

FORM 9 (Rule 7)

**Section 9 of Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011
Public Notice on application to the Cathedrals Fabric Commission**

PUBLIC NOTICE

TAKE NOTICE that the Chapter of the Cathedral Church of:

The Cathedral and Metropolitical Church of St Peter in York, also known as York Minster

has on this date:

17th February 2025

applied to the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for approval of the following proposal:
complete as on Form 8

Conservation of the Chapter House Doors

Summary of the nature of work and its extent (and materials) [or in the case of an object, a short description of it and details of the proposal]

The Chapter House Doors, which date from the late 13th century, are of outstanding importance and significance. They are in a fragile and unstable condition, and have a live pest infestation of furniture beetle (woodworm). Conservation is required to the doors, which have components of woodwork, highly accomplished decorative metalwork, and paint, and to the pintles (hinges) to preserve and stabilise them, enabling the doors to continue in working use in the Chapter House, as they have for around 740 years.

A conservation methodology has been provided by Richard Rogers Conservation Limited, developed by Richard Rogers, Carolien Coon and Indiana Ravenhill, specialists in metalwork, wood and paint conservation respectively. The approach is of conservation, not restoration, respecting the history and significance of the doors and their use over many centuries.

The main areas of concern are:

- The polychrome paint remnants are flaking, detaching and being lost. Consolidation is required.
- The doors are off-set on the pintles, causing a cycle of wear to the pintles and damage to the doors, which sag.
- Elements of the metalwork are loose and required reattachment, to prevent damage and loss. There is also iron corrosion.
- The ironwork baskets are fragile and need to be strengthened and protected.
- There are loose sections of timber on the lower half and sides of the doors where they have either detached from the oak frame or sections of the oak frame are missing. These sections need to be secured and supported.
- Metalwork and woodwork battens have been lost / removed from the bottom and tops of the doors, leading to further damage and deterioration and allowing access for pest insects to the friable wood. Missing frame sections and battens should be replaced.
- The wood has suffered historic and current pest damage, and in some areas is spongy and hollowed out from the inside, with existing losses and risk of further losses. Spot checks have identified regular falls of wood fragments. It requires consolidation.
- There is a live pest infestation of furniture beetle (aka woodworm) that requires treatment to prevent ongoing destruction.

The conservation methodology addresses each of these points, sensitively and with respect to the doors' history, while acknowledging that the doors still need to function as active working items.

Consent is sought:

- For the conservation of the Chapter House doors to the proposed methodology by Richard Rogers Conservation Ltd, subject to modifications that evolve in the course of the treatment, to be discussed in advanced with the working group.
- For the delegation of decisions on the evolution of the conservation methodology to a specialist working group, as proposed in the paper to CFCE, to report to the York FAC and Chapter of York under delegated authority from CFCE.
- For the removal of the doors off-site to a conservation studio for treatment.

Plans, drawings, specifications or other documents

Copies of the plans, drawings, specification and other documents accompanying this application may be examined online at <https://yorkminster.org/about-us/statutory-applications/>

- Paper to CFCE seeking consent for the conservation of the Chapter House doors

Due to the combined size of the application documents, please contact works@yorkminster.org to view any of the documents below.

Appendix A – Conservation Proposal and Methodology by Richard Rogers Conservation Limited

Appendix B – Review of methodology for removing Chapter House Doors by Edward Morton

Appendix C – Report on 19th century interventions by Dr Jennie England

Appendix D – Previous conservation reports and surveys, including of the historical and art historical significance of the doors.

REPRESENTATIONS

If you wish to make representations about the whole or any part of the proposal described in this Notice you should write to

The Secretary of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission:

c/o Cathedrals and Major Churches Officer
Church Buildings Division
Church House
Great Smith St
London
SW1P 3AZ
020 7898 1678
adrian.daffern@churchofengland.org

So that it reaches the Secretary not later than: *insert a date ending 28 days after the time of the commencement of the period for representations.*

17th March 2025

DIRECTIONS TO CHAPTER

1. This public notice (or a copy of it) must be displayed for a continuous period of 28 days in a prominent position inside and outside your cathedral where it is readily visible to the public.

2. A copy of this notice must be sent as follows:

- (a) to the Fabric Advisory Committee of your Cathedral Church
- (b) to Historic England (formerly English Heritage)
- (c) to the national amenity societies as applicable (see list on Form 8)

and

(only if the proposal is for works as described in section 2(1)(a) of the Measure)

- (d) to the local planning authority.

