Item: 1

St Magnus Cathedral Sub-Committee: 27 October 2026.

Organ Use Policy.

Report by Director of Enterprise and Resources.

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1. Overview

1.1. This report seeks to review and update the policy on the use of the St Magnus Cathedral Organ.

1.2. The Willis organ in the Cathedral is a very fine, hundred-year-old instrument, fitted and serviced by Henry Willis and Sons.

1.3. Orkney Islands Council bears responsibility for the condition of the organ, in close consultation with the Cathedral Organist and the Society of the Friends of St Magnus Cathedral.

1.4. This includes responsibility for the use and preservation of the organ. Excessive or inappropriate use can result in damage.

1.5. Whilst the policy on Organ Use agreed in 2000 was comprehensive, a number of developments necessitate a review. Such changes include:

- Changing use pattern by the Kirk Session. The previously determined regular usage dates and times have changed to become ad hoc by the Cathedral Organist; and
- Change in the employment status of the Cathedral Organist. The Cathedral Organist is now solely employed by the Kirk Session.

2. Recommendation

2.1. It is recommended that members of the Sub-committee:

i. Approve the Use of the Cathedral Organ Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Background

3.1. On 24 February 2000, the St Magnus Cathedral Sub-committee recommended the following policy for use of the organ:

- the Kirk practice sessions should remain as 3 p.m. until 4.30 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays and weekday evenings as required, together with 1 p.m. until 2 p.m. during winter months;
- the organ should only be available for practice, outwith normal Kirk practice sessions, to those organists deemed by the Cathedral Organist to be competent, and only to those with a finite end point in sight, to include:
    - a special service, such as a funeral or a wedding, where an invitation to play had been extended;
    - a concert or recital to be held within the Kirk; and
    - enrolment on a course of study towards an examination in organ playing, when musical competence was defined as already holding at least a Pass in the Grade 5 Examination of the Associated Board of Music;
- use of the organ for non-Kirk Session purposes should be limited to:
    - the half-working day prior to a performance or service, or equivalent period, by negotiation with the Cathedral Organist;
    - two hours per week for those studying for examinations, by negotiation with the Cathedral Organist, with evidence of ongoing studies being copied to the Cathedral Organist on a six-monthly basis for the duration of such studies up until the date of the examination, whereupon use of the Cathedral organ would cease; and
    - practice within normal opening times for the Cathedral during the working day, with a Custodian on the premises;
- requests or circumstances which did not appear to fit within the constraints of a user policy for the Cathedral organ should be considered in the first instance by the Cathedral Organist, with a right of appeal to the Heritage Officer in the Department of Development and Planning;
- appropriate negotiations should require to be undertaken with the Cathedral Organist prior to enrolment on an examination course for which practice on the Cathedral organ was to be requested; and
- all bookings of the organ should be lodged with the Heritage Officer for consideration in the light of other constraints on the use of the Cathedral, following initial negotiation with the Cathedral Organist.

4. Proposed Organ Use Policy

4.1. Since the 2000 policy on Organ use was approved, there have been a number of developments which necessitate a review.

4.2. Attached as Appendix 1 to this report, is a revised policy which sets out the scope, responsibilities and use of the organ, including which requests will be supported, as well as a mechanism to appeal a request which is refused, and a charge for visiting organists.

4.3. The changes are required due to:

- Changing use pattern by the Kirk Session. The previously determined regular usage dates and times have changed to become ad hoc by the Cathedral Organist; and
- Change in the employment status of the Cathedral Organist. The Cathedral Organist is now solely employed by the Kirk Session.

4.4. In addition, the organ is due to undergo restoration in 2026/27. As such the Cathedral Organist recommends reduced access to ensure its protection. Criteria relating to the frequency of playing the instrument will be reviewed upon the completion of the restoration.

For Further Information please contact:
Kate Doughty, Team Manager (Culture), extension 2376, Email kate.doughty@orkney.gov.uk.

Implications of Report

1. **Financial:** None.
2. **Legal:** None.
3. **Corporate Governance:** The report updates an established policy, providing proper governance.
4. **Human Resources:** No.
5. **Equalities:** An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
6. **Island Communities Impact:** An Island Communities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:
   ☐Growing our economy.

