

METAL THEFT FROM CHURCH BUILDINGS

A Guide for PCC's, Churchwardens and Clergy



Introduction

Sadly, metal theft continues to plague church congregations in this diocese and beyond and although the issue is still on local and national agenda, it is recognised that there is need for help and support NOW.

In September 2018, the diocese appointed a Historic Churches Support Officer (HCSO) whose post is funded by a grant from Historic England. One of the key tasks of the HCSO is to support parishes that have experienced metal (roof) theft from their buildings: this guide is one strand of that.

This guide is divided into two sections:

- **A.** What to do NOW, before your church experiences a theft
- **B.** What to do IF your church experiences a theft.

Section A is all about making sure that you have done as much as is reasonably possible to reduce your risk and the impact that metal theft would have on you church if you are unfortunate enough to experience it. It also helps you to put a strategy in place so that you know exactly what to do and who to call in the event of a theft so as to make this as straight forward as possible in a potentially stressful situation.

Section B gives you clear guidelines as to what should be done immediately after a metal theft has taken place.

We very much hope that you never have to use Section B.



Section A

What to do **BEFORE** your church experiences metal theft.

Lead roofs are not the only type of metal that thieves are interested in.

Other potential targets include:

- lead downpipes
- hoppers
- flashings and ridges
- lightning conductor tapes
- copper roofs

Sometimes the thieves are opportunist but more often than not they are well organised and know exactly what they are doing and are very efficient at doing it!

Here are some examples:



Stolen Lead Ridge and Flashings



Nave Copper Roof completely stripped
Temporary covering to aisle roof



Lead Tower Roof stolen



Lead cut away between the wood rolls



Lead Rainwater Pipe



Copper Roof part stolen
The remainder of that roof has been stolen since the picture was taken.

PLAN FOR THE WORST but HOPE FOR THE BEST

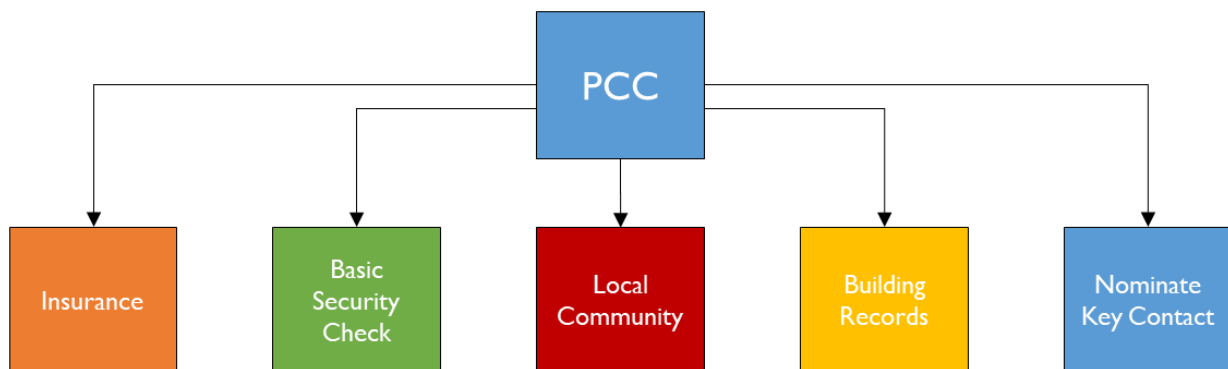
Whilst we always hope that we will not become the victim of metal theft there is no way of guaranteeing this. However, planning and preparation for the worst will be of enormous help in the long run.

It is suggested that churches undertake the following:

FIVE TASKS FOR THE PCC

In no particular order:

- Review your **Insurance**
- Undertake a **basic security check**
- Build good links with the **local community**
- Ensure that you have good photographic **records** of your church
- Nominate a **key contact** who will co-ordinate matters in the event of a theft.



These are explained in more detail.