TITLE: Conservation of the Chapter House Doors, York Minster
CFCE MEETING DATE: 27 March 2025
PAPER FROM: Dr Helen Rawson, Director of Collections, Cultural Heritage & Learning, York Minster

Brief Summary

The Chapter House Doors, which date from the late 13th century, are of outstanding importance and significance. They are in a fragile and unstable condition, and have a live pest infestation of furniture beetle (woodworm). Despite protective measures and careful management, small fragments of wood occasionally detach due to the pest infestation and the friable condition of the wood.

The conservation of the doors was the subject of an application to CFCE in 2018. This was approved subject to various conditions (see below) including that *'a proposal for deinstalling and reinstalling the doors, with details of how vulnerable areas of the doors will be protected, is approved by the Commission before any work is undertaken'* and *'That full conservation treatment specifications for polychromy, woodwork and metalwork are provided to the Commission for approval before any work is undertaken'*. Conservation treatment proposals and the methodology for removing the doors are now provided, in Appendix A.

An advisory visit was made by CFCE on 27 September 2024. It was recommended that a new application should be made, as the previous consent was heavily conditioned and cannot be amended: *'It is in the Minster's own interest that they should not be bound by what was known, and not known, at the time of the previous consent'*. This new application is therefore being made.

The application seeks consent for the methodology proposed by the specialist firm Richard Rogers Conservation Limited. This includes work by a consortium of metalwork, wood and paint conservators, working closely together within one professional studio, in recognition of the different components of the doors.

The approach taken is one of conservation, not restoration. The conservation methodology acknowledges and respects the doors' history and use over many centuries. Crucially, it seeks to consolidate and stabilise them so that they may retain their function in the Chapter House for generations to come. The doors are of central significance to the art and architecture of the Chapter House, and the approach and methodology recognises this, and the importance of their ongoing functional use, within carefully managed arrangements to ensure their safety and preservation.

The application seeks to remove the doors off-site for conservation, to the conservation studio of Richard Rogers Conservation Limited in Leatherhead, Surrey. Detailed consideration has been given to the risks and benefits of conserving the doors on- or off-site, and this is discussed below.

The application acknowledges that certain decisions on the exact conservation processes can only be made once the conservation is underway, due to the complexities and interacting components involved. Consent is therefore sought for the appointment of a specialist working group with the delegated authority to take decisions as tests are carried out and work progresses, through detailed discussions with the conservators and site visits, rather than each decision point having to be referred back to CFCE, with the consequent delays that would be incurred between meetings. It is proposed that this working group consists of Janet Berry, Head of Conservation and Collections Policy, Cathedral and Church Buildings; Sarah VanSnick, formerly Lead Preventive Conservator at the V&A Museum (until January 2025) and now Head of Preservation and Conservation at Trinity College Library, Dublin and member of the York FAC; John Gough, Chair of the York FAC; Helen Rawson, Director of Collections, Cultural Heritage and Learning at York Minster (a professional curator with

over 25 years experience); and two other specialists in the field, one to be in wood conservation, to be appointed in discussion between the Chapter of York, CFCE and the Collections Consultative Committee of the York FAC (comprised of FAC Chair Dr John Gough, Tiffany Hunt, Sarah VanSnick and Helen Rawson). I propose that this group report to the York FAC and the Chapter of York so that these bodies retain oversight of the work on behalf of CFCE. A similar specialist working group was appointed to oversee matters in relation to the creation of the sculpture of HM Queen Elizabeth II, now on the West Front of York Minster.

The application also acknowledges that there is a risk involved in removing the doors from their pintles (hinges), which is necessary for treatment, including of a live pest infestation, whether work is carried out on-site or off-site; but that the measures proposed, which have been reviewed by an independent structural engineer, mitigate that risk so far as is possible; and that a more significant risk of continued deterioration, in particular due to the pest infestation and the friable condition of the wood currently exists, and will persist if no action is taken. Wood fragments have recently fallen from the doors.

Attention is directed particularly to pp. 50-52, 55-56 and 79-83 of the conservation reports and costings in Appendix A, which summarise the conservation methodology and methodology for the removal of the doors, and to Appendix D, the independent assessment by Edward Morton of the methodology for the removal of the doors.

