

Lead theft in our diocese

The past 12 months have been a particularly difficult year for many of our parishes due to a significant rise in lead thefts. In total, 30 churches have been targeted, and despite the arrest of four suspects in December 2019 the problem has not abated – within the first two weeks of the new year two further thefts had taken place.

Lead theft is a devastating crime not only for the parish, but also for the wider community. The cost involved for the replacement of the lead usingterne-coated stainless steel – a far less attractive material for metal thieves – can be considerable. Most insurers will cover the cost of a replacement roof if the church is alarmed, has SmartWater and all of the appropriate signage. Where a church doesn't have an alarm, but has the other precautions it is likely the pay-out will be capped at around £7500. With the latter the net result is that parishes have to find the repair and reinstatement costs from a combination of church funds and charitable grant givers.

On average the replacement of an aisle roof can cost in the region of £30,000, and a nave roof, with more scaffolding involved, can be as much as £70–80,000. Therefore, it is in everybody's interests to try and minimise the risk of lead theft from a church. With this in mind, and if there is lead at your church, here is some advice:

- Make sure that where you already have SmartWater or similar it is up to date, registered and the appropriate signage has been installed.
- If you have an alarm ensure it is checked regularly and serviced as required.
- Be on the alert for suspicious activity around the church and ask parishioners who live close to the church to be especially vigilant. Any suspicious activity can be reported using the police 101 number, and if you think a crime is in progress then ring 999.

Further advice about lead theft can be found on the diocesan website, where there is also advice on what to do if the worst happens and who to contact in the diocesan Church Buildings department if it does.

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www.lincoln.anglican.org/church-buildings

www.lincoln.anglican.org/News/protecting-against-lead-theft