Insurance

I. INSURANCE

It is very easy to let your insurance renew without actually questioning what you are getting from your policy or whether your insurer has changed any terms.

Here are some key questions to consider:

- Who is our insurer?

Is our policy up to date?

When does it renew?

Consider whether your current Insurer and the policy that you have with them is serving you well.

What could be done to improve this?

Would one of the other Church Insurers be able to offer better or more favourable terms?

There is no requirement to use one particular company...

- In the event of metal theft from our church, will we get a full pay-out or are there limitations?

There may be limit on any pay-out if particular conditions are not met. Typically, these caps are £7500 which is insufficient to replace even a small tower roof.

- What are the specific conditions and/or exclusions around metal?

List them and ask whether you have, or can, comply with them. What actions do we have to take?

- Do we have Smart Water applied?

Smart Water (or other similar approved forensic marking systems) is required by most insurers – without this, you will not be insured.

Have we undertaken any works since the SmartWater was originally applied (e.g. renewing a section of lead roof) that means that it needs to be applied to this new area?

Is it registered?

It is also essential to ensure that it is registered.

- Do we need to have a roof alarm in order to meet our policy conditions?

Is this a requirement of the policy?

What installation costs are involved?

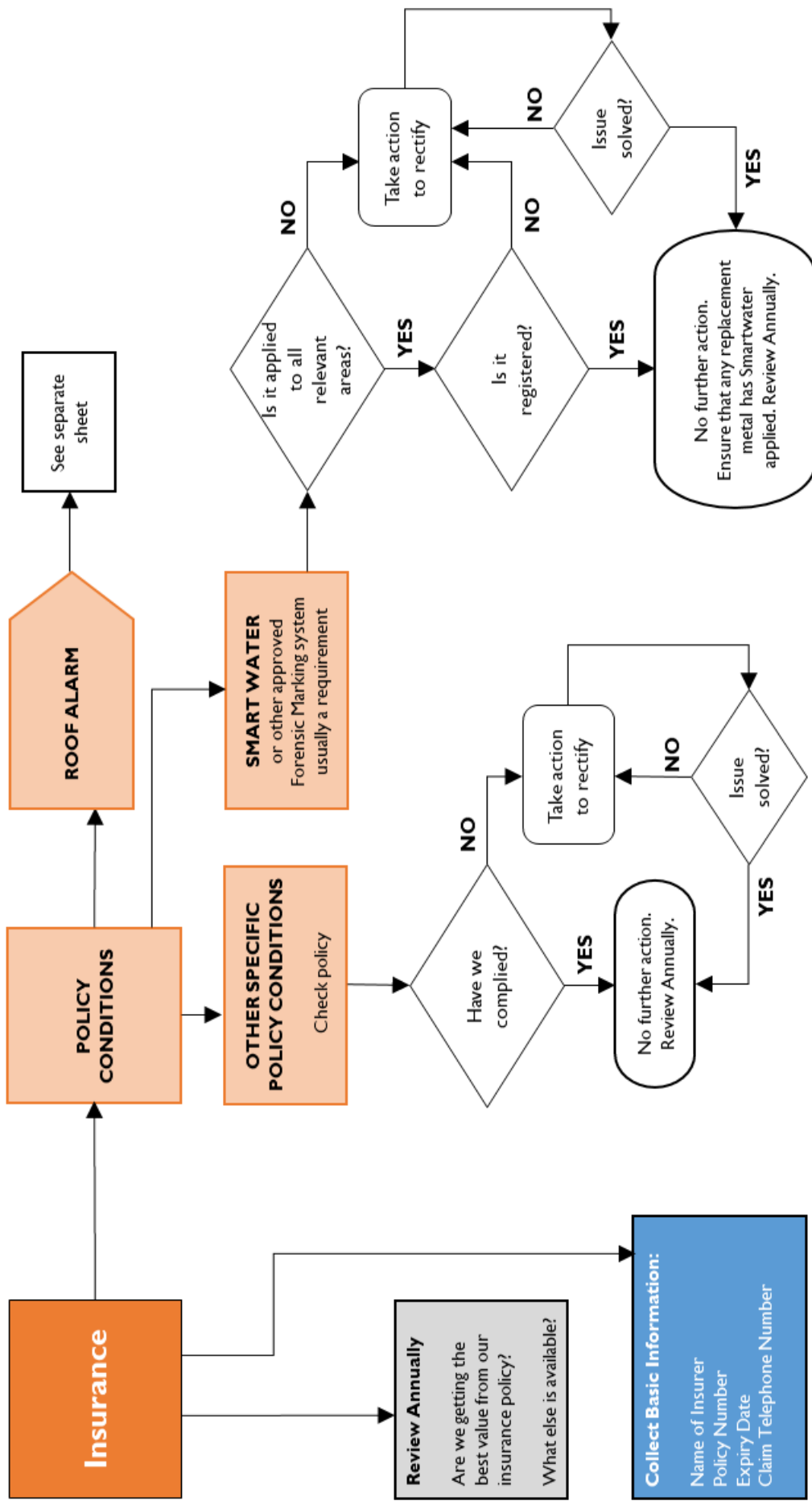
What are the annual maintenance costs?