Summary description of the Chapter House Doors

The Chapter House Doors are among the oldest doors still situated in their original location in the country. They are thought to be contemporaneous with the date of the Chapter House, generally accepted to have been constructed in the 1280s and known to have been in use in 1295. Three different types of craftsmen, joiners, painters and blacksmiths, were involved in their complex construction. The doors are composed of an oak lattice frame and pine boards. To this is fixed decorative ironwork, exceptional in both its outstanding quality and rarity. On each door, the metalwork design takes the form of the vertical stem of a tree, from which spring four pairs of spiral scrolling branches. At the root is a raised dragon's head, at the top a pair of winged dragons. The dragons at the top are highly unusual for the period, as 3D sculptures in metal. They are also particularly vulnerable. A complete creature survives south/left, pinned by his tail. South/right has lost his wings and head but his left foot is nailed to the door. North/left and right are pinned by one foot.

The door handles, slightly different on each side, are suspended from an open basket of foliage in metalwork. The handles themselves are missing and there is considerable historical damage and loss, which makes the ironwork baskets particularly vulnerable. The conservation report includes various options, with various levels of intervention, to strengthen the baskets: this is discussed below.

The rectangular iron frame surrounding the metalwork design is now incomplete. Loose ironwork on the doors presents a catch hazard for clothing and visitors brushing against them, damaging the metalwork.

The doors are now misaligned. They have dropped on the medieval pintles (pivot bolts / hinges), which are bent, with worn loops. This is causing damage to both the pintles and doors, due to the unequal pressure created and the danger of the doors dragging on the floor and catching the surrounding frame.

The back of the doors is natural wood, but the fronts have had several coatings of paint, which has been analysed by Hirst Conservation, 2014 (see report in Appendix D). It is extremely rare for

medieval paintwork to survive on doors, as most are exposed to the external environment: these have been inside throughout their long history. The remaining fragments of paint are fragile and require consolidation before the doors are removed from the pintles for other stages of treatment: the conservation methodology takes account of this.

The history, design and craftsmanship of the doors is discussed in the detailed reports provided in Appendix D. Attention is directed in particular to the reports of Professor Jane Geddes, 2013, and Stuart Harrison, 2013 for history and artistic context. Appendix D also contains previous conservation reports on the doors, submitted to CFCE in 2018.

Consents Process

An application was made to CFCE in 2018 for consent to conserve the doors. With it were submitted various reports, including by Professor Jane Geddes (2013), on the construction and condition of the doors and their significance in context; by Bethan Griffiths and Chris Topp, on the condition of the ironwork (2013); by Stuart Harrison (2013), an archaeological survey; by Hirst Conservation Ltd (2014), with the results of paint analysis of the surviving polychromy; by Hugh Harrison (2014), focusing largely on the woodwork. These five reports are provided again in Appendix D.

Crucially, no unified and overarching conservation methodology was submitted.

CFCE approved the application on 13 December 2018, subject to the conditions below. The consent lasts 10 years, to December 2028.

- 1. That the expected outcomes of the conservation process and future preventive care of the doors are set out in a focused Conservation Plan for the doors that is approved by the Commission before any work is undertaken.*
- 2. That a proposal for deinstalling and reinstalling the doors, with details of how vulnerable areas of the doors will be protected, is approved by the Commission before any work is undertaken.*
- 3. That full conservation treatment specifications for polychromy, woodwork and metalwork are provided to the Commission for approval before any work is undertaken. These should include details of a sequential approach to treatment for each element of the doors, beginning with a minimally interventive approach that aims to retain, and reduce any impact upon, original material as far as possible; more robust conservation measures that may be necessary to allow the doors to remain in use should be fully detailed and justified, particularly in relation to the proposed conservation of the ironwork basket on the north door where considerable intervention might be required in order to stabilise it.*
- 4. That the Chapter should consult the statutory consultees on the final proposals.*

The reason for these conditions being:

- 1, 2, 3 - this information is not yet available, and to ensure this complex conservation project is fully justified for this sensitive historic item;*
- 3 - it may not be possible to identify suitable treatments and develop treatment specifications without removing the doors from their setting;*
- 4 – to enable the statutory consultees to comment on the final proposals, which may change considerably as the conservation plan and treatment specifications are developed.*

The Commission recommends that a single, suitably qualified individual is given the task of leading, coordinating and overseeing the project management and conservation processes. The Commission recommends that this person consults accredited conservators with expert knowledge in the conservation of woodwork and metalwork, in particular the use and

application of consolidants and fillers to support areas of weakness in the doors, and consolidation of ironwork.

