

FORM 4 (Rule 5)

Section 8 of Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 Public Notice on application to the Fabric Advisory Committee

PUBLIC NOTICE

TAKE NOTICE that the Chapter of the Cathedral Church of:

The Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of St Peter in York

has on this date:

11th November 2025

applied to the Fabric Advisory Committee of the said cathedral for approval of the following proposal:

Conservation of an oak armchair with brown suede upholstery bearing a decorative roundel with cross keys pertinent to the cathedral (Inventory no. YORDC/2015/14), to allow it to be retained in use in services in York Minster.

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 chair has been in regular use during services in the nave. It was removed from active use in December 2024 due to wear and tear to the leather, including the roundel, sustained over time. It was last repaired and re-upholstered in 1990.

Specialist leather conservators at the Leather Centre, Northampton, have provided a methodology – please see conservation report. Certain elements, for example the specific lining fabric to be selected and the adhesive to be used, will be subject to tests in the conservation studio.

- Surface cleaning to remove dust and engrained deposits.
- Lining of the leather with a non-woven fabric applied to the grain surface to provide support and strength.
- Clean metal dome-headed nails.
- Reattach leather to wooden structure using original nails and supplementing with adhesive where necessary.
- Fill small areas of loss and provide additional support as needed to the front of split areas of leather to ensure edges don't catch when in use, and visually integrate.
- Carry out tests to better understand the composition and stability of the red pigment of the decoration and consolidate if necessary.
- Document and write report of treatment including recommendations on use and long-term care.

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/>

From this day:

11th November 2025

and until:

9th December 2025

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 Fabric Advisory Committee: *insert postal and email address.*

Mr David Demack
c/o Works & Technology Hub
4 Deangate
York
YO1 7JA
FAC@yorkminster.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.*

9th December 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 Cathedrals Fabric Commission, and
 - (b) if the proposal is of a kind described in section 2(1)(a) of the Measure—
 - (i) to Historic England (formerly English Heritage)
 - (ii) to the national amenity societies as applicable (see list on Form 3)
 - (iii) to the local planning authority.

LEATHER CONSERVATION CENTRE

CONDITION REPORT

Date: 22/04/25

Conservator: A Panton

LCC Number: 737-25

Client Information: Kirsty Mitchell, Curator, The Old Palace, York Minster

Object Information: Oak armchair upholstered with brown suede leather



Dimensions (cm): 60 x 51 x 105

Object Description: Armchair with vegetable tanned (likely) bovine leather upholstery on seat back and base. The armchair was originally purchased in 1931 and records note that the chair was repaired and reupholstered in 1990. The frame is constructed from Oak (according to records) with front legs turned and back legs square. All leather except that on the decorated chair back (and possibly the lower back edge of the seat) appears to be flesh split owing to highly fibrous appearance and enhanced strength.

The leather on the chair back recto, which extends around the edges, is a grain split with very thin cross section; the grain surface is facing inwards and can be seen at areas of damage. This softer, less fibrous material was likely chosen over the flesh split as it provides a more uniform surface on which to apply decoration.

The Minister arms are displayed in the centre back of the chair. The central 'keys' appear to be made from silver leaf which has tarnished creating a metallic, grey appearance. The crown above these and circular frame has been made using the traditional 'gilt' approach of silver leaf with an application of yellow varnish over the top giving a 'gilt' appearance. The crown and keys are surrounded by red pigment. All decorative elements have been embossed in a mould.

The back and base of the seat are cushioned and there is a plain weave cotton(?) fabric that lies directly behind the leather on the seat back which is in a stable condition. The leather is attached to the wooden frame of the chair using a combination of brass dome headed nails and metal staples.

Condition:

Prior to being removed due to condition concerns the chair was used once a week.

With the exception of the seat back, the chair appears to be in a relatively good, stable condition. There is ingrained dust across the fibrous leather surfaces, particularly concentrated in crevices and at corners at the back of the chair.

There are three prominent splits in the central region of the seat back which are likely the combined result of pressure applied during use and natural shrinkage of the leather in response to dry environmental conditions. The two larger splits correspond partially to areas of decoration indicating the collagen structure is slightly weaker where the fibres have been compressed during the moulding process. This theory is supported by several tears and observed points of weakness around the edges where the same leather is in contact with dome headed nails.

The proper right split measures approximately 6cm in length and is located in the lower PR corner of the design. There has been a small area of loss and some movement of the leather meaning the split edges don't fully meet; the leather retains flexibly but due to the compression and application of materials to create the 'gilt' decoration, it isn't as flexible as non-decorative areas. This is the case for all split.

The second, smallest split is approximately 2cm in length, located perpendicularly through the gilt circular frame towards the bottom. The split edges don't comfortably meet due to shrinkage of the leather.

The third, largest split appears as an upside-down 'T' formation, the lower horizontal line measuring approx.. 8cm and the vertical measuring approx.. 4cm which penetrate across the 'gilt' frame into the red central area of decoration. The lower, horizontal split extends through non-decorated leather. As with the other two

splits, edges don't comfortably meet due to shrinkage of the leather and there is less flexibility at areas of compression.

There are 7 small splits in various locations across the keys that are either fully or partially formed. Several of these align with points of decoration and at present edges meet flush. Several additional areas within the decoration appear vulnerable to splitting in the future without additional support.

There are several splits in the leather along the edges of the PR edge of the chair back and where pressure has been applied by the top couple of dome-headed nails. No other splits around nails are observed but it is likely that the leather in these areas is weakened and vulnerable to future splitting.

There are two small areas of loss on the wooden legs: one at the bottom of the front PR and a slightly larger one on the back PL. Neither are compromising stability, and all other structural components present as stable.

Natural variations in colour and texture are visible across surfaces, and there is some light surface scuffing towards the bottom of the chair back recto.

Minimal green corrosion is exhibited on dome headed nails where in contact with the leather. This is an expected reaction catalysed by fats and moisture in the leather and at present doesn't pose an issue to overall stability.

Proposed treatment:

Extensive will be carried out to ensure the best course of treatment

The choice of adhesives used will be determined during treatment. We will likely try a combination of the Lascaux acrylic adhesives and potentially Beva thermoplastic film. We will be looking for something that is compatible with the leather and repair material, has sufficient (but not too much) strength, doesn't alter flexibility in the area and doesn't cause darkening. The adhesive chosen will also be assessed for its aging properties including future re-treatability.

*The below proposal will allow for **use of the chair on a semi-regular basis.***

- Surface clean all surfaces using dry techniques to remove dust and engrained deposits. Dry cleaning will be carried out with brushes and a vacuum. No additional cleaning will be carried out on the silver leaf.
- Remove dome-headed nails and staples (if possible) around edge of seat back to detach leather allowing access to the grain surface. If staples can't be removed due to poor access, the leather will be split along the edges.
- Fully line the leather with a non-woven fabric applied to the grain surface to provide overall support and strength. This choice of material will depend on the strength required and the choice of adhesive, but the most likely candidates are Cerex or Reemay.

- Reattach leather to wooden structure using original nails and supplementing with adhesive where necessary.
- Fill the small area of loss and provide additional support as needed to the front of split areas to ensure edges don't catch when in use and visually integrate.
- Carry out tests to better understand the composition and stability of the red pigment and consolidate if deemed appropriate.
- Document and write report of treatment including recommendations on use and long-term case.

Additional option:

Cleaning of metal dome-headed nails. This would involve a light clean carried out mechanically using a range of stiff brushes and scalpel if necessary. We may also provide a very light protective surface coating of microcrystalline wax to the metal if this is deemed beneficial.

