



## York DAC – Advice Note on changes of roofing material and flashings following lead theft

### General principles

Given the frequency of repeated thefts, or attempted thefts, of lead roofing, the DAC is now regularly approached for its view on the replacement of sheet lead and lead flashings with alternative products like terne-coated stainless steel or felt-based systems. The Committee will usually support a change from lead to another **appropriate** material in the following circumstances:

- When such a change will have no detrimental historic or aesthetic impact.
- In visually discreet areas, like flat or shallow-pitched roofs concealed behind parapets.
- Where the roof is inconspicuous or of no historic importance.
- On ancillary structures of less significance than the main body of the church fabric; for example, on later modest vestry or porch additions.
- Where there have been multiple thefts within a short period of time.

The DAC favours like-for-like replacement of lead where this is possible. If a theft occurs, PCCs and their architects should consider the environmental and conservation benefits of replacing the lead before considering other materials less attractive to thieves. Lead is a sustainable material that can be easily cut and dressed to accommodate awkward details, provides reliable weather protection, and can easily be repaired in the event of local damage.

### Alternative materials

Where replacing lead is not possible, or would leave the building very vulnerable to repeated attacks, the Committee is strongly of the opinion that terne-coated stainless steel is by far the best alternative roofing material on shallow-pitched or flat roofs, but is unlikely to be cheaper than lead and may even be a good deal more expensive. Stainless steel can look extremely good, can be as long lasting as lead or slate, is almost impossible to remove, and has negligible scrap value. However, it can sometimes be noisy in inclement weather, and may be subject to technical problems concerning underside corrosion.

Felt-based roofing systems are short-lived and can be subject to maintenance problems. They may sometimes be acceptable on fairly modern or unlisted structures, but are completely unsuitable for historic buildings and extremely unlikely to receive approval from the DAC or the support of Historic England, local authorities or the Amenity Societies. As a replacement for more traditional materials, they are a very poor false economy.

Churches roofed in slate, tiles or other non-metallic materials are still likely to have large areas of lead flashings which can be very vulnerable. In some case it may be appropriate to replace stolen flashings with new reinforced mineral- or plastic-based materials like **Ubiflex**, **Lacomet** or **Masterform** or metal ones like **Zinflash** which can be dressed like lead, are suitably coloured and recyclable, and have little

or no scrap value. **Ubiflex** and **Zinflash** have now been used successfully on a large number of churches in the diocese.

### Permissions and procedures

As soon as a theft occurs, contact your insurance company and Inspecting Architect immediately, and arrange to have the damaged area sheeted to prevent water ingress. Your architect will probably be able to suggest suitable people to do this. If you have the opportunity to take photographs of the damaged areas, these may prove useful later when making faculty applications and insurance claims.

	Like for like	Change of material
<b>Unlisted building</b>	<p><b>List A – item A1 (8)</b> ‘The like for like replacement of roof lead or other material covering the roof of a building which is not a listed building’.</p> <p>Conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The original introduction of the material being replaced was authorised</li> <li>- The installation of roof insulation is considered</li> <li>- The PCC’s insurers are notified of the proposals</li> </ul>	<b>Faculty</b>
<b>Listed building</b>	<p><b>List – item B 1(6)</b> ‘The like for like replacement of roof lead or other material covering the roof of a listed building’.</p> <p>Conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The original introduction of the material being replaced was authorised</li> <li>- The installation of roof insulation is considered</li> <li>- The PCC’s insurers are notified of the proposals</li> </ul>	<b>Faculty</b>

Following cases of theft of roofing metals, flashings or guttering, an **Interim Faculty** can be issued if the building cannot effectively be protected (albeit only temporarily) from water ingress which will severely compromise the structure of the building, or immovable contents like major electrical components or a pipe organ, whilst the proper faculty procedure is followed.

Parishes must note that the ultimate responsibility for proposing **any** change from lead roofing to an alternative material must lie with the Inspecting Architect to the church. On all Grade I and Grade II\* buildings such changes will certainly require the support of Historic England, and possibly the local authority. Some local authorities may require Planning Permission for any change of roof covering.

On the other hand, the current approach and philosophy of Historic England and some of the Amenity Societies would seem to be reasonably pragmatic and close to that of the DAC. Like the DAC, Historic England considers each individual case on its merits, and both have recently supported changing from lead to terne-coated stainless steel on churches within the Diocese covering the complete range of listing grades; Grade I, Grade II\* and Grade II.

If sheet lead roofing is to be put back, architects should consider specifying that it be fixed using hollow rolls rather than wood-core rolls if the pitch of the roof allows. The copper fixings used to secure hollow rolled sheet lead make it more difficult to remove. Parishes should also give very serious consideration to putting effective security measures in place to reduce the risk of future attacks.