

Our aim in 2015-2016, once the organ is restored, is to double current user/visitor/audience numbers to around 2,400 people a year through a programme of music for all organised by the Events Group. This will include:

- An Organ Festival as part of Heritage Weekend in September 2015 to celebrate the return of the restored organ
- Monthly 'Musical Bites' and Organ Events, organised by SMSG groups, including recitals alongside other events (eg Stony AHA - Arts & Heritage Awareness - the Christmas Lights Switch On, Stony Live!, Arts and Music Festival, Stony in Bloom, Stony Words)
- At least 4 concerts by local musical groups using the organ, including charity fundraising
- A Community Gala concert in July 2015 ringing together a range of local performances for a major event featuring the organ, for example, possibly Britten's Noyes Fludde.
- An Organ Festival as part of Heritage Weekend in September 2016 to celebrate successful completion of the HLF project and our plans for 2017 onwards - which will include not only celebrating 50 years of the Willis Pipe Organ in Stony Stratford, but also the 50th birthday of Milton Keynes as a New Town. Such events provide a focus for raising awareness and attracting new audiences.

## 6. Undertake an education programme

In an increasingly electronic era primary and secondary schools, our HLF Project will help to ensure that young people have the opportunity to learn about how quality pipe organ sound is made.

Our Willis pipe organ has real relevance for teaching and learning not only of music but also science, technology, social and cultural history, and RE, at Key Stage 2 (age 7-11). We also see opportunities for projects relevant to design, technology and music at Key Stage 3 and 4 (age 11-16) and for projects at university level.

By providing a reliable and expressive instrument on which to learn and perform we also hope to draw in more keyboard learners of Grade 4 standard and beyond, who wish to use the organ for learning and performance.

Our goal within the HLF Project to run in 2015/2016 at least 8 primary school visits, 3 secondary school projects, 1 university level project, and 3 beginners' guide events, involving in total up to 600 students, as pilots to test and improve our learning resources and inform the development of an ongoing Education Programme as a key part of MUSIC FOR ALL@SMSG.

## HLF Project Team

The HLF Project Team would be delighted to hear from you. You can contact us as follows:

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<http://www.smsg-organ-appeal.co.uk>

<http://www.hlf.org.uk>

# Willis Pipe Organ Restoration and Reach-out project

## How the HLF Project will support MUSIC FOR ALL@SMSG



The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has given substantial funding for six key purposes, described overleaf. We are being funded not only to restore the organ, but also to extend knowledge and appreciation of the organ and its history as widely as possible. We must evaluate our work and report back regularly to the HLF about the progress we are making.

Current volunteers are passionate about music, its importance in our day to day lives and its impact on our wellbeing. We want to bring a greater range of musical experiences to as many people as possible. We're looking for like-minded volunteers to take part in the Project Team and its subgroups; we'd be delighted for you to join us, or pass on information about us to others you know who might like to get involved from the community.

The overall timescale of the project looks like this:

MUSIC FOR ALL@SMSG HLF PROJECT	Apr-Jun 2014	Jul-Oct 2014	Oct-Dec 2014	Jan-Mar 2015	Apr-Jun 2015	Jul-Oct 2015	Oct-Dec 2015	Jan-Mar 2016	Apr-Jun 2016	Jul-Oct 2016
1. Restore organ										
2. Research/record organ history										
3. Produce learning resources										
4. Train volunteer guides										
5. Community Music Events Programme										
6. Education Programme										



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## 1: Restoration of the organ

Our HLF bid states: "Our Willis Pipe Organ demonstrates 50 years of creativity and innovation in organ-building by three generations of the Willis family, from 1882-1932. The organ was built by 'Father' Henry Willis (Willis I), an innovator in terms of both build technology and musical sound at the height of his most productive and creative period. Over the next 50 years the Pipe Organ was enlarged twice, with further innovations developed by Willis II and Willis III, including pneumatic and electric action ... The increase in variety of different pipes added considerably to the scope of the instrument both for accompanying choral singing and recitals. A small number of additional pipes were also prepared for, to add further to the tonal range, but not installed."

