

DIOCESE OF SALISBURY

DIOCESAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CARE OF CHURCHES (DAC)

Guidance Note

THEFT OF METAL ROOF COVERING FROM A CHURCH

This DAC guidance note is intended to provide advice about the course of action to follow should you find that the metal roof covering (usually lead, but sometimes copper) has been stolen from your church.

Regrettably, metal theft is still a very serious problem in this country and can often result in considerable distress, cost and inconvenience to a parish, and also serious damage to the church fabric. The need to do all that you can to prevent theft is clear and deterrents such as intruder alarms, Ledlock or physical marking can help. Your insurers will be able to offer advice on this.

Information from the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group (EIG) is available at:

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

There is also advice available from English Heritage, at:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/places-of-worship/theft-protection/>

If theft occurs, you should initially contact -

- the police, and in time consider compiling a “Heritage Crime Impact Statement” or similar. The police have a dedicated Operation relating to lead theft called “Operation Tornado”. It can help to refer to this when reporting the theft
- the church insurers
- the church’s inspecting architect or surveyor to identify a suitable weather-proof temporary covering for the roof areas affected
- the Archdeacon, to notify him/her of the theft and obtain the necessary Minor Works permission for a temporary covering and any emergency work needed (the Diocesan Chancellor’s permission may be needed for the emergency work, but you will be advised about this at the time)
- the DAC secretary

and assess prevention and security measures against the likelihood of further theft.

Next steps

Discuss long-term options for replacing stolen roofing materials with your inspecting architect or surveyor. It may be possible to obtain permission for a short emergency period using short-term materials such as a felt, to permit fund-raising for a longer-term solution – and for deterrents. If your church is in the County of Dorset, some funding may be available towards costs from the Erskine Muton Trust Fund.

REPLACEMENT ON A 'LIKE-FOR-LIKE' BASIS

If it is sensible to replace on a like-for-like basis, obtain detailed proposals for the work and a quotation. Your inspecting architect or surveyor will be the best person to produce the specifications and drawings for this.

You should also consider effective deterrents against future theft (see 'SECURITY/ALARM SYSTEMS' below).

Then contact your Archdeacon to find out what type of permission is needed for the work required: this will be either Minor Works, Extended Minor Works or Faculty depending on the scope of the work.

CHANGE OF ROOFING MATERIALS

If, after consultation with your inspecting architect or surveyor, a change of materials is proposed then Faculty permission will be needed for this.

Detailed proposals, including proper site-specific specifications and drawings, will be required with the application.

It will be necessary to consult your local planning authority and English Heritage about the change and this should be done without delay. In some cases, the local planners will insist that Planning Permission is required for the work, in addition to Faculty. The DAC, when considering an application for change of materials (during the first stage of the faculty process), will want to know of the local planning authority's and English Heritage's view about the proposals.

If you are uncertain about the materials proposed, seek DAC informal advice about the change before finalising plans and starting the formal Faculty process.

Each case for change will be considered on its own merits, but short-term roofing materials such as asphalt, GRP, modern plastics or rubber are not recommended by the DAC. Long-term materials such as terne coated stainless steel (which is less likely to be damaged or stolen), zinc, slate or tile are more appropriate for churches and are more in-keeping with the historic significance of the buildings.

The visibility of the roof slope affected will be an important factor when change of materials is proposed and, also, the likely effectiveness of security systems in preventing further theft and need for change.

SECURITY/ALARM SYSTEMS

If there are roof slopes on the church where lead or copper remain and have been unaffected by theft, or if stolen materials are to be replaced on a 'like-for-like' basis, or if lead gutters and flashings will be retained, then it is sensible to install deterrents against theft such as a good alarm system and your insurers will be able to advise you on a suitable system. Other deterrents include Ledlock or physical marking (there are now some available which are more visible than Smartwater). If your church is in the county of Dorset, the Erskine Muton Trust Fund can offer a standard £2000 grant towards the installation of an alarm.

Permission will be needed for the installation of a security system or alarm and you should initially seek the Archdeacon's advice about the nature of permission required. You will need to provide details of proposals and costs. Your inspecting architect or surveyor will be able to advise you about locating and fixing equipment to minimise impact on church fabric. Most systems require an electricity power supply and if new work is needed to provide this, then it will be essential that current DAC Guidance for Electrical Installation and Maintenance is followed.

ADVICE AVAILABLE

If you are unclear about the above guidance or need advice following theft, please do not hesitate to contact the Archdeacons, via their Area Offices, or the DAC secretary for help.

Contact details:

Sherborne Area Office - 01202 659427

for the Archdeacon of Dorset and the Archdeacon of Sherborne

Ramsbury Area Office - 01722 438662

for the Archdeacon of Sarum and the Archdeacon of Wilts

DAC secretary/office – 01722 438654

Erskine Muton Trust Fund – 01722 438665

Diocesan Registry – 01722 432390