



Scottish Federation of Organists

The Pipe Organ in Scotland

Advice on relocating a redundant pipe organ

This advice acknowledges the following motions accepted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May 2024:

- (i) **“Affirm the central place of the arts in worship and mission, their contribution to knowledge and culture, recognises that our rich heritage results from many years of generous giving from forebears, congregations and benefactors, seek to protect this vital part of Scotland’s story for the future through consultation and collaboration with relevant bodies, acknowledge that the arts are a source of religious knowledge and experience, and urge the General Trustees to take all reasonable steps to safeguard this aspect of our communities.”**
- (ii) **“Urge the General Trustees, in consultation with Presbyteries, to give urgent thought to how pipe organs in closing churches might be widely publicised as available for relocation to churches (and other appropriate locations) continuing in use, and report on action taken to the General Assembly of 2025”**

ASSESSMENT

It is important that the pipe organ is assessed for its historic and musical value and its potential for rehoming as soon as possible - removal of an organ is a process which takes well over a year to accomplish (given the need for fund raising for installation by the recipient and permissions required from giving and receiving regulatory bodies). Local information and social media may be key to a successful relocation. As appropriate, pipe organs can be relocated to other churches (of any denomination), cathedrals, town halls, concert halls, town pavilions, museums, private dwellings, historic houses etc. Local organists’ societies/associations are key to identifying these. Alternatively, the new owner may be persuaded to retain the pipe organ.

COMMITTEES AND COMMUNICATION

Ensure an organist is included on relevant church committees and that the pipe organ is part of any agenda which addresses the future of the church building, its contents and purpose. In line with the motions passed at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, ensure that the local Presbytery and the General Trustees’ Sanctuary Development Officer is informed of proposals and permission re relocation is sought timeously.

SCOTLAND’S CHURCHES TRUST

Access the Scotland’s Churches Trust recording initiative www.scotlandschurchestrust.org.uk This may be a church’s last chance to document details and obtain photos of many artistic aspects of the building, not only including the organ, but also for example, stained glass, wood and stone carvings, memorials etc.

INDEPENDENT ORGAN ADVISER

Appoint an independent organ adviser - a list is available from the **Scottish Federation of Organists Advisory Service** www.scotsorgan.org.uk and the **Association of Independent Organ Advisers** www.aioa.org.uk This is a very useful part of what is a complicated artistic project.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

Many church buildings are Historic Environment Scotland listed (they have an oversight of ecclesiastical exemption) and planning permission from local Council planning departments may be required. (Listing A = changes are not allowed, B = planning permission may or may not be granted, C= permission may well be granted) The listing may apply to the exterior and/or the interior fixtures & fittings of the church.

FINANCE

Generous funding may be obtained from Heritage Lottery, Landfill Tax providers, trusts and charities – but requires extensive investigation of the possibilities, a detailed knowledge of the instrument's heritage and origins, and contact with reputable organ builders to obtain quotations.

OBTAINING THREE QUOTATIONS

Required by many fund-givers, the acquisition of **three quotations** allows comparison and contrast between a range of solutions to artistic projects. It is suggested that artistic integrity, rather than cost, be the deciding factor, and that any decision will reflect consultation with all those involved in the project. Fund givers already acknowledge that there may be a limited number of suitably qualified professionals who are qualified to carry out the necessary work.

Other useful information can be accessed from:

Church records (especially church history booklets of any vintage), newspaper articles and local archives
The British Newspaper Archive www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk
The National Pipe Organ Register <https://npor.org.uk/>
Sowne of Organe (which arranges surveys of historic organs) <https://sowneoforgane.com/>
Organs in Scotland, a revised list (2nd edition, 2020) (David A. Stewart and Alan Buchan), available to buy online

The Scottish Federation of Organists (SC023967) began its existence with a conference in 1957 and aims to promote the advancement of the arts, heritage and culture through organ music and the work of organists in Scotland.