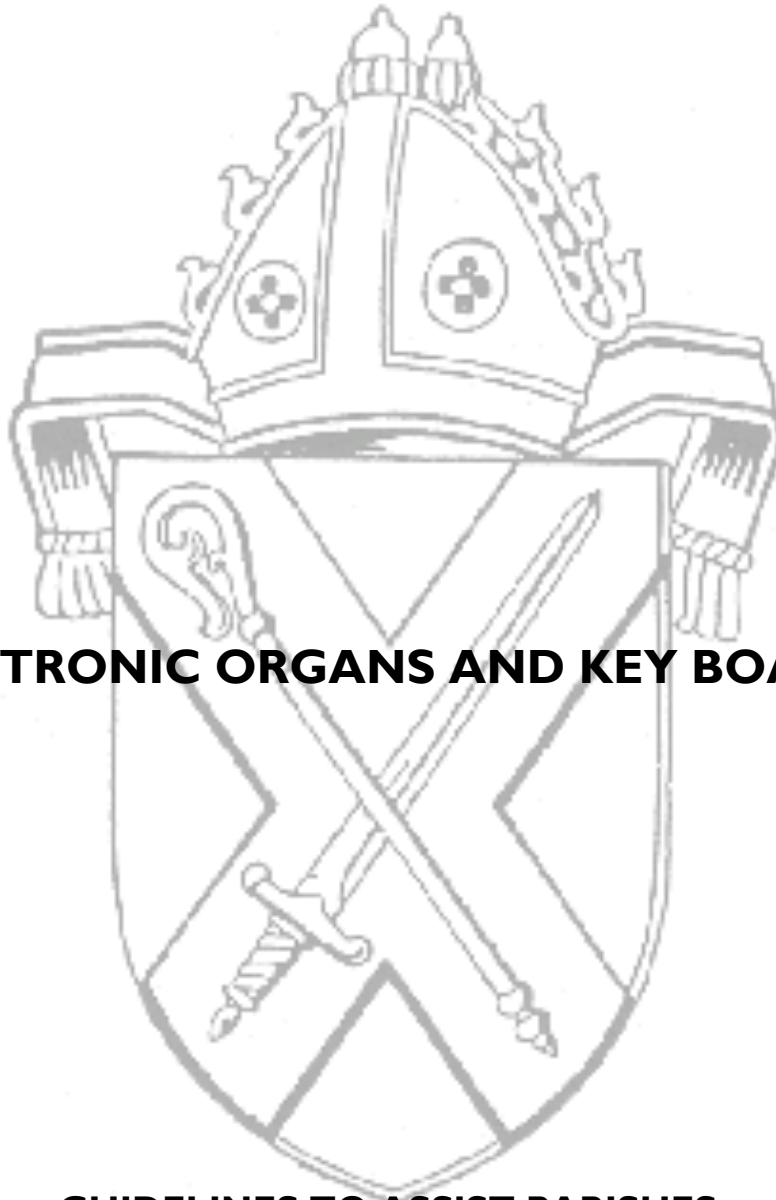


DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD

DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE



ELECTRONIC ORGANS AND KEY BOARDS

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST PARISHES

Issued January 2002

DRAINAGE AND GROUNDWORKS AT CHURCHES

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The use of musical instruments to accompany worship varies widely with the needs of individual churches. With new forms of liturgy and the opportunity for involving members of the congregation in music-making in addition to the traditional choir, the need is often expressed for musical instruments as an alternative or addition to the pipe organ. Many churches now have their own small orchestra or music group, in addition to the choir and traditional organ.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Guidance Note is to indicate the relative merits of two types of instrument – electronic organs and electronic keyboards. There are also instances where consideration is being given to replacement of the pipe organ. It is recognised that some congregations follow a liturgical style that may render a pipe organ redundant, and there are other places where there simply are no people able to play a pipe organ. However, where the sound of such an organ is required and there is an organist, it can be found that the repair of the existing pipe organ or its replacement with a second-hand organ from another church has been a satisfactory and long lasting answer. In such cases it is essential that the advice of the DAC organ advisers is sought. A separate Guidance Note on Pipe Organs is available.

ELECTRONIC ORGANS

- 2.1 It is important to clarify the distinction between the term ‘electronic’ and the term ‘electric action’. The latter refers to a type of action sometimes employed on pipe organs and in no way comes under the context of this Guidance Note.
- 2.2 There are many types and qualities of church electronic organs, eg digital and computer types. They are often referred to as ‘classical organs’.
- 2.3 The larger instruments for churches are often proposed as a substitute for the pipe organ having the benefit of :

- a) Less floor space
- b) More extensive range of stops
- c) Lower cost than a pipe organ
- d) Ease of maintenance by requiring no tuning
- e) More flexible siting

2.4 When considering such an organ consideration needs to be given to :

- a) The size and position of the speakers for optimum sound production
- b) The likely life of the speakers
- c) The sound output of small organs particularly in larger churches
- d) The range of voices or stops required
- e) The replacement availability of components
- f) The overall life cycle of the instrument and equipment

2.5 There are many purpose designed church electronic organs which replicate many of the usual functions of a pipe organ, with similar console, manuals and pedal board. For many in a church congregation the sound will be quite acceptable. A keen musical ear, however, will be aware that no speaker can completely replicate the sound from an organ pipe, even those instruments where the manufacturer has pre-recorded the sound of particular instruments. In purchasing any new or replacement instrument it is always worth checking to ensure that the console adheres to the accepted dimensions of a conventional pipe organ console.