Milton Keynes, as a new city, does not have any historic Church organs of the size and musical versatility of the SMSG Willis Pipe Organ, nor are there comparable instruments in the area. A survey of 350 organs within the 35-mile radius shows that just five are three-manual organs of Father Willis pedigree, and of these our Organ is the largest one in a Church. The current Diocesan Organ Adviser, Barry Williams, commented: "Henry Willis III had the ability to take the work of his grandfather ('Father' Willis) and to enhance it in such a way as the basic character, tone and musical architecture of the instrument remained unchanged, yet the organ became fully equipped to modern standards for recital and accompaniment work. His consoles are masterpieces and the quality of his voicing equals that of his grandfather. Stony Stratford could well be one of only half a dozen instruments in pristine condition if you are successful in your application."

Most of the organ is still as it was following installation here in the 1960s and, unsurprisingly, materials that were thought to have useful life then are now fragile. The pipework is in good condition, but the soundboards are in poor condition and the leather coverings of the double and single rise wind reservoirs are in a precarious condition. The wind system reacts poorly in consequence: there is an unpleasant sine-wave effect after staccato chords are played. Access for repairs in the current configuration is difficult: if some parts of the action stop working it is impossible to reach them for maintenance/piecemeal repairs. It is also not physically possible to reach some of the largest pipes in the organ. Restoration work will rationalise this without spoiling the essential Willis qualities of the organ.

The organ has been tuned and maintained, but its condition has deteriorated with age, becoming increasingly unreliable in action. Its present condition means that few players can play it successfully because it is so unreliable. There is also a dulling of tone due to build-up of grime on the pipework and an absence of concert pitch. All these factors limit its use, not only in church services but also in the development of Music@SMSG, which serves the local community.

This is the heritage we will restore and share across a 35-mile radius. Restoration work will be done by FH Browne & Sons Ltd of Kent, who have been appointed through competitive tender. Their work will begin in September 2014 and take about 10 months. Thereafter, the PCC is committed to creating and organising a long term maintenance plan, to ensure good condition in the future.

Adding the 'prepared-for pipes' to complete the organ to its 1932 specification are not a heritage cost and so were not included in the HLF budget, nor was building new casework to finish the appearance of the organ. We will continue fundraising for these items, with the aim of having them fitted before the end of the HLF project in October 2016.

## 2. Research organ history and record online

The history of our organ has never been officially recorded and thus there has been no basis for educational activity. Our project includes the systematic collection and analysis of documentary source material which describes the building and evolution of the organ and its care and usage in different ownerships. We have identified records and information sources in Edinburgh, in the Willis archive, and in local records; and we know that there are both written and oral memories since the 1960s of local people's engagement with the organ.

All the source material we can collect will be included in a Digital Information Source available online. We will use a 'timeline' structure to show what was happening with our organ and what was happening in related aspects of society (social, technology, etc) at that time.

The Digital Information Source will be used by our Learning Resource groups to develop materials, in audio-visual, print and web-based formats, to support a variety of learning events for audiences with different interests.

## 3. Produce learning resources in audio visual, web and print formats

We have been given funding to produce, with professional production support, interpretation resources for the general public:

- A 25-minute professional DVD of the restoration work, the 'hard to see' aspects of organ function, and 'before and after' illustrations of the organ in performance, with 100 copies for use in schools and in the church and the ability to upload the video in sections online
- Permanent information displays both in the Church (banners, wall posters, booklets, handouts) and online on our website

In addition we have been given funding to develop Activity Packs for all age groups in education, to support visits and projects related to the organ: Key Stage 2 primary pupils, Secondary school students, and University music students.

## 4. Train volunteer guides to support events

We will also produce information packs and training sessions for volunteer guides who would like to support or lead demonstrations, talks and events in the Church.

These will include regular Beginners' Guide to the Organ events for potential organ scholars and keyboard learners of all ages who would like to find out more about the organ with a view to learning to play it.

## 5. Undertake a programme of community music events

Funding to restore the Pipe Organ will allow us to increase and develop our audiences significantly by being able to offer a wider range of performance events which include the use of the organ, at which people can both enjoy the music and, if they wish, find out more about it. Our events have the potential to draw in hundreds of visitors to Stony Stratford, providing the opportunity to build new audiences for the organ and at the same time use the organ to draw more people into the town. We will appeal not only to organ enthusiasts, but also to those for whom the sound of the organ rolling out of open Church doors uplifts the spirit on a busy day.