

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COYCHURCH CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

FRIDAY 8TH MARCH 2019

REPORT OF THE CLERK & TECHNICAL OFFICER

PIPE ORGAN REPAIRS

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Joint Committee on repairs required to the pipe organ in Crallo Chapel at Coychurch Crematorium and to seek approval for improvement and maintenance works.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priorities:-
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Crematorium is an important work by a British architect of international reputation (Maxwell Fry) and is Grade 2* listed. As such, any work to the existing fixtures and fittings must be carefully considered.
- 3.2 The pipe organ located in Crallo Chapel (the larger chapel) was assembled during the construction of the Crematorium in 1970. The organ was built by the distinguished company N P Mander (of St Peters Square, London) and other than minimal remedial work and the addition of pipes, the instrument remains as built.
- 3.3 Over the past few years the electro-mechanical switching sited in the rear of the console has been failing and causing additional costs during tuning visits. In 2016 the Crematorium's organ tuners advised that future reliability is only possible if the failing components are replaced with modern Solid State. It was also recommended to fit supports under the passage board to improve safety when accessing the Great organ during tuning. At the meeting on 3rd March 2017 the Joint Committee approved the Business Plan that included funding for minimal repairs to the organ for an estimated sum of £20,000.00. The

repairs were postponed from 2017/18 to 2018/19 in order to fully assess the repair requirements and procurement methodology.

- 3.4. The organ is now approaching its 50th birthday and is used at least as frequently as the cathedral sized organs in the care of N P Mander.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 The original organ builders, N P Mander, now Manders Organs Ltd, were consulted in October 2018 and they were invited to carry out a thorough investigation of the organ. Their report recognises the organ to be worthy of preservation and it recommends that it should be rendered as mechanically reliable as possible for as long as is possible.
- 4.2 The report draws attention to the age and condition of the low-voltage switchgear in the console, reasonably pointing out that the more time that the Crematorium's organ tuner spends per visit on cleaning and adjusting contacts, the less time that is available for the actual tuning. The pedal contacts are also proving to be erratic and unreliable, and the speech of the Pedal Bourdon in particular was uneven and inconsistent over the course of the visit. The report states that these problems can be expected to recur at increasingly shorter intervals as the cable and contacts get older.
- 4.3 A related issue is that of the console controls generally and whether they adequately meet the needs of daily performance in the chapel. A console upgrade requiring the installation of new solid-state control circuitry, which in turn would demand the replacement of all the low voltage wiring to the rest of the organ, is considered highly advisable since the existing wiring is in a miscellany of styles resulting from a sequence of tonal improvements over the years, and the regulations which apply to this kind of electrical work have been tightened over the past five decades. The bundles of multi-core cabling which currently run between the console and the organ chamber could then be replaced by a single digital data cable.
- 4.4 It would be essential to remove the console to the organ builder's workshops to carry out this level of overhauling, with the organ in consequence being out of commission for a number of weeks. It would therefore be sensible to take the opportunity of carrying out any other recommended work on the rest of the instrument at the same time, in order to minimise the disruption that it would cause. The pipework should be taken out and cleaned, along with the supporting framework and associated woodwork, gallery platform and the organ chamber. The electro-pneumatic chests on which the pipes stand could then be removed for workshop attention enabling the complete replacement of all the external electro-magnets and internal pneumatic motors. (Manders noted that the Crematorium's organ tuners have found it necessary to start replacing the magnets on an individual basis, and observe that such operations are bound to become more frequent as time goes by).

- 4.5 It is advised to re-leather the Great and Pedal reservoirs since these are located in the chamber roof space and can only be removed in the absence of the Swell pipework.
- 4.6 There are worthwhile tonal enhancements that could be incorporated into the improvement programme which would be in keeping with the organ's character and style. A Great Mixture would supply the missing dimension from the principal chorus on those occasions when the chapel is full of hymn-singers.
- 4.7 It is essential for the chests to be repositioned on the gallery so that the higher-pitched fluework sits in front of the Bourdon and Diapason basses, tuned from a secure central passageboard, and with the rest of the flute rank moved to the very front. This will enable the tuner to reach all of the Great pipework in safety. A visual consequence would be the disappearance of the ranks of smaller pipes from the front elevation of the organ, but this is a small price to pay to enable the tuner to work without the risk of falling from above head height. Current health and safety standards would also require that a barrier is fixed at the treble end of the passageboard and a gate at the bass end (where the temporary access ladder is positioned for tuning visits).
- 4.8 The organ is unusually missing a reed instrument tone which could be introduced into the Swell chamber in the tone of an oboe, while enlarging the Pedal Organ, which could easily be done as part of the renewal of the switchgear.
- 4.9 To carry out the full programme of work described could involve the organ being out of commission for some four or five months, including time on site to dismantle and for reinstallation and tuning. The work would be scheduled for those times of year when the chapel is less busy and Manders have confirmed that it should be possible for one of their hire organs to be made available as a substitute instrument for the duration of the works.
- 4.10 A summary of the proposals is provided as follows:
- Cleaning of organ chamber and gallery platform (includes the repositioning of the Great upperwork chest and other measures necessary to ensure the tuner's safety). Workshop overhaul of console, original unit chests, Great & Pedal reservoirs including provision of new capture system and note-switching system, followed by re-installation & tuning.
 - Provision of new Great Mixture III.
 - Provision of new Swell Oboe 8' and Pedal Contra Oboe 16.
 - Re-leathering of Swell double-rise reservoir and refurbishment of organ blower.
- 4.11 Considering the Crematorium's Grade 2* listing is it proposed that this work is carried out by Manders Organs Ltd as a trustworthy means of rendering it mechanically reliable for the future and in order to preserve its authenticity.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equality implications arising from the report.

7 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment

7.1 This report seeks approval to carry out improvement works. There is no requirement for a well-being statement.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The cost of the above works is £96,400 and is covered in the Crematorium's Business Plan for 2019/20.

9. Recommendation:

9.1 The Joint Committee is recommended to approve the above works by Manders Organs Ltd. in the sum of £96,400.

ZAK SHELL

CLERK AND TECHNICAL OFFICER

12th February 2019

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Background Papers: Business Plan Report to the Joint Committee 8th March 2019 and Business Plan Report to the Joint Committee 2nd March 2018 and Business Plan Report to the Joint Committee 3rd March 2017.and Report by Manders Organs Ltd, 16th November 2018.