

Alarms for Churches



A SUCCESSFUL LOCAL CAMPAIGN

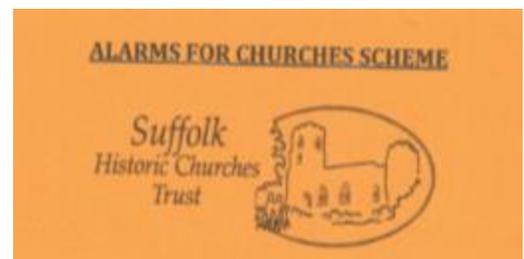
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Safeguarding Suffolk's churches in 2015 - a successful campaign by the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust

This case study highlights the impact that can be made from timely and organised action. It is a great example of a well organised local campaign that successfully gained public support.

A number of local trusts have now offered grants to help churches with alarms. The Suffolk campaign led to engagement with the media, a large number of churches and the public.

Somerset Churches Trust, although they did not mount a full campaign, similarly successfully raised their profile in 2018 through media exposure when they released news about their roof alarm grant programme supported by AllChurches Trust and Ecclesiastical Insurance Group.



A bright idea

The introduction of more controls over the sale of scrap metal combined with police efforts led to a sharp decline in theft for a brief period. In 2015 there were a number of roof thefts at churches in Suffolk, with efficient and organised gangs stripping and exporting large amounts of lead.

Following a series of devastating thefts in the summer of 2015, the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust decided to take action. With the support of the St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Diocese, which introduced a special fast-track De Minimis permission process to enable the scheme, they embarked on a mission to help Suffolk churches to install insurer approved alarms with a cost of up to £5,000 per church.

Launching a campaign

Counting the cost of theft

Suffolk churches suffering thefts in August/September 2015

- **Lavenham**
- **Combs**
- **Parham**
- **Capel**
- **Dennington**
- **Hundon**
- **Chevington**
- **Groton**
- **Stratford St Mary** (pictured above)

SHCT Trustees agreed to release trust reserves to get the scheme off the ground. The trust was lucky in having Geoffrey Probert, a trustee with PR skills, who has this year become SHCT Chairman. The Alarms for Churches Campaign was launched in late September. Press releases were made and local media contacts were approached. There was considerable local media interest and a number of interviews followed. SHCT clearly explained how people could give in response to their Appeal. This helped SHCT to raise £175,000 in the first five weeks of the Appeal.

Partners

With the support of the Diocese and Ecclesiastical Insurance Group, SHCT negotiated an advantageous deal with E-Bound, one of the contractors approved by Ecclesiastical Insurance.

The scheme had clearly articulated benefits for churches

- Reduced lead theft would reduce damage to historic church fabric
- Well maintained alarms are a deterrent against theft and its consequences
- Installing an approved alarm and maintaining it means that churches can be better insured against theft

The campaign raised money and awareness for churches and for SHCT throughout Suffolk

Mobilising churches

Within a week, a number of churches had signed up to have a roof alarm installed. The scheme makes it easy for them to install an alarm. SHCT can only meet the full cost, however, with additional financial help, so some churches may lose out if funding is not found.

Within a few weeks, more than 70 churches had committed to having alarms installed. By the beginning of December 2015 over a hundred had signed up.

"A race against the thieves" (Martin Favell, Chairman, SHCT in 2015)

SHCT aimed to safeguard 130 Suffolk churches by the end of 2016 and they achieved their goal.

As simple as ABC ... How the scheme was organised

1. Churches applied for a Faculty
2. They were referred to the SHCT
3. The church committed to paying 50% of the cost (up to £5,000 per building)
4. SHCT found the remaining 50%.
5. SHCT contacted E-Bound
6. E-Bound contacted the church and carried out a survey
7. The alarm was installed and maintained by E-Bound



St Peter & St Paul, Lavenham, one of Suffolk's most famous and loved churches which lost the section of roof pictured.