☐Strengthening our Communities.

☐Developing our Infrastructure.

☐Transforming our Council.

8. **Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:

   ☐Cost of Living.

   ☐Sustainable Development.

   ☒Local Equality.

   ☐Improving Population Health.

9. **Environmental and Climate Risk:** None.
10. **Risk:** This proposal reduces the risk of damage to the St Magnus Cathedral Organ by helping to ensure proper use.
11. **Procurement:** None.
12. **Health and Safety:** None.
13. **Property and Assets:** The Policy helps ensure proper use of the Cathedral Organ.
14. **Information Technology:** None.
15. **Cost of Living:** None.

List of Background Papers

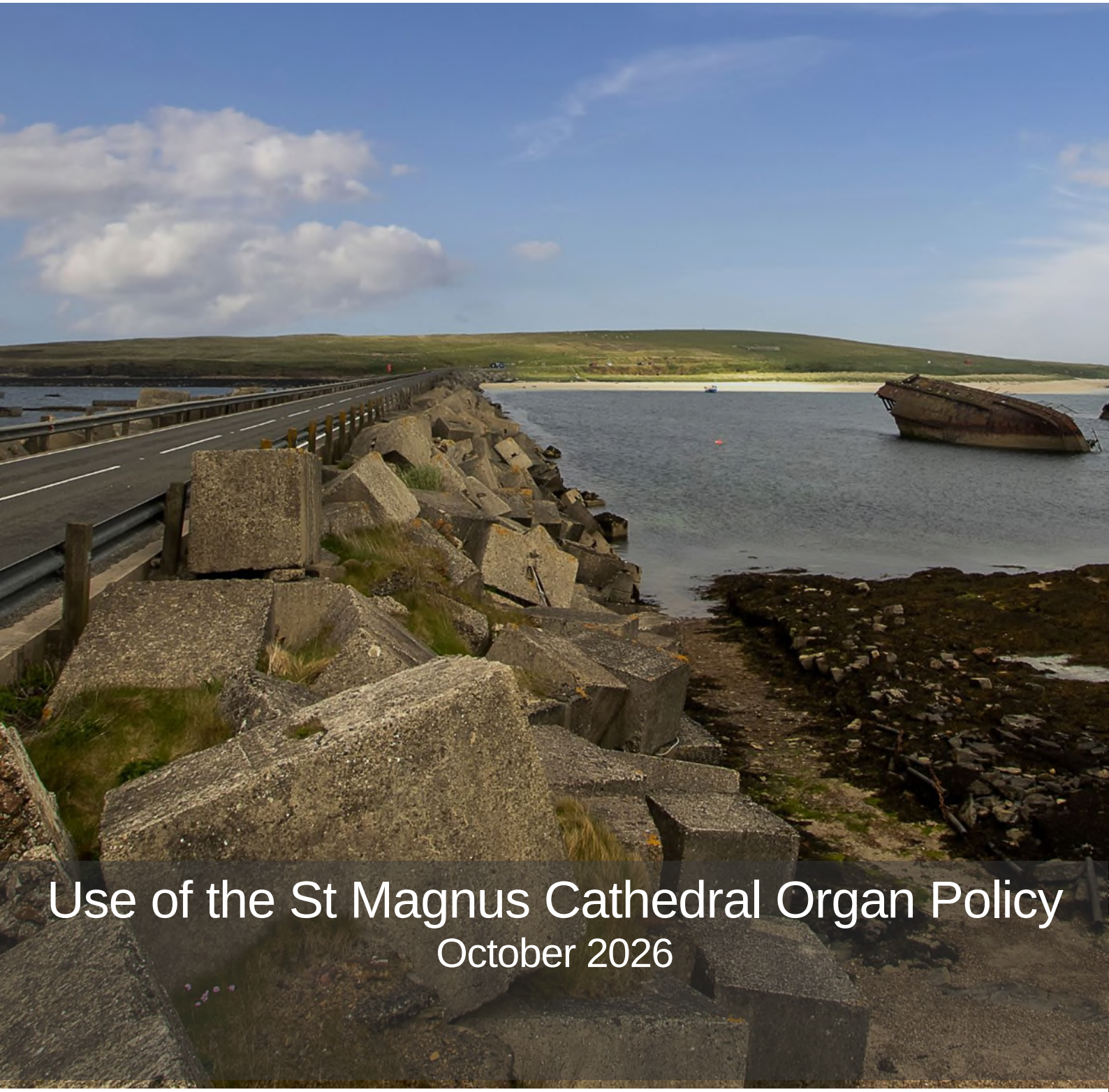
Report to the St Magnus Sub-committee on the use of the St Magnus Cathedral Organ, 24 February 2000.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Use of the St Magnus Cathedral Organ Policy 2026
Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment.
Appendix 3: Island Communities Impact Assessment.

