

SOMERSET CHURCHES TRUST ROOF ALARM CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

Easter 2020 has seen the successful completion of Somerset Churches Trust's roof alarm grant campaign in conjunction with Allchurches Trust, the charitable owner of Ecclesiastical Insurance.

Against a background of continuing lead thefts from churches, Chris Hawkings (Trustee) led Somerset Churches Trust (SCT) in a pioneering project with Allchurches Trust. The partnership was to use SCT's existing grant giving scheme to distribute funds to mainly rural churches in Somerset to enable them to install roof alarms.

As part of the publicity campaign in Somerset, Trust chairman, Dr Axel Palmer, was featured in local newspapers and appeared on BBC Radio Somerset and BBC Radio Bristol. This was followed by filming at St Peter's, Portishead for BBC Television 'Breakfast' and 'Points West'.

The £30,000 Allchurches Trust fund, topped up by our own funds, has seen some 23 churches benefit from grants to install roof alarms, latterly providing up to £2,500 towards the cost of fitting alarm systems. Now, as well as running schemes in conjunction with a range of dioceses and local historic churches trusts, Allchurches Trust welcomes applications direct from churches. You can find out more at www.allchurches.co.uk/roofalarmgrants.

Trust chairman, Dr Axel Palmer, commented: "Rural churches which have stood for 900 years are having their lead roofs stripped. This is serious and organised criminality where entire roofs were being stolen. These are attacks on our national heritage with a significant impact on victims and village communities."

Speaking of the economic issues facing churches in Somerset, Axel said "these are not victimless crimes – they go to the heart of rural communities and their dedicated parishioners. That's why we were pleased to trial these grants in our county and are delighted that Allchurches Trust is now making the scheme available nationally."

Jeremy Noles, Grants and Relationships Manager at Allchurches Trust said: "Metal theft continues to be a challenging issue across the UK, and with churches forced to close during the Coronavirus lockdown, security is currently an even bigger concern in many areas. Success of schemes like the one in Somerset in tackling this issue has led Allchurches to extend its Roof Protection scheme until the end of 2020 and increased the amount of funding available, with grants now funding up to 50% of the cost of the alarm, up to a maximum of £2500. We would encourage churches to visit our website to find out more."

27 April 2020.