- Does our insurer provide any checklists or guides that might also help us

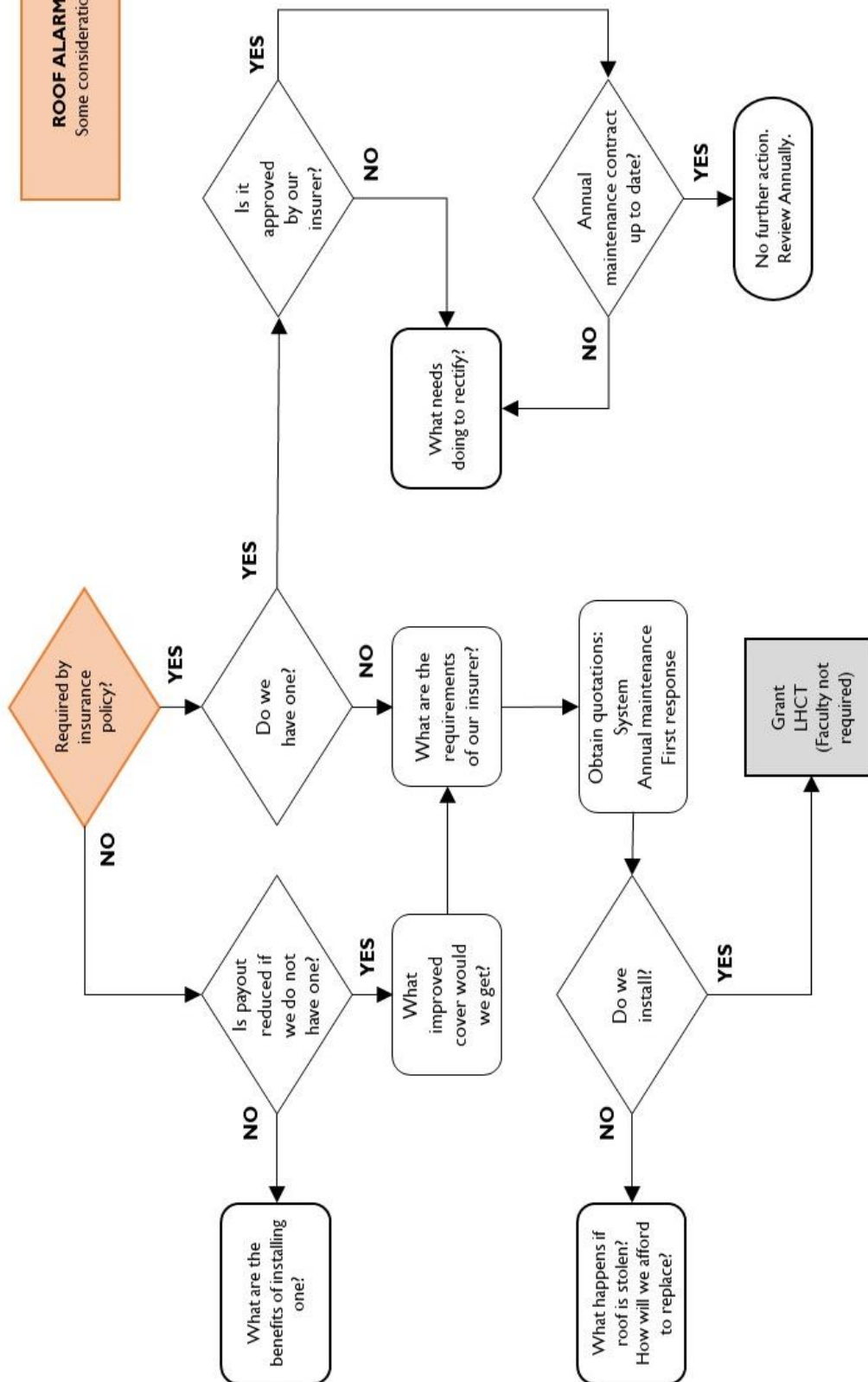
Websites are usually the best place to look. If you don't have access to the internet see if they have a customer helpline.