Appendix 1

ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL



Use of the St Magnus Cathedral Organ Policy

October 2026

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Document Control Sheet

Review / approval history.

Date	Name	Position	Version approved
24 February 2000	St Magnus Sub-committee		V1

Change record table

Date	Author	Version	Status	Reason
2026	Kate Doughty, Team Manager Culture	1.1	Draft	Updated to reflect changes since 2000
Next due for review in 2031				

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Scope of Policy

While the primary function of the organ is to accompany Church services, use of the St Magnus Cathedral Organ will be supported for secular events and concerts, and by practicing organists and organ scholars.

Any refused requests will detail the reason for the refusal based on the below criteria.

This document sets out the Policy on Use of the St Magnus Cathedral Organ.

Responsibilities

Orkney Islands Council bears responsibility for the condition of the organ, in close consultation with the Cathedral Organist and the Society of the Friends of St Magnus Cathedral. This includes responsibility for the use and preservation of the organ. Excessive or inappropriate use can result in damage.

The Cathedral Organist is employed by the Kirk Session to accompany church services and has the honorary title of Kirkwall Town Organist to reflect their duty to Orkney Islands Council as adviser on the use of the organ.

All requests to play the organ will be initially received by the Cathedral Visitor Services Officer and considered by the Cathedral Organist. A decision based on the below criteria will then be made.

A refused request may be appealed by the applicant to the Director of Enterprise and Resources, who will review the information provided and either support or overrule the decision of the Cathedral Organist.

Visiting organists are required to pay a fee to Orkney Islands Council as per the Charges Register for use of the organ and use it within the operating hours of the Cathedral when staff are on the premises. The charge does not apply if the visiting organist plays the organ as part of an event or concert.

Local organists or organ scholars may be allowed regular practice slots free of charge.

Use of the St Magnus Cathedral Organ

Requests to play the organ should be supported where:

The applicant can demonstrate sufficient competence and experience in music at or equivalent to:

- Grade 5 standard according to the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in Piano or Organ; or
- SQA National 5 standard or above in Music at the recommendation of a musical education professional.

The request does not unreasonably impede Cathedral operations or prior bookings.

Sufficient notice is given for the request to be considered, being 10 working days.

Use will not be to the detriment of the instrument, taking account of weather conditions affecting the organ and frequency of use by all parties.

Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a proposal or changes by anticipating the consequences and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

Should you have any questions or wish for your draft EqIA to be reviewed by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, please contact OD@orkney.gov.uk.

1. Identification of the Proposal or Change	
Name of proposal or change being assessed.	St Magnus Cathedral Organ Use Policy
Responsible Service and Directorate.	Enterprise and Economic Growth, Enterprise and Resources
Date of assessment.	5 October 2026.
Is the proposal or change existing? (Please indicate if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	Amended policy, updated to reflect current practice.

2. Primary Information	
What are the intended outcomes of the proposal or change?	To formalise current conditions of use pertaining to the organ in St Magnus Cathedral.
Is the proposal or change strategically important?	**No.**
State who is or may be affected by this proposal or change, and how?	Cathedral Organist, Cathedral Visitor Services Officer, Director of Enterprise and Resources, visiting organists, resident organists and organ scholars.

How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this proposal or change?	Cathedral Organist, Cathedral Curator, Cathedral Visitor Services Officer, Service Manager for Sustainable Regeneration and Arctic, and Head of Enterprise and Economic Growth have been consulted on the development of the policy.
Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking.	No.
Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.	No.
Could the proposal or change have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons:
1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.	No.
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	No.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	No.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	No.