Variations in disposition of stops and pedals, though they might appear to be slight, can prove disconcerting to the player who is called in to deputise at the last moment. Care should be exercised not to have too large an instrument since one offering almost 'cathedral' like variety and dynamic range can sound incongruous in a small church. To overcome the considerable size of speakers for the larger pipe sounds, some bass speakers are housed in purpose-built compartments built into the church and their siting has some relevance in the inherent design of the building. Such organs are usually at the upper end of the price range.

2.6 There are smaller instruments especially developed for churches which have none of the effects often included with domestic organs such as rhythms, sound effects etc. however, the former comment regarding

sufficient sound output should be carefully assessed to suit the size of church.

DIGITAL PIANOS

3.1 There are distinctive instruments, often in the form of, but less height than, a traditional upright piano. They have as similar touch to a normal piano with the added facility of tuning to match accompanying solo instruments including the pipe organ. Many also have the facility of a 'church organ' stop for imitating a pipe organ sound, though this is seldom convincing. There are also portable versions of digital pianos and also versions having recording and playback facilities. Pre-recorded CD's can also be used as 'digital hymnals' where no organist is available.

These instruments are often used with small groups or soloists, and also to lead congregational singing of modern choruses and songs, as opposed to traditional hymns. Great care needs to be taken that an instrument and speakers are chosen which are adequate for the task.

DIGITAL KEYBOARDS

4.1 There are a great number of elaborate variations on the portable keyboard. Many of the features are similar to digital pianos though they are of a more portable nature and are provided with appropriate stands. As has been noted, the volume of these can be limited, and the PCC should be satisfied that the volume and equipment is suitable for congregational singing. They have built-in speaker systems but, where suitable, connection can be made to the church sound system. However, this in turn may only have speakers primarily for voice reinforcement. Speakers suitable for voice and music are necessary.

4.2 Great care is required to control the balance of microphones and instruments by the use of a mixer. Such instruments are commonly used in "music groups" to accompany worship songs, where their percussion and other effects can be appropriate.

4.3 In leading large groups of singers, these instruments, unlike a pipe organ, often do not have as broad a range of pitches. It is this factor which equips

the pipe organ so well for its role in leading large congregations. The higher and lower pitched stops enable the singers to hear the organ without it having to be unduly loud, as their voices are rather like the filling in a tonal sandwich.

MUSIC GROUPS

- 5.1 The position of any music group in the church should be given serious consideration. Its siting should be sensitive to the liturgical space at the front of the nave and chancel and be reasonably unobtrusive.
- 5.2 Where portable keyboards are to be kept on the premises, arrangements should be made for their secure and discreet storage when not in use.
- 5.3 Electrical leads to any instruments can be a hazard as well as being unsightly. Avoid laying loose cables across aisles and other circulatory areas where they are likely to be hazardous.

FACULTY CONSENT AND ADVICE

- 6.1 A Faculty is required for any work on an organ beyond routine tuning and maintenance. If in doubt, seek advice from the Diocesan Registry or DAC Secretary.
- 6.2 Whether seeking advice or applying for a Faculty, please send **copies** of all available information about the organ to the DAC Secretary for copying and forwarding to the Diocesan Organs Advisors. This should include full details of the name of the manufacturer, approximate age and specification, the nature of the proposed work and estimates or letters from the contractor whose advice has been sought. This will allow the Advisors to become fully conversant with the situation before entering into discussion.
- 6.3 It is normally recommended that three or four estimates be obtained from suitable firms. Most charge a fee for carrying out an inspection and preparing a report if they do not maintain the organ. When work is being considered the parish might therefore find it helpful to discuss the situation with the Diocesan Organ Advisors before seeking estimates in order to minimise this expense.
- 6.4 The Diocesan Organ Advisors are anxious to make themselves available to give advice : please do not hesitate to contact them through the DAC Secretary.

INSURANCE

- 7.1 The insurer or tuner should be consulted for accurate advice on the replacement cost of the instrument.

1. The use of musical instruments to enhance worship is to be encouraged but where electronic organs and digital pianos are used, their casing should be compatible with the general furniture of the church.
2. Specialist advice should be sought at an early stage from the Diocesan Advisory Committee.
3. In the event of a proposed replacement of a pipe organ with an electronic organ, a Statement of Needs will be required.
4. The positions and sizes of any speakers for electronic organs will need to be agreed with the DAC. The church architect should also be consulted regarding siting of speakers and routing of wiring.
5. All permanent exposed wiring should match in colour the surface to which it is fixed with hot glue fixing in preference to clips. Plastic trunking is to be avoided.
6. Where portable keyboards are kept on the premises, arrangements for storage when not in use should be stated.
7. A Faculty will be required for electronic organs and digital pianos.

**This is one of a series of guidelines published by the
Diocesan Advisory Committee**
**Copies can be downloaded from the Diocesan website
:
(www.chelmsford.anglican.org)
or can be obtained from the
DAC Secretary at the address below.**

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