

SHARP RISE IN METAL THEFTS ACROSS THE DIOCESE

The numbers:

Since May 2016 there have been 52 thefts of lead from 37 churches. 20 churches within the Dorchester Archdeaconry, 16 churches within the Buckingham Archdeaconry and 1 church in Berkshire have been targeted. Many churches have been targeted more than once.

The churches:

The churches targeted are no longer only isolated rural churches. Thefts are now taking place at churches surrounding my houses and with strong road frontages. Churches under threat often have single storey side aisles with lead roofs behind a parapet.

The thieves:

The people carrying out these crimes are organised and vehicles used to remove lead from site have been recovered by police containing lists of churches they intend to target. In some instances, areas of roof protected with CCTV have been avoided.

Awareness:

The Archdeacons of Buckingham and Dorchester have contacted their parishes to notify them of the danger and to encourage extra security measures.

Roof Alarms:

Ecclesiastical Insurance Group have 4 approved installers of roof alarms. These typically cost £3000 - £5000 to install and an annual monitoring fee is paid to a remote monitoring company. This is usually around £600. Although this is financial outlay is a stretch for parishes the alarms have been working as effective deterrents and the inbuilt cameras which begin recording when an intruder is detected can help lead to prosecutions. More importantly for the parish, where EIG insure the church they will cover the church to 100% of the value of the stolen lead and associated repairs if both smartwater and an approved alarm system is installed.

Funding for Alarms:

The below groups are all providing funding scheme to assist parishes in installing alarms -

Buckingham Historic Churches Trust

<http://bucks-historic-churches.org/>

Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust

<http://ohct.org.uk/>

All Churches Trust

<http://www.allchurches.co.uk/>

What to do following a theft:

- 1) Contact your incumbent
- 2) Contact your QI and instruct a roofer to apply a temporary cover
- 3) Notify your insurers and the police
- 4) Contact the DAC team on 01865 208229 or liz.kitch@oxford.anglican.org
- 5) Consider as a PCC, with advice from the DAC and the QI architect, what material is most appropriate for the long term repair
- 6) Apply for diocesan permission (and secular permission where required) for the long term repair.

Permissions required:

To install a roof alarm – A List B application should be made to the DAC and the Archdeacon via the Online Faculty System

To replace the roof in lead - A List B application should be made to the DAC and the Archdeacon via the Online Faculty System

To replace the roof in an alternative material – A faculty application should be made to the DAC via the Online Faculty System. The Local Planning Authority should be consulted to confirm whether or not planning permission is required. If the church is grade II or grade I listed Historic England will have to be consulted.*

Alternative materials:

The DAC always recommends that where possible lead is replaced on a like for like basis and an alarm installed. The DAC will review applications for alternative materials on a case by case basis. Where an alternative material is proposed the DAC will consider factors such as the number of attempted thefts at the church, its location, whether or not the roof is visible, the financial circumstance of the church, and the significance of the historic fabric internally within the church.

Preventative removal of lead:

The DAC does not recommend preventative removal of lead roofs prior to theft actually taking place. The DAC always recommends that where possible lead is replaced on a like for like basis and an alarm installed. The DAC will review applications for alternative materials on a case by case basis.

FURTHER INFORMATION

In 2011 Historic England produced this guidance note, which is still current and very detailed <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/theft-metal-church-buildings/theft-metal-church-buildings.pdf>

Ecclesiastical Insurance Group have many helpful resources on their website, include a guidance note on protecting your church from theft, and what to do should your church be targeted.

<http://www.ecclesiastical.com/churchmatters/churchguidance/churchsecurity/theftofmetal/index.aspx>

For further information on Faculty and List B permissions, or any other support and advice, please contact the DAC team:

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