5. Pregnancy and maternity.	No.
6. Age: people of different ages.	No.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	No.
8. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	No.
9. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	No.
10. Caring responsibilities	No.
11. Socio-economic disadvantage.	Yes, insofar as visiting organists are charged to use the organ. The charge for 2026-2027 is £54 per visit.
12. Care experienced	No.

3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No.
Does the analysis above identify any potential negative impacts?	No.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes.

4. Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Please complete the following action plan where you have identified any differential impacts or potential negative impacts in Section 3 of the Equality Impact Assessment.

Impact Identified	Action to be taken	Owner	How will it be monitored	Date Action to be completed

5. Sign and Date	
Signature:	[redacted]
Name:	Kate Doughty.
Date:	5 October 2026.

Island Communities Impact Assessment

St Magnus Cathedral Organ Use Policy

Preliminary Considerations	Response
Please provide a brief description or summary of the policy, strategy or service under review for the purposes of this assessment.	The policy seeks to formalise current use of the organ in St Magnus Cathedral and establish a means of appeal.
Step 1 – Develop a clear understanding of your objectives	**Response**
What are the objectives of the policy, strategy or service?	To formalise conditions of use pertaining to the organ in St Magnus Cathedral.
Do you need to consult?	No.
How are islands identified for the purpose of the policy, strategy or service?	N/A
What are the intended impacts/outcomes and how do these potentially differ in the islands?	The impacts pertain only to St Magnus Cathedral and its users.
Is the policy, strategy or service new?	No, it formalises an established policy.
Step 2 – Gather your data and identify your stakeholders	**Response**
What data is available about the current situation in the islands?	N/A
Do you need to consult?	No.
How does any existing data differ between islands?	N/A
Are there any existing design features or mitigations in place?	N/A
Step 3 – Consultation	**Response**
Who do you need to consult with?	None.
How will you carry out your consultation and in what timescales?	N/A

What questions will you ask when considering how to address island realities?	N/A
What information has already been gathered through consultations and what concerns have been raised previously by island communities?	N/A
Is your consultation robust and meaningful and sufficient to comply with the Section 7 duty?	N/A
Step 4 – Assessment	Response
Does your assessment identify any unique impacts on island communities?	No.
Does your assessment identify any potential barriers or wider impacts?	N/A
How will you address these?	N/A

You must now determine whether in your opinion your policy, strategy or service is likely to have an effect on an island community, which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities).

If your answer is **No** to the above question, a full ICIA will NOT be required and **you can proceed to Step 6**.
If the answer is **Yes**, an ICIA must be prepared and y**ou should proceed to Step 5**.

To form your opinion, the following questions should be considered:

- Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as different levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)?
- Are these different effects likely?
- Are these effects significantly different?
- Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the Scottish mainland or between island groups?

Step 5 – Preparing your ICIA	Response
In Step 5, you should describe the likely significantly different effect of the policy, strategy or service:	
Assess the extent to which you consider that the policy, strategy or service can be developed or delivered in such a manner as to improve or mitigate, for island communities, the outcomes resulting from it.	
Consider alternative delivery mechanisms and whether further consultation is required.	
Describe how these alternative delivery mechanisms will improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	
Identify resources required to improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	
Stage 6 – Making adjustments to your work	Response
Should delivery mechanisms/mitigations vary in different communities?	N/A
Do you need to consult with island communities in respect of mechanisms or mitigations?	No.
Have island circumstances been factored into the evaluation process?	No.
Have any island-specific indicators/targets been identified that require monitoring?	No.
How will outcomes be measured on the islands?	N/A
How has the policy, strategy or service affected island communities?	N/A

How will lessons learned in this ICIA inform future policy making and service delivery?	N/A
Step 7 – Publishing your ICIA	Response
Have you presented your ICIA in an Easy Read format?	No.
Does it need to be presented in Gaelic or any other language?	No.
Where will you publish your ICIA and will relevant stakeholders be able to easily access it?	N/A
Who will signoff your final ICIA and why?	N/A

ICIA completed by:	Kate Doughty.
Position:	Team Manager Culture.
Signature:	[redacted]
Date complete:	5 October 2026.

ICIA approved by:	Gareth Waterson.
Position:	Director of Enterprise and Resources.
Signature:	[redacted]
Date complete:	14 October 2026.