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Installation of security systems can deter theft from Churches

The price of lead has risen in recent years and unfortunately so has the theft of lead tiles from Church roofs. There were 163 reports of theft and vandalism to churches, graveyards and cemeteries between November 2010 and October 2011 in Norfolk alone and almost half of these crimes involved the theft of lead or windows being smashed.

The theft of lead roof tiles is becoming so common that churches are seriously considering using cheaper roofing alternatives to reduce the costs of repairs and deter future thefts. However, English Heritage believes that lead roofing should always be used wherever possible and that security equipment should be installed to protect the church and deter future thefts – a view echoed by Norfolk Constabulary who have recorded an increase in theft of lead from churches within the area.

A spokesman for Norfolk Constabulary said: “We would encourage all churches to consider the installation of lighting, CCTV and even roof alarms to deter theft and vandalism. Smartwater is also a valuable tool against metal theft and has been used across Norfolk to mark roof lead and other items to make them identifiable at a later date, should they be recovered”.

In a statement published by English Heritage in their Guidance Notes ‘Theft of Metal from Church Buildings’, they strongly support the installation of security systems where appropriate to protect roofs and will include the expense of these as an eligible cost when assessing applications to the Repair Grants for Places of Worship Scheme. They recognise that theft brings frustration, expense and inconvenience to the congregation; therefore installing security devices and systems reduces the risk and helps keep insurance premiums down.

St Peter’s Church in Gorleston-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, experienced a spate of vandalism which resulted in high repair costs and considerable inconvenience. Father Henry McCarthy wanted to protect the church from further damage and asked Gardwell Secure Systems to install a state-of-the-art CCTV system whilst bearing in mind the need to keep costs low.

The CCTV system installed served as an effective visual deterrent to potential thieves, and when a theft did occur it also provided video evidence for the courts.

Speaking about the benefits of installing CCTV at St Peter’s Church, Father Henry MacCarthy said: “In addition to being a deterrent to potential thieves and cutting down on vandalism it is also useful in enabling me to find out what is happening around the church at any time of day or night. The retaining of events for some 21 days is an added bonus. One of the advantages of the modern small CCTV cameras is that they are very inconspicuous. On a listed building this is very important. We have found that if there are any problems with our CCTV installation, Gardwell Secure Systems deal with them quickly and efficiently. In conclusion we are very pleased with our investment in this Gardwell installation.”

If you would like to find out more about the [Repair Grants for Places of Worship Scheme](#), visit the English Heritage website.

Gardwell Secure Systems can provide a range of cost-effective security solutions including CCTV and intruder alarms. If you would like to know more, please contact Renato Notarianni on 01493 742 020 or visit www.gardwellsecuresystems.co.uk

KEY SERVICES:

- CCTV Systems
- Intruder Alarms
- Remote Monitored CCTV
- Access Control Systems

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