

## Care of Churches Advice:

### Lead Theft from Churches

The widespread theft of lead & copper from church buildings has almost reached crisis point. We know of 40 churches where lead has been stolen over recent months and I am sure there are others yet to report to us. Some churches have had multi-thefts with at least two churches suffering theft of the same roof for the third time.

Although this is a national problem, Nottinghamshire has been particularly hard hit by this crime wave. Due to the scale of the problem, Nottinghamshire Police have now appointed Chief Inspector Glenn Harper as the designated officer to oversee the situation across the county.

According to the Daily Telegraph of 7 July 2007, the price of lead has risen 160% since last summer. Copper, Zinc, Aluminium and Stainless Steel, all used in roofing work, have also increased in price as demand for them increases.

Lead theft has become more lucrative for villains with the increase and high demand for scrap. But they make only hundreds of pounds when the replacement runs into thousands! There are the associated fabric damage and internal water damage and scaffolding which further increases the price.

Questions are being asked about possible alternatives to lead. Lead historically and currently is the best product by far. Possibilities for alternatives are extremely limited and sometimes almost as costly, if less attractive to thieves. Terne-coated (to look like lead) stainless steel is perhaps the most acceptable replacement, currently about 75% of the cost of lead.

The Diocesan Advisory Committee at its meeting earlier this week discussed fully the implications of the continual lead and copper theft. It examined the various roofing alternatives, life, cost and suitability. We discussed the possibility of using a temporary covering and then metal replacement in an approved time scale. Consideration was given to security measures and whether funding could be available where insurance falls short.

Although we have the faculty legal process, there are some instances on listed buildings when a change in the appearance of, in this case the roof, requires consultation with local authorities and involvement by English Heritage who are a major source of funding for church repairs.

Under the Chairmanship of Archdeacon Nigel, members of the DAC are arranging to meet representatives of English Heritage & Local Authorities in an attempt to negotiate some flexibility at this difficult and distressing time. We hope to meet urgently and I will give feed-back and further advice in due course.

In the meantime I have three items of advice I would appreciate parishes taking up:

- Repair and replacement of lead or copper on roofs is subject to the legal requirement of faculty; in cases where work is an emergency details should be forwarded to this office or to the Registrar who, if appropriate, will seek a Chancellor's Licence for the work to proceed
- Parishes are asked to contact Care of Churches to report any theft of lead or copper, including incidents in the past which have not been reported to us; it would be useful also to know any problems with insurance and any police involvement
- Church Officers should urgently visit neighbours who overlook or are near to the church and ask them if they would be alert to any problems and report to the police any suspicious occurrences

If you have any information, comments or suggestions please contact Stephen (01636 817211) or Jonathan (01636 817210) in the Diocesan Office.