Current Position

I approached the highly regarded conservation firm Richard Rogers Conservation Ltd to review the previous reports, conduct a conservation survey of the doors, and propose a detailed conservation methodology. The work was led by Richard Rogers himself, who would conduct the metalwork conservation, and included specialists in woodwork (Carolien Coon, his Head of Conservation) and paintwork (Indiana Ravenhill). Crucially, the conservation work, if approved, would take place within an established consortium of conservators within all the relevant areas, working as a team within one studio, not a number of disparate conservators from different studios as per previous reports. This has allowed for the proposal of a conservation methodology, including for removal and reinstallation of the doors on the pintles. Proposals are attached in Appendix A - attention is directed particularly to pp. 50-52, 55-56 and 79-83.

The proposals and methodological approach were approved at the meeting of the Chapter of York on 5 December 2024, and consent given for a new application for consent to be made to CFCE, as recommended in the CFCE site visit of 27 September 2024.

Conservation approach

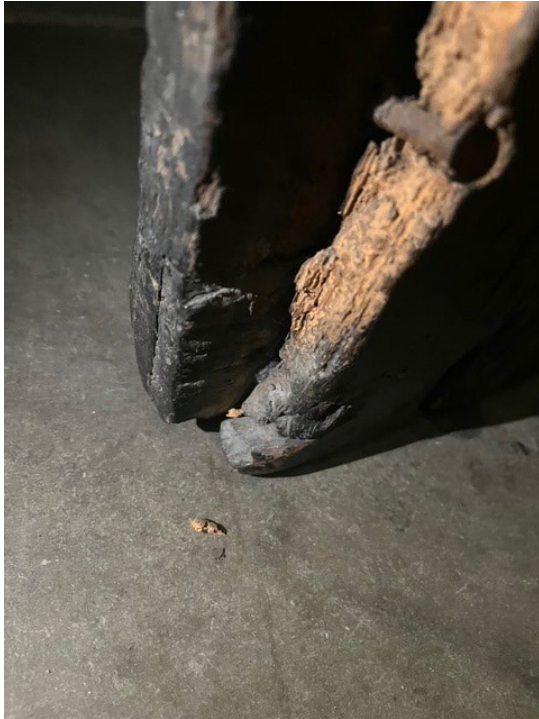
As discussed above, the approach taken will be one of conservation, not restoration. The doors naturally bear the evidence of their use over seven centuries, and this is an intrinsic part of their significance.

However, various areas require stabilisation, to ensure the survival of the doors for the centuries ahead.

The main areas of concern are:

- The polychrome paint remnants are flaking, detaching and being lost. Consolidation is required.
- The doors are off-set on the pintles, causing a cycle of wear to the pintles and damage to the doors, which sag.
- Elements of the metalwork are loose and required reattachment, to prevent damage and loss. There is also iron corrosion.
- The ironwork baskets are fragile and need to be strengthened and protected.
- There are loose sections of timber on the lower half and sides of the doors where they have either detached from the oak frame or sections of the oak frame are missing. These sections need to be secured and supported.
- Metalwork and woodwork battens have been lost / removed from the bottom and tops of the doors, leading to further damage and deterioration and allowing access for pest insects to the friable wood. Missing frame sections and battens should be replaced.
- The wood has suffered historic and current pest damage, and in some areas is spongy and hollowed out from the inside, with existing losses and risk of further losses. Spot checks have identified regular falls of wood fragments. It requires consolidation.
- There is a live pest infestation of furniture beetle (aka woodworm) that requires treatment to prevent ongoing destruction.

The conservation methodology addresses each of these points, sensitively and with respect to the doors' history, while acknowledging that the doors still need to function as active working items. Were they to be removed to a museum case, it would not be necessary, for example, to reinstate battens to the top and bottom of the doors to protect them, but as active working items, it is.



South Door, 4 Feb 2025. Note the two fragments of detached wood (on ground and resting on lowest central part of door). The usual protective covering has been temporarily removed.

Refining the Conservation Methodology

The complexity of the conservation, and the interactions of different elements, mean that some areas of the methodology can be refined only once conservation is underway. The existing CFCE consent acknowledged this. The conservation proposal provides various options, which I propose be reviewed in detail by the suggested working group as matters progress. The conservators have emphasised that they can accommodate site visits for discussions.

