

Combating metal theft with the new roof security alarm

Case Study: Diocese of Manchester

Black clouds over Blackley

The village of Blackley appears in the Domesday Book and is now part of the Manchester conurbation, just three miles north of the city centre. Built entirely of stone, the church is the area's only community space.

Over the past decade, St. Peter's has experienced a number of thefts, mainly of the lead flashings from the roof. This presented an ongoing problem to the church and congregation, not just because of the loss of the lead itself but because of the internal damage caused by incoming rainfall.

Morale was low

As members of the church had to keep dealing with the thefts, the normal day-to-day life of the church was constantly being disrupted. The costs kept adding up with each insurance claim, and St. Peter's eventually spent over £20,000 in replacing stolen lead. The situation was disheartening and an unwelcome distraction, as The Reverend Eddie Roberts, the vicar of St. Peter's says, *"Apart from the day-to-day repairs to the church and the interruption to the life of the church, these constant incidents seriously impacted morale."*

St. Peter's tried any number of solutions to tackle the problem. However, the steps taken had little effect and the lead flashings were still being stolen.

Hands Off Our Church Roofs campaign

As a result of the significant metal theft problems experienced, we installed a roof alarm at St. Peter's and launched the Hands Off Our Church Roofs campaign at the church in February 2012. We received significant press coverage for our campaign launch and reached an estimated audience of 18 million people.

No more damage

Within a few months the alarm system had proved its effectiveness. The alarm was triggered on two nights back in May 2012, and the alarm monitoring company alerted the church. By the time church members had arrived on the scene, the thieves had fled and there was no evidence of any theft having taken place.

On closer inspection of the roof, we found evidence of an attempt to remove the lead flashings. The alarm had obviously frightened off the thieves.



To date there has been one final metal theft attempt, when thieves tried to remove the sensors themselves. The sensors are sturdily secured and triggered the alarm to foil the thieves. Since then there have been no further attempts on the lead. As Reverend Roberts said, *"Now the local thieves have tried two or three times we're hoping that everything will stop."*

St. Peter's are delighted that they can now get back to the all-important day-to-day life of the church. *"We are very pleased that the system is in place,"* says Reverend Roberts, *"It gives us great comfort to know that we should never have another serious theft from the roof again."*

For more information about the new electronic roof security system, or to arrange a free,* no-obligation site survey, please call **0845 600 9659**. You can also download an alarm fact sheet at www.ecclesiastical.com/churchmatters. For expert advice tailored to your church, please contact your local Insurance Consultant and Surveyor (IC&S) who will be pleased to help. You can also speak to our customer services team on **0845 777 3322**.

*UK mainland only – travel expenses may be applicable offshore.

Pictures: (Top) St. Peter's. (Bottom left and right) A typical alarm installation: Alarm sounder and blue strobe in church tower, and infrared motion detector.



Beaufort House,
Brunswick Road,
Gloucester, GL1 1JZ