Use the Guide on the next 2 pages to help you with these questions.

Consult any guidance notes from your insurer.



ROOF ALARMS
Some considerations



Basic Security Check

2. BASIC SECURITY CHECK

It is really important that we don't miss out on making sure that all of the obvious solutions are in place. Sometimes the familiar becomes so commonplace that we no longer see what is actually there.

Here we consider some aspects of church security, particularly in respect of metal theft, but they also have a general application.

- Firstly, look with fresh eyes at your church and ask someone to help you with this. It might be that someone independent is available e.g. – your local Heritage Watch Volunteer or Police/Community Support Officer. Remember, that two pairs of eyes are better than one.

This is all about assessing what the weaknesses might be and whether something can be done about them.

There might be other things that we observe at the same time e.g. that out of date notice or vegetation growing in the gutter ...

- Once these have been identified, three further questions arise:

What could we do to solve these weaknesses, at:

- i) No or low cost
- ii) Medium cost
- iii) Significant cost

Look AT the church - Start with a wide view.

- from a satellite image (e.g. using google maps or similar)

- from the road/street

After all, these are exactly how a thief may see a potential target.

Use the tips in the table below to help you.

Once you've looked at the church in this way and made appropriate notes, then

Look outwards FROM the church - do this from each side

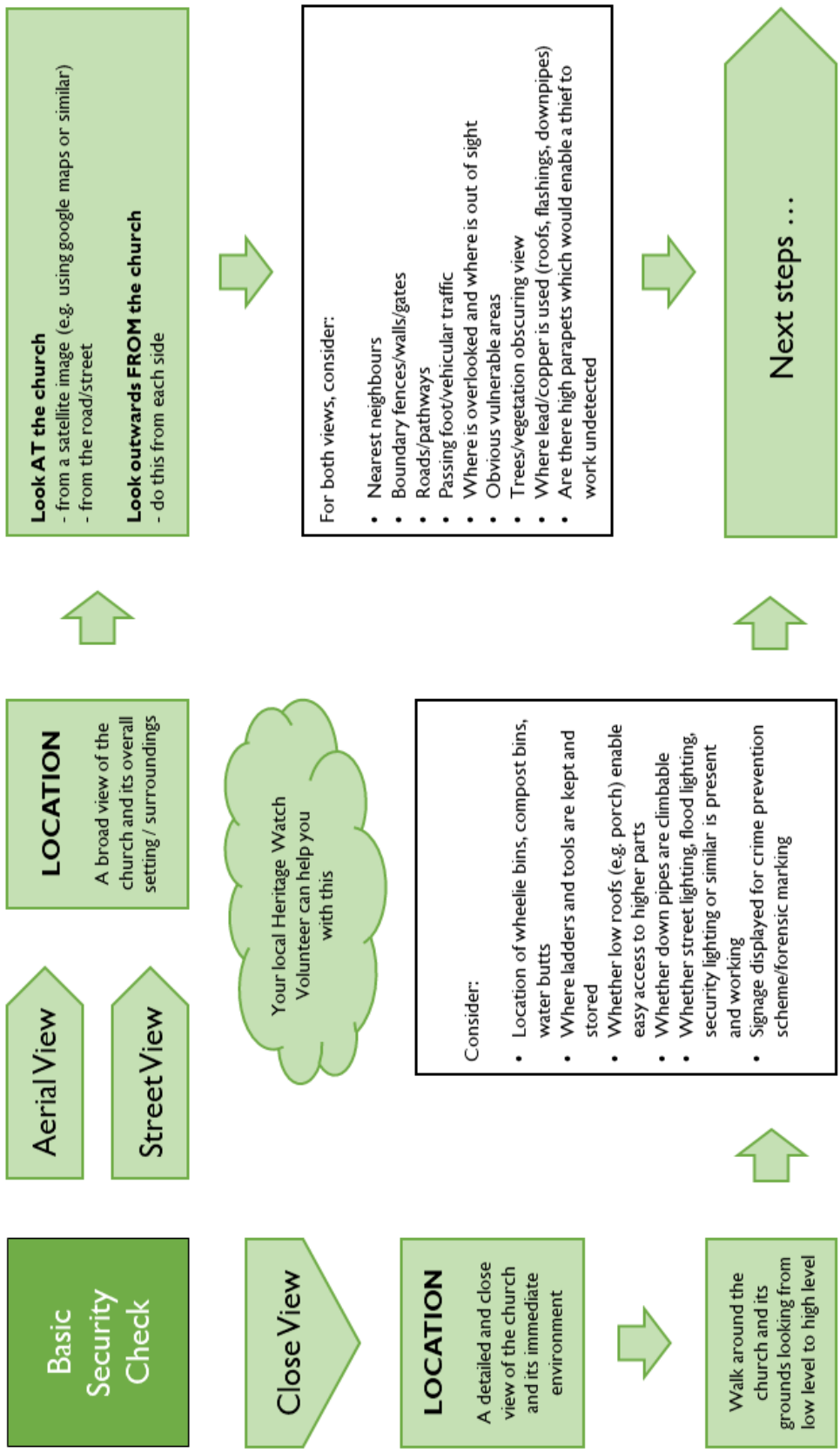
- Is the church heavily shielded by trees or easily visible *Could trees/vegetation be cut back/reduced to improve visibility*
- Do any neighbours overlook the church or is it remote? *An overlooked location is no guarantee of improved security*
- At night-time, how well lit is the church/yard?
- Do people pass by?
- What is the access like?
Are there gates? Are they secured at night?
How close would you be able to get a vehicle?
- Is the wheelie bin easily accessible or is it secured? *These are often used to collect and transport rolls of lead which have been dropped on the ground to waiting transport, or as something to stand on to gain access.*
- Are there water butts, oil tanks or similar which provide easy points of access to roofs?
- Are ladders/tools locked up? *Ensure that any tools are kept securely. e.g. wheelbarrows can be used to collect and transport rolls of lead which have been dropped on the ground to waiting transport.*
- Are downpipes easily climbable and enable easy access to roofs? *Consider applying anti-climb paint. Note that it is a requirement to display special warning signs.*