These options are discussed in the conservation reports provided in Appendix A. In particular:

- Testing is required to identify the most suitable consolidant for flaking paint and adhesive for facing up friable timber (p.51, points 2 and 4). NB, for operational and health and safety reasons, the public would not be admitted to the Chapter House during testing or consolidation and facing up.
- Testing is required to identify the most suitable consolidant for the timber (p.52, point 5).
- Extent of intervention for areas of loss of timber (p. 52, point 8 and 9), for which close inspection and assessment following the removal of the doors from the pintles is required. As noted above, the approach will focus on conservation rather than restoration, while retaining the functionality of the doors. Minimal intervention is preferred where possible, within these parameters.
- Refixing of the ironwork using either standard wood screws of the appropriate size, or pre-made nails to match existing and fixed in same manner or standard wood screw but heads altered to look like existing nails (p. 82, 3B). Tests on the wood are needed due to its spongy composition.
- Approach to iron basketwork (p.82, options 4 A-D). Currently, a combination of options C and D is thought likely to best maintain the integrity of the doors while strengthening and protecting the basketwork. Further studio analysis is needed.

- Replacement of missing ironwork border (p.83, 5 A and B). Of the two options, A – ‘manufacture new iron border to match the existing pattern’; and B – ‘manufacture new border in a plain strap design not intended to replicate or look like the original but to blend in with colour’, B is currently preferred on conservation grounds (not apparent from a distance but on close inspection by specialist, apparent that it isn’t original).
- Hinges (p.83, 6 A and B). The extent of intervention necessary to maintain the doors in operational use while protecting the doors and hinges will be carefully assessed following their removal.

In each case, the approach will focus on conservation rather than restoration, while protecting and retaining the functionality of the doors. Minimal intervention is preferred where possible, within these parameters, within the expectation of a period of at least 50-100 years before further intervention is needed.

Pest Treatment

Options for pest treatment (p.50, Appendix A) have been considered in detail.

Option 1. The preferred option for pest treatment is humidity-controlled heat treatment (generally referred to by the brand name Thermo-Lignum), whereby adults, eggs and larvae are killed by elevating temperatures to 48-55°C for 24 hours. Relative humidity and temperature of the atmosphere within the treatment chamber is controlled to prevent physical or structural changes from evaporation or absorption of moisture. Sarah VanSnick of the York FAC has advised that this method has been used successfully by leading museums for many years, and is known, trialled and tested for objects of this nature. Due to the size of the doors, treatment would have to take place off-site in the London studio of ICM UK (International Contamination Management), as they are too large for their mobile chamber. The possibility of sourcing a larger mobile chamber from outside the UK has been investigated – there is one in Brussels owned by the company Thermo Lignum, whose former UK company now operates as ICM – but Thermo Lignum advised that there are high barriers including visas, customs and taxes that they are not able / willing to meet, due to the UK’s decision to leave the EU, for as a pest control company they do not come under the category of favoured companies, and so directed us back to ICM.

Option 2. A second option is anoxia, whereby pests are deprived of oxygen by enclosing the doors in a humidity- and temperature-controlled airtight chamber where the oxygen is replaced with an inert gas (nitrogen or argon) and maintained at 0.3% oxygen for 21 days. Sarah VanSnick has advised that this is less effective, as pests can only be killed at certain stages of the lifecycle, so some may escape. Due to the health and safety risks involved in bringing large volumes of oxygen-depleting gas into a busy public space, on-site treatment has been ruled out. Therefore the doors would also have to leave the Minster for this treatment.

For both the above options, the doors would have to be removed from the pintles (hinges) to create an effective seal.

