

Bristol Cathedral: Boiler Replacement (1 of 1 project funded)

Awarded £184,000 in November 2014 and additional funding of £30,000 in 2016

The need

As part of the development of the cathedral's five-year strategy 2015-19 it became apparent that a much-improved heating and hot water system was essential to its main priority of 'welcome and invitation'. The current systems were no longer fit for purpose, inefficient and prone to breakdowns.

Outcomes

The boiler replacement was successfully completed in 2016, and the draught reduction work will be completed during 2018. The cathedral is now noticeably warmer and the relative humidity is more stable. It is much more comfortable for visitors. There is considerably improved knowledge of the below-ground pipework, asbestos sites, and service layout and new schematics have been prepared so that future projects will have better information available.

Economic and social impact

Local contractors were used for the work. The cathedral has saved money from the increased efficiency of the new system and a reduction in fuel bills; it reports that boiler efficiency has been increased from 50% to 95%. The installation has also made it easier for the cathedral to attract commercial income: previously concert groups were saying it was too cold to rehearse or perform in. Commercial income has risen in the last two years.

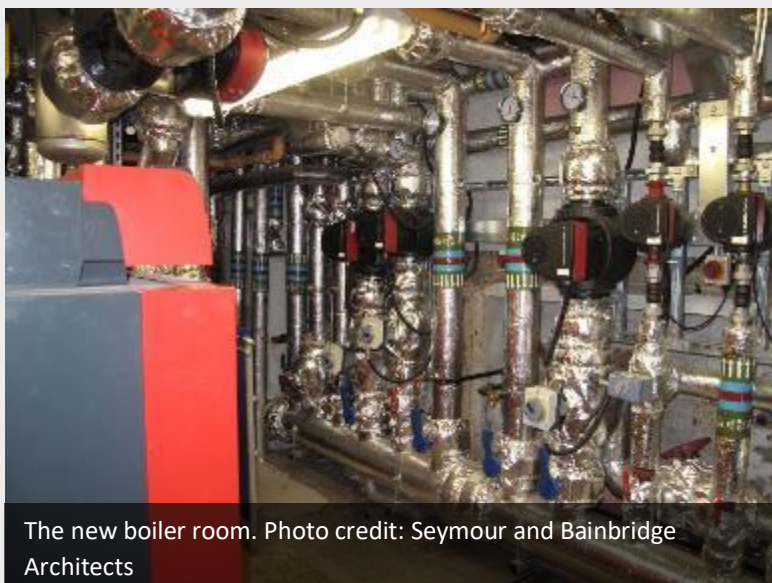
In a survey the cathedral's volunteers, who are generally older people, and visitors, said that they used to stay less time in the building because of the cold. The new heating has made the whole environment more comfortable, and importantly, more welcoming. The cathedral regularly hosts recitals, concerts, art events and exhibitions, including its four-year HLF-funded First World War project 'We Have Our Lives'. Feedback from visitors has become more positive.

Works completed and timescale

The project comprised the installation of new boilers and draught reduction measures. This included the installation of new glass doors between the nave and cloister, new glass doors in the cloister, and the installation of a new disabled entrance. The boiler replacement work began in the summer of 2015. Due to the unanticipated discovery of asbestos around underground piping, which was expensive to remove, the boiler replacement costs were more than £50,000 over budget. Following the identification of underspend on grants elsewhere the Fund's Expert Panel was able to re-allocate a further £30,000 towards the project. Because of the shortfall it was agreed that the funding should be used to complete the boiler installation only, and the other work on draught reduction had to be delayed; it is due for completion during 2018.

The Cathedral

Bristol cathedral originated as an Augustinian Abbey in the twelfth century, with much of the resulting church structure still surviving as part of the modern Cathedral, including the Romanesque Chapter House. The truncated church of the original Augustinian Abbey was designated Bristol Cathedral in 1542. A Gothic Revivalist nave was added by G.E. Street, and completed by J.L. Pearson. The Cathedral Archaeologist provided a watching brief on all excavation works and found new evidence of the medieval monastic complex.



The new boiler room. Photo credit: Seymour and Bainbridge Architects