

Administrators go in at 270-year-old York builder

Administrators have been called in at a York-based specialist heritage building company that has been in business since 1747, writes Dave Rogers.

Begbies Traynor has been appointed at William Anelay, whose projects have included Lambeth Palace and Wilton's Music Hall, also in the capital, as well as current projects York Mansion House and Lancaster Castle.

Joint administrators Julian Pitts and Bob Maxwell said 126 of the firm's 140 staff have been made redundant and the company has stopped trading.

The company confirmed it was having problems last month. Pitts said the firm had run into cash flow problems after a period of

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CHARLES ANELAY, WILLIAM ANELAY



Lambeth Palace was one of William Anelay's projects

expansion, as well as being hit by problem contracts on its books.

The firm attempted to arrange a CVA with creditors - a mechanism whereby a struggling company agrees with creditors to pay back a certain sum over a set period of time to stave off insolvency - but Pitts said this hit a dead end.

He added: "There was no alternative but to place the business into administration."

The company has 17 schemes on site and Pitts said the administrators were talking to rivals and were

"hopeful that it may prove possible to novate some of the company's contracts to ensure that work can be completed with the minimum of disruption to clients".

He added: "We will be working closely with the management to realise returns for creditors and will keep the employees fully informed as the situation becomes clearer."

According to its last set of accounts filed at Companies House, William Anelay had a turnover of £33.4m for the year to June 2015 with a pre-tax profit of £493,000.

In July, it said it was extending its current accounting period until year-end.

The firm's chairman, Charles Anelay, the eighth generation of the founding family, said: "The last few weeks have been the worst of my life. We are hugely disappointed that it has come to this.

"We thank all our staff for their commitment and loyalty, apologise to those clients and creditors who have given their support and who will now lose out, and thank all past friends of the firm and members of the public who gave their support."

He added: "We have worked very hard to save the business and do the best for our creditors by proposing a CVA. We really believed that we had a good plan to get through our cash difficulties, and were supported by our bank and HMRC."

The administrators said the firm's associated businesses - Lowery Roofing, Hare and Ransome Joinery, Anelay Traditional Masonry and Anelay Building and Conservation - were unaffected by the administration and will continue to trade as normal

Sweett MD gets top Currie & Brown job as takeover is completed

Sweett managing director Alan Manuel has taken a top role at Currie & Brown after the takeover of the firm was completed last week.

Sweett de-listed from the AIM arm of the London Stock Exchange after nine years and joined Currie & Brown, creating a 2,200-strong consultant with 60 offices worldwide.

Currie & Brown's £29m offer trumped a rival bid

from Canadian firm WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff earlier this year.

Manuel will be chief operating officer for the UK, Channel Islands, Ireland and mainland Europe, Sweett's most senior figure in the combined business. Sweett's board - including chief executive Douglas McCormick - all leave under the deal.

Currie & Brown confirmed the historic Sweett brand,

set up in 1928, will be ditched within two months, as revealed by Building last month in an interview with Currie & Brown chief executive Euan McEwan.

McEwan said: "The merged businesses will create an even stronger global player in our field and we look forward to working closely with our new Sweett colleagues to create a leading construction advisory business."

Murphy targets £2bn revenue

Infrastructure specialist Murphy has bounced back into the black and set out plans to more than double in size by 2025.

Murphy chief executive Steve Hollingshead said the firm's plan was to double revenue to £2bn by 2025 under a 10-year plan.

The contractor posted a £13.8m profit in calendar year 2015, after a £9.7m loss the previous year. Turnover dipped 2% to £647m, down from £658m.

Murphy attributed last year's loss to problems on an east London combined heat and power plant.

The firm's director Bernard Murphy said the project suffered "difficulties with design, cost escalation, supply chain and engine related technical breakdowns", which "overshadowed what was otherwise a very satisfactory year".

The firm also blamed a drop in activity at its Australian businesses and in the UK and Ireland

Wilson James' consultancy soars

Wilson James' recently launched consultancy business has picked up five contracts in its first year, including work on a HS2 bid and Square Mile tower 22 Bishopsgate.

The division, led by director Andrew Rhodes, is a logistics partner for a consortium working on an HS2 bid and is advising a major ports operator.

The firm has also picked up work on Lipton Rogers' 22 Bishopsgate tower, Jaguar Land Rover's factory scheme in Warwickshire, and University College

London's Bloomsbury campus redevelopment.

Rhodes said he is targeting the division to make up 10-15% of the £102m-turnover company's overall revenue in the years to come, up from 2% today.

He added: "We are focusing increasingly on the security side - construction logistics security - and pre-construction work and also expanding into wider logistics consultancy."