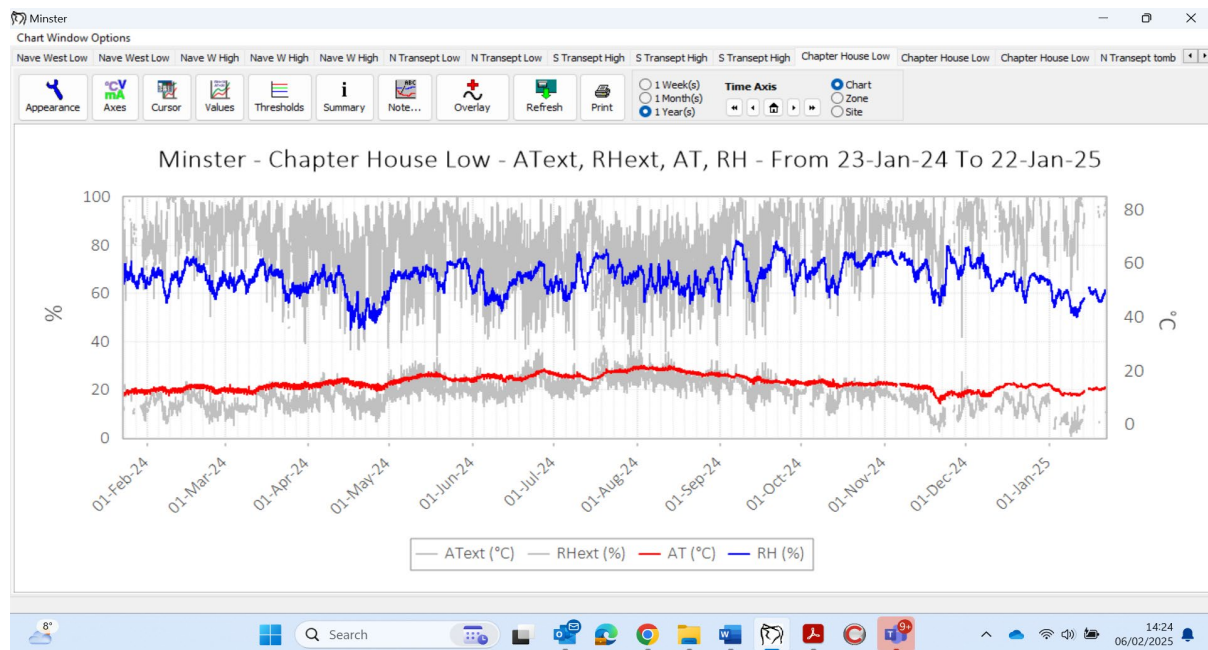
Carolien Coon of Richard Rogers Conservation Limited advises against fumigation due to the composition of the doors, while ‘injecting or spraying insecticides such as Constrain does not penetrate the wood very far and simply injecting into existing holes (where the beetle has already emerged from) is not very effective. I cannot guarantee that this will eradicate the pest problem as the beetle/larvae needs to be covered in Constrain in order for it to be killed’.

We therefore propose using humidity-controlled heat treatment to treat the pest infestation.

Location of Treatment

Detailed consideration has been given to the feasibility, and the risks and benefits, of treating the doors on- or off-site. The 2018 CFCE consent acknowledged that ‘it may not be possible to identify suitable treatments and develop treatment specifications without removing the doors from their setting’.

Previously, discussions on *in situ* treatment seem largely to have focused on the fluctuating environmental conditions of the Chapter House and the risk involves in transportation to another site. Transportation would be to professional museum standard, including climatic controls and air-ride suspension, the standard used to move precious and fragile artefacts of incalculable value across the world for conservation, exhibition and loan by leading UK and international museums. It is acknowledged that the environmental conditions in the Chapter House do fluctuate, and concerns seem to have been previously expressed that the doors are accustomed to the fluctuating environmental conditions in the Chapter House and might warp if removed to another different **uncontrolled** environment. However, the doors would not be moved to an **uncontrolled** environment. Richard Rogers Conservation Ltd offers a **controlled** studio environment which, though it does not replicate the environment in the Chapter House, where relative humidity fluctuates from 45-81% and temperature from 8-22°C, will provide a **stable mid-line environment** within the range the doors are used to, avoiding the damaging fluctuations likely to cause issues. Sarah VanSnick supports this assessment. Climate controlled transportation will also be used. In any case, the environment in the Chapter House itself causes issues – as the doors have become misaligned on the pintles, the north door drags and catches on the floor at times of year when it swells, risking damage when it must be moved (closed) for the doorway to the Masons’ Loft and Chapter House roof space to be accessed, the entrance to which is behind the door. Until conservation work addresses the misalignment, this risk will persist.



Extensive consideration has been given to the extent to which the doors can be conserved without removal from the pintles, their hinges. Carolien Coon notes ‘Consolidation, cleaning and corrosion and a light wax can occur on the lintels. Any structural work of the timber and metal would not be done well, and some not possible at all *in situ*’. Pest treatment would also most likely be ineffective if the doors are not removed, as this is required for both the anoxia and humidity-controlled heat treatment due to the need to create a total seal.