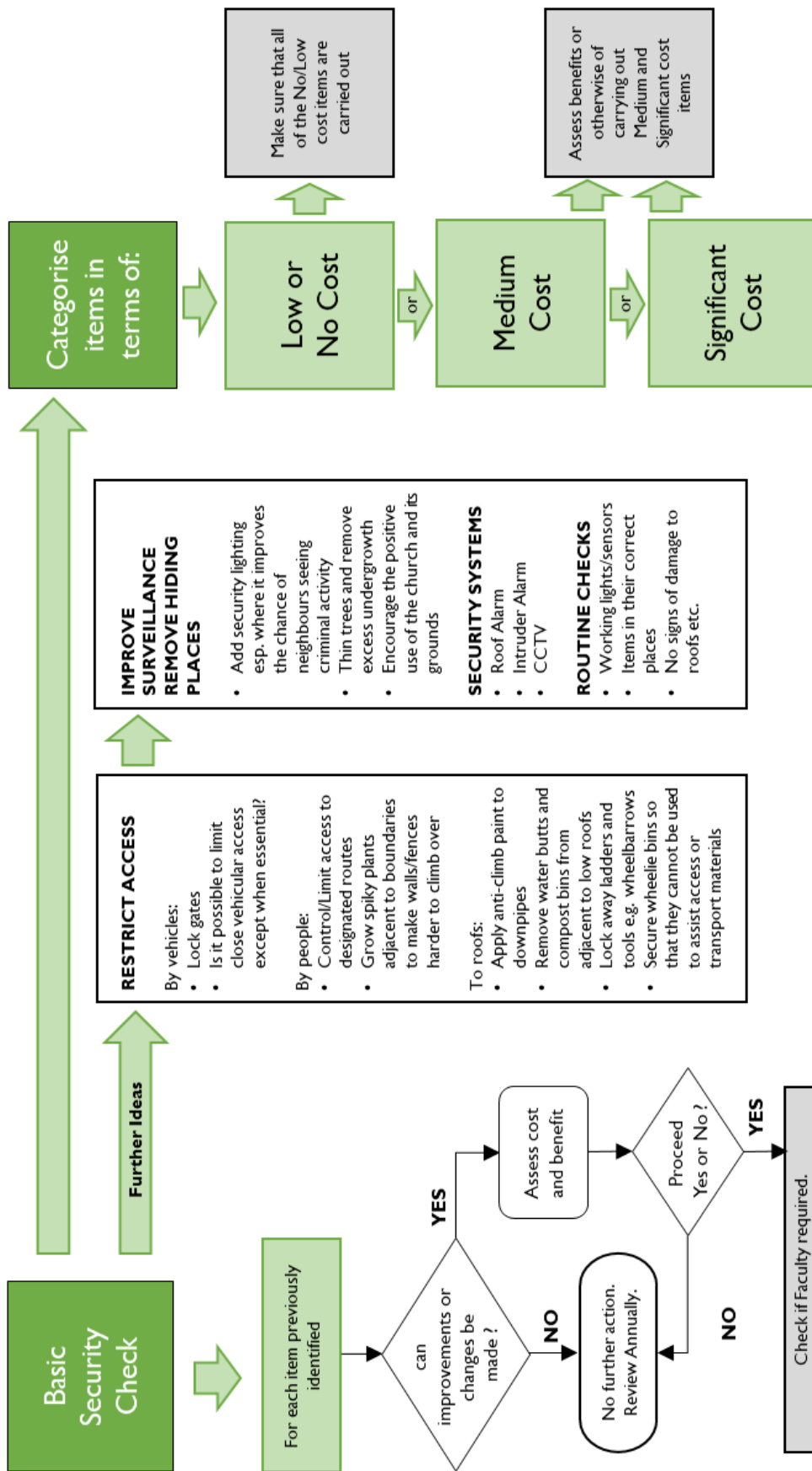
Note that certain works will require Faculty Approval before being undertaken.

Please double check with Rupert Allen (DAC Secretary) if in any doubt.

