York Council. It will be the largest of its type on any cathedral in the UK and will follow other similar successful projects at Bradford, Gloucester and Salisbury cathedrals.

The panels, which will be able to be glimpsed at ground level but will not detract from the cathedral's architecture or heritage values, will support its ambitions to achieve operational net zero carbon, as outlined in its adopted Neighbourhood Plan, which sets out a 15-year route map to create a sustainable future for the Precinct.

The application, which follows extensive consultations between York Minster and key stakeholders, including City of York Council and Historic England, comes as the Minster, like many others, faces significant increases in the cost of energy.

It is estimated that in 2023 the annual gas and electricity costs to heat and power not only the cathedral itself but the many surrounding buildings that make up its wider Precinct could triple.

The planning application follows the successful installation and operation of solar tiles on the roof of the Precinct's Refectory earlier this year, marking the first time that solar tiles have been placed on a listed building in the city and already producing 11,000 kilowatt-hours of power a year.

Alex McCallion, Director of Works and Precinct at York Minster, said: "With a climate emergency having been recognised worldwide and City of York Council having set an ambition for York to be a net zero carbon city by 2030, alongside a similar pledge by the Church of England, it is timely that we are submitting this important planning application as the COP 27 conference reaches its conclusion.

"We have committed to taking a lead on addressing the climate emergency through the implementation of our Neighbourhood Plan and have been very clear that the greatest threat to the fabric of our historic Minster, the Precinct and our many heritage properties are extreme weather events brought about by climate change.

"We are extremely proud of this application and the positive impacts it will bring, and I invite City of York Council to please support this fundamental project to allow the Chapter of York at York Minster to play its part as we move towards our net zero goal."

The Dean of York, the Very Revd Dominic Barrington, said: "Through our Neighbourhood Plan we have set a clear policy-led approach that is not only making positive improvements to the cathedral for both its benefit and that of the city, but is also setting a guiding example for others to

follow in how heritage estates address climate change.

“We believe that this well-placed, carefully judged and justified photovoltaic installation on the roof of the Minster is a fundamental part of this vision. The installation, which is sensitive to the Precinct’s historic architecture, will be celebrated inside with a panel displaying the energy production and carbon savings, and we welcome the fact people will be able to glimpse the panels and understand their importance to the Minster’s sustainable future.”

Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, said: “The message from COP27 is that everyone has a role to play in effectively implementing the ambitious climate action required to meet the urgent needs of the planet.

“York Minster has already committed to taking a lead on addressing the climate emergency through the implementation of its Neighbourhood Plan, and this installation if approved will go a huge way in supporting the future care and conservation of this significant monument.”

For more information about the York Minster Neighbourhood Plan, visit: <https://yorkminster.org/about-us/master-planning/>.

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