The planned conservation work requires local exhaust ventilation. This cannot be achieved in the Chapter House without intervention to the fabric of the building, and would be difficult to achieve elsewhere in the Minster, without significant operational disruption due to the plant and noise involved. Indeed, the size and layout of the Minster means that it is not been possible to identify an area in which conservation works could take place on site. None of the side chapels are large enough to accommodate both the doors (H 2990mm x W1590mm and H 3000mm x W 1600 mm respectively) and the space and equipment necessary for the work, while the south quire aisle will for a number of years yet be taken up with the scaffolding for the work on the St Cuthbert Window (within which the related exhibition sits); so that operationally, in terms of visitor flow and liturgical use, the north quire aisle cannot be used for this work. The Crypt and Undercroft are, of course, too low and constrained in terms of space. Removing the doors to a specialist conservation studio would be beneficial in terms of health and safety (for the public and conservators in relation to an appropriate environment for chemical treatments), ventilation / air extraction, working conditions and practicalities (proper lighting, access to equipment and air extraction fans etc) and work streams (which would be more agile, less complicated, more collaborative and less costly in a studio, rather than requiring different conservators to come on site multiple times for different phases). It would reduce conservation costs (less hotel, subsistence, travel costs, etc for the conservators). It would enable the Chapter House to remain in use for ceremonial and public events, sightseeing, and other purposes, to the benefit of liturgical matters and public engagement – the Chapter House is an important part of the visitor experience.

An outline methodology for removing the doors from the pintles to enable the conservation work to take place has been developed by Richard Rogers and independently reviewed by Edward Morton of the Morton Partnership – Structural Engineers – please see Appendix A pp. 56 and 79-81 and Appendix B, Edward Morton’s report. (To inform his assessment, Edward Morton was provided with the conservation reports in Appendix A). If consent is granted, this will be worked up into a full detailed method statement, for review and approval by the working group.

There is evidence that the doors were removed and rehung in 1844, and new locks fitted, as part of the major programme of refurbishment of the Chapter House under the architect Sydney Smirke, funded through a legacy from Dr Stephen Beckwith. On 20 July 1844 ‘George Coates, carpenter’ invoiced £2 3s 0p ‘To barricading and hanging doors and casing stonework at the entrance of the Chapter House’. In this context, ‘barricading’ may imply fitting locks to. Please see Dr Jennie England’s report in Appendix C. We may therefore conclude that the doors have previously been removed without significant harm, and most likely without the care that would be taken by professional conservators or the careful structural support provided by the proposed removal methodology.

The FAC and Chapter of York support the proposal that the doors should be removed from site to a conservation studio for treatment, informed by discussions with Sarah VanSnick. Fragile elements of the doors will be consolidated / protected *in situ* before any movement (including from the pintles) occurs. Please see p. 51 of Appendix A for details of consolidation of flaking pain and facing-up of friable timber.

Conservation in a Cathedral Setting

Following the site visit on 27 September, CFCE recommended that I consult the Head of Collections at St Paul’s Cathedral, Simon Carter, to discuss the on-site conservation work on ‘The Light of the World’ by Holman Hunt and the opportunities for public engagement that this provided. Simon noted that both he and the conservators would have preferred the work to take place off-site, within a conservation studio. This was for reasons including:

- Ease and practicalities of the work in a studio setting.

- Setting up the 'studio' on-site caused physical and operational issues – the make-shift studio blocked a quarter of the South Transept. The work therefore needed to be done to a tight timescale, to reclaim this space as quickly as possible. This was hard to plan around the external conservators' other commitments; and main periods of activity in St Paul's (only quieter times of year feasible).
- There were concerns about risk. (a) Hot works on site – rabbit glue and gilding needed microwave because of lack of other facilities. (b) Terrorism – prominent and iconic artwork, being conserved in public gaze in iconic building – perceived threat from Just Stop Oil and other organisations.
- Conservators did not want to be interrupted by the public. Compromise reached whereby public would only be permitted to interact with conservators at set, advertised times, three times a day. Two of the three remained uncomfortable with the level of public interaction required.

Simon noted that the main factors in choosing to conserve in the cathedral rather than off-site, as preferred, were CFCE consents and cost of transport to take off-site. Conservators were local, so there was no real additional cost in getting them to come on-site (e.g. travel, accommodation). However, it was operationally disruptive to other things happening in cathedral, and although the work concluded successfully, on balance, there was a far greater risk associated with it happening on-site rather than off-site. The only real benefits were to marketing and publicity for the cathedral and public engagement, as the public could view the work happening in the enclosure erected in the South Transept and the conservators stopped work to give short public talks three times a day, covering the painting, artist, conservation work, material, techniques, then questions.