Other Guidance

- Historic England – Theft of Metal from Church Roofs:
[Theft of Metal from Church Roofs: Prevention and Response | Historic England](#)
- Heritage Watch Volunteers
heritagewatchvolunteers@leicestershire.pnn.police.uk





Local Community

3. LOCAL COMMUNITY

Who is our neighbour?

There is real value on so many levels of establishing good links with the local and wider community.

- Consider setting up a local network which can be used to gather and send relevant, important and appropriate information relating to church security. Make sure it is sensibly used and managed so that people take notice of it. Keep it on topic – don't start advertising the forthcoming coffee morning – use other channels for that. Make sure that you don't fall foul of any relevant GDPR rules along the way.

One church has set up a WhatsApp group for this purpose.

- Let people know that, unless you tell them otherwise, NO work is taking place on the church. So if you see someone on the roof then there is something wrong – and, yes, thieves are that brazen and will steal during the day under the guise of being legitimate workmen!
- Keep in touch with local churches in your benefice/deanery. They might have fallen victim at the same time or could be the next target. Depending upon your situation, there may be other nearby buildings that could also be susceptible to metal theft. Where are they?
- Get to know your local PCSO/beat officer.

Building Records

4. BUILDING RECORDS

It is really important that there are good records of significant and/or historic features.

Look at your church building – what would be damaged if the roof were stolen or all of the drainpipes and hoppers? Maybe, these are particularly fine or historic examples in their own right. Could you show your insurer photographs of what things looked like?

- Record items of significance.
- Look at each building element and consider what damage would be done if you no longer had a roof covering – do you have significant wall paintings? What is the roof over the organ?

Your architect may be able to assist or may have photographs. The last Quinquennial Inspection may also help you identify particularly important features – e.g. significant historic graffiti or plumber's marks on lead work.

Key Contact

5. KEY CONTACT(S)

In order not to duplicate efforts it is worth nominating a key person who will coordinate things in the event of a theft. This way, ONE person knows what is going on and has the facts to hand! This could be the churchwarden.

In nominating a Key Contact it isn't suggested that one person has to shoulder all of the responsibility, but acts as a coordinator

Make sure that people in the Community know who this person is as well.

Useful information for the key contact to have to hand:

- Insurance Company name, Claim telephone number, Policy Number
- Telephone Numbers for key church contacts: Churchwarden, Incumbent
- Telephone/email (or similar) Local Information Network (see item 3).
- Other neighbouring churches and Area Dean
- Historic Churches Support Office from the Church Building Team (based at St. Martin's House)
Simon Headley 07398 639 326, 0116 261 5242
- Name of your Quinquennial Inspection architect.
Their professional advice will be required when the time comes to re-roof. [N.B. the PCC will need to approve any fees for their professional services].

It's worth another person holding this information as well to cover holidays, illness etc.

Section B

What to do in the event of metal theft.

Essential first steps:

- If a crime is taking place phone the Police on 999; otherwise, use 101.
It is now possible to report crime online www.leics.police.uk/

Report as a **Heritage Crime**.

Make a note of the Crime Reference Number

- Notify your Insurance Company
- Arrange for temporary coverings

The architect whom you usually use to carry out your quinquennial inspection may be able to advise further who you might use.

Move furniture etc. to unaffected area(s)/cover with waterproof sheeting if external temporary coverings cannot be done immediately. Waterproof sheeting may also be required to cover fixed furnishings, organs etc.

- Record any damage, both externally and internally.

Include consequential damage, e.g. stonework disturbed/broken in the course of removing a roof, or where access has been gained.

Whoever is putting a temporary covering on should be asked to take photographs.

- Notify the Church Buildings Team:

Simon Headley

Historic Churches Support Officer
Diocese of Leicester, Church Building Team (based at St. Martin's House)

07398 639326

0116 261 5242

The Historic Churches Support Officer will arrange to visit and is able to offer further advice as well as notifying the Archdeacon(s) and DAC secretary.

See next page for further details.

