



PRESS RELEASE

Bid to foil church thieves

January 5, 2018

Two charities have come together to foil thieves who have been damaging historic churches across Somerset by stealing lead from the roofs.

Allchurches Trust has given £30,000 to the Somerset Churches Trust towards the cost of providing 30 roof alarms on churches across the county.

Although the number of lead thefts has fallen following changes in legislation they are still happening and costing hard-pressed congregations thousands of pounds.

All Saints church, in Kingston Seymour, near Clevedon, became a victim in June last year when lead – worth around £15,000 - was stripped off the roof of the south aisle of the church, which is a Grade 1 listed building dating back to the late 14th or early 15th century.

Somerset Churches Trust's chairman Dr Axel Palmer said: "We are so pleased with this grant from Allchurches Trust. It really will help churches protect their vulnerable roofs.

"Part of the problem is that if thieves strike then the church may become a victim of the weather because the buildings are not watertight. And even if they are

unprotected for only a short period of time heavy rain can cause considerable damage to internal decorations and contents including organs.

“I would like to hear from any church or chapel that would like to apply for a £1,000 grant towards the cost of installing a roof alarm. There is a special roof alarm grant application form that can be downloaded on our website at www.somersetchurchestrust.org

“You can either send the completed form to us as a scanned email attachment email :somersetchurchestrust@gmail.com or post it to our grants secretary, Anthony Sutcliffe, Ditchheat Hill Farmhouse, Ditchheat, Somerset, BA4 6TL.”

Somerset Churches Trust is non-denominational and gives grants to churches, chapels and meeting houses to encourage use by the local community.

Grants cover not only repair to the main fabric of the building but also improvement works such as better access, kitchens and other facilities, including toilets.

Since the charity was founded in 1996 it has given more than £700,000 in grants.

Allchurches Trust Ltd was established in 1972 to promote the Christian faith and to contribute to the funds of other charities. In its early days, the majority of grants were for repair and maintenance of church buildings. While it still makes similar grants, the scope of what it supports has expanded, and last year it gave more than £13 million to a wide range of church, charity and community projects across the UK and Ireland.

Allchurches Trust receives its money from the business it owns, not from public donations. It is the owner of the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group plc (EIG), an independent financial services company, which insures heritage buildings, charities, schools, churches and other faith buildings.

Sir Philip Mawer, Allchurches Trust chairman said: “We’re pleased to be helping to protect some of Somerset’s most beautiful and historic churches and applaud Somerset Churches Trust for taking this initiative. In our experience, installing a roof alarm not only deters thieves but acts as a catalyst, inspiring other community action in support of a local church. Since 2016, Allchurches Trust has given grants totalling almost £500,000 towards roof alarms for 435 churches across England.”

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