York Minster has greater challenges of space than St Paul's Cathedral, and the complex conservation of the doors, with their components of metalwork, woodwork and paint is more demanding in terms of chemicals, heat, air extraction and complexity than an oil painting.

Public Engagement

Public engagement is a key part of our plans, and a short film of Dr Jennie England, York Minster's Research Co-Ordinator, discussing the conservation survey of doors at the time this took place, gained 7500 views. Rather than stopping conservation work to give the same talk several times a day, we propose creating a short film about the project, to be shown in the Chapter House and via the York Minster website, featuring high quality film footage and photography and interviews with the conservators and with York Minster staff (potentially Director of Collections, Research Co-Ordinator, and the Dean / residential canons) discussing the doors, the project and its importance. This will engage the public and raise awareness of the importance of the ongoing conservation work in York Minster and the specialist skills involved, linking to both fundraising messaging and York Minster's new Centre of Excellence in Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management, with its leading apprenticeship programme. The conservators have offered to 'live stream' certain phases of the process, potentially to a screen in the Chapter House, to support public engagement, and this can be added to the film as work progresses. We also plan a small exhibition and a programme of talks, celebrate, educating and informing about the doors and the Chapter House in their historical and art historical context and the conservation work, culminating as the doors are re-installed in York Minster.

Management Procedures Following Conservation

Current management procedures include protective coverings to fragile areas of the doors, restricting movement as much as possible (the doors are only closed when necessary, for example the north door must be closed to access the Masons' Loft and Chapter House roof space), training of all relevant staff in safety procedures, including regarding the movement of items into the Chapter

House through the doors safely, and raising awareness among staff and volunteers of the significance and relatively fragility of the doors.

Management procedures and the active use of the doors will be considered throughout the conservation process and indeed are embedded within it, as the conservation methodology takes account of their active use. On completion of the conservation work, Richard Rogers Conservation Ltd will provide a preventative conservation risk assessment of the main risks to the Chapter House Doors and communicate this to staff, training curatorial and Works staff in routine inspections and maintenance. All relevant staff, including vergers and Visitor Experience staff, will be trained in the safe movement of the doors (which will be as infrequent as possible) and the movement of items through the doors into / out of the Chapter House, which will be as restricted as operationally possible, with appropriate safeguards where necessary. The conservation work and the significance of the doors will be communicated to staff and volunteers, and training regularly refreshed.

Risk / Benefit Analysis

It must be acknowledged that there is a risk to any intervention. However, there is no 'no risk' option here. Not treating the doors means that the vulnerable paint, wood and metalwork will continue to deteriorate, with losses increasing as it does so. The pest infestation will continue, exacerbating problems and potentially spreading elsewhere. To do nothing leaves a bigger problem, and more extensively damaged doors, for our successors, and potentially a sudden crisis point, should the doors drop further on the pintles and no longer be able to be opened / closed, or the areas of the important ironwork fully detach. This application takes account of an options appraisal from doing nothing to in-situ interventions (on and off the pintles) to off-site treatment. Richard Rogers Conservation Ltd have advised that they cannot see a reason why the doors could not be returned to active use in terms of the proposed methodology. Failing to intervene appropriately now can only exacerbate the issues facing these important and historic doors.

Costs and funding

Richard Rogers Conservation Ltd has provided outline cost estimates depending on the exact options and treatments selected, some of which can only be refined through testing in the conservation studio. Once consent is secured, the intention is to formally apply to both the Friends of York Minster and the Ironmongers' Company's charitable grant scheme for support, with the intention of sourcing funding to meet conservation costs in full.

CFCE is asked:

1. **TO RECEIVE** this briefing paper
2. **TO CONSENT** to the conservation of the Chapter House doors to the proposed methodology by Richard Rogers Conservation Ltd, subject to modifications that evolve in the course of the treatment, to be discussed in advanced with the working group.
3. **To CONSENT** to the delegation of decisions on the evolution of the conservation methodology to a specialist working group, as proposed.
4. **To CONSENT** to the doors going off-site to a conservation studio for treatment.

Dr Helen Rawson
Director of Collections, Cultural Heritage and Learning, York Minster
6 February 2025