

Minster organ is coming home

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WORK to rebuild York Minster's Grand Organ as part of a £2 million, once-a-century project to refurbish the instrument is nearing completion at the cathedral.

Specialist organ builders Harrison and Harrison were yesterday returning some of the recently restored decorative pipes, dating from the 1800s, to the organ's case – after work started to rebuild the instrument in June.

The organ, which is one of the largest in the country and includes 5,403 pipes, was removed from the Minster in October 2018 and taken to the company's specialist workshop in Durham for cleaning, repair and replacement.

Parts of the instrument were returned to the cathedral at the end of 2019 and in January this year, before work on the project - the first on this scale since 1903 - paused in March due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The final parts of the rebuild of the instrument are due to be completed by early October, after which the scaffolding will be removed before the organ is 'voiced', a process to ensure the pipes' notes and volume levels are playing correctly.

It is hoped the refurbished instrument will be back in use by spring 2021.

Robert Sharpe, director of music at York Minster, said: "We're delighted to have reached this stage in the project and to see all the amazing craftsmanship which has gone into refurbishing the Grand

Organ coming together.

"Organ music has been at the heart of worship at York Minster for nearly 1,000 years and we hope this project will allow us to continue that tradition throughout the 21st century and beyond."

The decorative pipes being returned today are part of a set of 102 pipes which decorate the organ's case. They are some of the oldest surviving pipes in the organ dating from 1832, when a new organ was built following an arson attack in the Quire in 1829.



The two-year long refurbishment will allow music to be performed at the cathedral for the next 100 years
Picture: PA



New pipes are replacing originals dating from the 1830s and have been restored to match their distinctive design
Picture: PA



Staff from organ specialists Harrison and Harrison working in York Minster
Picture: PA



An organ specialist begins working on the final phase of the restoration of the Grand Organ
Picture: PA